

OPINION 6
RACE FOR THE
WHITE HOUSE

WORLD 8
PALESTINIAN DEATH TOLL
FROM WAR PASSES 10,000

MONEY 10
SENSEX, NIFTY JUMP NEARLY 1%
ON GAIN IN IT, BANKING SHARES

Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 33 Issue 308
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

NEW DELHI, TUESDAY NOVEMBER 7, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



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12 SPORT

INDIA Bloc breaks apart

Congress is a very deceitful party, it will cheat you: Akhilesh at a rally in MP

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The consolidation of Opposition parties under the INDIA bloc, rallying behind the Congress, seems to be at its lowest point currently, with one of the major alliance partners, the Samajwadi Party, led by Akhilesh Yadav, urging people not to vote for Congress, labeling it a "chalu" (cheat) party. Yadav's comments come less than a week after senior JD(U) leader and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's criticism of the grand old party for not showing interest in the INDIA bloc, which is now a cause of concern for the roughly 30 Opposition parties that were preparing to challenge the BJP-led Narendra Modi Government in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.



party... Will you be cautious or not? If Congress can deceive us, it can deceive anyone," stated the former Uttar Pradesh CM, who also criticised the Congress for its demand for a nationwide caste census. The Congress has not formed an alliance with the INDIA bloc partners, the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) led by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. The conflict between Congress and SP in Madhya Pradesh has led to verbal and sarcastic exchanges, which in turn prompted Nitish to express his frustration with Congress for not giving priority to the coalition.

It further emphasised that the Assembly polls scheduled this month in five States serve as a "dress rehearsal" for the Lok Sabha polls next year. The Shiv Sena also acknowledged the validity of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's concerns. However, it noted that such concerns should not be aired publicly, as it gives the BJP sadistic pleasure. During the past week, other prominent stakeholders like Sharad Pawar, Sitaram Yechury, and Omar Abdullah have also voiced their concerns and emphasised the urgency of formulating the INDIA alliance, provided everyone is committed to dismantling the juggernaut of Narendra Modi in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. A senior Congress leader, who is working behind the scenes for the coordination committee of the INDIA bloc, mentioned that such animosities are bound to occur during elections but they do not endure. "In the case of the INDIA bloc, everyone realises that the common goal is to prevent Modi's dominance in the next elections. However, Congress is expected to perform well in the five State Assembly polls, and any resentments will likely take a back seat because the primary focus will be on the Lok Sabha polls. We have advised our leaders to refrain from making or responding to comments from the alliance stake-

holders," said an unnamed source to *The Pioneer*. He mentioned that members of the Coordination Committee are collaborating for the upcoming alliance meeting and planning a joint rally, preferably in Patna early next month. Taking a dig at the ongoing issues within the Opposition camp, Union Minister Piyush Goyal remarked that the Opposition bloc INDIA had started to disintegrate and was now referred to as "INDI zero". Goyal pointed out the dispute between Yadav and MP Congress president Kamal Nath regarding seat sharing for the Assembly polls, as well as Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's statement that the Congress was more focused on elections than on setting the course for the INDIA bloc. "The Opposition alliance is already falling apart even before its formation. The parties within it are competing against each other in the Assembly polls in various States. It has now transformed into an 'INDI zero' alliance," stated Goyal during a press conference while on a tour of Madhya Pradesh. "Nitish Kumar is disheartened by the state of the alliance. The Aam Aadmi Party criticises the Congress. In West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka, the constituents of the alliance are at odds," asserted the senior BJP leader.

Environment, tremor rattle subcontinent

Odd-Even to return to Delhi roads from Nov 13

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The bustling metropolis of Delhi and NCR has been gripped by a relentless wave of severe pollution. The air, thick with noxious fumes, has become a daily battle for its inhabitants, prompting urgent calls for change. Meanwhile, the subcontinent's tectonic stability is undergoing a period of uncertainty, marked by frequent tremors in Nepal and Afghanistan that serve as stark reminders of nature's unpredictable force. As the pollution levels in Delhi and NCR continue to rise, people are taking measures to protect themselves, from wearing masks to investing in air purifiers. Amid mounting pressure to implement stricter environmental policies and find sustainable solutions to combat this pressing issue of air pollution that has reached the highest level, the Delhi Government on Monday decided to reintroduce the Odd-Even vehicle rationing system for a one-week period from November 13 to November 20. Under the Odd-Even scheme, vehicles with licence plate numbers ending in an even digit (0, 2, 4, 6, 8) are allowed to operate on even dates, while those ending in odd digits (1,

3, 5, 7, 9) can ply on odd dates. The odd-even system was first introduced in 2016 by the AAP Government to control vehicular pollution and later implemented in 2017 and 2019 also. Additionally, all schools in Delhi have been directed to suspend physical classes, barring classes 10 and 12, until November 10. The odd-even scheme alternates car usage based on number plate digits. Addressing a press conference, Delhi's Environment Minister Gopal Rai said, "A detailed action plan will be developed in collaboration with relevant departments, including Transport and Traffic Police, during a meeting on Tuesday." Additionally, Rai announced the suspension of in-person classes for all schools, with the exception of students in grades X and XII preparing for board exams, in order to prioritise the health of schoolchildren. Environmentalists, however, called the latest enforcement of the rule a knee-jerk reaction to the rising pollution levels, rather than a long-term one. Jyoti Pande Lavakare, author of "Breathing Here is Injurious to Your Health: The Human Cost of Air Pollution", said the same "band-aid solutions" are implemented every year whenever the deteriorating air quality

rings an alarm bell. Environmentalist Bhavreen Kandhari echoed similar views and said that instead of implementing such measures for a week, they should be implemented throughout the year. Meanwhile several resident welfare associations in Delhi on Monday criticised the State Government's decision to reintroduce the odd-even rule and termed it a 'political gimmick', while many others called for a complete lockdown to combat the rising air pollution. Pollution levels in Delhi-NCR on Monday morning were recorded around eight to 10 times above the government-prescribed safe limit, as a toxic haze persisted over the region for the seventh consecutive day. Meanwhile an earthquake of 5.6 magnitude struck west Nepal on Monday and strong tremors were felt in parts of north India, the National Centre for Seismology said. It said the epicentre for the quake was 233 kilometres north of Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. The quake triggered panic among people, with many in Delhi and NCR reporting vigorous shaking of furniture. Several social media users shared visuals of people rushing out of residential buildings.

Modi discusses Gaza conflict with Iran

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As conflict rages between Israel and Hamas, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi on Monday exchanged views on the "difficult situation" in the West Asia region. Modi expressed deep concern at the "terrorist incidents, violence and loss of civilian lives". Modi in the last few weeks has held such talks with several world leaders in an effort to end violence in Gaza and reiterated India's position to end the strife as soon as possible. In his telephonic conversation with Raisi, Modi reiterated India's longstanding and consistent position on the Israel-Palestine issue. The two leaders exchanged views on the "difficult situation" in the West Asia region and the Israel-Hamas conflict, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said. President Raisi shared his assessment of the situation. Both the leaders stressed the need for preventing escalation, ensuring continued humanitarian aid and early restoration of peace and



stability, the statement said. The leaders also reviewed and positively assessed progress in multifaceted bilateral cooperation. Modi and Raisi welcomed focus and priority accorded to the Chabahar Port in Iran for improving regional connectivity. Both sides agreed to remain in touch given shared interest in regional peace, security and

of the situation. The two leaders exchanged views on the developments in the West Asian region. They emphasised the importance of durable peace, security and stability in the region. They also reiterated their commitment to continue to strengthen bilateral cooperation in diverse areas within the framework of the India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. On October 23, Modi spoke to Jordan's King Abdullah-II and the two leaders shared concerns regarding terrorism, violence and loss of civilian lives. Modi said concerted efforts are needed for an early resolution of the security and humanitarian situation. Incidentally, Modi on October 19 spoke to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. During their conversation, Modi said India would continue sending humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians. He also conveyed his condolences on the loss of civilian lives in the Gaza Strip due to the deep concern at terrorism, deteriorating security situation and the loss of civilian lives and called for early resolution

tion in the region. Reiterated India's long-standing principled position on the Israel-Palestine issue," Modi said after speaking to Abbas. In a post soon after Hamas launched 5,000 rockets at Israel in 20 minutes and began a multi-pronged attack by land, air and sea on October 7, Modi had said he was "deeply shocked by the news of terrorist attacks in Israel" and expressed India's solidarity with the country in the difficult hour. Modi reiterated his support for Israel on October 10, when he had posted that Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had called him and given him an update on the deadly conflict. Speaking at the G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit in New Delhi the same week, Modi said terrorism anywhere in the world and in any form was against humanity and emphasised that it was time for peace and brotherhood. Calling for the world to move forward with a human-centric approach, he also said conflicts and confrontations in any part of the world impact everyone and do not benefit anyone.



Commuters on a Delhi road as the national Capital is shrouded in a thick veil of pollution. Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Timed Out, Lanka's Angelo scripts World Cup history

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sri Lanka all-rounder Angelo Mathews on Monday became the first international cricketer to be timed out after not being ready to face the ball within two minutes of the fall of a wicket against Bangladesh in a World Cup match here. The incident happened in the 25th over when the 36-year-old walked out to bat after the dismissal of Sadeera Samarawickrama but found that the helmet strap was broken and immediately signalled for a replacement instead of facing the bowler Shakib Al Hasan. This prompted Bangladesh to appeal for a "time out". Mathews was seen having an animated discussion with umpire Marais Erasmus and Richard Illingworth, explaining that he had some issue with the helmet strap. He also approached Shakib,

who didn't withdraw his appeal and the Sri Lankan cricketer was forced to leave the field. A furious Mathews, who made a late entry into the World Cup as a replacement player, walked back to the dugout, smashing his helmet outside the boundary rope in disgust. According to article 40.1.1 of the ICC playing conditions for the 2023 World Cup, "After the fall of a wicket or the retirement of a batter, the incoming batter must, unless Time has been called, be ready to receive the ball, or for the other batter to be ready to receive the next ball within two minutes of the dismissal or retirement. If this requirement is not met, the incoming batter will be out, Timed out." Article 40.1.2 says, "In the event of an extended delay in which no batter comes to the wicket, the umpires shall adopt the procedure of Law 16.3 (ICC Match referee awarding a



Sri Lankan batsman Angelo Mathews leaves the ground after being given 'timed out' by umpire during the ICC Cricket World Cup 2023 match between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, at the Arun Jaitley Cricket Stadium in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

match). For the purposes of that clause the start of the action shall be taken as the expiry of the two minutes referred to above." Mathews' wicket, which was not credited to any bowler as per the rule, left Sri Lanka reeling at 135 for 5 in 24.2 overs. The Islanders, however, managed a competitive 279 all out in 49.3 overs riding on Charith Asalanka's century. Though it has never happened in international cricket, there have been six such instances in domestic cricket, including one in the match between Tripura and Orissa at Cuttack in 1997 when Hemulal Yadav was at the receiving end. The dismissal, the first instance in international cricket across all formats, including women's cricket, thus added another chapter in the bitter rivalry between the two teams. It also triggered a debate with Asalanka saying, "My point is

that Mathews' dismissal was not good for the spirit of cricket." Pakistan pace great Waqar Younis also called it against the spirit of cricket, while former India opener Gautam Gambhir tweeted, "Absolutely pathetic what happened in Delhi today!" Australian batter Usman Khawaja questioned how could Mathews be given 'timed out' when his helmet strap broke while he was at the crease. "Angelo made his crease then his helmet strap broke. How is that timed out? I'm all for timed out if he doesn't make his crease but this is ridiculous. No different than a batsman getting to the crease then taking 3 minutes to face up," Khawaja wrote on 'X', formerly Twitter. Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan said he felt like he "was at war" when he decided to approach the umpire demand-

ing Mathews be "timed out". "I felt like I was at war. Whatever I had to do, I did it. There will be debates. Today that (the time out) helped, I won't deny that!" said Shakib after the match. "One of our fielders came to me and said that if I appealed, he (Mathews) would be out. The umpire asked me if I was serious. It's in the laws; I don't know if it's right or wrong," added Shakib. Sri Lanka skipper Kusal Mendis said the umpires should have taken a "good decision" on the issue. "When Mathews came to the crease, there were five seconds left. When he came out, he found out about the strap of the helmet. It was disappointing. We expected him to score runs for us; it's disappointing that the umpires couldn't step in and make good decisions," said the Sri Lankan skipper. Bangladesh defeated Sri Lanka by three wickets.

TMC may drop a dozen sitting MPs in LS polls

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Hit by a bevy of scams and plagued by alleged schism within the party the Trinamool Congress could drop as many as a dozen faces in the coming parliamentary elections. Though there is no word from senior leaders, sources who are in the know of developments in the Camac Street office of the party general secretary Abhishek Banerjee have no doubts that quite a few sitting MPs may get the axe. In the list of "doubtful candidates" are senior parliamentarians Sudip Bandopadhyay, Saugato Roy and Kakoli Ghoshdastidar, sources say. Banerjee who is also the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is known to have been advised by a famous election management company to drop MPs like Bandopadhyay, Roy, Ghoshdastidar, Aparupa Poddar, Prasun Banerjee, Shatabdi Roy,

Mimi Chakrabarty, Dipak Adhikari, Sisir Adhikari, Dibyendu Adhikari, Chaudhuri Mohan Jatua and Sunil Mondal. According to sources a poll management company which has for the past few elections been advising Banerjee who is also the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is known to have advised the Bengal ruling outfit to field newer and non-controversial faces. This, in an apparent image-makeover exercise. The company is led by Bihar-based pollster and politician Prashant Kishore. Besides, the election management company's advisers there is also an effort to bring in new, young and cleaner faces in the party so as to balance out a galaxy of erudite, new-gen leaders in the Opposition — particularly in the Left — that have often been pulling an impressive number of crowds. Apart from infusing "clean images" in the party, the junior

Banerjee is also planning to drop older faces that would be difficult for him to handle in times to come. Abhishek has already been proclaimed as the party's number two post his aunt, the Chief Minister. According to sources Saugato Roy a former Union Minister and three-time MP from Dum Dum and TMC leader in Lok Sabha Sudip Bandopadhyay — a three-time MP from Kolkata North constituency — are likely to get the boot. While both of these leaders have preferred silence, sources close to them said that they have "full faith in Mamata Banerjee's decisions and wisdom." A third senior leader and all-weather companion of the Chief Minister, Dr Kakoli Ghoshdastidar representing Barasat parliamentary constituency may also get dropped, insiders say. Besides belonging to the older generation and members of the Chief Minister's coterie these Bandopadhyay

and Roy were implicated in Sharada and Narada scams. The poll company is also known to have recommended the sacking of Howrah MP and former India footballer Prasun Banerjee. Arambagh MP Aparupa Poddar alias Afsheen Ali may also get axed, sources say. Both the MPs' names got embroiled in the Narada scam. Apart from this Dipak Adhikari alias Deb, a Bengali matinee idol and MP from Ghatat constituency, is known to have himself requested the Chief Minister to let him in the coming elections. "Deb does not want to contest again... he has his business and has requested the Chief Minister to relieve him from active politics," said one of the company officials. The three other cine personalities whose names may get dropped are Nusrat Jahan, the Basirhat MP --- whose name recently got embroiled in an alleged housing scam --- Jadavpur MP and her Tollywood

colleague Mimi Chakrabarty, and Shatabdi Roy, sources said. While Jahan and Chakrabarty have been reported against for their regular absence from Parliament, the importance of Roy — a three-time Birbhum MP — has diminished following the death of her friend, philosopher and guide Subroto Mukherjee, a veteran Bengal politician and a former minister. Besides other politicians who would definitely not get TMC tickets are Contai MP and former Union Minister Sisir Adhikari and his son Dibyendu Adhikari. While Sisir is the father of Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari — a former TMC minister and close confidant of Mamata Banerjee who quit his party before 2021 Assembly elections — Dibyendu is his brother. Jatua a three-time MP from South 24 Parganas is unlikely to get a re-nomination on account of his age whereas

Mondal too may not get a ticket as he had in 2021 joined the BJP for a brief period before coming back to the TMC. While the TMC leadership remained tight-lipped about the possibility of some of its sitting MPs not getting tickets, the Opposition BJP called the new development a "clear divide between Mamata Banerjee's old brigade and Abhishek Banerjee's new brigade." BJP spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya said, "the Prince, when he becomes the king will not accept the courtiers of the Queen and so he is kicking them out... an ideology-less party the end of the TMC will one day come like this." CPI(M) leader Sujana Chakrabarty too said "as the party only revolved around Mamata Banerjee... as she ages and becomes weaker groupism will rise... the older people will be kicked out... corruption and fratricide will get the better of that party."



Mamata: We have taken nothing, still being called thief

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for the first time defended herself in the ration scam saying though she and her people had not taken anything from anywhere "we are being called thieves." Addressing an audience at a social function Banerjee on Monday apparently referred to the recent scams, which have seen a number of her senior Cabinet colleagues and MLAs going to jail Banerjee said how she had never taken the monthly salary of Rs 1.25 lakhs for the past 10 years. "We have never taken anything... and still we are being called thieves today." Referring to the multi crore ration scam which has seen the former Food Minister and her trusted lieutenant Jyoti Priya Mallick going to jail, Banerjee said "it has taken years to delete 1 crore fake ration cards which the Left Front used to get false votes." Incidentally the TMC government has been accused of presiding over a Rs 28,000 crore scam by misusing 1.66 crore ration cards. Though she would not name Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister said that she was not the kind who did everything for her own publicity. "I don't construct stadiums or railway stations in my own name... I have never named any project in the name of my parents," Banerjee said. Senior ministers of her Cabinet like Partha Chatterjee, Jyoti Priya Mallick, MLAs Manik Bhattacharya, Jivan Krishna Saha have been cooling their heels in ED custody and jail.

Banerjee's remarks came a day after Mallick, who is in ED custody, told the media that he had been framed through the BJP leading to an uproar. "I have been framed by using the BJP... the BJP has implicated me... Mamata didi, and Abhishek Banerjee knows everything." His statements led to multiple conjectures in the media with Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari immediately demanding her interrogation. "After Jyoti Priya Mallick's statement we want Mamata Banerjee to be interrogated," he said. Lashing out at the Centre for neglecting and depriving Bengal the Chief Minister alleged how the BJP Government had withheld the legitimate dues of her State adding to the miseries of the common man. "They take away the taxes in the form of GST but do not return our share... they have withheld our legitimate dues... they are not giving funds for the 100-days' work scheme... they have made the poor people work and not paying them... they are not releasing funds for the road construction projects... while 60 percent of the money given by us and 40 percent is given by them." Speaking about inclusive politics Banerjee said Bengal was a truly inclusive culture where people of all hues, races, religion and castes live in peace. "Bengal has always preached peaceful coexistence which is why Rabindranath Tagore wrote in our National Anthem about 'Punjab, Singh, Gujarat, Maratha, Dravida, Utkala, Banga'..."

Zika virus: Kerala health department urges people to be vigilant

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Days after an outbreak of Zika virus was reported from northern Kannur district, the Kerala health department issued a directive on Monday urging people to remain vigilant against the mosquito-borne disease. The department said that symptoms such as fever, headache, body pain, joint pain, and red eyes should be taken seriously. It urged the public to promptly inform healthcare workers if they notice these symptoms. The first infection was reported in the Thalassery area of Kannur district on October 30, and after that, a medical camp was organised in the area on November 1 during which 24 samples were collected and sent for testing. "If Zika virus symptoms are observed in patients, healthcare providers must give them special attention," the statement said. The statement was issued after a high-level meeting chaired by Health Minister Veena George held here reviewed the Zika virus cases in Thalassery. Currently,

eight Zika virus cases have been confirmed there. The department said if pregnant women are affected by the virus, there is a possibility of a birth defect, such as microcephaly, in the unborn baby. Therefore, pregnant women in areas with reported cases of the disease should receive special monitoring, it said. Microcephaly is a condition where a baby is born with a small head or the head stops growing after birth. The department directed doctors to conduct separate examinations for pregnant women affected by fever. It said the Zika virus is primarily transmitted by the Aedes mosquito, but it can also be transmitted through blood donation and sexual contact. The department called for an intensification of activities to prevent mosquito breeding and fogging to destroy them. It also directed schools, households, and institutions in Kannur district to observe "dry days" on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday to prevent mosquito breeding.

Ajit camp wins in Pune

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a victory of sorts to him over his uncle Sharad Pawar in their home district of Pune, the breakaway faction led by NCP Maharashtra's deputy Chief Minister on Monday walked away with 109 Gram Panchayat (GP) seats out of a total 231 seats followed among others by Sr Pawar-led NCO (27) and Congress (25). With 109 seats out of total 231 Gram Panchayat seats in Pune district, the Ajit Pawar-led NCP has established its hold in Pune seats. The rival Sharad Pawar-led NCP came a distant second with 27, followed by the Congress (25), Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (13), Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena (10) and others (11). Two GP seats in Pune district are yet to be filled. In the politically important Katewadi Gram Panchayat in Baramati taluka of Pune district, the Ajit Pawar-led ruling NCP won 14 out of total 16 seats, while its alliance partner BJP secured two remaining seats. Katewadi forms a part of the Baramati Lok Sabha constituency represented by the Sharad Pawar family over five

decades now. While Ajit Pawar is a one-term Lok Sabha MP from Baramati and for Baramati MLA for seven times, Supriya Supe is a three-term MP from Baramati. After the vertical split witnessed in the Sharad Pawar-led NCP in July this year, this was the first local body elections in which the people have favoured others by Sr Pawar-led NCO (27) and Congress (25). In all, 2,359 GPs were to polls on Sunday. The counting of votes was taken up on Monday. Since full formal results had not been declared till late on Monday evening, all political parties were making somewhat exaggerated claims as to the number of seats won by the respective parties. The ruling alliance claimed that of the total 2,359 GPs, the BJP had won 750 GPs, followed by Ajit Pawar-led NCP (350 GPs) and the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena (240). However, of the total GPs, the Congress disputed the claims made by the ruling alliance and said that it was leading in the state by winning 721 gram panchayats, while the Opposition emerged victorious in a total of 1312 gram panchayats

On its part, the ruling BJP — in a statement issued in the evening — claimed that it had won more than 750 seats, while the BJP-Ajit Pawar-led NCP-Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena had collectively captured more than 1,400 GPs. In a statement issued in the evening, Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole said: "the counting of votes for 2320 gram panchayats in the state took place today. The Congress party has emerged victorious on its own in 589 gram panchayats so far, while in 132 gram panchayats the Congress party has secured victory with the support of local alliances, making a total of 721 gram panchayats in which the Congress has won. "The MVA has won a total of 1312 gram panchayats in the state. The claims made by the BJP are completely false and ridiculous, and if they have the courage then they should hold local body elections in the state," Patole said. "In reality, these gram panchayat elections are not contested on party symbols and the figures that the BJP is giving are misleading. "They should publicly declare a list of gram panchayats and then it will be clear who did the

public support. Similar false claims were made by the BJP in the last year's market committee elections in which Congress had in reality emerged victorious," Patole said. **BRS captures power in ten Gram Panchayats** **PNS ■ MUMBAI** In its effort to gain electoral inroads outside Telangana ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the K Chandrashekar-led Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) on Monday captured power in ten Gram Panchayats in two districts of Maharashtra in the GP polls held on Sunday. Latest reports said while the BRS has won 9 GPs in Bhandara district in Vidarbha region, it has secured power in one GP in neighbouring Beed district in Marathwada region. BRS' national special media in-charge Jayant Deshmukh claimed that its sarpanchs had won in 18 places. "The BRS is gaining momentum in Maharashtra," Deshmukh said on micro-blogging site "X".

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School student bitten inside classroom by stray dog in Kerala



PTI ■ PALAKKAD (KERALA)

A sixth standard student was bitten by a stray dog inside her classroom in a school at Mannarkkad in this north Kerala district on Monday. The girl's father told a TV channel that he had dropped his daughter off at school in the morning. Subsequently, when her first

class of the day began, the stray dog ran into the room and bit her. The incident occurred around 10.30 am, he said. For the last two weeks, there has been a stray dog nuisance in the area and in the past two days, rumours of a rabid dog had created a panic there, he claimed. "That is why I dropped her off by car. My house is nearby and my daughter usually walks to school. Thanks to the intervention of the teacher, serious injuries were avoided," he said. While he claimed that the dog had bitten others in the area, police said there were no reports of the same. Police also said the dog in question has not yet been caught.

BJP ropes in women leaders from across States to campaign in Rajasthan

PTI ■ UDAIPUR

While the Congress in Rajasthan is banking on its women-centric welfare schemes and "guarantees" to woo voters, the BJP is mobilising women leaders from other States to counter the ruling party. Apart from the BJP state Mahila Morcha, women leaders from Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Delhi and Jammu Kashmir are campaigning in various constituencies of the poll-bound state to publicise the Modi government's schemes and programmes and reaching out to the general public, especially women. Assembly elections in the state will be held on November 25 and counting will be done on December 3. BJP Mahila Morcha national general secretary Deepti Rawat Bharadwaj, who is in charge of the party's women's unit in Rajasthan during elections, said that a strategy has been made to ensure that women votes go to BJP. Women constitute about 50 per cent of the total voters in Rajasthan, so the Gehlot-led Congress government in the state launched several schemes for them. The focus of the state government has been to reach out to the women through the Indira



Gandhi Smartphone Yojna, Annapurna Food Packet Scheme, half fare in state roadways buses, gas cylinders for ₹500 for Ujjwala scheme beneficiaries and free sanitary napkin scheme among others. "The Mahila Morcha here is active but there is a lot of pressure in the elections, hence experienced women have come from other states too. They are moving to different assembly constituencies. Teams have been formed for the home-to-home campaign," Bharadwaj told PTI in Udaipur. According to the strategy, two teams will work in each mandal (circle), one in the morning and the other in the evening, she said. The sitting MLAs, former MLAs, senior office bearers, deputy mayor or mayor are among the women leaders who have been roped in for Rajasthan elections, she said.

'Indian per capita income has soared'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Painting a brighter picture of long-term progress but also persistent disparity and widespread disruption and foresting a turbulent development landscape, a new UNDP report has said in India, between 2000 and 2022, per capita income soared from \$442 to \$2,389. At the same time, it noted, between 2004 and 2019, poverty rates (based on the international poverty measure of \$ 2.15 per day) plummeted from 40 to 10 per cent. Titled 'Making our Future: New Directions for Human Development in Asia and the Pacific', the new report argues that unmet aspirations, heightened human insecurity, and a potentially more turbulent future create an urgent need for change. On a brighter side, the report pointed out that India is contributing significantly to the growth in the global middle class-encompassing those living between \$ 12 and \$120 a day. India is expected to contribute 24 per cent to the global middle-class growth (192 million people), it said. Moreover, between 2015-16 and 2019-21, the share of the population living in multidimensional poverty fell from 25 to 15 per cent. Despite these successes, poverty remains persistently concentrated in states that are home to 45 per cent of the country's population but contain 62 per cent of its poor, the report pointed out. "In addition, many other people are very vulnerable, hovering just above the poverty line. The groups at greater risk of falling back into poverty include women, informal workers, and inter-state migrants," the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said in its report.

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GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER
BALANGIR IRRIGATION CIRCLE, BALANGIR
E-mail: sebalangir@gmail.com
"e-Procurement Notice"
BID Identification No: ACE, BOIC- 07/2023-24
1. Name/ Nature of Work : Construction of inspection road over right bank of Patnamunda Minor from RD 00 m to 8000 m under Ong Irrigation Project in the district Balangir.
2. No of Works : 01 No
3. Estimated Cost : Rs. 202.07 Lakhs (excluding GST)
4. Bid document Cost : Rs.10,000.00
5. EMD : Rs. 2.02,100/-
6. Class of Contractor : 'A' & 'B' Class Only (Oshwa PWD or relevant class of other licensing Authority.)
7. Period of Completion : 12 (Twelve) Calendar month
8. Other details are as follows.
Procurement Details
Procurement Order No. : 07/2023-24
Bid Identification No. : ACE, BOIC- 07/2023-24
Availability of tender on line for bidding : From 01.10.2023 To 01.11.2023
Date of Sealing Tender : On 10.11.2023
Date & Time of opening of tender : On 11.11.2023 at 11.00 Hours
Technical Bid : To be submitted in sealed envelope
Financial Bid : To be submitted in sealed envelope
Place of opening : Office of Add. Chief Engineer, Balangir Irrigation Circle, Balangir
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in"
OIPR-32347/11/0008/2324
Additional Chief Engineer
Balangir Irrigation Circle, Balangir

Fresh tension grips Imphal following disappearance of two teenagers

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Fresh tension gripped the state capital and its adjoining areas on Monday after two teenagers boys went missing from Imphal West district in Manipur. The two, identified as 16-year-old Maibam Avinash and 19-year-old Ningthoujam Anthony, had gone towards Skemai area in Imphal West district on a two-wheeler on Sunday morning to attend a function before they went missing, locals said. Locals suspect that the duo, whose hometown is in Lamshang, was abducted by unidentified men. Lamshang police has registered a missing case and started an investigation. Police have recovered the

phones of the teens wrapped in a black polythene packet near an oil pump in Senapati district which comes after crossing Kangpokpi district. Demanding swift police action to rescue the teens, higher secondary students of three prominent schools in Imphal town took out a rally and protested at Keisampat junction in the heart of the capital. Th Lamngamba, a protester told reporters, "This incident is hard to accept for the student community. We already have the infamous case of disappearance of two youths." At Lamshang, locals in large numbers came out on the streets and burnt tyres and put boulders in the middle of the streets as a mark of protest.

Maharashtra Govt advisory as AQI turns severe

PTI ■ MUMBAI

In view of the worsening air quality in several cities, the Maharashtra health department on Monday issued an advisory asking people to avoid outdoor morning and late evening walks, running, jogging and physical exercise when the AQI turns "poor to severe." It said sentinel surveillance of acute illnesses have been attributed to air pollution in 17 cities across the state. Children below the age of five, old persons, pregnant women and those with pre-existing respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses are at high risk, the state health department said. Patients with underlying medical conditions such as chronic pulmonary or cardiovascular problems should be more careful.

Cop probing Elvish role in snake venom case transferred to police lines

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

A sub-inspector who was investigating the snake venom case in which YouTuber Elvish Yadav is an accused has been shunted and the matter transferred to another Noida police station, officials said. The investigating officer, SI Sandeep Chaudhary, was the in-charge of Noida's Sector 49 police station and has been transferred to police lines. "The station in-charge Sector-49, Noida, has been transferred to the Reserve Police Line due to his inability to effectively control crime within the police station area," a police spokesperson said on Sunday night. A senior officer on Monday questioning anonymity said the case has been handed over to Sector 20 police station for further investigation.

"The forensic test result of vial containing the 20 ml suspected snake venom is yet to come out. "Further probe would be done accordingly. Elvish Yadav is yet to be called for inquiry in the case," the officer said. Noida Police has lodged an FIR against six named persons, including Yadav, a social media influencer and winner of reality OTT show "Bigg Boss", for alleged use of snake venom at rave parties under provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act and the Indian Penal Code on November 3. Five accused were arrested on November 3, while nine snakes, including five cobras, were rescued from a banquet hall, and 20 ml of suspected snake venom seized from their possession, according to police.

GRAP IV exemptions removed, all constructions banned

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As pollution levels in Delhi-NCR on Monday morning were recorded around eight to 10 times above the Government-prescribed safe limit, the Delhi Government on Monday banned construction of public projects and works involving public utilities such as roads, flyovers, over-bridges, power transmission, and pipeline installations that were previously exempted under GRAP-IV. "Furthermore, within Delhi, there is no exemption for any kind of construction or demolition activity. The Chief Minister has directed a ban on all such activities within Delhi," said Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai while addressing a press conference. Delhi's air quality ranks among the worst in the world's capital cities. The national capital is the top in the list of most polluted cities of the world for the third

consecutive day. To protect the health of schoolchildren, the government also decided to suspend in-person classes in all schools, except for students in grades X and XII preparing for board exams, until November 10.

According to the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR)-India, the current air quality index has now touched the last stage of the index to 'severe plus' with an AQI exceeding the 500 mark. The air quality early warning system, predominant winds were coming from northwest direction with a speed four to six kilometre per hour for few hours during daytime but calm winds prevailed rest of the day. The air quality is likely to be in the severe category from Tuesday to Thursday.

Earlier on Monday, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal held a meeting with senior officials of his government to

review the implementation of an action plan to control air pollution in winter.

The city's 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI), recorded at 4 pm daily, stood at 421 on Monday, a marginal improvement from 454 on Sunday, even as a toxic haze persisted over the city for the seventh consecutive day. Anand Vihar recorded AQI at 615 in the noon. Dwarka recorded 516, PGDAV college 475; RK Puram 412.

The Delhi Fire Services (DFS) has started sprinkling water at 13 hotspots to curb rising air pollution in the city. The identified pollution hotspots are Narela, Bawana, Mundka, Wazirpur, Rohini, RK Puram, Okhla, Jahangirpuri, Anand Vihar, Punjabi Bagh, Mayapuri and Dwarka, DFS Director Atul Garg said. These hotspots were identified based on the annual average concentrations of PM10 and PM2.5 in these areas, Garg said.



Several cities in neighbouring Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh have also reported hazardous air quality. Neighbouring Ghaziabad (391), Gurugram (713), Noida (384), Greater Noida (420), and Faridabad (412) also reported hazardous air quality. According to the Ministry of Earth Sciences' Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi-NCR, the region is likely to experience severe air quality for another five to six

days. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), conditions favourable for dispersion of pollutants are likely to develop Tuesday night onwards under the influence of an upcoming western disturbance, weather systems that originate in the Mediterranean region and bring unseasonal rainfall to northwest India. Sharing a data about the actions taken by the government, Delhi environment minister Gopal Rai said the Transport

Department and Traffic Police have conducted campaigns to check Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates. A fine of Rs 10,000 is imposed for violating PUC norms, and 28,471 fines have been issued to vehicles during the periods of Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) levels I, II, and III. This has helped in controlling vehicles that contribute to pollution in Delhi. Moreover, an Anti-Dust campaign was conducted in Delhi, where 12,769 construction sites were inspected. Violations of norms were found at 324 locations, resulting in fines of around Rs 74 lakhs. Complaints related to the increase in pollution have been received through the Green Delhi app. From October 3 until now, 1,646 complaints have been registered, and 1,581 of these complaints have been resolved with the cooperation of various departments.

Rai added that additionally, 233 Smog Towers have been

installed at various projects, and 106 Anti-Smog Guns have been installed on government buildings to control pollution. Mobile Anti-Smog Guns have been spraying water on the roads at 192 locations. "Various teams have been deployed for different tasks, such as addressing open burning, checking vehicle emissions, and enforcing restrictions on fireworks. In total, 611 teams are working in the field to address open burning, 385 teams are checking vehicle emissions, and 210 police teams have been formed to control the use of firecrackers. Furthermore, 82 MRTs (Multi-Tasking Resource Vehicles) are cleaning the roads through water sprinkling and cleaning. An additional 345 water sprinklers from various departments are working on the roads to mitigate pollution in different areas. The concerted efforts include the installation of 233 Smog

Guns at different project sites and 192 Mobile Anti-Smog Guns spraying water on the roads. Additionally, 106 Anti-Smog Guns have been installed in various government buildings to combat pollution," he said.

On Sunday, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) decided to invoke Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in the entire NCR with immediate effect - in addition to all actions under Stages I, II, and III.

GRAP is a set of emergency action plans implemented in four stages depending on the severity of the air pollution - which is determined by the air quality index (AQI). Under Stage IV of GRAP, only CNG, electric, and BS VI-compliant vehicles from other states are allowed to enter Delhi. Exemptions are granted only to those involved in essential services.

AAP, BJP trade charges over farm fires as city woes worsen

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As the air quality has now reached the highest level of the index to 'hazardous' or 'severe plus', leaving citizens vulnerable to serious health conditions, the AAP and the BJP has engaged in a blame game with the former accusing the BJP ruled States- Uttar Pradesh and Haryana for not taking steps to address the issue. The BJP has also slammed the Kejriwal Government for blaming Haryana for Delhi's 'severe' pollution and said Delhi has become gas chamber due to the policies of the AAP Government led by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. Addressing a press conference, AAP national spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar called for an analysis of the anti-pollution measures taken by the Manohar Lal Khattar-led government since 2014. "The stubble burning in Punjab is

about 500 km away from here and the stubble burning in Haryana is 100 km away. An analysis should be done on anti-pollution measures taken by the Khattar government in Haryana since 2014," Kakkar said.

The AAP spokesperson said the smoke from stubble burning in Sonapat, Panipat, and Rohtak is reaching Delhi. To reduce incidents of stubble burning, the central government provides funds to Haryana, but despite that, the Khattar government has not taken substantial measures. In contrast, Punjab, which doesn't receive funds from the central government, has seen a significant decrease in stubble burning by 50-67% in the past year. It's worth noting that buses running on banned fuels from Haryana are still entering Delhi. Kakkar mentioned, "Delhi has one of the highest Green Cover in the entire country. Delhi has a



23.6% green cover, and the goal is to increase it to 27% by 2025. In contrast, Haryana has seen the cutting of numerous trees, and there is only 3.6% green cover, which is one of the lowest in the country." Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai said the BJP is scapegoating Punjab for air pollution in the national capital, while their own governments have failed to ban diesel buses in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. However, he criticised the BJP for placing blame



on Punjab for Delhi's pollution, pointing out that their governments in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana have been unable to ban diesel buses over the last decade. Hitting back, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva claimed there were over 3,000 stubble burning incidents in AAP-ruled Punjab on Sunday while Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was busy with "political tourism" in poll-bound states. "Kejriwal has turned Delhi into the city of

smoke. There were 3,230 incidents of parali burning in Punjab on Sunday alone but Kejriwal has kept mum over it because his party rules in the state," Sachdeva charged.

People are choking due to air pollution in Delhi but Kejriwal's priority is "political tourism", he said and added that immediate steps were needed to combat the crisis. Sachdeva further alleged that damaged roads, dust and farm fires in Punjab were the major factors behind the high level of air pollution in the city.

Responding to the allegations, BJP leader Shehzad Poonawalla claimed 3,000 stubble burning incidents were detected in Punjab on Sunday. "Delhi has become a gas chamber because chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and AAP have polluted politics...Before coming to rule in Punjab, Delhi's CM used to say that there was pollution because of stubble burning in Punjab.

He said that after AAP comes to Punjab, the stubble issue will end...Yesterday, more than 3000 incidents of stubble burning came to the fore in Punjab...What happened to the bio decomposer and the machines supposed to be given to farmers a month ago," he said.

Delhi BJP leader Harish Khurana said, "Stubble burning in Punjab is one of the biggest reasons for Delhi's pollution".

Pollution levels in Delhi-NCR on Monday morning were recorded around seven to eight times above the government-prescribed safe limit, as a toxic haze persisted over the region for the seventh consecutive day.

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) on Sunday invoked stage IV of the graded action response plan (GRAP), paving the way for additional anti-pollution curbs.

2,200 vehicles issued challans in Delhi for violating GRAP IV norms

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has issued challans to more than 2,200 vehicles in the national capital on Sunday in view of the increasing pollution and deteriorating air quality level. Plying old diesel/petrol vehicles and trucks, carrying non-essential material, in the national capital attracts a challan of Rs 20,000 under the Motor Vehicle Act.

A senior police officer said Delhi has 20 major borders, including Rajokari, Kapashera, Badarpur, Kalindi Kunj, Tikri, Auchandi, Bhopura, Apsara, Chilla, Singhu.

"We have 20 major borders in the national capital where we have deployed our staff. We are implementing the directions under GRAP IV and the non-destined vehicles are being sent back. However, vehicles carrying essential commodities are being allowed.

"There are 13 pollution hot spots in the city where we have deployed the staff. The joint drive is being carried out with the MCD against the encroachment and unauthorised parking. We have deployed our staff during peak hours at the

traffic congestion areas to ensure that the movement of traffic would not be affected," the officer said.

According to the data shared by Delhi Traffic Police, they have stopped 6,757 vehicles in the national capital on Sunday and challaned 2,216 vehicles - 1,024 for not having Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates, 217 challans were issued to BS-III and 975 to BS-IV vehicles.

Under Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), only CNG, electric and BS VI-compliant vehicles from other states are allowed to enter Delhi. Exemptions are granted only to those involved in essential services. All medium and heavy goods vehicles not engaged in essential services are also banned in the capital, according to the latest order of the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM).

The Delhi Traffic Police has been making efforts to mitigate air pollution stemming from vehicular emissions by focusing on regulation, intensive quality prosecution, special drives, integrated night checking and engineering intervention.

Kejriwal will run Government from jail if arrested: AAP



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will run the Delhi Government from jail if he is arrested in the coming days, referring to the summons sent to him by the Enforcement Directorate in the Delhi liquor policy case. At the meeting, AAP MLAs said it will seek the court's permission to have Kejriwal working from jail in case he is arrested by the Enforcement Directorate. Kejriwal has called a meeting with his party MLAs on Monday amid a furore over recent actions by central probe agencies against ministers and leaders of the party. After the meeting, Delhi PWD minister Atishi said all legislators told the Chief Minister not to resign from his post despite the ED summons. Atishi said that if Kejriwal is arrested, they will approach court to seek permission for him to carry out official work from jail. "The people of Delhi are watching how a person, who has been working for them day and night, is facing extremism. All the AAP MLAs have conveyed him that whether he (Arvind Kejriwal) is sent to jail, he must not resign," Atishi said. Delhi minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said all the MLAs present in the meeting told Kejriwal that "if he is arrested,

he will continue to be chief minister since he has been given the mandate by the people of Delhi to run the government." "All of them had a unanimous view that the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi are scared of Arvind Kejriwal. The BJP knows that it cannot oust Kejriwal from power through elections and it can only be done by hatching a conspiracy," Bharadwaj said.

"The way the atmosphere is, very soon we all will be going to jail, the kind of preparations PM Modi is doing, rest of the cabinet colleagues along with CM will be going to jail. Maybe Atishi will be in jail number 1, I will be in jail 2 and someone else will be in jail 3 so we will get together for cabinet meetings. We will hold meetings and decisions will be taken and those MLAs who will be outside jail, they will implement them," Bharadwaj added. Bharadwaj said officers will go to jail for meetings and "if we are called, we will be happy to go". Last week, AAP national convener Kejriwal was summoned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with its probe in the excise policy-linked money laundering case. However, the AAP convener skipped the summons by the financial watchdog, saying that they were "illegal and politically motivated". He had further alleged that the summons were sent at the request of the BJP.

Clean Central Delhi streets, pavements: LG

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Monday directed officials to immediately clean pavements and streets in Central Delhi after he found them covered with thick layers of dust and loose silt during an inspection. According to Raj Niwas officials, Saxena also inspected the ongoing works of dust mitigation by mechanical road sweepers, who he found to be causing more pollution by blowing the dust during cleaning which was not being taken care of by a following water sprinkler as the case should have been.

Travelling, mostly on foot from



the stretch behind Red Fort, Rajghat, ITO, Pragati Power Plant, IP Estate and Millennium Park near Sarai Kale Khan on the Ring Road, Saxena inspected the pavements, footpaths, central verges and the yards of the Power Plant and Millennium Bus Depot, they said. "It was

found that the pavements and footpaths were covered with thick layers of dust and loose silt at several places which were flying off with passing vehicles, causing even more pollution. Taking a strict note of this, LG directed the officials to immediately clear the pavements and

streets," the official said. He also took stock of the Mobile Anti-Smog Guns.

The LG instructed accompanying officials of PWD, MCD, DDA, etc. To immediately ensure the covering of the footpaths and remedial measures to keep the yards of the Power Plant and the Bus Depot dust-free.

Saxena also directed the Transport Department and Delhi Police to strictly ensure that vehicles prohibited under GRAP-IV are not allowed on the roads. At the same time, strict enforcement was told to be maintained at border points to check the entry of polluting vehicles entering Delhi from other states, the official said.

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
Government of India

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Panel adopts report on criminal laws

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The parliamentary committee examining three bills, which seek to replace as many "colonial" era laws, on Monday adopted its draft report offering a slew of amendments but sticking to their Hindi names, with nearly 10 Opposition members likely to submit dissent notes. Sources said former Home Minister Congress leader P Chidambaram spoke at length in the meeting offering a host of suggestions, including that the committee should define community service and what all it envisages, and wanted three instead of two days for members to file dissent notes, sources said, adding that the panel has stuck to the deadline of 48 hours. While some opposition members such as Adhir Ranjan Chowdhary have already submitted their dissent notes, a few others are likely to sub-



mit in the next two days. The committee has stuck to the Hindi names given to the bills and ignored suggestions from some opposition members, including Dayanidhi Maran, that they should have English versions too. Home Minister Amit Shah had introduced Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya

Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam bills in Lok Sabha August 11 during the Winter session. They are meant to replace the Indian Penal Code, The Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act and were sent to the committee for scrutiny with a three-month deadline.

Shad had described the current set of laws guiding the criminal jurisprudence as a colonial legacy, a reference to their British Raj provenance, and asserted that they focussed on punishment while the proposed laws give primacy to justice. The 30-member committee is headed by BJP MP Brij Lal.

The committee has recommended taking a more stringent view of deaths caused by negligence amid criticism that the current statute is too lenient, the sources said. The committee has also proposed a reduction in sentence for those convicted of deterring public servant from discharging their duties. The sources said the Section 353 of the Indian Penal Code provides for a maximum of two years of prison term and the committee may seek to slash it to one year. The law is often used against those staging protests and many members of the committee are of the view that common protesters should be dealt with leniently. It has been reported that the committee has backed a gender-neutral adultery law and punitive measures for non-consensual sex between men, women and transgender people among other recommendations.

Congress expresses surprise over delay in banning Mahadev app

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The Congress on Monday accused the Centre of delaying the imposition of a ban on the Mahadev app, at the centre of a political row in poll-bound Chhattisgarh, despite Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel seeking action against the betting platform months ago. The party said the Government acted against Baghel instead of delaying the imposition of a ban on the app, and added the people will give a befitting reply to the BJP in the Assembly polls for its actions. The Centre has issued blocking orders against 22 illegal betting platforms, including Mahadev app and Reddyanaprestopro, on the Enforcement Directorate's request, an official statement said on Sunday. Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar

alleged the Chhattisgarh government did not send any request to block these platforms despite having powers to do so. In a social media post, Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said the ED has been investigating the Mahadev app case for several months but it was "surprising" that it took so much time to ban it. "The demand to ban Mahadev App was also first raised by Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on August 24, 2023. Instead of praising him, the Prime Minister deployed ED against

him," Ramesh alleged. The Union minister is "clearly lying" about the fact that Chhattisgarh government had not demanded a ban on the Mahadev app, the Congress alleged. In the press conference held at the Congress headquarters on August 24, 2023, Baghel had called for arresting the accused and raised the issue of giving legal status to online betting by the central government by imposing 28 per cent tax, Ramesh pointed out and shared a video of the presser. "The chief minister has been continuously asking questions for several months as to why the central government is not banning this betting app. He (Baghel) had said that perhaps the ban is not being imposed due to the greed of 28 per cent GST or did the BJP have any dealings with the app operators?" Ramesh stated in his post.

LS ethics committee meeting in Mahua case postponed to Nov 9

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha Ethics Committee meeting to consider and adopt its draft report on the cash-for-query allegations against TMC MP Mahua Moitra has been postponed to November 9 from November 7, according to a notice from the Lok Sabha secretariat. No reason has been officially cited for rescheduling the meeting. The convening of the meeting for adopting the draft report means that the committee headed by BJP MP Vinod Kumar Sonkar has finished its enquiry and will now be making its recommendation after its members ranged along party lines in their last deliberations on November 2. The BJP members are in a majority in the 15-member committee which is likely to take a grim view of the charges against Moitra, more so after she accused Sonkar of asking filthy and personal questions to her in the last meeting before walking out in a rage along with opposition members.



There are indications the committee may make a recommendation against her in its report to Speaker Om Birla amid a possibility of dissent notes from opposition members. All five opposition members had stormed out of the November 2 meeting, alleging that Sonkar asked personal and indecent questions to her regarding her travels, hotel stay and telephone calls. She later alleged that she was subjected to a "proverbial vastraharan" in the meeting. The committee chairperson dismissed opposition members' claims as a case of unethical conduct aimed at shielding her. The decision of Moitra, who appeared before the panel

as a subject of enquiry and thus lacked the privileges bestowed on its members, to walk out of the meeting is likely to be taken up critically by the committee in its report. BJP MP Nishikant Dubey has accused Moitra of asking questions in the Lok Sabha to target the Adani Group at the behest of businessman Darshan Hiranandani in exchange for bribes. He said it was Hiranandani who used her login to file questions from different places, mostly Dubai. Moitra has admitted that he used her login details but has rejected any pecuniary considerations, asserting that most MPs share their login credentials with others.

Centre effects senior level bureaucratic reshuffle

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Senior bureaucrat Hitesh Kumar S Makwana has been appointed as Surveyor General of India as part of a senior-level bureaucratic reshuffle effected by the Centre on Monday. Makwana, a 1995-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre, is currently an Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs. He has been appointed as the Surveyor General of India, Survey of India, Department of Science and Technology in the rank and pay of Additional Secretary by keeping the recruitment rules for the post in abeyance, an order issued by the Personnel Ministry said. Abhishek Singh, Chief Executive Officer of National e-Governance Division, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, has now been appointed as Additional Secretary in the ministry. The officer will continue to hold the additional charge of the post of Chief Executive Officer, Karmayogi Bharat, it said. Niraj Verma, a 1994-batch IAS officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre, will be Administrator,

Universal Service Obligation Fund in the Department of Telecommunications, the order said. Ritvik Ranjanam Pandey, a 1998-batch IAS officer of Karnataka cadre, has been appointed as Officer on Special Duty for Advance Cell of 16th Finance Commission, Department of Economic Affairs, it said. While senior IAS officer Anurag Agarwal has been appointed as Additional Secretary and Financial Advisor in the Ministry of Atomic Energy. Srikant Nagulapalli has been appointed as Additional Secretary in the Power Ministry, Rahul Sharma will be Additional Secretary, the Cabinet Secretariat and Manmeet Kaur Nanda has been named as Joint Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat, the order said. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has also approved the in-situ upgradation of four officers. Accordingly, Aneeta C

Family Welfare, Sudeep Jain named Additional Secretary in the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and Amit Kumar Ghosh will be Additional Secretary, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment. Shakil P Ahamed has been appointed as Additional Secretary and Financial Advisor in the Ministry of Textiles, Gitanjali Gupta will be the Additional Secretary, NITI Aayog, Caralyn Khongwar Deshmukh has been named as Additional Secretary in the Department of Rural Development and Rajeev Kumar Mital will be Additional Secretary and Financial Advisor in the Department of Atomic Energy. Srikant Nagulapalli has been appointed as Additional Secretary in the Power Ministry, Rahul Sharma will be Additional Secretary, the Cabinet Secretariat and Manmeet Kaur Nanda has been named as Joint Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat, the order said. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has also approved the in-situ upgradation of four officers. Accordingly, Aneeta C

Meshram will be the Additional Secretary, Department of Fertilizers, Pankaj Kumar Bansal has been appointed as Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Cooperation, Vishal Chauhan will be Member (Admin) in the

National Highways Authority of India in the rank and pay of Additional Secretary and Akash Tripathi has been named as CEO, MyGov, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in the rank and pay of Additional Secretary.

Ex-IAS officer sworn in as Chief Information Commissioner

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Former IAS officer Heeralal Samariya was on Monday sworn in as the Chief Information Commissioner by President Droupadi Murmu. The post was lying vacant following the completion of Y K Sinha's tenure on October 3. Samariya, the first Dalit to have been appointed to the post, was working as information commissioner in the transparency panel Central Information Commission (CIC). A 1985-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of Telangana cadre, Samariya retired after serving as the Labour and Employment Secretary in the government of India. He was sworn in as the Information Commissioner on November 7, 2020. The swearing-in ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan was attended by Vice President Jagdeep Dhanwar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh among others. The Supreme Court had on October 30 asked the Centre and the state governments to take steps to fill the post, saying otherwise the 2005 law on the Right to Information would become a "dead letter".

UN member nations agree to prepare blueprint for loss and damage fund: UAE

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Following intense deliberations at a recently concluded transitional committee of the UN climate meet in Dubai, the host United Arab Emirates said that the member nations have agreed to prepare a blueprint for a new "Loss and Damage" fund aimed to repair the damage suffered by the most vulnerable nations. It might be presented for adoption at the COP28 in Dubai this month-end. However, climate and com-

munity activists are doubtful. They claimed that the fund is not likely to see the light of the day anytime soon as rich countries are not keen to fund the fund aimed to help the most vulnerable sectors with the US saying "it is not a consensus document" because they were not in the room when it was adopted. The transitional panel is charged with designing the fund. Loss and damage, which means the rescue and rehabilitation of communities stricken by climate disaster, has been one of the most contentious issues at

global climate talks for more than a decade. Poorer countries, with less carbon footprints, have done the least to cause the climate crisis but are bearing the brunt of its impacts. "I welcome the agreement reached in Abu Dhabi by the Transitional Committee," Sultan Al Jaber, COP28 President-Designate, told a news agency. He said that this is clear and strong recommendation to operationalise the Loss and Damage Fund and funding arrangements, paves the way for agreement at COP28. "Billions of people, lives and livelihoods who are vulnerable to the effects of climate change depend upon the adoption of



this recommended approach at COP28." The Transitional Committee on the operationalisation of

the funding arrangements and new fund for responding to loss and damage resulting from climate change held its

earlier meetings too that resulted in significant progress towards fulfilling the mandate given to the committee at COP27 in Egypt last year. During the Transitional Committee 5 (TC5) meeting, young people from the Loss and Damage Youth Coalition had called on wealthy countries to stop hindering the swift setup of the Loss and Damage Fund and its funding plans. "The Transitional Committee must prioritise principles of justice, equity, common but differentiated responsibility, and common interest in discussions on loss and damage," they said. Responding to the outcome of the TC5 meeting, Harjeet

Singh, head of global political strategy at Climate Action Network International, told the agency: "It is a sombre day for climate justice, as rich countries turn their backs on vulnerable communities, allowing those who have contributed the least to the climate crisis to suffer its most severe consequences. The reluctance of wealthy nations to fulfill their financial responsibilities, in spite of historical obligations, has starkly revealed their true intentions and their indifference to the plight of the developing world. The current set of recommendations to operationalise the Loss and Damage Fund falls short of providing vul-

nerable communities with adequate assurance that their financial needs for coping with climate impacts and rebuilding their lives will be met." The activists have been demanding that the Loss and Damage Fund must be established as a new and independent entity under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). At COP21 in 2015, the world agreed to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels by 2050. To remain on target, science tells us that emissions must be halved by 2030. Now the globe has another seven years to meet that goal.

DEBT RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, DELHI
4th FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING,
PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001

SALE NOTICE

The under mentioned Assets will be sold through auction on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" for recovery of dues as per court orders, in the following cases:-

CASE DETAILS	Asset Details	Reserve Price	EMD AMOUNT
ICICI BANK LTD V/S BANSIWALA ROADLINES, TA/ 2504/ 2022	Vehicle No. RJ52GA4260 Make & Model - MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA LTD BLAZO-49, Manu Year-2018	Rs. 4,00,000/-	Rs. 40,000/-
	Vehicle No. RJ52GA4261 Make & Model - MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA LTD BLAZO-49, Manu Year-2018	Rs. 4,00,000/-	Rs. 40,000/-
	Vehicle No. RJ52GA4262 Make & Model - MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA LTD BLAZO-49, Manu Year-2018	Rs. 4,00,000/-	Rs. 40,000/-
	Vehicle No. RJ52GA4263 Make & Model - MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA LTD BLAZO-49, Manu Year-2018	Rs. 4,00,000/-	Rs. 40,000/-

Auction Date: November 16, 2023 From 11:00 am to 2:00 pm.
Auction Type: Online Auction
Auction Portal Name & URL Link: Car Trade & https://www.cartradeexchange.com
Contact Person - Swapnil Upadhyay (8126013708) / Rajeev Ranjan (8584874809)

Note: EMD is to be made in favour of ICICI BANK LIMITED payable at Delhi and Bidder has to deposit original EMD with KYC before 5 pm on dated November 15, 2023

Terms of Sale

The particulars of the said asset specified herein above have been stated to the best of the information and knowledge of the undersigned, who shall however not be responsible for any error, misstatement or omission in the said particulars. The interested participant/s are therefore requested, in their own interest, to satisfy himself/ themselves/ itself with regard to the said asset and other relevant details pertaining to it before submitting the bids.

Successfully bidder shall have to deposit balance sale amount within 5 days from the auction date by the way of pay order/demand draft/RTGS/NEFT. In case if you fail to make the remaining sale amount within 5 days, your EMD amount will be forfeited.

The intending bidders may visit at ICICI Bank Ltd, SHAL TOWERS, Plot No 23, New Rohatk Road, Karol Bagh Delhi- 110005 for details and inspection of the said hypothecated vehicles.

PUBLIC NOTICE

ICICI Bank

Regd. Office: ICICI Bank Limited, Landmark, Race Course Circle, Vadodara- 390007
Corporate Office: ICICI Bank Towers, Bandra- Kurla Complex, Bandra (E), Mumbai- 400051

Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd Block C-1, 19th Floor World Trade Tower, Sector-16, Uttar Pradesh- 201301

A notice is hereby given that the following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non Performing Assets (NPA). The notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses as provided to the bank by them, that in addition thereto for the purposes of information of the said borrowers enumerated below, the said borrowers are being informed by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Description of Secured Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	LVDEL00042722481/ Greenboxlogisticsllp/ Qube Services Pvt Ltd/ Ground Floor 109A/ Pocket-12 Jasola/ New Delhi/ Delhi- 110025	LPT 1112/ CHASSIS BS6/ LPT 1112/ KA53AA2746	09-Aug-23 Rs. 11,53,686/-	17-Apr-2023
2.	LVDEL00042722520/ Greenboxlogisticsllp/ Qube Services Pvt Ltd/ Ground Floor 109A/ Pocket-12 Jasola/ New Delhi/ Delhi- 110025	LPT 1112/ CHASSIS BS6/ LPT 1112/ KA53AA2747	09-Aug-23 Rs. 11,53,812/-	17-Apr-2023
3.	LVDEL00042722599/ Greenboxlogisticsllp/ Qube Services Pvt Ltd/ Ground Floor 109A/ Pocket-12 Jasola/ New Delhi/ Delhi- 110025	ULTRA 1918/ ULTRA 1918 FBV/ ULTRA 1918 FBV/ KA53AA2750	09-Aug-23 Rs. 15,40,740/-	17-Apr-2023
4.	LVDEL00042722611/ Greenboxlogisticsllp/ Qube Services Pvt Ltd/ Ground Floor 109A/ Pocket-12 Jasola/ New Delhi/ Delhi- 110025	ULTRA 1918/ ULTRA 1918 FBV/ ULTRA 1918 FBV/ KA53AA2751	09-Aug-23 Rs. 15,87,299/-	17-Apr-2023
5.	LVDEL00044877054/ Gateex Press Cargo Private Limited/ Vicky Mehta/ Ground Floor A 53 Dda Shed Okhla/ Industrial Area Phase 2/ New Delhi South Delhi/ Delhi- 110020	PRO 2114XP/ CHASSIS BS6/ PRO 2114XP/ HR38AC2022	09-Aug-23 Rs. 18,94,658/-	02-May-2023
6.	LVDEL00046130370/ Gateex Press Cargo Private Limited/ Inderjeet Jha/ Ground Floor A 53 Dda Shed Okhla/ Industrial Area Phase 2/ New Delhi South Delhi/ Delhi- 110020	PRO 2110XP/ CHASSIS BS6/ PRO 2110XP/ MH04LE1783	09-Aug-23 Rs. 21,78,234/-	02-May-2023

The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (where ever applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of issuance of notice U/s. 13 (2), failing which further steps will be taken after expiry of 60 days from the date of issuance of notice U/s. 13 (2) as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002

Date: November 07, 2023
Place: Delhi/ NCR

Sd/- Authorised Officer For ICICI Bank Ltd.,

Affordable radiative cooling paint developed by scientists

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian scientists have developed an affordable, eco-friendly radiative cooling paint, specifically engineered to effectively cool structures like buildings, pavers, and tiles in hot weather conditions that can diminish electricity consumption and offer essential relief during sweltering summer days. At the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR) in Bengaluru, researchers, led by Professor Bivas Saha in collaboration with Prasanna Das, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology, have shown that the groundbreaking radiative cooling paint. The work published in Advanced Material Technologies, a Wiley publication, can motivate industries to implement the radiative cooling paint for building cooling applications.

According to the International Energy Agency, using air conditioners and electric fans to keep buildings cool accounts for nearly 20 percent of the total electricity used in buildings around the world; while space and water heating account for almost half. Developed from a novel MgO-PVDF polymer nanocomposite, this low-cost, solution-processed paint demonstrates significant cooling capabilities with an high solar reflectivity and infrared thermal emissivity. The experimental findings by scientists of JNCASR, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology, have shown that the surface temperature of a treated paver decreases by approximately 10°C under intense sunlight-- almost double of the reduction that conventional white paints give. The researchers developed polymer nanocomposite paint by using a simple solution-

processed technique. They used ultra-white and ultra-emissive magnesium oxide (MgO)-polyvinylidene fluoride (PVDF) nano-composite prepared from materials that are earth abundant, cheap, non-toxic and non-harmful. Initially, polymer powders were transformed into a solution using solvent and then, dielectric nanoparticles are dispersed inside the polymer matrix. After preparation, different spectroscopic techniques were used to characterize the optical properties of the prepared polymer nanocomposite paint. By measuring the temperature of the paint using a thermocouple, excellent cooling performance was demonstrated under hot sunlight. The nanocomposite paint exhibits water-resistant hydrophobic properties and can be easily coated on pavers, wood sticks and so on with high uniformity and good adhesion.

BHU, IIT discuss security concerns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A joint meeting of Banaras Hindu University and Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) administration was held on Sunday and discussed the comprehensive security concern of the entire BHU campus. During the meeting, which lasted for more than three hours, both the administrations agreed to strengthen security of the campus in a coordinated manner and expressed strong commitment to put all the efforts and resources to ensure the peaceful living of the entire campus. The meeting attended by Vice-Chancellor of BHU Prof Sudhir Kumar Jain, Director of IIT (BHU) Prof Pramod Kumar Jain, and other top functionaries of the institutions discussed and resolved some steps.

Both the administrations are working aggressively on augmentation of the CCTV surveillance in the campus. In this regard, appropriate help from the Varanasi Smart City

Limited is being taken to ensure early implementation of the state-of-the-art CCTV surveillance facility in the campus. The Varanasi Smart City Limited has already conducted an initial survey in this regard.

They have resolved that the campus street lighting is being improved immediately. The work is already in progress and in the next two days there would be proper lighting on each of the streets of the campus. Besides, campus security barriers and check posts are being strengthened and strict enforcement of security protocols are being ensured round-the-clock. All the seven gates of the campus are under strict check from 10 pm to 5 am to restrict the entry of anti-social elements.

Both BHU and IIT (BHU) have women's grievance cells and they will work to strengthen their respective cells and more participation from the students would be encouraged and ensured. They will also review GSCASH provisions

within seven days and see what improvements are needed in the functioning of the Women's Grievance Cell.

A joint committee consisting of faculty members of both the institutions has also been formed. It would coordinate and work together to ensure a safe environment for students on the campus. The joint committee will directly report to the heads of both the institutions. The committee is chaired by Prof Royana Singh (Department of Anatomy, IMS) and co-chaired by Prof Rajesh Kumar Upadhyaya (Chemical Engineering, IIT-BHU). Prof Lalit Mohan Agrawal (IMS, BHU) and Prof RK Singh (Electrical Engineering, IIT-BHU), have been named members of the joint committee.

The members present unanimously resolved that having a boundary wall will not solve the security problems of IIT (BHU) premises. They also discussed the challenges of constructing a boundary wall for the IIT premises. It was

unanimously agreed upon that in the current situation, in which many faculty buildings and other units/services such as hospital, sewage system, power/water supply, post office, roads leading to the campus, entry gates etc. are jointly shared, it is not feasible to isolate/divide the campus with a boundary wall.

Both the institutions reiterated their commitment for ensuring safety of students in the campus as a whole and to take necessary measures as and when needed.

All the students and community of the entire campus are requested to extend their cooperation in the safety measures being taken and follow the rules, regulations and protocols.

Finally, it was resolved that all the points discussed or resolved will be implemented in full force with immediate effect. Further, efforts will also be taken to ensure the sustainability of the same for the long-term.

₹1470.93 crore sanctioned to make highway four-lane

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Road Transport Ministry of Union Government has sanctioned ₹1470.93 crore to make the Prayagraj-Lucknow highway four lane between Prayagraj and Rae Bareilly. The highway is already four lane between Rae Bareilly and Lucknow. After completion of this project before Mahakumbh 2025, vehicles will take lesser time to reach their destination using this highway.

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari informed on X that the budget had been sanctioned for the above project and asked the officials to see that the road widening between Prayagraj and Rae Bareilly is done before Mahakumbh 2025.

Officials have started

preparing strategies for timely completion of this project and tenders will soon be floated to involve contractors.

Infrastructure development is the need of the hour and the completion of this four lane project will pave the way for speedy all-round development of the area as it will raise the speed of vehicles between the Sangam city and the state capital, said Gadkari in his message and added that infrastructure development is the dream of the prime minister and it on top of his priority list.

The project is to be completed latest by December 2024 to facilitate the devotees who will arrive here from far and near distances in crores to take a holy dip in the sacred waters of the Sangam, the confluence

of the Ganga, Yamuna, and mythical Saraswati during Mahakumbh.

MURDER CASE: The son had hired criminals for Rs 5 lakh to eliminate his father in Bilaspur village near Prayagraj airport. With the arrest of five persons, including the son and a doctor, the police claimed to have solved the murder mystery.

Manna Lal (58) was found dead last week on a path leading towards his agricultural fields. Investigation revealed that Manna Lal had snapped relations with his wife and son and had been living separately with another woman. He started selling properties, which irked the son and his mother. When the police met all the family members separately to know the truth

Manna's daughter expressed suspicion that it might be the handiwork of her mother and brother.

The police grilled the son Kallu and he spilled the beans and admitted that he had hired criminals through a doctor to kill his father. The hired criminals followed Manna for five days and on October 30 they found the opportune time in early morning hours when he was going to the fields. They attacked Manna with rods and iron pipe and ran away.

The village doctor, Sunil, had arranged the criminals. The police have arrested five persons in this connection.

DCP Deepak Bhukar said that the police did not find any evidence of the involvement of Manna's wife in this murder so far.

Ganga ghats to be divided in 9 zones for Dev Deepawali

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As it is expected that about five lakh tourists to visit the holy city of Kashi on the auspicious occasion of Dev Deepawali, elaborate security arrangements will be made to fortify the city, especially its internationally famous 88-odd Ganga ghats and in this direction, the local administration and police department have already chalked out a blueprint for security arrangements which includes the division of Ganga ghats in nine zones, 11 sectors and 32 sub-sectors.

Commissioner of Police (CP) Mutha Ashok Jain and District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam informed all the security details when ahead of the festival, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had conducted a comprehensive review of security preparations.

The CM was also informed that it is expected that there

would be heavy rush of people at seven prominent ghats during the upcoming festivals and these ghats are Dashashwamedh, Ahilyabai Ghat, Assi, Rajghat, Chetsingh, Panchganga and Namoh Ghat. To ensure the safety and security of these locations, Varanasi's Commissionerate Police has chalked out a comprehensive plan.

In addition to ensuring security at ghats, police teams will also be deployed on the narrow streets adjoining these ghats.

As many as 20 Quick Response Team (QRT) units will be strategically stationed at the busiest ghats. Additionally, 11 specialised teams equipped with loudhailers will patrol the ghats, and Anti-Romeo Squad teams will be stationed at 17 major ghats in Kashi. To further enhance security, women police teams will be stationed at each ghat, and a team of 16 divers will be on

standby to carry out water rescues, ensuring the safety of those near the river.

Besides, approximately 1,200 boats will be in operation in the Ganga, offering tourists a spectacular view of the divine and grand ghats. A meeting has already been conducted with boat operators to provide them with the necessary guidelines for this event.

Additionally, to effectively manage the crowds, robust barricading will be implemented at five key locations in the city, including Maidagin, Assi, Godowlia, Bhadau Chungi and Ramapura. To ensure the safety of women, 11 pink booths will be established.

Moreover, integrated emergency helpdesks will be set up at seven strategic locations, including Rajghat, Namoh Ghat, Hanuman Temple of Ramnagar, Bengali Tola Inter College, Dumrao Bagh and Godowlia and Ramapura crossings.

These helpdesks will be staffed by medical professionals, police personnel, traffic management experts, fire brigade personnel, communication specialists, and assistance personnel to aid lost and found individuals.

Apart from this, a separate security strategy has also been developed for the Kashi Vishwanath Temple on Dev Deepawali. Anti-Terrorist Squad teams will also be deployed on Dev Deepawali to ensure Kashi's security.

In addition, intelligence personnel will be present in plain clothes. Aside from that, NDRF and Municipal Corporation teams will be present with water ambulances at Dashashwamedh Ghat and Rajghat. In addition, five teams of water police will continuously patrol the Ganga carrying dragon lights, loud hailers, rescue equipment, and wireless sets.

Preparations begin to attach more properties of Atiq, Shaista

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

After attaching properties worth ₹12.42 crore in Ghauspur Kathula under the Puramufti police station preparations have begun to attach some more properties of the slain mafia don Atiq Ahmad and his wife Shaista Parveen. The newly traced properties are in the city area.

The police came to know about the alleged partnership of Atiq Ahmad in Bengal Hotel situated in Shahganj Minhaz Pur. When details were traced the police came to know that Atiq had taken the hotel from its owner on rent to run it properly.

After some time the Atiq gang allegedly grabbed half portion of the hotel. When the owner objected to it, he was beaten black and blue and was asked to keep mum.

After this incident the gang divided the above property into three portions and got them registered in the names of gang men and one portion was registered in the name of Atiq Ahmad. An FIR had also been lodged with the Shahganj police. In 2008 during Mayawati regime, this hotel property had been attached, but later it was freed. Atiq had been using the above property as a shelter for the gang men.

Now process has been initiated to attach the above property. Besides Bengal Hotel property, the police traced a 200 sq yard plot near Prayagraj Junction railway station on KN Katju Road. This land was allegedly grabbed by Atiq Ahmad and later its registry was done in the name of Shaista Parveen. This property is also to be attached. Value of the above properties is estimated to be around ₹6 crore.

FIR LODGED: Two sons of Samajwadi Party leader Sulaki Yadav have been named in an FIR by a cooking gas agency owner for allegedly

committing fraud and demanding a goonda tax of Rs 20 lakh.

Manju Chandra, a resident of Ashok Nagar, alleged that Sandeep and Ranjeet Yadav grabbed her land and opened a restaurant there without her permission. She came to know about it when a notice was served by the power corporation about the realisation of money for raising connection.

When she objected to it, the sons of the SP leader and three others reached her residence, threatened her and demanded Rs 20 lakh as goonda tax, she alleged.

Three-day Alfresco 2023 begins

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Boys' High School (BHS) and College is celebrating 162nd years of excellence in the field of education this year. To make the year eventful the school has organised a three-day Inter-Institutional Cultural and Games Extravaganza Alfresco 2023 from November 6 to 8. The function commenced here at the St Patrick's auditorium on Monday. Rt Rev Morris Edgar Dan, Bishop, Diocese of Lucknow, Church of North India (CNI) was the chief guest.

The motto of Alfresco 2023 'Educate, Enthral, Excel and Evolve' is to facilitate personal personality development, confidence building and inter personal relationships among the student fraternity. More than 500 boys and girls from more than a dozen prominent educational institutions are participating in the mega fest.

The participating schools are Girls' High School and College, Bishop Johnson School and College, Mary Lucas School and College, DP Public School, Khelgoan Public School, Tagore Public School, Ewing Christian Senior



Secondary Public School, Erny Memorial Senior Secondary School, Jagat Taran Golden Jubilee School, Srinivasa Ramanujan Public School, St John's Co-Ed School, YMCA Centenary School and College, Bal Bharti School and the host, Boys' High School and College.

The chief guest, Bishop Dan, was accorded a warm welcome by BHS principal DA Luke and Academic Supervisor CB Luke. The NCC cadets presented guard of honour to the chief guest. The inaugural function began with a march-past by the flag-bearers of the

participating schools.

It was followed by the melodious rendition of the school song by the school choir. College Captain Ansh Mishra took the oath. Bishop Dan invoked the blessings of the Almighty for the success of this mega event. A video presentation on "160 years of Excellence" depicting the glorious history of the school was screened. Bishop Dan praised the principal DA Luke for the all-round development of the school and for rendering quality education to children. He said congratulated the academ-

ic supervisor CB Luke and teachers for the hard work in organising this mega event. He declared the three-day Inter Institutional Games and Cultural Fest, Alfresco 2023 open. The inaugural ceremony of the cultural events commenced with the lighting of the candles followed by draw of lots. The on-stage cultural events for the first day were Colloquy, Sing Along and Rock On while offstage events were Charcoal on Canvas, Splash, Creative Muse and BGMI. The games events were football match and T-10 cricket.

Mock drill conducted at Mau yard

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A joint exercise of full scale mock drill was conducted by Safety department of Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) and 11th Battalion of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), posted at Varanasi, at Mau Coaching Depot Yard on Monday in the presence of senior officers including District Magistrate (Mau) Arun Kumar, Superintendent of Police (Mau) Avinash Pandey, Deputy Commandant (NDRF) Prem Kumar Paswan, Additional Divisional Railway Manager (Infra) Roshan Lal Yadav, Senior Divisional Safety Officer Balendra Paul and others.

At 11.11 am, information was received from the control room that the fifth coach (Number 00053AC 2nd NE) of train number 05251 Chhapra-Lucknow Railway (Mela Special) was derailed on Line Number 13 near the coaching depot in Mau yard on Bhatni-Aunrihar railway section. Four wheels were derailed and the coach caught fire, in which five passengers were seriously injured. As soon as the information was received, Accident Relief Train (ART), Accident Relief Medical Equipment (ARME) and concerned officers and others reached the spot. Along with this, the teams of NDRF, Fire Brigade, district administration and local police



also reached the incident site. As per the guidelines of the Accident Manual of Indian Railways, everyone performed their role well and this mock drill was completely successful.

In the same sequence, primary information was broadcast and public communication was done by sounding siren along with details of diversion and short termination/originiation of the trains due to main line block. Besides, helpline number was issued and fire fighting personnel reached the incident site, along with accident and medical relief vehicles and they started extinguishing the fire using all techniques apart from setting up a temporary control centre at the site, issuing emergency numbers for correct information to the family members of the passengers, staff as per protocol. Besides, the officials discharged

their responsibilities after reaching the accident site, working quickly to minimise the effects of the accident, installing tower lights, making arrangements for generators and drinking water, evacuation of passengers in a safe manner, and disaster prevention tools, coach restoration etc. The causes of the accident were also reviewed.

Later, ADRM (Infra) Roshan Lal Yadav, while praising the relief and rescue operations of Railways and NDRF teams, said that it showed their alertness and awareness towards railway safety and

expressed hope that they would discharge their accident related responsibilities with more caution in the future.

Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (Carriage & Wagon) Anubhav Pathak, Senior Divisional Signal & Telecommunication Engineer Rajat Priya, Divisional Electrical Engineer (General) Ramdayal, Chief Coaching Depot Officer (Mau) Manish Verma, Assistant Divisional Engineer (Mau) Anand Yadav, Assistant Electrical Engineer Manish Srivastava, Assistant Safety Officer Abhishek Kumar, Assistant Commercial Manager PS Rawat and Dr Puneet Rao of NER Divisional Hospital, NDRF Inspector Indradev Kumar, personnel Vishal Yadav, Dhorendra Pratap, Anil Kumar Pal and others were also present during the mock drill.

Emphasis on exercising right to franchise

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Chief Development Officer (CDO) and SVEEP incharge Srilaxmi VS said that voting is a way to strengthen democracy and it is the duty of every citizen to exercise his/her franchise. These views were

administration under SVEEP programme in the grounds of GIC on Sunday. She appealed to the Divyangjans to get their names included in the voter list and motivate others who had completed the eligibility age to do so. In the tournament four teams took part and it concluded

POSTED: Superintendent of Police (SP) Abhinandan has posted inspector Mithilesh Kumar Mishra as the SHO at the Jigna police station on Sunday. The post was lying vacant for few days due to the suspension of the then SO. At present MK Mishra was posted at the Police Lines.

Meanwhile mines inspector Poona Ram Ahakey had lodged an FIR at Vindhyachal police station on Saturday against the accused under relevant sections for illegal mining. SHO Arvind Mishra took the matter seriously and formed a team to nab the accused. The team succeeded in arresting the accused identified as Kamlesh Kumar of Gajipur village under Vindhyachal police station on Sunday.

COUPLES REUNITE: Under Project Milan programme three couples who were living separately due to petty issues got reunited at the family counselling centre (FCC) located at Police Lines on Sunday. After several sittings the centre succeeded in getting five couples to agree to

live together. The entire process was carried out by inspector and incharge of FCC Seema Singh. She was assisted by sub-inspector Shashi Tiwari, constable Sapna, counsellors Parvati Pandey and Dr Krishna Singh.

FUNCTION: Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Anupriya Patel claimed that the government is committed to providing a congenial atmosphere to the traders as well as protecting the right of consumers. These views were expressed by her while addressing the traders in the inaugural function of a diamond showroom, a sister concern of Krishna Alankar Mandir at Chaubey Tola on Sunday. Appreciating the state government for maintaining law and order situation she said it is the need of the hour we contribute to the nation by getting involved in constructive work. She wished Gokul Agrawal, the main promoter of the showroom, for the bright future of the firm. The minister was accorded a warm reception by traders led by Vishwa Nath Agrawal and Keshav Agrawal.



CDO Srilaxmi VS handing over the prize to a divyang on Sunday

expressed by her in the prize distribution ceremony of the Divyangjan Wheelchair Cricket Tournament organised under the joint aegis of the Divyangjan Empowerment department and the district

ed with the prize distribution. The tournament was inaugurated by joint magistrate Alok Prasad and attended by the divyangjan empowerment officer, social welfare officer, BSA and others.

Pensioners can obtain DLC from postmen

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Now there is no need for pensioners to visit the treasury, bank or any other department for submitting their life certificates. Pensioners can obtain the Digital Life Certificate (DLC) from the nearest Post offices or can also get it generated by Postman or Gramin Dak Sevak. For this, a fee of only Rs 70 is prescribed. The life certificate will automatically reach the concerned department online. It will not cause any hindrance in receiving

ing pension. This facility is being made available in all post offices through India Post Payments Bank (IPPB). This was informed by the Postmaster General (PMG) of Varanasi and Prayagraj Region Krishna Kumar Yadav.

Highlighting on DLC, the PMG said that through the Department of Posts, the facility of DLC is being provided to pensioners of all departments at door step.

Pensioners can call the postman of their locality as well as request can also be

made through Post Info Mobile App to avail this facility. For this, the pensioner will have to provide Aadhaar number, mobile number, bank or post office account number and PPO number, said Yadav.

The pensioners have to submit the life certificate to the treasury, bank or the concerned department, usually in the month of November and December every year. For this, pensioners residing in remote areas and old pensioners many times face difficulties to attend the treasury

and it also causes expenditure involved in travelling etc. In such a situation, pensioners will get a lot of convenience and relief from this digital initiative of the Department of Posts, said the Postmaster General.

Apart from obtaining Digital Life Certificate at their doorstep, pensioners can withdraw an amount of pension from their bank account through Aadhaar enabled payment system also at door step through postman, he added.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Poll position

The first phase of last Assembly elections before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls begins today

The 2023 men's cricket World Cup semifinals may still be a few days away but the much more eagerly awaited and critical-for-the-nation's-future electoral semifinal before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections' grand finale gets under way today. Of the five State Assemblies going to the hustings, voters in Mizoram's all 40 constituencies and those in the first phase in Chhattisgarh (20 of the 90 seats) will exercise their franchise. Three of the Assemblies where elections are being held --- Mizoram, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan --- are major States in the Hindi heartland which can make a lot of difference in the Lok Sabha elections. The State polls have a direct bearing on general elections, especially if the gap between them is less than six months. Most voters, according to psychologists and psephologists, choose the same party when State and general elections are narrowly spaced. However, which way the elections would turn is anybody's guess as it is a crucial round, a precursor to the 2024 general elections. In Chhattisgarh, Bhupesh Baghel of the Congress defends his turf. Besides a host of usual poll-time freebies, he announced that a caste survey will be conducted if the party is voted to power. The BJP's manifesto for the State, released by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, also includes several promises and, interestingly, both manifestos look like carbon copies of each other. At the moment, Baghel is embroiled in myriad controversies and he will also have to deal with 'anti incumbency,' skewing his chances. The Chhattisgarh elections are being held in two phases --- on November 7 and 17 --- and the counting of votes will be undertaken on December 3 along with the other



four Assemblies going to polls in this round.

Mizoram is the only State from the Northeast going to polls this winter. Voter sentiment and other things on the ground are a bit fluid here after the ethnic strife and violence in Manipur. There is no Mizo National Front-BJP pre-poll alliance this time around. While the ruling MNF is a constituent of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), it has chosen not to enter into a pre-poll alliance with the BJP in the State. Despite having just one legislator in the outgoing Mizoram Assembly, the BJP wants to form the next Government in the State. The BJP has made it abundantly clear that in case the State returns a fractured verdict, it is open to aligning with either the ruling Mizo National Front (MNF), already a constituent of the NDA, or the main Opposition party, the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), to form the next State Government. But who is the local people's choice to govern them will be revealed on December 3 when the ballot boxes are opened and the votes counted. Till then, we can only pray that the elections are without any hiccups, fair and violence-free, especially since the left-wing infested Bastar in Chhattisgarh is also poised to vote in the first phase. Go on and get that finger inked, dear voter!

PICTALK



A worker makes candles at a factory, ahead of the Diwali festival, on the outskirts of Jammu

PTI

Meritorious students deserve subsidies

The centres of excellence in higher learning should be subsidised, if not free, for meritorious students

Everybody talks about reservations for backward communities, but hardly anyone speaks about reservations for academically meritorious students. Because of this, even our policymakers are not at all concerned with the meritorious students. What does merit hold for a student? Merit allows students to study in an institution of their choice with reduced fees. Traditionally meritorious students get admission to public sector institutions. Whether you are from upper caste or lower caste or high economic background or lower economic background, meritorious students should be given top priority in academics. Merit is a symbol of quality. Old-time school teachers used to advise students that after qualifying 10th standard (SSLC) one should be self-sufficient in meeting the expenses of his or her studies. So students used to work hard to get admission to prestigious government institutions. Getting admission to a government college or university was considered a symbol of quality, as only merit prevails in these



centres, whereas in private institutions with money, you can buy a seat. The society also gives high priority to people studying in merit seats, especially in fields related to the medical profession. Even while visiting a medical professional patients give high respect and confidence to doctors studied in government institutions. Since doctors who study in private institutions spend lakhs of rupees their ultimate objective would be to make money to compensate for the huge amount spent for their studies. Old-time students used to vie for the National Merit Scholarship and University Merit Scholarship, which is provided solely based on merit. Labelling as a meritorious fellow is like getting a Nobel Prize for a student even if he is from the economically upper strata of

society. The starting of deemed-to-be universities and autonomous institutions like IIT have destroyed the social fabric of education. Even though clearing the IIT-JEE is the most challenging task in the life of a student, studying in IITs is the most expensive education in the country. After clearing such a tough examination, a student is expected to get a subsidised education. Contrary to this an IIT student has to spend lakhs of rupees to complete an undergraduate study. If we go through the socio-economic background of students studying at IITs we can easily find that most of them are from economically well-off families. This is the reason most students aspire to central institutions like JNU where education is highly subsidised. It's the prize they get for their dedicated learning and hard work. Even today alumni from JNU are held in high esteem. That is the place where students enjoy total academic freedom. Only if there is freedom students will enjoy learning and only if they enjoy learning, creativity

evolve and only if creativity evolves the country will develop. The centres of excellence in higher learning should be made free to meritorious students and it should be kept exclusively for them. During early times we had fewer higher education centres, so only the best would get admission to these centres. There is an organised effort by vested interests across the country to destroy good institutions in the government sector. Even UGC is promoting granting autonomy to every college. Once a college becomes autonomous it comes out with its fee structures, which are not accessible to everyone. Ultimately students from the middle and lower middle class will move from higher education to paths that provide easy employment. If there is no value for the marks obtained by the students for their qualifying examination, parents and students will be forced to retract from higher education. (The writer is a science communicator and an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

Race for the White House

Both, Biden and Trump have achievements to highlight, but 44% of Americans say they are worse off financially under the Biden regime

A hypothetical President Joe Biden versus his predecessor, Donald Trump, contest in the 2024 U.S. presidential race is too close to call. Elections will be held on November 5, 2024, just a year away. News agency Reuters says this election promises to be like no other modern U.S. election. New York Times noted Biden and Trump Are Tied. It would be "the most important election since 1860" --- when Abraham Lincoln was elected President, triggering the US Civil War.

The most recent U.S. presidential election was held in 2020. Still, unfortunately, it resulted in a deadly attack on the U.S. Capitol and the first failed coup in American history. According to the BBC, there are indications that the 2024 election will repeat in 2020, with Donald Trump running against Joe Biden, but with their respective roles reversed. Nine Republicans, four Democrats and two independent candidates --- are running for President in 2024. But Biden and Trump may ultimately be their respective parties' nominees. But surprises and upsets cannot be ruled out before November 5, 2024, the election date. For instance, in 1979, a hostage crisis cost President Jimmy Carter re-election. In 2020, Pandemic Covid played a negative role. Possible election surprises include a leading candidate quitting, the Israel-Gaza war affecting outcomes, and the Ukraine conflict escalating. President Trump faces 91 criminal charges across four trials next year, which could mean he goes to prison. Political parties have yet to announce their official nominees. In the past, sitting Presidents have been re-nominated if they choose to run again. It is interesting to note that a country that values youth may have to choose between two of its oldest Presidents. According to recent polls, Trump is leading his challengers by a significant margin. However, he has a strong hold on his party's right wing. He may face difficulty winning over moderate and independent voters in a general election if he secures the Republican nomination.



On the Democratic side, Biden faces three long-shot challengers, including Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who run independently. Kennedy's candidacy may spoil the chances of either Democratic candidate. Trump is the favourite to win the 2024 Presidential election at most sportsbooks, with election odds of around +160. What's different between Biden's and Trump's presidencies? Biden's the current President and is running against Trump in 2024. Trump may be chosen as the Republican candidate, but he's been indicted four times on 91 felony charges since April. This is good news for President Biden. On the bright side, inflation's gone down, job growth's steady, and the stock market's quickly rebounded. If he were to be elected, Trump has promised to implement more stringent immigration restrictions and stricter limitations on trade with China. Additionally, he would likely seek to take political revenge against those who he believes have wronged him. Biden is conducting his campaign by extensively travelling both in the United States and abroad, attending official events, and participating in dozens of fundraisers.



CURRENTLY, 48% OF AMERICANS APPROVE OF TRUMP'S PERFORMANCE, WHICH MATCHES HIS PEAK AS PRESIDENT. ADDITIONALLY, 54% OF REPUBLICANS AND REPUBLICAN-LEANING INDEPENDENTS FAVOUR HIM FOR THE GOP NOMINATION

Biden faces challenges from within his party, as only 66% of Democrats approve of his handling of foreign policy, and 74% support his management of the economy, compared to 81% approval among Democrats. The lack of support from young Black people and Latinos is a cause for concern for Biden.

The President is campaigning for re-election based on his record of handling the economy and the "battle for the soul of America." Under Biden, unemployment reached historic lows, GDP grew faster than expected, and wages increased. But inflation spiked last year, and voters are still concerned about the high cost of essentials like food, fuel, housing, and cars. With exactly a year away, Biden's strategy is to revive 2020 themes, drawing a contrast with Trump. Biden has repeatedly asked the voters to allow him to finish the job. Both Presidents have achievements to highlight, but 44% of Americans say they are worse off financially under the Biden regime. CNBC's survey shows Biden's approval rating at just 37%, while Trump beats him by 4 points in a head-to-head matchup. Opposing views on the economy and geopolitical

tensions are eroding Biden's support. But voter frustration with lingering inflation and age concern (Biden turns 81 in two weeks) remain. Currently, 48% of Americans approve of Trump's performance, which matches his peak as President. Additionally, 54% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents favour him for the GOP nomination. American allies are paying close attention to conflicts in Israel-Hamas and Ukraine. This highlights the importance of Washington's global role. China, Russia, and Iran are creating versions of a new international order. Presidential candidates compete for donations with lower contributions than Obama, Clinton, and Trump in 2020. Many people around the globe are closely monitoring the situation. However, it's challenging to make predictions as both presidents have strengths and weaknesses. For instance, Democrat Albert Gore won half a million more votes than his Republican opponent George W. Bush. Yet, he lost the presidency in the Electoral College by a count of 271-267. (The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

COUNTRY NEEDS UCC

Sir ---The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is one of the three core issues. The repeal of Article 370 has been successfully achieved. The Ayodhya Ram Mandir issue has been resolved. But UCC is in waiting. Speculation is rife and opinion has been gaining ground that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has lost interest in bringing UCC. If this issue has been put on hold, it may be probably due to the 5 state Assembly elections having already been announced and the fast-approaching Lok Sabha election. People are aware that this cannot be brought into force in haste. Consensus among political leaders is conspicuously absent. The only issue on which the politicians close their ranks is about their pay and perks. On all other issues, what is desirable for ruling parties is anathema for opposition parties. Personal laws can co-exist with UCC provided the provisions of personal laws are not in conflict with the UCC if it comes to force. The prospects of UCC coming into the statute book are bright if the NDA stages come back to power in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Appeasement of any section of people is bad. The Muslims should introspect on the UCC. UCC is being opposed by others with the belief that it leads to the removal of caste-based reservations. The reservation policy has nothing to do with the UCC. Even Dr. Ambedkar believed that UCC is necessary to promote gender equality, secularism and national integration. The concept of UCC has a long history. India's colonial era saw discussions of a uniform civil code.

KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

MIXING OF POLITICS AND RELIGION

Sir --- As per media Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi may have to walk more than 500 meters on foot during the Ram Temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya on January 22. The temple trust is expected to offer him the role of carrying the existing movable idol of Lord Ram to the newly constructed temple. People wonder

King Kohli



With the 49th ODI century, King catches up with Master Blaster in style. While Tendulkar scored his 49th century in his 451st ODI innings, Kohli got there in just his 277th innings in his 289th match. He finished unbeaten on 101 off 121 balls, having steered India to a total of 326. The performance of the

India ODI World Cup is showing early promise. We are all looking forward to knowing how Virat Kohli has been the star performer in ICC-sponsored tournaments. Virat Kohli is the senior pro of the Indian side and a prolific run-getter. Virat Kohli is an enigma in Indian cricket as a frontline batsman and top fielder in the deep. And in the Indian playing conditions, he is a master blaster. His two centuries in the first 6 matches are a morale booster for the Indian side. His captaincy experience came in handy in helping Rohit Sharma at the crucial moments. With the Indian batting clicking well at the right time and the Indian bowling bolstering at the right moment we can expect to reach the semi-final stage and bring the World Cup to our doorstep. Kohli is likely to cross many milestones in his long and illustrious career. Kudos to King Kohli.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

INDIA IS NOT ISRAEL

Sir --- This refers to Ishaan Saxena's article, "Israel and India share common interests" (November 6, 2023). Unlike Israel, India has never occupied the territories of its neighbours since its Independence. So how can we be in the same terrorism-victim boat with Israel? How can we consider Israel's stand against Hamas equivalent to our country's stand against Pakistan-backed terrorism? The United Nations secretary-general Anton Guterres rightly said that the Hamas attack did not take place in a vacuum. The truth is that 15 million Palestinians have been suffering the brutality of Israel's oppression for decades.

There were acts of terrorism against British civilians like the Kennedy ladies during the British Raj. Can such attacks on British civilians ever justify the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre by the British?

Sujit De | Kolkata

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

SIMPLICITY: THE ESSENCE OF LIFE

once we learn to simply enjoy the music of life, there will be no noise



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

In a world that seems to celebrate complexity and extravagance, the concept of simplicity often stands as a beacon of tranquility and harmony. And that is why embracing a simpler way of life, far from being a compromise, is an art that holds the essence of wisdom and contentment. Most of us would agree to the fact that we live in a society where there are two schools of thoughts as far as our standard of living goes. Some of us feel that "more the merrier", while some of us feel "less the better". There is an in-depth meaning to these two approaches towards life. With the world around us getting more and more competitive, we are forced to match up to the high standards, which at times get out of our reach & capacity. Today the majority of us are stuck into the web of fictitiousness that's created by us. Hence to liberate ourselves from this web, we need to go back to our roots, that taught us to "Live Simple & Think High". But!! Is it possible to live a simple life under a complicated & confused world? Why not? With strong determination, it's not impossible at all, because simplicity is our originality, so it's not a big deal once we realise from within and get back to our roots.

At its core, simplicity isn't just about minimalism or reducing material possessions; it's a comprehensive approach to life that encompasses various aspects, including thoughts, actions, and lifestyle choices. It's a conscious decision to strip away the unnecessary, allowing what truly matters to shine through. Simplicity enhances clarity of our perception and frees us from the innumerable diversions of desires. When we become simple, our material world also becomes simple and beautiful & there is hardly any waste left in our life, with all our resources, time, thoughts, ideas, knowledge, money and materials becoming more and more valuable & fruitful for us. There is a common myth among people that if we become simple, then we would be considered stupid or dull. But we tend to forget the fact that all the research, whether they are done in the field of science, agriculture, engineering and a host of other disciplines are based on fundamental simple principles. Likewise, the laws of the uni-



verse are also simple. Even though we cannot always grasp the wonders of nature, the underlying principles governing the universe are quite simple. When we start respecting the natural world, then the physical world starts responding in such a way that all our physical needs are adequately met. It is only when our own nature becomes complex and polluted by selfish desires that the outer world also appears to be complex and difficult for us to understand. So, when we move away from our inner space of childlike simplicity, we divorce ourselves from nature and totally forget the art of working in tandem with the natural world.

Living simply also means being mindful of our consumption habits. It involves making deliberate choices about what we bring into our lives, whether that's material possessions, relationships, or experiences. Instead of being driven by an insatiable desire for more, simplicity teaches us to cherish what we have and find fulfillment in the present moment. Remember! Where there is simplicity, there is strength.

Unnecessary possessions are considered heavy burdens that take up a lot of our time & energy. That's why those who have enough but not too much are the happiest people in the world. The classic example of this can be seen through the lives of saints and leaders, who live a simple life maintaining simplicity in their nature and character. Once we learn to simply enjoy the music of life, there will be no complexity. It is only when we decide to probe the unlimited structures that develop from the simple form, we lose sight of the truth and beauty of life. So! Be Simple to Become a Sample, an example for others to follow.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist, views are personal)

Can caste census help social development?

In a transformative country like ours, policy decisions based on caste data can change society for the better

Dr BR Ambedkar's powerful call to annihilate caste not only challenged the entrenched power dynamics of the upper castes but also held profound implications for economic growth and broader social development. Following this legacy, the late Kanshi Ram introduced the slogan Jiski Jitni Sankhya Bhari, Uski Utni Hissedari (Proportional share based on population strength). This slogan emphasised the critical importance of social equality achieved through fair and proportional representation. It underscored the need for an inclusive and representative governance structure that mirrors the diverse composition of our society.

After the Patna High Court upheld the Government of Bihar's decision to conduct the caste survey and the Supreme Court clarified that it had not stayed its publication, on 2 October 2023, the State Government released results of the "Bihar Jaati Adharit Gananna, 2023". Coincidentally, this was a week before Kanshi Ram's 17th death anniversary.

There has been a strong reluctance to collect or release caste-based data publicly, as seen in the case of the Socio-Economic and Caste Census of 2011 and the Government of Karnataka's socio-economic survey report of 2015. Odisha, too, surveyed caste-based information in May 2023, but its report is not yet officially released. Following the Bihar survey, there has been some interest from states like Maharashtra, Assam and Rajasthan in conducting caste surveys.

The need for socio-economic caste surveys has been established and reinforced time and again by political parties and civil society. A substantial body of data and analysis suggests that affirmative action may require refinement in light of the progress made in recent decades. While certain oppressed castes have advanced in various domains, others have not experienced equal growth. Additionally, segments of the population have been overlooked in the process.

Over the millennia of history of the Indian sub-continent, distinct social groups had unequal access to land. As the caste system evolved, some castes typically did not possess land. These were avarna or ati-shudra groups, whom Jyotirao Phule in the late 19th century referred to as "Dalit"; a term adopted by these communities in the 1970s. The Constitution of India categorized these groups as Scheduled Castes (SC).

Tribal groups outside the caste system also had a tenuous hold on land and access to forests. Under the Constitution, these have been identified as Scheduled Tribes (ST). Peasant cultivators and artisans without substantial land ownership were categorised under the Constitution as socially and educationally backward classes. However, the Government of India uses Other Backward Classes (OBC) as a collective term to cover these groups.

Landholdings, as captured in the Situation Assessment of Agricultural Households and Land and Livestock Holdings of Households in Rural India, 2019 shows that only 14% of agricultural households from Scheduled Tribes own land and 16% of SC own land. Scheduled Castes (SCs) in India face the second highest level of multidimensional poverty, following the STs. According to the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index of 2021, approximately 33.3% of India's 28.3 crore SC population is living in



THERE HAS BEEN A STRONG RELUCTANCE TO COLLECT OR RELEASE CASTE-BASED DATA PUBLICLY, AS SEEN IN THE CASE OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CASTE CENSUS OF 2011

(Iyca Malhotra and Sandeep Chachra, work with ActionAid Association. The views expressed are personal)



poverty. Additionally, it is imperative to demystify the varying socio-economic status of the various sub-groups falling under the category OBC. Such a census will allow for equitable welfare measures tailored-made to suit the diverse needs of people within OBC.

Analysis by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy on the caste-wise labour force participation rate reveals a concerning trend - the most significant decline in labour force participation rates since 2016-2017 has been among the OBCs and SCs. The employment rates have drastically fallen, particularly affecting the OBCs and SCs. The labour force participation rate of OBCs since 2016 has fallen from 46% to 38% in 2022-23, as opposed to the rates for upper caste, which has seen a relatively marginal decline - from 42% to 37%.

The National Sample Survey (2011-12) revealed that SCs had a significantly higher proportion of casual wage workers among wage labourers, indicating poorer job security and lower earnings. Specifically, 32% of the overall informal labour population in the country were from the SCs, double their population share of 16%. Additionally, SCs were employed for fewer days than people from general caste categories, with one-third of the disparity attributed to differences in human capital endowment and two-thirds to discrimination against SCs in the hiring process.

Moreover, funds intended for the welfare of disadvantaged communities are also diverted elsewhere. According to the 2016 National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) report, several states have misallocated funds intended for the most disadvantaged segments of society. In a more recent instance, the Bihar Government in 2018-19 diverted over Rs 8,800 crore, designated for scholarships for SC/ST students, towards various projects such as roads, embankments, medical colleges, and government build-

ings. These dismal indicators underscore the pressing need to enumerate and tailor government interventions for the holistic upliftment of marginalised communities. The effort by the Bihar Government to enumerate these groups and release the data publicly is an essential first step towards bringing about social justice.

While the influence of vote bank politics in shaping political strategies is undeniable, it is equally crucial to recognise the potential of data-driven and evidence-based approaches in formulating effective policies and social welfare programs. Accurate and up-to-date on caste groups and demographic aspects enable policymakers to design targeted and impactful initiatives that address various marginalised communities' specific needs and concerns.

The state should aim for fair resource allocation and equal opportunities while avoiding the reinforcement of caste identities. Furthermore, the significance of this renewed attention to the caste census extends beyond policy formulation to advancing social justice. It plays a vital role in dispelling divisive political and religious rhetoric that has affected our society. By relying on factual and updated data, misrepresentations and prejudices that hinder social justice can be challenged, such as the notion of a high influx of Muslims into Bihar from Bangladesh. The survey shows a minor increase of less than 1% in the Muslim population since the 2011 census.

In this journey towards the annihilation of caste, it is imperative to have an unwavering political will and a comprehensive agenda that places evidence-based affirmative action at its core. A similar exercise is required for the nomadic tribes and de-notified tribes (NTDNT) of India. A census of NTDNT, a long-standing demand and one appointed commission has endorsed, will enable us to move towards a more

equitable representation, ensuring that every community has a fair share of the socio-economic and political landscape. Data availability will allow for the tailoring of welfare policies with customised budgets and targeted interventions that specifically address the unique socio-economic needs of each marginalised group.

The renewed focus on the caste census is a pivotal step that advocates for proportionate representation and a shift toward social justice and progress. These phenomena need to go together to foster suitable welfare policies and create robust social dialogue about the intricacies of caste. These policies, rooted in accurate and comprehensive caste-based data, have the potential to bridge the socio-economic gaps that have persisted for generations. By gaining insights into the distinct challenges faced by various caste groups, policymakers can craft nuanced and practical strategies to uplift the marginalised and ensure no one is left behind. Moreover, a well-informed social dialogue on the caste census can help challenge stereotypes, prejudices, and biases associated with caste.

In a transforming India, where education and technology act as levelling forces, caste-based affirmative action, refined through caste numbers, can drive more extensive dialogues on aspiration, ambition, freedom, opportunity, and the necessity for a system where citizens are not unfairly privileged or confined by their identities. If a robust methodology were to be used, this effort would be vital in identifying and addressing fault lines to promote gender justice.

The availability of socio-economic data disaggregated on categories that exist in society should inspire a broader nationwide conversation on the dynamics of social hierarchies, encouraging efforts towards social justice and equality. A country-wide caste census would thus be a good step towards annihilating caste.



IYCA MALHOTRA



SANDEEP CHACHRA

Antimicrobial puzzle: Action and awareness is the key

Misuse and overuse of antibiotics, poor infection prevention, and lack of sanitation, all contribute to the alarming rise of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

In today's fast-paced world, where medical advancements are celebrated, there exists a silent threat of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) that has been steadily gaining ground. As the efficacy of antibiotics and other antimicrobial drugs wanes, we are confronted with a serious challenge to our health and well-being. It's time we understand the gravity of this situation and take collective action.

India faces a significant burden from infectious diseases and ranks second in global antibiotic consumption, increasing by 47% from 2010 to 2020. Misuse and abuse of antibiotics is a key driver for the development of AMR. Free over-the-counter availability and self-medication



SANGEETA SHARMA

(The writer is Professor and head, Neuropsychopharmacology, Institute of Human Behaviour & Allied Sciences (IHBAS) and president, Delhi Society for Promotion of Rational Use of Drugs (DSPRUD); views are personal)

by the patients fuel this rise. Antibiotics are societal drugs, distinct from other medications, as their misuse not only affects individual health but also contributes significantly to the growing global threat of AMR, impacting public health & society at large.

Active patient and public involvement are crucial for responsible antibiotic use, promoting understanding, preventive measures, and healthcare efficiency.

Overuse in animal husbandry, aquaculture and agriculture worsens the issue. Integrating efforts between humans, animals, and the environment is vital. Public support for responsible farming, policy advocacy, proper food handling, sustainable practices,

and awareness can help reduce antimicrobial use. Let us join hands in this battle, raising awareness and taking action to preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics, the most vital medical resource for ourselves and future generations.

What is Antimicrobial Resistance? Antimicrobial Resistance occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites evolve and become resistant to the drugs designed to kill them. Misuse and overuse of antibiotics in humans and animals, poor infection prevention, and lack of clean water and sanitation all contribute to the alarming rise of AMR.

Why Should We Be Concerned as We Move to the Post-antibiotic Era? AMR

doesn't discriminate and knows no borders. It affects anyone, at any age, in any country. As AMR continues to rise, the number of effective antibiotics decreases. If AMR is not addressed urgently, we might enter a post-antibiotic era where even minor infections could become deadly which could once be treated with antibiotics, leading to prolonged illness, increased healthcare costs, and a higher risk of spreading diseases to others. The Role of Public Awareness: Education is our most powerful tool in the fight against AMR. Informed individuals, communities, and healthcare providers can make prudent choices, promoting judicious antibiotic use. The DSPRUD school campaigns, supported

by WHO, the Delhi Government, and ECHO India, illuminate the way. Over 600,000 students from 1000+ Delhi schools participated in 2019. Adapting to the pandemic, the 2020 online campaign reached 3,500 teachers and 350,000 students. In 2022, a focused online campaign involved 180 teachers, emphasizing microorganisms, AMR, hygiene, and one-health practices. These efforts empower communities and shape a responsible generation that understands the importance of responsible antimicrobial use. Education, paired with determination, creates change.

Our Collective Responsibility: Communities, healthcare professionals, policymakers, and

individuals all play vital roles in combating AMR. Properly using antibiotics, following healthcare advice, and demanding responsible practices from the agricultural and pharmaceutical industries are essential steps.

The Way Forward: In a world where the misuse of antibiotics poses a growing threat to global health security, the World AMR Awareness Week (WAAW) provides a unique opportunity for individuals, healthcare professionals, policymakers, and communities to unite in the shared goal of preserving the efficacy of antimicrobial drugs. By embracing the theme of community empowerment and responsible use, we can collectively work towards a future where antimicrobials remain

effective, ensuring a healthier and safer world for generations to come.

Join the Movement: The upcoming WAAW from November 18-24, 2023, holds significant importance in our global efforts to combat AMR. This year's theme, 'Empowering Communities, Promoting Responsible Use,' underscores the pivotal role of local engagement and education in curbing AMR. Let's stand united against AMR. By educating ourselves and our communities, we can safeguard our future generations. Together, we can preserve the effectiveness of antimicrobial drugs, ensuring that when we need them, they work. Spread the word. Save our antibiotics. Protect our future.

Palestinian death toll from war passes 10,000

AP ■ DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP)

Israeli forces severed northern Gaza from the rest of the besieged territory and pounded it with intense airstrikes overnight into Monday, as the Palestinian death toll from a month of fighting passed 10,000.

An even bloodier phase is expected as Israeli troops push into the dense confines of Gaza City. Palestinians held a mass funeral for dozens killed a day earlier in strikes in the south, where Israel has told civilians to seek refuge though it has continued to strike targets all across the coastal enclave.

Troops are expected to enter Gaza City soon, Israeli media reported, and Palestinian militants who have had years to prepare are likely to fight street by street, launching ambushes from a vast network of tunnels.

Casualties will likely rise on both sides in the war, which has already killed at least 10,022 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between fighters and civilians.

Some 1,400 Israelis have died, mostly civilians killed in the October 7 incursion by Hamas that started the conflict. Both tolls are unprecedented in the decades-old conflict.

The Israeli military said late on Sunday that it had cut off northern Gaza from the south, calling it a "significant stage" in the war.

On Monday, it said that aircraft struck 450 targets overnight and ground troops took over a Hamas compound. A one-way corridor for residents to flee south remains available, according to the military, for the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who remain in Gaza City and other parts of the north.

Some 1.5 million Palestinians, or around 70 per cent of Gaza's population, have fled their homes since the war began. Food, medicine, fuel and water are running low, and UN-run schools-turned-shelters are beyond capacity, with many sleeping on the streets outside.

Mobile phone and internet service went down overnight, the third territory-wide outage since the start of the war, but was gradually restored on Monday, accord-



Samir Ayoub, uncle of three children who were killed by an Israeli airstrike, puts flowers on their car in the town of Ainata, a Lebanese border village with Israel in south Lebanon and Palestinians look for survivors under the rubble of a destroyed building following an Israeli airstrike in Khan Younis refugee camp, southern Gaza Strip on Monday. AP/PTI

ing to the Palestinian telecom company Paltel and internet access advocacy group NetBlocks.org. Aid workers say the outages make it even harder for civilians to seek safety or even call ambulances.

Israel has so far rejected US suggestions for a pause in fighting to facilitate humanitarian aid deliveries and the release of some of the estimated 240 hostages seized by Hamas in its raid. Israel has also dismissed calls for a broader cease-fire from increasingly alarmed Arab countries — including Jordan and Egypt, which made peace with it decades ago.

After days of intense diplomacy around the Middle East, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrapped up

his tour of the region on Monday, saying efforts to secure a humanitarian pause, negotiate the release of hostages and plan for a post-Hamas Gaza were still "a work in progress" without pointing to any concrete achievements.

The war has also stoked wider tensions, with Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group trading fire along the border. In another sign of growing unrest, a Palestinian man stabbed and wounded two members of Israel's paramilitary Border Police in east Jerusalem before being shot dead, according to police and an Associated Press reporter at the scene. Israel captured east Jerusalem, along with Gaza and the West Bank, in the 1967 Mideast war.

Blinken wraps up Mideast tour

AP ■ ANKARA

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrapped up a gruelling Middle East diplomatic tour on Monday in Turkey after only limited success in efforts to forge a regional consensus on how best to ease civilian suffering in Gaza as Israel intensifies its war against Hamas. In the Turkish capital of Ankara, Blinken met with Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan following a frantic weekend of travel that took him from Israel to Jordan, the occupied West Bank, Cyprus and Iraq, to build support for the Biden administration's proposal for "humanitarian pauses" to Israel's relentless military campaign in Gaza.

"All of this is a work in progress," Blinken said before leaving Turkey. "We don't obviously agree on everything, but there are common views on some of the imperatives of the moment that we're working on together."

Blinken's shuttle diplomacy came as Israeli troops surrounded Gaza City and cut off the northern part of the besieged Hamas-ruled terri-



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, left, meets with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ankara, Turkey on Monday.

tory. Troops are expected to enter the city Monday or Tuesday, and are likely to face militants fighting street by street using a vast network of tunnels. Casualties will likely rise on both sides in the month-old war, which has already killed more than 9,700 Palestinians.

The top US diplomat hopes that pauses in the war would allow for a surge of humanitarian aid to Gaza and the release of hostages captured by Hamas during the militants' deadly Oct. 7 incursion into southern

Israel that killed more than 1,400 people, mostly civilians - while also preventing the conflict from spreading regionally. "We've engaged the Israelis on steps that they can take to minimize civilian casualties," Blinken said before leaving Ankara. "We're working, as I said, very aggressively on getting more humanitarian assistance into Gaza." "We are very focused on the hostages held by Hamas, including the Americans, and we are doing everything possible to bring them home," he added.

South Africa accuses Israel of genocide in Gaza

AP ■ JOHANNESBURG

South Africa's government has recalled Monday its ambassador and diplomatic mission to Israel in condemnation of the bombardment of the Gaza Strip, calling it "a genocide". The government also threatened action against the Israeli ambassador to South Africa over his recent remarks about the African country's stance on the Israel-Hamas war. No further details were given about the remarks.

The war broke out after the Palestinian militant group's attacks on Israel on Oct 7 left over 1,400 people dead. Over 10,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's military offensive in Gaza, according to the Hamas-run health ministry. "The South African government has decided to withdraw all its diplomats in Tel Aviv for consultation," said minister in the presidency Khumbudzo Ntshavheni.

She added the cabinet noted the "disparaging remarks of the Israeli ambassador to South Africa about those who are opposing the atrocities and genocide of the Israeli government" and that the department of international relations has been instructed to "take the necessary measures within the diplomatic channels and protocols to

deal with (his) conduct". Ntshavheni also said the position of the Israeli ambassador in the country was "untenable".

Pro-Palestinian protesters - who have been staging demonstrations by the US Consulate in Johannesburg and Israeli embassies in Pretoria and Cape Town - have called on the South African government to expel the Israeli ambassador.

International relations minister Naledi Pandor, who on Monday hosted her Ukraine counterpart Dmytro Kuleba, said the South African officials would be recalled from Tel Aviv to give the government a detailed briefing about the situation in the region.

"We need to have this engagement with our officials because we are extremely concerned at the continued killing of children and innocent civilians in the Palestinian territory and we believe the nature of response by Israel has become one of collective punishment" said Pandor.

Pandor said she had discussed the strengthening of bilateral ties with her Ukraine counterpart, including meetings held by at least seven African leaders who visited Moscow and Kyiv earlier this year to propose a peace plan.

Shooter fires 22 shots into Cincinnati crowd, one killed, 5 injured

AP ■ CINCINNATI

US officials are expressing outrage and horror at a drive-by shooting in Cincinnati that sent more than a score of bullets into a crowd of children, killing an 11-year-old boy and striking four other children and an adult. Police Chief Terri Theetge told reporters Sunday that an occupant of a sedan fired 22 rounds "in quick succession" into a crowd of children just before 9:30 pm Friday on the city's West End. A 53-year-old woman was hit along with the boy who died; three other boys aged 12, 13 and 15; and a 15-year-old girl. One victim remained hospitalised in stable condition.

Mayor Aftab Pureval called the shooting "sickening and unimaginable" and said it occurred in a vibrant neighbourhood next to a local park and near a historic elementary school. "Twenty-two rounds were fired," Pureval said. "Twenty-two rounds in a moment — into a crowd of kids. No time to respond. No time to react." Pureval said the neighbourhood is suffering "unimaginable trauma". On Saturday and on Sunday morning, he said, people were

"shouting messages of love and support to each other through open windows, but they were too wary to go outside".

"The parents, and the kids themselves we talked to, don't feel safe, and I frankly can't blame them," he said. Theetge said it was too early to say whether the shooting was random or targeted, and she declined to discuss other aspects of the investigation. She urged whoever was responsible to turn themselves in, vowing "we will find you and we will bring you to justice".

Isaac Davis, the father of the slain child, was at the news conference along with the boy's mother and grandmother and also urged whoever was responsible to come forward. "When will this stop? Will this ever stop?" Davis asked. "How many people have to bury their kids, their babies, their loved ones?" The mayor said 40% of the illegal weapons on the city's streets were stolen from cars, and he and the city manager urged gun owners to lock up their weapons. He decried both the ubiquity of guns and the "inability to resolve differences peacefully".

Yellen to host Chinese vice premier for talks

Washington (AP): US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen will host Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng for two days of talks this week, the latest in a series of high-level talks between US and Chinese officials as the world's two largest economies aim to ease tensions, the Treasury Department announced Monday.

The Yellen-He talks set for Thursday and Friday come ahead of the start of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco which starts November 11.

President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping are expected to meet next week during the summit, what would be the first engagement between the two leaders in nearly a year.

"As a foundation, our two nations have an obligation to establish resilient lines of open communication and to prevent our disagreements from spiraling into conflict," Yellen wrote in a Washington Post op-ed to spotlight the upcoming meeting. "But we also know that our relationship cannot be circumscribed to crisis management."

The meeting between the two senior government officials comes after Biden spoke with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the White House for about an hour late last month, when Beijing's top diplomat came to Washington for talks with Blinken and White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan.

French min on trial accused of conflict of interest

Paris (AP): France's justice minister goes on trial Monday on charges of using his office to settle personal scores, in an unprecedented case that has raised concern about checks and balances in French democracy.

Justice Minister Eric Dupond-Moretti's refusal to resign, or at least to step aside from his role overseeing France's justice system during the trial, has drawn wide criticism.

Once a high-profile lawyer, Dupond-Moretti is accused of abusing his position as justice minister to order probes targeting magistrates who investigated him, his friends or his former clients.

He denies wrongdoing. He faces up to five years in prison and half a million euros in fines if convicted on charges of illegal conflict of interest.

Moldova's pro-Western govt hails elections

Chisinau (Moldova): Moldova's ruling pro-European party has lost a bid for the mayorship of the country's capital and other key cities despite victories in many areas in local elections that were overshadowed by accusations that Russia was meddling to undermine the vote, according to preliminary results.

Lilian Carp of the Party of Action and Solidarity, or PAS, lost out to incumbent Chisinau mayor, Ion Ceban, who won just over 50 per cent of the capital's vote, according to the Central Electoral Commission.

Before Ceban set up a pro-European party last year, he was widely considered to hold a pro-Russian stance, and many believe he still does.

In recent years, Moldova has looked to foster closer ties with its Western partners and was granted EU candidate status in June last year. Sunday's elections in the country of

about 2.5 million people, situated between Romania and Ukraine, were under the spotlight because of ongoing accusations by Moldovan authorities that Russia was meddling to influence the outcome of the vote.

Moldova's second-largest city Balti will go to a runoff after none of the candidates obtained a clear majority. PAS came in far behind the top three vote-getters. In Orhei, the candidate who is closely linked to a Russia-friendly exiled Moldovan oligarch, Ilan Shor, won the vote for mayor.

Despite losing out in the election for the Chisinau mayor, Andrei Spinu, the minister of infrastructure and regional development, said that the overall election results was a success for PAS.

"PAS has won the elections in the country... in 19 districts we are in first place," he wrote on Facebook on Monday. AP

'Deeper global cooperation can win fight against illegal wildlife trafficking'

AP ■ SINGAPORE

Britain's Prince William said Monday that seven countries — Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, Singapore, Britain and the United States — have committed to a wildlife summit to deepen their intelligence-sharing and other cooperation to combat money laundering by international gangs engaged in the illegal wildlife trade.

Speaking at the United for Wildlife Summit in Singapore, the Prince of Wales said the wildlife population around the world has plummeted by almost 70 per cent over the past 50 years.

"From here in Southeast Asia to North America, the Amazon to Africa, traffickers in more than 150 countries are developing more sophisticated networks to smuggle wildlife products across air, land and sea," he said. "They feed a glob-



Britain's Prince William, center, participates in a dragon boat event in Singapore, on Monday. AP

al black market that has made flora and fauna the fourth most-traded illegal commodity in the world, worth up to USD 20 billion."

Joint investigations will lead to more high-value seizures and arrests, he said. The charity hopes to include more governments in the

effort. "We know where the animals are being poached; we know the routes through which they are illegally transported; we know the financial systems that criminal networks are exploiting to finance their trade; and we know the main markets that are fuelling the demand for it," he said. "This

is a battle that can and must be won." He said criminal gangs that traffic rhino horn, tiger paws and pangolin scales are part of the same highly organized gangs that traffic drugs, arms and people. Such criminal convergence has made the illegal wildlife trade a human crisis as more than 1,500 rangers, including over 600 in Asia, have died in the line of duty, he said.

United for Wildlife was created by William's Royal Foundation charity.

William told the conference that his wife, Kate, couldn't join him on his four-day visit as she has to help their eldest son, George, "through his first set of major exams". The royal couple last visited Singapore in 2012.

William, 41, is in Singapore for the annual The Earthshot Prize awards ceremony, the first to be held in Asia.

S Korea plans to launch military spy satellite on November 30

Seoul (AP): South Korea said Monday it plans to launch its first domestically built spy satellite at the end of this month to better monitor rival North Korea, as the North pushes to expand its arsenal of nuclear weapons targeting its adversaries. The plan was unveiled days after North Korea failed to follow through on its vow to make a third attempt to launch its own reconnaissance satellite in October, likely because of technical issues.

Jeon Ha Gyu, a spokesperson for the South Korean Defense Ministry, told reporters Monday that the country's first military spy satellite will be launched from California's Vandenberg Air Force Base on Nov. 30.

The satellite will be carried by SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket. Under a contract with SpaceX, South Korea plans to launch four more spy satellites by 2025, according to South Korea's Defense Acquisition Program Administration.

South Korea currently has no military reconnaissance satellites of its own and relies on U.S. spy satellites to monitor moves by North Korea.

The possession of its own spy satellites would give South Korea an independent space-based surveillance system to monitor North Korea in almost near-time. When operated together with South Korea's so-called three-axis system - preemptive strike, missile defense and retaliatory assets - the country's overall defense against North Korea would be sharply strengthened, according to Lee Cheon Geun, an honorary research fellow at South Korea's Science and Technology Policy Institute.

Lee said that US spy satellites produce much higher-resolution imagery but they are operated under US strategic objectives, not South Korea's.



Danish Crown Prince Frederik and Crown Princess Mary receive Spain's Queen Letizia at the airport in Copenhagen, Denmark, Monday. King Felipe and Queen Letizia begin a three-day state visit to Denmark. AP/PTI

Google's antitrust headaches compound with another trial

AP ■ SAN FRANCISCO

Google on Monday will try to protect a lucrative piece of its internet empire at the same time it's still entangled in the biggest US antitrust trial in a quarter century. The latest threat will unfold in a San Francisco federal court, where a 10-person jury will decide whether Google's digital payment processing system in the Play Store that distributes apps for phones running on its Android software has been illegally driving up prices for consumers and developers.

The trial before US District Judge James Donato is scheduled to last until just before Christmas and include testimony from longtime

Google executive Sundar Pichai, who is now CEO of the company's parent, Alphabet Inc.

Pichai recently took the witness stand in Washington DC during an antitrust trial pitting Google's long-running dominance of internet search against the US Justice Department's attempt to undercut it on the grounds the company has been abusing its power to stifle competition and innovation.

The case targeting Google's Play Store is being brought by Epic Games, the maker of the popular Fortnite video game, which lost in a similar 2021 trial focused on many of the same issues in Apple's iPhone app store.

Although a federal judge sided with Apple on most fronts in that trial, the outcome opened one potential crack in the digital fortress that the company has built around the iPhone.

The judge and an appeals court both determined Apple should allow apps to provide links to other payment options, a change that could undermine the 15 per cent to 30 per cent commissions that both Apple and Google collect on digital purchases made within a mobile app.

Apple is appealing that part of the ruling to the US Supreme Court, where Epic is also challenging most elements of the case that it lost.

Braverman under fire over homelessness remarks

London (PTI): UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman has come under fire from the Opposition and charities even as her own party colleagues distanced themselves from remarks that implied that some homeless people sleeping in tents on the streets of the country were making a "lifestyle choice". The Indian-origin cabinet minister announced plans on social media over the weekend to crack down on the rows of tents occupied by homeless people as they caused nuisance and distress to residents.

However, some of her language has since been challenged with the Opposition Labour Party branding it

"despicable". "The British people are compassionate. We will always support those who are genuinely homeless."

But we cannot allow our streets to be taken over by rows of tents occupied by people, many of them from abroad, living on the streets as a lifestyle choice," reads Braverman's post on X.

"Unless we step in now to stop this, British cities will go the way of places in the US like San Francisco and Los Angeles where weak policies have led to an explosion of crime, drug taking, and squalor."

Nobody in Britain should be living in a tent on our streets," she said.

Relief materials dispatched to quake-hit Nepal

Fresh tremors jolt region

PTI ■ JAJARKOT/KATHMANDU

Two truck-loads of emergency relief materials provided by India to Nepal were dispatched to the quake-affected northwest mountainous region where people are facing a shortage of food, clothes and medicines as a fresh tremor struck the region on Monday.

Nepal was jolted by a 6.4 magnitude earthquake just before midnight on Friday that killed 153 people and injured over 250 others.

The earthquake, which hit Jajarkot and Rukum West districts in western Nepal, also damaged around 8,000 houses, both public and private, according to officials.

Chief District Officer (CDO) of Banke, Shrawan Kumar Pokharel, said the relief goods were sent towards the disaster-affected areas from Nepalgunj Airport and escorted by personnel from the Armed Police Force Nepal.

Pokharel said a truckload of relief goods is for Jajarkot and the other for Rukum Paschim (West) relief materials

will be handed over to the chief district officers of the respective districts.

The relief materials include 625 units of plastic tarpaulin and tents, 1,000 units of sleeping bags, 1,000 blankets, 70 large-size tents, 35 packets of tent accessories, medicines and 48 other articles, officials said.

A special Indian Air Force C-130 flight landed in Nepal on Sunday carrying the first consignment of emergency relief materials worth Rs 10 crore.

India has become the first country to dispatch emergency relief materials to the earthquake-hit districts in Nepal.

Ambassador of India to Nepal, Naveen Srivastava, handed over the relief goods to Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Purna Bahadur Khadka.

Meanwhile, a 5.8-magnitude earthquake struck Jajarkot and surrounding areas at 4:31 p.m. (local time), according to the National Seismological Center. The epicentre of the quake was at Ramidanda of Jajarkot, it said. This was followed by another 4.5-magnitude earthquake at 4:40 pm, said another official.

President Ramchandra Paudel has cancelled his



Policemen pack relief material to distribute among earthquake survivors in Jajarkot district in Nepal on Monday AP/PTI

planned 10-day visit to Europe in view of the devastating earthquake, his office said on Monday. In a press release, Kiran Pokharel, press advisor to the president, said President Paudel will visit earthquake-affected areas on Tuesday morning. The survivors of the

catastrophe cremated their deceased relatives on Sunday. Due to the difficult terrain, the relief materials are yet to reach several areas.

According to Suresh BK, a resident of Chiuritol, 13 people lost their lives in the village while several others were

injured in the earthquake.

At least 56 houses in the village were completely destroyed while 110 houses, although still standing, have become uninhabitable, said Suresh. The villagers have been waiting for help to arrive. "But so far, we have not received

any. All our crops, grains, food, clothes and other valuables lie buried in the debris. We haven't been able to retrieve anything as there are no security personnel to help us," The Kathmandu Post newspaper quoted Suresh as saying. "It is unbearably cold outside and none of us have had any sleep since Friday night."

Chandra Prakash Gharti, mayor of Bheri Municipality, said that the local unit is collecting data to streamline relief distribution, which has caused delays in dispatching relief materials immediately to the affected villages.

The earthquake victims are in need of immediate help and blame the government for delayed response even during emergencies. Kalawati Singh, a local survivor in Chiuritol, said that after two nights out in the cold, the villagers have started to fall sick.

"Elderly people and young children are falling ill. We don't have warm clothes and have been spending our days and nights in the open field," Singh said. "There are no doctors or any medical help here. We have food left for a maximum of two days. We hope more help will soon arrive."

Pakistan deports over 6,500 more Afghans

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

More than 6,500 Afghan nationals left Pakistan through the Torkham border on Sunday, taking the total number of repatriated Afghans to over 1,70,000, border officials said on Monday. The voluntary evacuation has been going on since the government gave an ultimatum to all unregistered foreign nationals to leave Pakistan by November 1 after which action would be taken against them according to law.

A total of 1,74,358 Afghan nationals left for Afghanistan since September 17, adding that voluntary repatriation was still underway, but the number was dropping with each passing day, the Dawn newspaper reported, quoting officials.

"There was a huge number of illegal immigrants at the border crossing soon after the deadline expired. It is now coming down," an official involved in processing voluntary repatriation of Afghan nationals said.

According to official data, 6,584 Afghans, including women and children, exited Pakistan on Sunday.

On Saturday, 209 deportees from different prisons across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab were sent back along with 46,936 men, 35,507 women and 85,331 children.

On November 3, 148 deportees, 44,718 men, 33,699 women and 82,221 children were repatriated, while the number stood at 24 deportees, 40,899 men, 30,399 women and 76,675 on November 2.

Around 7,195 families, with 34,639 men, 25,710 women, and 68,280 children, besides 115 deportees, were repatriated on November 1.

Apart from the voluntary repatriation, Afghan nationals imprisoned for involvement in petty crimes were also being

deported, the official data said.

Over 500 prisoners from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Islamabad were deported between November 1 and 4.

According to official numbers, 194 prisoners were transported from different districts of Punjab to the Torkham border crossing for repatriation.

On Saturday, around 700 Afghan nationals also returned through the Chaman border, according to caretaker Information Minister Jan Achakzai.

Addressing a press conference along with Quetta Commissioner Hamza Shafiqat on Sunday, the minister said that more than 54,000 Afghans have returned to their homeland.

Officials have also assured Afghan families that the government will bear all expenses for repatriation to convince them.

However, international human rights bodies have criticised Pakistan's move to deport millions of illegal migrants in the country.

They have said that Afghans fleeing Pakistan to avoid arrest and deportation are sleeping in the open, without proper shelter, food, drinking water and toilets once they cross the border to their homeland.

Arshad Malik, country director for Save the Children, said many of those returning are coming back without education documents, making it difficult for them to continue their learning, as well as lacking the local Afghan languages of Dari and Pashto because they studied Urdu and English in Pakistan.

He warned that child labour in Afghanistan as well as their involvement in smuggling are likely to increase due to poverty as most returning families were among the poorest migrants in Pakistan.

Aus, Chinese leaders talk pandas and wine as relations improve



Australia's PM Anthony Albanese, left, gestures as he meets with China's President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China, on Monday AP/PTI

AP ■ BEIJING

The leaders of Australia and China joked about the relative cuteness of pandas and Tasmanian devils on Monday in a largely symbolic meeting that reflected the ongoing upswing in relations between the two countries after several years of acrimony and division.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is making the first visit by an Australian leader to China in seven years in a sign of both how low relations fell and how they have begun to stabilise.

He and Chinese President Xi Jinping welcomed the gradual improvement in ties in the past year and emphasised the importance of engaging with each other despite differences on issues such as defence.

China, a major market for Australia, has lifted some trade restrictions on Australian products since the two leaders first met in Bali, Indonesia, in November 2022.

"The progress we have made in advancing our relationship over that time has been unquestionably very positive," Albanese said in opening remarks to Xi before the media. "Trade is flowing more freely to the benefit of both countries."

Xi said that both sides had resumed exchanges of views and worked out some problems.

"The China-Australia relationship has embarked on the right path of improvement and development," Xi said. "I'm heartened to see that."

Albanese said he would meet Chinese Premier Li Qiang on Tuesday before returning to Australia.

Relations nosedived in recent years as suspicions of Chinese interference in Australian politics increased. China, in turn, was angered by Australia's call for an inquiry into the origins of the COVID-19 virus.

China levied tariffs and unofficial trade barriers that are estimated to have cost Australian exporters up to 20 billion Australian dollars (\$13 billion) a year for products such as coal, wine, beef, barley and lobsters.

Those barriers have since been substantially reduced and now cost about \$2 billion Australian dollars (\$1.3 billion).

China has signalled that it is moving toward lifting punishing tariffs on Australian wine that dealt a severe setback to the industry.

"We even had a bit of a debate about wine and the quality," Albanese told reporters. He said that Xi had said during their meeting that he had visited New Zealand and been told how good the wines are there. "I asserted Australia's pre-eminence when it comes to quality red wine," Albanese said.

Xi also talked about his visits to Australia, and described Tasmanian devils as cute, the Australian leader said. When Albanese said that they probably weren't as cute as pandas, Xi replied that not all pandas were cute, citing the Kung Fu Panda movie. "That shows really just how warm the exchange was," Albanese said.

When asked by a journalist, Albanese confirmed that he had raised the case of Yang Hengjun, an Australian democracy blogger who has been detained in China for almost five years, but didn't say how Xi responded.

China did release Australian journalist Cheng Lei last month after three years in detention under charges of espionage, a case that had come to be a focal point in the tensions.

Even as Albanese has largely sounded upbeat during his visit, Australia is still actively pursuing a security partnership with the United Kingdom and the United States that China views as an attempt to counter its influence in the region.

The Australian leader, in his opening remarks to Xi, underscored the importance of high-level dialogue and people-to-people links.

"Where differences arise, it's important that we have communication," Albanese said. "From communication comes understanding."

Before coming to Beijing, Albanese was a guest at the opening ceremony of an annual import expo in Shanghai on Sunday at which Chinese Premier Li Qiang pledged to further relax market access.

Albanese's visit comes around the 50th anniversary of the first trip by an Australian prime minister to the People's Republic of China.

Pak SC to take up Mush plea against death penalty

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's apex court will start from Friday the hearing on a set of appeals related to conviction of now deceased former military ruler Pervez Musharraf, including one moved by the ex-leader, seeking to overturn his death sentence by a special court in a high treason case.

The three-judge special court of Justice Waqar Ahmad Seth, Justice Nazir Akbar and Justice Shahid Karim in the 2-1 split verdict on December 17, 2019 found Musharraf guilty of high treason under Article 6 for violation of the Constitution and sentenced him to death in absentia. The judgement angered the country's powerful army that has ruled over Pakistan for most of the period since its 75 plus year existence. It was the first time a former top military official had faced such a sentence for treason in Pakistan. The death sentence was later annulled by the Lahore High Court.

Musharraf, through his counsel Salman Safdar, had filed the plea to set aside the conviction by saying that the trial was conducted and completed "in sheer violation of the Constitution as well as the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) 1898 as well as the suspension of the judgment in the interest of justice and fair play."

After remaining in the cold storage for years, incumbent Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa set up

a four-member bench including himself and Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Aminud Din Khan and Justice Athar Minallah to hear the case. Interestingly, the Lahore High Court on January 9, 2020 declared the formation of the special court bench as "unconstitutional" on the grounds that it was formed without the approval of the cabinet.

Later, the Sindh High Court Bar Association on January 13, 2020 challenged the Lahore High Court decision of declaring as unconstitutional the decision of the Special Court, and sought to set aside the high court judgment.

The petition contended that

the high court verdict was contrary to the law laid down by the superior courts as well as against the dicta laid down by the Supreme Court in the case 2019 Lahore High Court Bar Association case. It pleaded to the apex court to restore the conviction by the Special Court for subverting the Constitution. It would be interesting to note the proceedings as Musharraf died this year and the Special Court verdict to hang him even after his death for violating the constitution was not implemented. Musharraf was in the UAE at the time of decision by the court and never returned until his death when his body was flown and he was buried in Karachi.

Ukrainian military officers probed for holding awards ceremony

Kyiv (AP): Ukraine on Monday launched a criminal investigation into military officers who organised a ceremony to honour troops that was hit by a Russian missile strike, killing 19 soldiers in one of the deadliest single attacks reported by Ukrainian forces.

The State Bureau of Investigation said it aims to hold military officials accountable for the Rocket Forces and Artillery Day event held Friday near the front line in Zaporizhzhia where Russian reconnaissance drones could easily spot the crowded gathering. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy lamented that the deaths of the men of the 128th Separate Mountain-Assault Brigade of Zakarpattia was a "tragedy that could've been avoided." The carnage sparked a wave of criticism among Ukrainians on social media for



Ukrainian emergency workers examine the site of the Russian rocket attack in central Odesa, Ukraine, early hours on Monday AP/PTI

planning the event so close to the battlefield.

The announcement came as officials said Russian drone and missile strikes in Odesa wounded eight people and damaged an art museum that is part of a UNESCO World Heritage site, and satellite photos showed damage done by a

Ukrainian missile strike to a Russian naval ship.

Odesa's National Art Museum said seven exhibitions, most featuring the work of contemporary Ukrainian artists, were damaged by a strike that left a large crater outside the museum celebrating its 124th anniversary.

Photos and video showed shattered windows, doors, and some paintings lying on the floor amid debris strewn across the galleries.

The attack followed reports by the Russian Defence Ministry that Ukrainian cruise missiles aimed at the Zaliv shipyard in Kerch, a city in the east of the Moscow-held Crimean Peninsula, had struck one of its vessels. Satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press showed damage to a Russian navy corvette moored off Kerch.

Sharif asks party leaders to start preps for elections

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan's former prime minister and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif on Monday directed his party leaders to begin their preparations for the national elections scheduled to be held on February 8, according to a media report.

Sharif, 73, gave the directions during his first meeting at the Central Secretariat of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in Lahore after returning from a four-year-long self-imposed exile in London, Geo News reported.

During the meeting, the three-time prime minister was welcomed by the party president and former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif, PML-N Senior Vice-President and

Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz and other leaders.

"PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif on Monday directed his party leaders to begin their preparations for the national elections," said the report.

Sharif returned to Pakistan on October 21 after about four years of self-imposed exile in London where he had gone after getting a medical bail following his conviction in the Avenfield Apartment and Al-Azizia corruption cases.

According to the latest announcements made by Pakistan's President House, general elections will be held on February 8 to elect a new government.

The PML-N's election campaign has entered a new phase as Nawaz started his meetings with party members,

the PML-N party said in a tweet on its official X account.

Senior PML-N leaders Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Ahsan Iqbal, the party's Election Cell Chairman Senator Ishaq Dar and Central Information Secretary Marriyung Aarangez also attended the meeting.

In the meeting, the members also discussed the future political activities of the party and the current political situation in the cash-strapped country.

Speaking to the leaders, Nawaz Sharif said that they will start the journey to development from where it was left off.

Following the meeting, Asif while speaking during a press conference said that Nawaz Sharif will contest in the upcoming elections.

Northeast China sees season's first major blizzard

Beijing (AP): Heavy snow blanketed swaths of China's northeastern region, shutting schools and halting transportation in the first major snowstorm of the season. Major highways in the northeastern city of Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang province, were closed and flights cancelled, China's state broadcaster CCTV said. Elementary and middle schools also cancelled classes for Monday.

The National Meteorological Centre said Monday that snowfall is likely to "breakthrough the historical records" for the same period. Heavy snowstorms are expected to continue in parts of Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning provinces, with snow depth reaching 20 cm (7.9 inches) in some places.

Footage showed delivery trucks stranded bumper to bumper, stretching 1 km (0.6 mile) outside the city. Chaoyang city in neighbouring Liaoning province and Chifeng in Inner Mongolia province also closed their schools and kindergartens. China's weather authorities issued an orange alert on Monday morning through Tuesday, the second highest on a scale of four.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi goes on hunger strike while imprisoned in Iran

Dubai (AP): A campaign urging Iran to free Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi said Monday that the activist has begun a hunger strike over the conditions of her imprisonment and the country's requirement that women wear headscarves.

The Free Narges Mohammadi campaign said she "through a message from Evin Prison has informed her family that she started a hunger strike several hours ago." It said

Mohammadi and her lawyer for weeks have sought her transfer to a specialist hospital for heart and lung care.

It did not elaborate on what conditions Mohammadi suffered from, though it described her as receiving an echocardiogram of her heart.

Iranian state media did not immediately acknowledge that Mohammadi had gone on a hunger strike. Mohammadi, 51, has kept up her activism despite numerous arrests by

Iranian authorities and spending years behind bars.

She has remained a leading light for nationwide, women-led protests sparked by the death last year of a 22-year-old woman in police custody that have grown into one of the most intense challenges to Iran's theocratic government.

That woman, Mahsa Amini, had been detained for allegedly not wearing her headscarf, or hijab, to the liking of authorities.



In this photo released by the office of the Iranian Presidency, President Ebrahim Raisi, right, and Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani shake hands in their press briefing at the Saadabad Palace in Tehran on Monday AP/PTI

PUBLIC NOTICE	NOTICE
We, (1) Mr. Anuj Gupta S/o Mr. Ramesh Chand Gupta and (2) Mrs. Manisha Gupta W/o Mr. Anuj Gupta both R/O D-96, Preet Vihar, Delhi-110092 have inform The Public at large is hereby notified that we intend to purchase Entire Built Up Property Bearing No.D-101, Preet Vihar, Delhi-110092 from Mr. Ashok Manocha S/o Shri W.C. Manocha and he has misplaced Original Perpetual Sub Lease, GPA, ATS, WILL, Building Sanction Plan & Sanction Letter has been lost/misplaced and is not traceable by his best efforts and for the same he has filed NCR vide L.R. No. 1095934/2023. Dated: 02/11/2023 It is therefore, Notified that anybody claiming any right, title, interest or lien over the aforesaid property may file such claim or objection to the undersigned within a period of 10 days from the date of Publication of this notice. Otherwise, it will be presumed that the said property is free from all encumbrances, charges and/or lien, etc. and we are free to purchase the said property from the above named seller.	It is hereby informed to public at large that I am owner of cottage, Cottage No. C-31, bearing Kharsa No.95, 96-B, Situated at revenue Village Kalahkweera, Tehsil & Distt. Nainital (U.K.), said property was purchased by me from Mr. Varun Pratap Chopra S/o Shri Rakesh Chopra and Mr. Rakesh Chopra S/o Shri Devendra Chopra vide sale deed Sr. No. 1872/2016 and my seller Mr. Varun Pratap Chopra and Mr. Rakesh Chopra purchased said property from Mr. Nisar Ahmad Siddiqui S/o Mr. Iqbal Hussain vide registered sale deed dated 22 Nov. 2014 which deed was registered on Bahi No.1, Jild 1282, Pages 263-280 with Sr.No. 2407 at Sub-Registrar office Nainital, said title deed in the name of Mr. Varun Pratap Chopra and Shri Rakesh Chopra has been lost, hence, public at large, hereby, informed that if anyone has any objection regarding said property or anyone has any interest over the said property, can put their objection to undersigned within 15 days of Publication and after 15 days any objection will not be considered.
MR. ANUJ GUPTA	Bhagwan Das Taneja S/o Shri Darvari Ram Taneja R/O 1043/D-18, Ward-8, Mehrauli, Gadaipur, New Delhi-110030, Mob: 9891492308

PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.
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 Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813;
 Website www.pspcl.in Contact No. 96461-17604, 96461-17659)

Tender Enquiry No. 1596/PMC/O&M/PC-2488 Dated: 03-11-2023
 Chief Engineer/ O&M (P&P Cell-II), GHPT, Lehra Mohabbat, invites E-tender for the Procurement of Numerical Relays. Quantity as per NIT. For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 03-11-2023 at 17:00 hrs. onwards.
 Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>
 76155/12/2367/2023/29543 Dated CHD :- 11/6/2023
 GHPT-91/23

G20 Presidency gives clear direction to address global population needs: FM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said India's G20 Presidency has provided a clear policy direction for addressing the needs of the majority of the global population whose voices are often unheard in multilateral forums.

"However, we still have work left to do," the minister said in an inaugural address at the Seminar on 'Strong, Sustainable, Balanced and Inclusive Growth', organised by the ministries of finance and labour, and the commerce department.

On December 1, 2022, India assumed the mantle of G20 Presidency. The G20 New Delhi Leaders Declaration (NDLD), unanimously agreed to by all G20 countries, addresses some of the pressing challenges confronting the global economy



and also provides policy guidance for a future built on people-focused principles and trust-based partnerships, Sitharaman said.

"Even though by the end of this month, our role as G20 Presidency comes to an end, momentum must be maintained on the policy guidance in the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration.

"Not only should we engage

with G20 partners to take forward the outcomes, but we should also explore how best we can integrate these outcomes into India's domestic policy-making process so that we can lead by example," she said.

Sitharaman emphasised that concerted efforts were taken by India's G20 Presidency, to mainstream the concerns and aspirations of the Global

South.

"I believe we have delivered a G20 Presidency that has provided clear policy directions for addressing the needs of the majority of the global population whose voices are often unheard in global multilateral forums. However, we still have work left to do," Sitharaman said.

The minister further said since the pandemic, the global economy has been grappling with multiple crises, adversely affecting global growth. While the recovery is underway, it remains slow and uneven.

The current pace of global growth remains quite weak, well below the 3.8 per cent average in the two decades before the pandemic and looking ahead over the medium term, growth prospects have weakened further.

The finance minister also noted that policy coordina-

tion, both global as well as domestic, is critical to ensure that growth comes back on track and remains strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive.

To this effect, she said the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration underscores the urgency of implementing well-calibrated macroeconomic and structural policies to bolster equitable growth and enhance macroeconomic and financial stability.

Sitharaman emphasised that concerted efforts were taken by India's G20 Presidency, to mainstream the concerns and aspirations of the Global South; to explore how technology can be leveraged for the benefit of development for all; and to develop solutions for enabling multilateral institutions to become more effective in addressing the complex development financing landscape of the 21st century.

Sensex, Nifty jump nearly 1% on gain in IT, banking shares

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex and Nifty rallied for a third straight session on Monday, closing higher by nearly 1 per cent on gains in IT, private banks and capital goods shares amid favourable trends in global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 594.91 points or 0.92 per cent to settle at 64,958.69. During the day, it rallied 628.76 points or 0.97 per cent to 64,992.54.

The broader Nifty of the National Stock Exchange climbed 181.15 points or 0.94 per cent to 19,411.75.

In the three sessions to Monday, Sensex has rallied around 1,367 points and Nifty by 422 points to trade above 19,400 level.

Among the Sensex firms, Larsen & Toubro, Axis Bank, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finance, Power Grid, Asian Paints, Mahindra & Mahindra and Bajaj Finserv were the biggest gainers.



State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever, Tata Motors and Titan were the laggards.

"Optimism continued as soft US payroll data and expectations of moderation in monetary tightening by the Fed supported the sentiment. Since most of the headwinds are global in nature, investor sentiment has shifted to domestic-oriented businesses, where festive demand is healthy," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge jumped 1 per cent and midcap index rallied 0.90 per cent.

"Markets started the week on

a firm note and gained nearly a per cent, in continuation of the recent rebound. Markets are largely mirroring the rebound of the US markets," Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Among the indices, capital goods advanced 1.68 per cent, metal jumped 1.64 per cent, industrials (1.42 per cent), utilities (1.39 per cent), commodities (1.38 per cent), oil & gas (1.33 per cent), energy (1.27 per cent), realty (1.19 per cent), bankex climbed 0.74 per cent and auto (0.65 per cent). Consumer Durables emerged as the only laggard.

Airbus signs contracts with Mahindra, 3 others for aircraft components

PTI ■ MUMBAI

European aircraft and aerospace major Airbus on Monday said it has signed new contracts with multiple India-based suppliers for the manufacturing of components for commercial aircraft.

Contracts have been signed with Aequs, Dynamic, Gardner and Mahindra Aerospace for the supply of airframe and wing parts across Airbus A320neo, A330neo and A350 programmes, the company said in a statement.

The latest contracts follow the allocation of the A320neo family cargo and bulk cargo doors manufacturing to Tata Advanced Systems earlier this year, Airbus said.

The company already procures components and services worth USD 750 million every year from India, and the latest round of contracts will add significantly to those volumes, it



said.

"Make in India is at the core of Airbus' strategy in India. We are proud that we are putting in place all the critical building blocks for an integrated industrial ecosystem that will propel India into the front ranks of aerospace manufacturing nations," said Rémi Maillard, President and Managing Director of Airbus India and South Asia.

"For Airbus, India is not just a market but a strategic resource hub for both human capital and aerospace components and services. We are proud to extend our partnership with Aequs, Dynamic, Gardner and Mahindra Aerospace," he said.

India to remain top importer of coking coal; rising prices of raw material a concern: ISA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India will continue to remain the top importing nation for coking coal in the near future, industry body ISA said noting that the rising prices are affecting the domestic steel industry the most.

Coking coal is a key raw material that is used to manufacture steel through the blast furnace route.

The Indian steel industry is finding ways and means to explore sustainable pathways for coking coal usage by way of using various technologies.

However, it is a long journey, Indian Steel Association (ISA) President Dilip Oommen said on Monday.

"India in the near future will remain the largest coking coal export destination, one due to a significant increase in domestic steel demand and the other as China will depend more on its own resources," he said, addressing



the ISA Coking Coal Summit in the national capital.

India will continue to remain the top importer of coking coal as most of the Indian steel players have already planned new capacities in the BF-BoF route, Oommen said, adding that in India, BF-BoF (blast furnace) accounts for 46 per cent of the production

route, while EAF (Electric Arc Furnace) is 22 per cent and IF (Induction Furnace) using thermal coal is 32 per cent.

He added that India is the largest importer of met coal, which includes PCI (pulverised coal injection). The annual import ranges between 70-75 million tonnes.

The imports are mainly from countries like Australia, the US, Canada, and Mozambique, among others, he added. According to SteelMint India, coking coal prices have moved up by around USD 100 per tonne in the last six months to trade at USD 350 per tonne at present. ISA Secretary General Alok

Sahay said "partnership between coking coal miners and its user industry steel is most important. Price discovery needs to be rationalized and transparent."

SAIL Chairman Amarendu Prakash said India's coking coal imports are expected to go up to about 120 MT in the next seven years in sync with the rise in steel production.

Naveen Jindal, Chairman of Jindal Steel and Power, said "though blast furnaces are very efficient machines, there is scope for further enhancing the efficiency.

The industry must invest in research and development to blend different types of coal for usage in the blast furnace."

Additional Coal Secretary A Nagaraju said the Coal Ministry was working vigorously on the Jharia Master Plan, which requires the rehabilitation of 15,000 families.

"When done, we will get a huge reserve of coking coal," Nagaraju said.

Fitch raises medium-term growth estimate of India, cuts China's

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fitch Ratings has raised India's medium-term potential growth estimate by 70 basis points to 6.2 per cent on the back of an improvement in the employment rate and a modest increase in the working-age population forecast.

In a report on Monday, Fitch projected medium-term potential growth for the 10 emerging economies at 4 per cent, down from 4.3 per cent from the previous estimate. This was "driven by a 0.7 percentage point cut" in China's growth estimate.

We have lowered China's supply-side GDP growth potential to 4.6 per cent from 5.3 per cent. China's growth has slowed sharply in recent years and prospects for capital deepening have deteriorated as the property slump weighs heavily on the investment outlook," the rating agency said.

It also cut Russia's potential growth, by 0.8pp to 0.8 per cent.

By contrast, it made upward revisions to Brazil, India, Mexico, Indonesia, Poland and Turkey relative to its previous estimates.

Fitch attributed the higher growth forecast for India to a swift recovery in labour force participation rates, following significant declines in 2020.

"We have increased India's estimate by 0.7pp while those of Brazil, Turkey and Indonesia are all now higher by 0.2pp," it said. In India's case, "potential growth has increased by 0.7pp to 6.2 per cent given an improvement in the employment rate and a modest increase in the working-age population forecast," it said, adding India's labour productivity forecast is also higher.

It defined the medium term as a period from 2023 to 2027. India's projected labour supply growth is also lower relative to 2019 given the expected negative growth in the participation rate.

Jaiprakash Associates defaults on ₹4,258 cr loans

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Crisis-hit Jaypee Group's flagship firm Jaiprakash Associates on Monday said it has defaulted on loans worth Rs 4,258 crore, including principal and interest amount.

In a regulatory filing, Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) informed that the company has on October 31 defaulted on repayments of a principal amount of Rs 1,733 crore and interest of Rs 2,525 crore.

The loans pertained to various banks, and the nature of the obligation is fund-based working capital, non-fund-based working capital, term loans and FCCB (foreign currency convertible bonds).

"The total borrowing (including interest) of the company is Rs 29,272 crore, repayable by 2037, against which only Rs 4,258 crore is



overdue as on October 31, 2023," JAL said.

Out of the said borrowing of Rs 29,272 crore, Rs 18,682 crore will get further reduced on transfer to the proposed Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for which the Scheme of Arrangement duly approved by all the stakeholders is pending sanction of NCLT. The entire loan is in any case under restructuring, it added.

The company said it has been taking tangible steps to

reduce the borrowings.

"Post the proposed divestment of cement business and the restructuring under consideration, the borrowing will get almost to nil upon implementation of revised restructuring plan," it said.

JAL also said that ICICI Bank had approached the NCLT Allahabad on the direction of the RBI under Section 7 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) 2016 against the company. It has contested the move.

"The matter is pending to be decided simultaneously with the Scheme of Arrangement for transfer of real estate to the SPV to be sanctioned by the NCLT," the filing said.

In September 2018, ICICI Bank filed an insolvency petition against JAL. The country's biggest lender SBI has also moved the NCLT against JAL, claiming a total default of Rs 6,893.15 crore as of September 15, 2022.

Earlier this year, JAL and its group firms announced the sale of its remaining cement assets to Dalmia Bharat Ltd at an enterprise value of Rs 5,666 crore and exit from the sector as part of its strategy to reduce debt.

As part of its debt resolution exercise, JAL had sold more than 20 million tonnes per annum cement capacity to Aditya Birla group firm UltraTech Cement between 2014 and 2017.

Cello World shares settle with over 22% premium in debut trade

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of household products and stationery manufacturer Cello World Ltd on Monday settled with a premium of over 22 per cent against the issue price of Rs 648.

The stock made its debut at Rs 831, rallying 28.24 per cent from the issue price on the BSE. During the day, it zoomed 28.81 per cent to Rs 834.70. Shares of the company ended at Rs 791.90, climbing 22.20 per cent.

At the NSE, it listed at Rs 829, registering a jump of 27.93 per cent. The stock ended at Rs 792.15, rallying 22.24 per cent. The company commanded a market valuation of Rs 16,806.58 crore.

In traded volume terms, 13.31 lakh shares of the com-



pany were traded at the BSE and over 1.79 crore shares at the NSE during the day.

The Initial Public Offering (IPO) of Cello World was subscribed 38.90 times on the last day of subscription on Wednesday.

The public issue had a price band of Rs 617-648 per share.

Mumbai-based Cello World has a product portfolio across three key categories -- consumer houseware, writing instruments and stationery, and moulded furniture and related products. In 2017, it ventured into the glassware and opal ware business under the 'Cello' brand.

BUSINESS BRIEF

NYKAA NET PROFIT RISES 50% TO ₹7.8 CRORE IN Q2
New Delhi: Beauty and fashion e-tailer FSN e-Commerce Ventures, which operates under Nykaa brand name, on Monday reported a 50 per cent increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 7.8 crore in the second quarter ended September 2023. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 5.2 crore in the same period a year ago, Nykaa said in a regulatory filing. The consolidated revenue from operations of Nykaa grew 22.4 per cent to Rs 1,507 crore during the reported quarter from Rs 1,230.82 crore a year ago.

MAX HEALTHCARE INSTITUTE Q2 PAT RISES 27% TO ₹338 CRORE
New Delhi: Max Healthcare Institute Ltd on Monday reported a 26.59 per cent rise in profit after tax to Rs 338 crore in the quarter ended September 30, 2023. The company had registered a profit after tax of Rs 267 crore in the same quarter last fiscal, Max Healthcare Institute said in a statement. Network gross revenue, including subsidiaries, managed hospitals and partner healthcare facilities, stood at Rs 1,827 crore as compared to Rs 1,567 crore in the year-ago period, up 16.59 per cent, it added.

SRMIST, ICAR-CIBA INK RESEARCH RELATED MOU
Chennai: SRM Institute of Science and Technology and ICAR-Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (ICAR-CIBA) signed an MoU recently to take up collaborative research in the area of automation applied to brackishwater aquaculture. The MoU was signed by Dr Kuldeep Kumar Lal, Director, Dr T Senthil Murugan, Scientist, PK Patil, Sic, ITMU from ICAR-CIBA and Dr TV Gopal, Dean (CET), Dr Revathi Venkataraman, Chairperson (SCO), Dr R Annie Uthra, HoD (CINTEL), Dr J Preetha Roselyn, Dr Saad Yunus Sait and Dr S Dhanalakshmi from SRMIST. This collaboration is expected to pave the way to several exciting developments, including joint research initiatives, internships, experiential learning opportunities for students, knowledge transfer, and exchange of industry best practices.



Domestic solar module manufacturing capacity to touch 60 GW by 2025: Icra

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The domestic solar photovoltaic (PV) module manufacturing capacity is expected to touch 60 gigawatts (GW) by 2025, according to Icra.

At 60 GW, there will be a 62 per cent growth in module manufacturing capacity compared to the current level of 37 GW, the rating agency said on Monday.

It is likely to increase to nearly 100 GW as the capacity awarded under the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme comes on stream, led by the strong policy support and growing demand from domestic solar power installations, Icra said.

The solar PV module supply chain is dominated by China, with over 80 per cent share in



medium term.

The Government of India (GoI) has awarded incentives for setting up a module manufacturing capacity of 48 GW, including fully integrated facilities of 24 GW, i.e., from polysilicon to module.

The capex outlay for setting up these integrated module capacities is estimated to exceed Rs 1 lakh crore.

Given the significant scale-up expected in manufacturing capacity, garnering a share of the global demand through exports would remain critical for domestic solar OEMs (original equipment manufacturers). Vikram V, Vice President & Sector Head - Corporate Ratings, ICRA, said, "While the abeyance of the Approved List of Models & Manufacturers (ALMM) order till March 2024 and

sharp decline in global module prices is leading to an increase in PV module imports in FY2024, the expected scale-up in domestic manufacturing capacity with backward integration over the next two to three years, along with resumption of the ALMM order, is expected to reduce import dependence."

Apart from module capacity, the OEMs are expected to enhance the wafer and cell manufacturing capacities with cell capacity expected to cross 25 GW by 2025 from the current level of 6 GW.

However, the country will remain dependent on polysilicon imports as these capacities are likely to take longer to set up, involving a larger capital investment, he said.

manufacturing capacity across polysilicon, wafer, cell, and modules.

In comparison, the manufacturing capacity in India is relatively low and is largely restricted to the last manufacturing stage.

The PLI scheme is expected to change this, with integrated module units expected to come up in India over the

Spirit of viral prayers

New Delhi: Zed Black Agarbatti, the renowned manufacturer of premium incense products, and former cricketer legend MS Dhoni have come together to celebrate the spirit of collective prayers and the power of viral prayers during the ongoing ICC Cricket World Cup 2023.

Zed Black has launched TVC campaign that captures the essence of friendship, unity, and collective prayers. In the TV commercial MS Dhoni can be seen enjoying a thrilling match with a group of friends.

While the group shares a nail-biting moment in the game, the Captain Cool speaks about the spirit of viral prayers in tough times.

It beautifully portrays how a simple moment shared with friends can turn into a heart-felt collective blessing for our beloved cricket team.

VAISHALI, VIDIT WIN FIDE GRAND SWISS WOMEN'S, OPEN TITLES

PTI ■ ISLE OF MAN (UK)

R Vaishali and Vidit Gujrathi clinched the women's and open category titles respectively in the FIDE Grand Swiss in a rare double for India on the world stage, with both players also qualifying for the prestigious Candidates tournament.

While Vaishali played out a draw with Batkhuyag Mungutuul of Mongolia in the 11th and final round to bag the women's title on Sunday night, Vidit beat Alexandr Predke of Serbia to record his seventh victory in the event and take the top spot in open section. Both Vaishali and Vidit ended with identical 8.5 points apiece and stayed a half point clear of nearest rivals.

Apart from a place in the Candidates to be played in April next year in Canada, Vaishali got richer by USD 25000 (Over Rs 20 Lakhs) while Vidit took home a whopping prize purse of USD 80000 (Over Rs 66 Lakhs).

The second place in the women's section went to Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine who played out a draw with veteran Grandmaster Pia Cramling of Sweden.

The second woman player to make it to the Candidates was Tan Zhongyi who finished third. Muzychuk had already made the cut from the World Women's Cup.

In the open section, Hikaru Nakamura played a rock-solid game to draw as black with India's Arjun Erigaisi who ended a credible fourth and remained unbeaten throughout the event.

Vaishali had her eyes trained for the gold and the Grandmaster title can wait for which she is shy of a few points.

The Chennai-based sister of Praggnanandhaa went for complexities yet again but met with stiff resistance from Mungutuul who is known to be



a fierce opponent. It was a Ruy Lopez opening wherein Vaishali yet again went for complexities and stood better according to the computer analysis. Optically, it looked like the Indian was dominating the proceedings but the advantage fizzled out very soon as Mungutuul opened up a file on the queen side. The game was drawn in just 34 moves.

Vaishali became the first Indian to win the Grand Swiss and will have her task cut out in the Candidates alongside India's first woman Grandmaster -- Koneru Humpy. Humpy is likely to qualify by virtue of her high rating but the decision will be known only in January 2024. For now it's Vaishali all the way. A new star for India Chess is born after a gap

of 12 long years. It was in 2011 that D Harika became the second Grandmaster from India. If Vaishali was consistent, Vidit was extremely precise out of an innocuous Queen's Gambit accepted game. Playing white, the Nashik based 29-year-old traded the queens early and pressed for an advantage in the ensuing middle game.

Predke lost a pawn in a simple tactical melee and Vidit could have drawn to seal his berth in the Candidates as the other pursuer Andrey Esipenko of Russia was crushed by Anish Giri of Holland.

However, the Indian showed heart and went for the title instead, and was rewarded with success after 47 moves. Important and Indian results of final round (Indians unless specified): Arjun Erigaisi (7.5) drew with Hikaru Nakamura (Usa, 8); Vidit Santosh Gujrathi (8.5) beat Alexandr Predke (Srb, 7); Anish Giri (7.5) beat Andrey Esipenko (Fid, 7.5); Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 7) drew with Vincent Keymer (Ger, 7.5); R Praggnanandhaa (7) beat Deac Bogdan-Daniel (Rou, 6.5); Aravindh Chithambaram (6) drew with Yu Yangyi (6); P Harikrishna (5.5) lost to Yilmaz Mustafa (Tur, 6.5); Ivan Saric (Srb, 6) drew with Nihal Sarin (6); S L Narayanan (6) drew with Maxim Matlakov (Fid, 6); Richard Rapport (Rou, 6) beat Aryan Chopra (5); Frederik Svane (Ger, 5.5) drew with Raunak Sadhwani (5.5); Leon Luke Mendonca (5.5) beat Jeffery Xiong (Usa, 4.5); D Gukesh (5) beat Varuzhan Akobian (Usa, 4); B Adhiban (4.5) drew with Jaime Santos Latasa (Esp, 4.5); Adam Kozak (Hun, 5) beat Murali Karthikeyan (4); Alexander Donchenko (Ger, 4) drew with Abhijeet Gupta (4). Women: Batkhuyag Mungutuul (Mgl, 7.5) drew with R Vaishali (8.5); Pia Cramling (Swe, 7) drew with Anna Muzychuk (Ukr, 8); Zhongyi Tan (Chn, 7.5) beat Gunay Mammadzada (Aze, 6); Aleksandra Goryachkina (Fid, 6) drew with D Harika (6); Monika Socko (Pol, 6.5) beat Tania Sachdev (5.5); Divya Deshmukh (6) beat Marsel Efremovskii (Isr, 5); Vantika Agrawal (5.5) drew with Oliwia Kioblasa (Pol, 5.5); Lina Nassr (Alg, 2) lost to B Savitha Shri (4.5).



Durant has season high 41 points

Suns beat Pistons, former coach Williams 120-106

AP ■ DETROIT

Kevin Durant had a season-high 41 points, Eric Gordon scored 21 points and the short-handed Phoenix Suns snapped a three-game losing streak with a 120-106 victory over the Detroit Pistons. Phoenix was without guards Devin Booker (calf) and Bradley Beal (back). Grayson Allen had 14 points and Josh Okogie scored 10 points, taking advantage of more playing time and shots with the standout guards out with injuries. Cade Cunningham had 26 points, six assists and six turnovers for the Pistons, who have lost four in a row. Detroit coach Monty Williams faced his former team for the first time in the regular season after matching up in the preseason. Pistons rookies Marcus Sasser scored a season-high 22 points and Ausar Thompson had 14 points while Killian Hayes added 13 points. CAVALIERS 115, WARRIORS 104: Donovan Mitchell scored 31 points and Cleveland beat

Golden State to end a 16-game losing streak against the Warriors. Darius Garland added 24 points and seven assists, Evan Mobley had 13 points and 16 rebounds and Max Strus scored 15 points for Cleveland, which had lost its first three home games. The Cavaliers beat Golden State for the first time since Dec. 25, 2016, spanning 12 regular-season and four playoff losses. Stephen Curry scored 28 points and made seven of 11 3-pointers, and Draymond Green had 18 points and eight assists for the Warriors. RAPTORS 123, SPURS 116, OT: Scottie Barnes scored 17 of his 30 points in the fourth quarter and had 11 rebounds and Toronto overcame a 22-point deficit to force overtime and beat San Antonio. Dennis Schroder and O.G. Anunoby each had 24 points to help Toronto win for the first time on the road this season. Keldon Johnson had 26 points, Zach Collins added 21 points and 11 rebounds and Victor Wembanyama had 20 points for San Antonio.

Luis appeals for release of his kidnapped father after scoring for Liverpool



AP ■ LUTON

Luis Diaz returned to Liverpool's team and scored a late equalizer in its Premier League soccer match against Luton, with his father still missing after being kidnapped by a guerrilla group in Colombia. Diaz had missed Liverpool's last two games but trained since Thursday and was selected on the bench for the match at Kenilworth Road. He entered the game in the 83rd and scored in the fifth minute of stoppage time to secure a 1-1 draw for his team. He revealed a T-shirt with the words "Libertad Para Papa" ("Freedom For Papa") after the goal. Diaz followed that up with a post on Instagram later Sunday. It read: "Today the footballer is not speaking to you. Today Lu-

cho Diaz, the son of Luis Manuel Diaz, is speaking to you. Mane, my dad, is a tireless worker, a pillar in the family and he has been kidnapped. I ask the ELN for the prompt release of my father, and I ask international organizations to work together for his freedom. "Every second, every minute, our anguish grows. My mother, my brothers and I are desperate, distressed and without words to describe what we are feeling. This suffering will only end when we have him back home. I beg you to release him immediately, respecting his integrity and ending this painful wait as soon as possible."

Both of Diaz's parents were kidnapped in the small Colombian town of Barrancas last weekend, though his mother was rescued within hours by police. Colombia's government said Thursday that the guerrilla group National Liberation Army, known as ELN, was responsible for the kidnapping. "At the training ground he was fine, on the pitch he was fine, so that's why he is here," Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp had said about his player ahead of the game. "All the signs he gets, as far as I understand, are very positive," Klopp said about the situation regarding Diaz's father. "Negotiations are ongoing but still positive and that's why (Diaz) wanted to be part of the team."

Borussia keeps bringing out best in Bayern Munich

AP ■ BERLIN

Though it's scant consolation for Borussia Dortmund, it always brings out the best in Bayern Munich. Bayern's latest win in "der Klassiker" between the old rivals — a comprehensive 4-0 victory that included a hat trick from Harry Kane — was the 10th consecutive time it emerged unbeaten from their meetings (nine wins, one draw), prompting yet another round of Dortmund soul-searching. Goalkeeper Gregor Kobel fell into a long silence when asked to explain why Dortmund has consistently failed to trouble Bayern, before acknowledging: "I can't say."

Saturday's defeat was Dortmund's first league loss of the season. It had high hopes going into the game, as it was on a 17-game unbeaten run, had vociferous home support, and Bayern duo Joshua Kimmich (suspended) and Matthijs de Ligt (injured) were missing. Dortmund also hoped to capitalize on Bayern's disappointment after the Bavarian powerhouse was surprisingly knocked out of the German Cup by third-division Saarbrücken on Wednesday. But Dayot Upamecano scored in the fourth minute in Dortmund and Kane got the first of his three goals five minutes later. The England captain completed his hat trick in injury time to put the cap on Bayern's best performance so far this season.



Dortmund only drew one save from Bayern captain Manuel Neuer, who complained afterward he had to wait a long time for Marco Reus' effort in the second half. "It's a very frustrating evening," Dortmund coach Edin Terzic acknowledged. "To be honest, we were the worse team in all areas."

The statistics showed a relatively even game — Dortmund even had more crosses and

efforts at goal — but Bayern has the likes of Kane, Leroy Sané and Jamal Musiala in its attacking lineup, while Upamecano, Kim Min-jae, Alphonso Davies and Nussair Mazraoui kept Dortmund's forwards in check. Kane, who now has 15 goals in 10 Bundesliga appearances, arrived at Bayern from Tottenham in the offseason in a league-record 100-million-euro transfer, while Dortmund lost its best player, Jude Bellingham, to Real Madrid for a similar amount that could rise to more. It illustrates the difference between the clubs — Bayern boasts financial reserves unparalleled in the Bundesliga, where its position as the league's most powerful club is becoming increasingly entrenched after

winning the last 11 titles. Any teams hoping to challenge Bayern must hope for a spate of injuries, managerial upheaval, or some other misfortune to befall the defending champion before they can consider ending its dominance. Even then, Bayern would respond with all its might to restore it, as it did in 2013 with a Bundesliga, German Cup and Champions League treble following Dortmund's back-to-back Bundesliga titles. Bayern has won the German title every year since. Dortmund squandered a great chance to win the Bundesliga last season, when Bayern was beset by managerial upheaval, but drawing with Mainz on the final day.

Russian Olympic officials appeal to sports court against suspension by IOC

AP ■ LAUSANNE (SWITZERLAND)

The Russian Olympic Committee has appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sports against a suspension by the IOC last month for incorporating Ukrainian sports councils. CAS said Monday it has registered the appeal but that "it is not possible to indicate a time frame" for a verdict by its panel of judges. A hearing is likely to be held in Lausanne, Switzerland, which is home to the court and the International

Olympic Committee. The legal dispute should have no effect on Russian athletes preparing to qualify for, and compete at, the Paris Olympics next year. The IOC previously said any Russian athletes accepted as neutral individuals to compete in Paris could be invited directly via their sports world governing body in a process bypassing the ROC. The latest Russia-IOC dispute was provoked by the Russian Olympic body incorporating

the sports councils in four regions in occupied eastern Ukraine as its own members. Imposing the suspension last month, the IOC said the Russian action "constitutes a breach of the Olympic Charter because it violates the territorial integrity of the NOC of Ukraine." The ROC made a similar move in 2016 to incorporate sports councils in the Crimea region which had been annexed by Russia two years earlier. The IOC did not issue a suspension that time.

CAS said Monday the Russian appeal asks for the ROC to be reinstated "benefiting from all rights and prerogatives granted by the Olympic Charter." The suspension removes the right of the ROC to get a share of Olympic broadcast and sponsor money worth millions of dollars in each four-year Olympic funding cycle. Russian officials reportedly have been weighing legal action to access the money not being paid due to economic sanctions during the war in Ukraine.

We wanted to set record straight at ACT after failing to win Asian Games gold: Savita



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A disappointing Asian Games campaign on its mind, the Indian women's hockey team wanted to set the record straight by clinching the gold medal in the just-concluded Asian Champions Trophy in Ranchi, skipper Savita Punia said. Touted as favourites, India fell short at the Asian Games, losing to eventual winners China 0-4 in the semifinal in Hangzhou in October. But the Indians roared back to form, demolishing all their Asian rivals, including China, to clinch their second Asian Champions Trophy title in Ranchi on Sunday with a 4-0 win over Japan. "We came with a target. We wanted to set the record straight after the team fell short in the Asian Games. We wanted to claim the gold medal here, especially since it was being held in India for the first time," said Savita after claiming the ACT title on Sunday. "We always take it one game at

a time in every tournament. This time, the whole team had a point to prove and I am glad we were able to do so." India, who won the bronze at the Asian Games, will return to Ranchi and look to repeat the performance at the women's FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers, scheduled to be held at Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh AstroTurf Hockey Stadium from January 13 to 19. "The team played a lot of attacking hockey. We took the initiative as we have the players suited for it and everyone gave their best to make sure we stand on top of the podium," Savita said. "The aim has always been to bring our performances from practice to the pitch. Now, for the women's FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers, we have time to prepare and ensure we come back and perform to the best of our abilities." In recognition of their exceptional title-winning performance, which was marked by an unbeaten streak, Hockey India declared a reward of Rs 3 lakh for every member of the Indian women's team and Rs 1.50 lakh for each member of the support staff. India played China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, and Thailand in the round-robin stage of the tournament and won all five games to finish on top of the table with 15 points. In the semifinal, India defeated Korea 2-0 to book a date with Japan in the summit clash. India's chief coach Janneke Schopman appreciated the performance and mentality of her team throughout the tournament.

Ryan earns 1st career NASCAR championship

AP ■ AVONDALE

Ryan Blaney raced to his first career NASCAR championship by banging his way past contender Kyle Larson in the closing laps at Phoenix Raceway to give Team Penske back-to-back Cup titles. The third-generation racer is the first Ohio-born driver to win the Cup title and followed teammate Joey Logano, who won for Roger Penske a year ago. It was an amazing finish for Ford Performance, which struggled most of the season but came on late with Blaney, who won two of the final six playoff races. Ford wound up sweeping championship weekend with titles from Ben Rhodes in the Truck Series and Cole Custer in the Xfinity Series. It was the first manufacturer championship sweep since 2001, and Ford is only the second manufacturer to do it. Chevrolet did it five different times. The title was the fourth in the Cup Series for Penske, but first

time "The Captain" has consecutive Cups. His IndyCar program won back-to-back championships in 2016 and 2017 with Simon Pagenaud and Josef Newgarden and Penske has 44 total championships across motorsports. "What a year," a tearful Blaney said after finishing second to Ross Chastain. "Congrats, RP. Thanks for giving me a shot." He then noted how important it was to win for Penske; the 86-year-old was recently hospitalized with shingles and missed Blaney's win at Martinsville Speedway last Sunday. Penske was in Phoenix and calmly watched the race from a suite, but made his way to the frontstretch to congratulate his 29-year-old driver. Blaney has driven for Penske since 2013, when he was 19 years old. "It was definitely on my mind to give him consecutive titles, I mean, because he's done everything in motorsports and we had a chance to go back-to-back on

GIVES ROGER PENSKÉ BACK-TO-BACK CUP TITLES



the Cup side with him," Blaney said. "I mean, we couldn't pass up that opportunity. So everyone worked really hard to make it happen and I'm so proud of the effort." Blaney is the son of former Cup driver Dave Blaney, who made 473 Cup starts over 17 seasons. Dave Blaney was a World of Outlaws champion, his brother, Dale, was a sprint car champion, and their father, Lou, was credited with multiple Midwest titles. "Obviously I come from a family of racers, my grandfather, dad and uncle," Blaney said. "Dad is

obviously who I grew up watching and admiring, wanted to be like. To be able to do what he did, 'cause as a kid I just wanted to do what dad did, so to be able to race and let alone compete for wins and championships, still have my parents around, people that you look up to that are still around, it makes it even more special." Chastain won the race in a Chevrolet for Trackhouse Racing and is the first driver to win the season finale while not racing for the championship since Denny Hamlin in 2013, one year before this current elimination format began. "I am beside myself that we were able to do that," Chastain said. "Everybody came up with a way to make this thing turn, and we drove off into the sunset." Larson and William Byron finished third and fourth for Hendrick Motorsports, while Christopher Bell of Joe Gibbs Racing finished last in the 36-car field with a broken brake rotor. They were the only four drivers

eligible for the title Sunday and the championship was guaranteed to the highest finisher of the group. Kevin Harvick finished seventh in the final race of his Cup career. Blaney had to earn the win as he was clearly racing for the victory and went hard after Chastain, even growing annoyed with how hard the rival Chevy driver was racing a title contender. With 53 laps remaining, Blaney ran into the back of Chastain, which allowed Larson to get past Blaney. Blaney was furious on his radio and the message was delivered to Byron, who dates Blaney's youngest sister, Erin. "The 12 is melting down," Byron was told over the radio. Byron, who won a Cup Series high six races this year, started from the pole and led 96 laps early. "Once the track rubbered in, we got really tight. Especially when we lost the lead on track, we just had a big balance shift and got tight," Byron said. "Just couldn't gain a lot of speed."



BANGLADESH BEAT SRI LANKA BY THREE WICKETS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Charith Asalanka's century went in vain as Bangladesh defeated Sri Lanka by three wickets in an inconsequential match of the World Cup here on Monday. Sent in to bat, middle-order batter Asalanka scored a 105-ball 108, while opener Pathum Nissanka and Sadeera Samarawickrama made identical scores of 41 runs each to help Sri Lanka post 279 all out in 49.3 overs in a contest between teams which are out of semifinal contention.

Bangladesh scored the required runs in 41.1 overs for the loss of seven wickets. The Sri Lankan innings was marred by an incident where Angelo Mathews became the first international cricketer to be 'timed out' after not being ready to face the ball within two minutes of the fall of a wicket.

The 36-year-old walked out to bat after the dismissal of Samarawickrama but had some issues with his helmet strap and signalled for a replacement, prompting Bangladesh to appeal for a 'time out'. Mathews was seen having an animated discussion with the umpires but the Sri Lankan was asked to leave the field.

Later, Najmul Hossain Shanto (90) and skipper Shakib Al Hasan (82) shared 161 runs for the third wicket to lay the foundation for the win, reaching 282 for 7 in 41.1 overs.

Dilshan Madushanka (3/69) was the pick of the bowlers for Sri Lanka, while Angelo Mathews (2/35) returned with two wickets, including the scalp of Shakib.

Batting first, Asalanka smashed six fours and five maximums during his 105-ball



108, his second ODI ton, to carry the team on his shoulders. Asalanka forged a 63-run partnership with Sadeera Samarawickrama (41), before adding 78 off 82 balls with Dhananjaya de Silva. He also shared 45 off 48 with Maheesh Theekshana (22). Opener Pathum Nissanka also contributed with a 36-ball 41. The two teams don't have much at stake

in the World Cup but there is never a dull moment when the two rivals play. Opting to field, wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahaman produced a moment of brilliance with a stunning catch to get rid of comeback man Kusal Perera (4) but Nissanka cut Shoriful Islam to size with three fours in the third over to shake off the early jitters. The opener looked in ominous form as

he did most of the damage as Sri Lanka reached 52 for 2 in the first power play. Sri Lanka skipper Kusal Mendis, who took 14 balls to get off the mark, clobbered Tanzim Hasan Sakib over mid on for the first six of the innings before picking up another four. However, his stay ended when he tried to send one off Shakib over his head only to be caught by Shoriful.

India, South Africa will be tough to beat: Smith

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Steve Smith on Monday hoped Australia are speaking at the right time given they have five wins on the trot in the World Cup and are on the cusp of joining India and South Africa as the third team in the semifinals.

While India are set to finish at the top of the points table, South Africa are currently placed second having qualified for the final four. Australia can join the two teams if they win their upcoming clash against Afghanistan, to be played here on Tuesday.

"You do want to be peaking at the right time in the end, but obviously you need to do enough to make the semifinals. I think that would be the beauty of it if we were able to get there," Smith told the media before Australia's training session at the Wankhede Stadium.

"You know, we had a rough start, we lost two games and we have gradually, I guess, progressed as we have gone along and there are still areas we can work on," said Smith, adding that even though all-rounders Mitchell Marsh and Glenn Maxwell are back to training, it remains to be seen if they get a nod for the contest on Tuesday.

Smith said India's monumental win over what has been the second best team in the tournament, South Africa, makes the challenge even more difficult for Australia going ahead.

"Tomorrow (on Tuesday) is a big game for us. I think if we win - we qualify - if that is correct. I think you want to be peaking at the right time for sure and the two teams up top are playing really good cricket, in particular India, who beat the second team, South Africa, yesterday pretty convincingly," Smith said.

"They are going to be tough to beat — there is no doubt about that. But I think we are playing some good cricket so hopefully we can have a good day, get ourselves in there and give ourselves a chance," the middle-order batter added.

Smith urged the Australian players to get behind their leader Pat Cummins who has worked hard



to pull the team out of a precarious position, having lost two games at the start.

"He has improved as it has sort of gone on. He has got the tempos of the game, he is understanding the pace of the game a lot more and like I said he has not done it a lot, so he is sort of working into it," Smith said.

"He has done a terrific job after we were particularly 0-2, to get us in the position where we are now. We are right behind him and hopefully we can play well for him," Smith said.

Smith revealed dealing with the issue of vertigo as he addressed the media but hoped that he would be fine for the game.

"Occasionally, I have had a few episodes, so I can tell you it is not the funnest space to be in, but yeah, I will go out and have a hit and hopefully be okay and we will see how we go," he said.

Australia look to banish middle-order woes against plucky Afghanistan

PTI ■ MUMBAI

With seats filling up fast for World Cup semifinals, Australia will look to banish middle-order woes and secure a final four spot against a fearless Afghanistan here on Tuesday.

Only two places remain up for the taking with rampant India slated to finish atop the World Cup points table. South Africa have also qualified.

With no other team directly threatening Australia's progression into the semifinals, Pat Cummins' men would like to finish the job at the first given opportunity here at the Wankhede Stadium - a venue that has been a paradise for batting but also supports the bowlers adequately if they are good enough to exploit the conditions.

The battle promises to be an enticing watch given Afghanistan's battery of spinners and resolute batting itching to deliver a strong show against Australia, for whom leg-spinner Adam Zampa's 19 wickets in seven matches are the most for any bowler in this World Cup. Australia need only one win from their remaining two contests - against Afghanistan and Bangladesh - to become the third semifinalists and more importantly stay clear from the pack that is about to engage in a dogfight in the middle of the points table for the final spot. But the five-time champions are also in a way, a bit far from their best even though they come into Tuesday's contest riding high on confidence of five consecutive wins, given that their middle-



order is yet to come to the party. Steve Smith (one) and Marnus Labuschagne (two) are no ODI behemoths but a combined total of three fifties in seven matches each between Nos 3 and 4 would give any team a huge concern.

But given how the duo batted in Ahmedabad on a pitch that was gripping and turning in Ahmedabad, both Smith and Labuschagne will hope for stronger returns against Afghanistan.

For Labuschagne, his two fifties have come in the last three outings and his 83-ball 71 against England was a quality knock on a sluggish surface where Australia did just well enough to make a total which was beyond England's reach.

At the top, David Warner (428 runs in 7 matches at 61.14, 2x100s, 1x50s) has done the heavy lifting while Travis Head's strong beginning to the World Cup (120 runs in two matches) gives Australia the hope of a fiery start.

With Mitchell Marsh returning, Australia must also be able to address the issue of Cameron Green's ordinary run with the bat among the team's designat-

ed all-rounders. For Afghanistan, who have lost all three ODIs to Australia including two in World Cups, it will be imperative to keep building on the success they have garnered in this edition.

With four wins in the last five matches, the Afghans have kept the semifinal dream alive but getting past Australia will be a humongous challenge, knowing that they are also required to improve the Net Run Rate in their respective last two league games.

The consistency displayed with the bat by captain Hashmatullah Shahidi (282 runs), Rahmat Shah (264) Azmatullah Omarzai (234), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (234) and Ibrahim Zadran (232) has delivered three consecutive wins while chasing for Afghanistan, but playing against Australia will be a different ball game.

With Rashid Khan (7 wickets) opting to have an extended batting session here on Sunday, there were clear indications which part of his game the star player wanted to work on more as his 56 runs in seven matches have not done justice to his abilities.

Rohit's attacking batting approach at top of order working well for team: Rathour

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Rohit Sharma has not scored too many hundreds in the ongoing World Cup but batting coach Vikram Rathour feels that the Indian skipper has led the team from the front with his attacking approach at the top of the order.

Rohit, who has scored one century (131) and two fifties from eight matches, has been consistently giving India fluent starts. His 24-ball 40 against South Africa here on Sunday ensured that India were off to a flier. India scored 326 for 5 after opting to bat first and then dismissed South Africa for a mere 83 for

a massive 243-run win. "It's absolutely Rohit's idea. He's taking the initiative," Rathour said at the mixed zone.

"If there's something on the coach Vikram Rathour feels that the Indian skipper has led the team from the front with his attacking approach at the top of the order. He's one guy who's leading with his action."

Rohit and Shubman Gill took charge of the South African new-ball bowler duo of Lungi Ngidi and Marco Jansen and unsettled their rhythm. Rohit may have failed to convert his start but he helped India reach 91 for 1 in the powerplay, which allowed Virat Kohli and Shreyas Iyer to take it easy in the middle overs before stepping up



the run-rate. "We're looking to score as many runs as we can. The start that Rohit and Gill provided helped Virat and Shreyas to settle down and take their

time. "Maharaj looked like the bowler who could have got some wickets on this wicket. That start gave us the opportunity to play a little safely. That was a great strategy and it worked out well," Rathour said. The Indian batting coach also hailed Shreyas Iyer's valuable 77 off 87 balls in a match-turning 134-run partnership with Rohit. "He (Iyer) always plays like this, he has scored a lot of runs for the team for the last two years. One-two bad matches does not make a difference, we're always sure how he can contribute to the team," Rathour said of Iyer who now has three fifties from eight innings.



'Loss to India in group stage an eye-opener'

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Losing to India in the group stage of the World Cup was an eye-opener for South Africa who hope to rectify their mistakes for a possible battle in the final, feels spinner Keshav Maharaj.

India amassed 326/5 before the spin twins Ravindra Jadeja and Kuldeep Yadav shared seven wickets between them to bundle South Africa out for 83 in 27.1 overs. "I think it was a good trial run. Hopefully, they do progress further in this tournament after the semi-final. We need to just identify areas where we can get better," Maharaj told reporters at the mixed zone on Sunday.

India have already topped the pool and South Africa are set to finish in the top-three. The two teams can only face each other in the final.

"We've played exceptionally well past this point here. It's just about going back to those performances that we did, and identifying the areas in which we can score against the turning ball." The win halted South Africa's four-match winning streak.

"It's probably a good thing and a blessing in disguise for this team is just to make sure that we iron out our glitches. It's just a good eye-opener for us to see."

Kohli is absolute best batter in world: Ponting

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Virat Kohli is the "absolute best" batter in the world on the basis of his overall record and he did not need to equal legendary Sachin Tendulkar's record number of ODI hundreds to earn that tag, feels former Australia captain Ricky Ponting. Kohli equalled Tendulkar's record of 49 ODI centuries with a brilliant 101 not out against South Africa on his 35th birthday in a World Cup match on Sunday. The century only further strengthened Kohli's case of being one of the greatest players of modern times.

"There is no doubt he is the absolute best and I have said that for a long time," Ponting said on the ICC website. "He didn't need to equal Sachin's record, he doesn't need to break the record. "If you look at his overall batting record it is incredible," said Ponting, himself a legendary batter. The century against South Africa was Kohli's second of the tournament and fourth overall in all 50-over World Cups. The 35-year-old now has a total of 543 runs at this edition of the World Cup at an imposing average of 108.60.

Ponting eluded to the fact that Kohli reached the feat of 49th ODI ton in 175 innings less than Tendulkar. "To think that he (Kohli) got 49 ODI hundreds and equalled Sachin and in 175 less innings is unbelievable." Ponting predicted a more dangerous Kohli in the remainder of the World Cup as he can play with more freedom now that he has drawn level with Tendulkar. "That (49th ton) might be a bit of a monkey off his back. I think he has been working extra hard to equal Sachin's record. "That's done now and it has happened at a really good time at the



tournament for him. One more game to go and then they head into the semi-finals. It was an almost perfect day for Virat and a great day for India." Ponting was also highly impressed with the strong impact Indian bowlers have had in many of their resounding victories. He said the Indian bowling attack has been the best of all the teams in the ongoing World Cup. South Africa's star-studded batting line-up were skittled for just 83 on Sunday and only two teams have managed to bat out their 50 overs against India through their first eight games

of the tournament. India now have three players among the top 10 wicket-takers at the tournament — Mohammed Shami (16), Jasprit Bumrah (15) and Ravindra Jadeja (14). "What we have seen in this World Cup so far, is that India's bowling attack has clearly been the best," Ponting said. "Opposition teams are going to have to put a lot of analysis into how they play Bumrah, how they are going to play (Mohammed) Siraj, as they need to get on top of these guys early. "Because if they don't, their spinners will come and get you in the middle of the game."