

OPINION 6
TELANGANA BRACES UP FOR
A TRIANGULAR CONTEST

WORLD 9
HALF A MILLION LEFT WITHOUT
POWER IN CRIMEA

MONEY 10
COMMERCE MINISTRY WORKING
TO REMOVE TRADE BARRIERS

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INDIA AIM TO
SEAL SERIES
12 SPORT

Rain relief for Delhi NCR

STAFF REPORTER ■
NEW DELHI

Unseasonal rain in the National Capital Region on Monday brought down the temperature, signalling the onset of winter and providing relief for citizens grappling with haze and smog for the last fortnight. While thunderstorms over Delhi-NCR led to the disruption of flight services, with several flights diverted to Jaipur, Lucknow, and Chandigarh, heavy rains were also reported in other parts of the country, including Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. The rains claimed 24 lives due to multiple lightning strikes and simultaneously took a toll on crops of onion, tomato, leafy vegetables and sugarcane in Maharashtra, North Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha regions.

Delhi witnessed light rain with a thunderstorm in the evening, and residents were hopeful that the showers would bring down the high pollution levels. This came after the air quality in the national Capital deteriorated to the severe category. With the temperature dropping due to the rain, netizens have taken to social media to share their reactions. According to IMD scientist RK Jenamani the clouds over Delhi will persist till Tuesday. "The western disturbance created due to intense circulation over central Pakistan led to the cloud formation over Delhi," he said. The minimum temperature was recorded at 13.4 degrees Celsius, three notches above the season's average. The average Air Quality Index of Delhi was recorded at 395 at 4 pm. A thick layer of smog blanket-



ed the national Capital and its suburbs, reducing visibility to just 600 meters at 8 am at the

Safdarjung Observatory, the primary weather station in Delhi.

The visibility was 800 metres at the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI)

until bad weather in evening diverted flights. While Gujarat reported 20 deaths due to lightning in 24 hours, in Madhya Pradesh, four people, including a married couple, were killed and a boy was seriously injured in multiple lightning strikes. In Maharashtra, heavy rain accompanied with strong winds damaged crops of onions, tomato, sugarcane and leafy vegetables in Nashik and its surrounding areas. In its forecast, the IMD has predicted light to moderate rainfall at some places accompanied with isolated thunderstorm & lightning very likely over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, East Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, north Madhya Maharashtra, Marathwada, Vidarbha and Chhattisgarh November 29 with significant reduction thereafter.

TELANGANA ELECTIONS Political war intensifies



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

Two days before Telangana votes for Assembly polls, a huge political row erupted following the Election Commission's withdrawal of permission granted to the incumbent KCR-led Telangana Government to provide financial aid to farmers for Rabi crops under the Rythu Bandhu Scheme. This decision was made after a State Minister violated the model code by publicly announcing about it. In the high-stakes battle of the polls, the Congress is aiming to dislodge two-term Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu (KCR) in the State. The party is highlighting irregularities in various schemes by filing complaints with the election watchdog. Meanwhile, the BJP has also successfully raised its saffron flag in a campaign led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The BJP is directly attacking the CM to improve its voting percentage in the southern State.

While the Congress, which had complained against the BRS to the EC a day earlier, said the withdrawal of permission was the result of the "irresponsible and self-serving" approach of the Rao-led party, the CM alleged that beneficiaries of Rythu Bandhu in the Congress had lodged a complaint with the poll panel asking it to stop the disbursement. On its part, the BJP said the Congress Government in Karnataka has been placing advertisements in the Telangana media with an eye on the upcoming Assembly polls in the State. The party urged the EC to take action against the Congress. A BJP delegation, including Union Minister Bhupendra Yadav, former Minister Prakash Javadekar, and party leaders Sudhanshu Trivedi and Om Pathak, submitted a complaint to the EC, alleging that the Congress has violated the Representation of the People Act and the Model Code of Conduct. "It is a regular programme. Not a new programme. This is the sixth year of Rythu Bandhu disbursement. They think that if Rythu Bandhu is stopped, they will get votes. How many days can you (the Congress) stop it?" Rao asked. He exuded confidence the installment will be deposited once BRS returns to power after December 3, the date of poll results, along with other States, which went to polls this month.

The poll panel had given its nod to the State Government to disburse the Rabi installment during the model code of conduct period on certain conditions and asked it not to publicise the disbursement during the poll code. After the State Finance Minister, T Harish Rao, made a public announcement about the disbursement of Rabi installments, the poll panel sent a stern message, instructing the Chief Electoral Officer to communicate its decision regarding the withdrawal of permission. Congress spokesman Jairam Ramesh said nobody else is to be blamed other than the 'gang of 4' ruling Telangana, who in their desperation to hang onto power have ended up denying what is owed to farmers. BRS MLC K Kavitha blamed "dirty politics" of the grand old party. She also said the scheme is not an election promise and an ongoing one. Party leaders including Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi and Sachin Pilot held several public meetings in the poll-bound State as the campaign will come to an end on Tuesday. Asserting that the BJP will bring Telangana out of the clutches of BRS, Modi in a rally on Monday said it is his party's resolve to send the corrupt leaders of the ruling party to jail. In another public meeting at Huzurabad, Home Minister Amit Shah claimed there was an atmosphere of "anger" against the ruling BRS in Telangana and that the people did not want the Rao-led dispensation to come back to power. Also, he participated in road shows in Peddapalli and Mancherial. Attacking the BRS and Congress over 'parivarvaad' (dynasty) rule, Shah said the BJP and Modi have decided to make a BC (backward caste) leader as Chief Minister in Telangana, if the party is elected to power and to provide a "vertical quota" to the Madiga community of SCs. "And hence, the time has come to give VRS to BRS and the time has come to send their vehicle (BRS symbol car) to the garage," Shah said. "On November 30, does this KCR Government have to be changed or not? A Backward Caste should be made as chief minister or not?" Shah asked the crowd. Shah said the Congress, BRS and Asaduddin Owaisi-led AIMIM are dynastic parties and accused that these three parties believe in corruption and vote to them means vote to corruption.

CAA final draft by March end

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra told a rally at Thakurnagar in North 24 Parganas that the "final draft of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act or CAA is expected to be ready by March 30 next year". Reacting to it, the TMC leadership on Monday called Mishra's statement a dirty ploy of the saffron party to polarise votes before the general elections. The CAA seeks to grant Indian citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan entering India before December 31, 2014. Asserting that "no one will be

able to snatch the citizenship of the Matuas once the CAA is implemented", the BJP MP from Uttar Pradesh, while addressing a gathering of the Matua community at Thakurnagar in North 24 Parganas district on Sunday said, "For the past couple of years the process to sort out technicalities was on as a result of which things should be before you in a few months' time so that Matuas will permanently be eligible for Indian citizenship." Matuas, numbering about 80-90 lakhs, are Hindu Scheduled Caste immigrants from Bangladesh who fled religious persecution post-Independence and migrated to India. Although a significant por-

tion of the community still resides in Bangladesh, those who migrated to India wield substantial influence over the voting patterns in 3-4 districts of Bengal. The community has a sizable population in North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, Nadia, Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri, and North Dinajpur districts. In fact the BJP MP and Union Minister Shantanu Thakur is himself a Matua and hails from Thakurnagar in North 24 Parganas. Rejecting the Union Minister's statement, TMC spokesperson and MP Shantanu Sen on Monday said, "Matuas are a self-respecting people who will never fall into the trap of the BJP which is trying to divide the voters along communal

lines." Saying that Matuas were already citizens of India, he stated, "The very fact that they have been living in this country for decades, voting here, possessing all the identity cards, and enjoying equal rights raises the question of why there is a need to bring a separate law to legalise their citizenship. Tomorrow, they may bring laws to legalise the citizenship of the remaining population of the country. "This amounts to befooling the Matua community, and the BJP will receive a befitting reply in the elections. They will lose once again, as they did in the 2021 Assembly elections, because the Matua community has more faith in Mamata Banerjee than in the BJP."

India envoy to US heckled by Khalistanis

PTI ■ NEW YORK

India's Ambassador to the US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu, offered prayers at a gurudwara in Long Island in New York on the occasion of Gurburab where a group of Khalistani supporters heckled him but they were escorted out by members of the Sikh community. "Privileged to join the local Sangat, including from Afghanistan, at Guru Nanak Darbar of Long Island in celebrating Gurburab — listened to Kirtan, spoke about Guru Nanak's everlasting message of togetherness, unity, & equality, partook langar, and sought blessings for all," Sandhu said in a post on X on Sunday. Sandhu received a warm welcome at the Hicksville Gurudwara against the perceived notion of opposition from Khalistanis. A few nuisance makers tried to heckle him but were escorted out by members of the Sikh community, sources said. In his remarks at the gurudwara, Sandhu assured members of the Sikh community that Indian diplomats in the US will provide all help and support to them. Sandhu, accompanied by Consul General in New York Randhir Jaiswal and Deputy

Consul General Varun Jeph, highlighted growth in the India-US partnership, whether in the healthcare, energy, IT, new emerging technologies, semiconductor or education sectors. On the occasion, the gurudwara members and officials honoured and felicitated the Indian Ambassador. Sandhu also spoke about the historical linkages between Sikh Gurus, Sikhs and Afghanistan. He noted that Afghan Sikhs have shown how to face adversities. He mentioned that three Saropos of the Sikh scripture Guru Granth Sahib were brought from Kabul to Delhi in August 2021 after the Taliban took over the war-torn country. During the visit to the gurudwara, some pro-Khalistan elements heckled Sandhu and shouted questions about Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, killed in Canada in June this year, according to videos being circulated of the incident. Earlier, in a separate tweet, Sandhu said Guru Nanak Dev's timeless message of equality and universal oneness in the well-known Shabad of Guru Ravidass as he paid his respects at Sri Guru Ravidass Temple in New York on Saturday.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits the famous hill shrine of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala in Andhra Pradesh on Monday and offered prayers for the good health, well-being and prosperity of all Indians

CPM Government in dock over stampede

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The CPI-M led Government in Kerala is facing one of the severest criminal charges in its eight-year history since 2016. The stampede at Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) on Saturday night, resulting in the loss of four students' lives, is attributed to the irresponsibility of the institution's authorities and the Marxist Government's disregard for the laws of the land, according to the Save University Campaign Committee (SUCC). This organisation in the State acts as whistleblowers against

irregularities and corruption in higher learning centers. The SUCC has demanded the immediate removal of P G Sankaran, CUSAT Vice Chancellor from the position and suspension of Youth Welfare Board director PK Baby. "The mishap occurred during the musical evening held in violation of the standing orders of Kerala High Court. The court had issued strong directives to the university authorities that events like musical fest should be held only under the direct supervision of the faculty members. No faculty members were present during the event and they reached the spot after

hours of the disaster," RS Sasikumar, chairman, SUCC, told *The Pioneer*. Sasikumar pointed out that the court directive came in the aftermath of an engineering college student's incident in 2015 during the Onam Festival. Sasikumar and M Shajhar Khan, secretary, who are two respected academicians in academic world said the Marxist Government had subverted the selection and appointment of all faculty and non-teaching staff members in universities in the State. "PK Baby, a card-holding member of the CPI-M was appointed as director, Youth Welfare



Board on a pay scale specified by the UGC. Baby was only a non-teaching staff member and was appointed to the post based on the directive of a powerful Minister in the Government led

by Pinarayi Vijayan. He does not have the mandatory qualifications. The Government should put him under suspension with immediate effect. But what the Vijayan Government has done

is to appoint Baby in the committee constituted to probe the details of the mishap. This is like making an accused to sit as judge in a case against him," said Sasikumar and Shajhar. Baby, a ministerial staff was designated as Assistant Professor and was being paid ₹2 lakh per month as salary. "The Save University Campaign Committee is submitting memorandums to the Governor, who is the Chancellor of the university to put Baby under suspension and order a judicial probe into the mishap," said Sasikumar. Meanwhile students in CUSAT told *The Pioneer* that the insti-

tution has become a breeding ground to recruit and train future Marxist leaders. "Those who do not subscribe to the Marxist ideology are tormented and harassed by leaders of SFI, the student wing of the CPI-M," said a post graduate. Sasikumar said Governor Arif Mohammed Khan stands vindicated in his stance not to toe the CPI-M Government line with regard to the affairs in the university. "The Vice-Chancellor of CUSAT too is a Marxist camp follower like other Vice Chancellors in the State. No action has been taken against the Vice Chancellor of a university in the State for insti-

gating delegates to physically assault the Governor during the inaugural session of a national conference," said Sasikumar. It may be remembered that a woman Assistant Professor in Kerala University was abused and assaulted by a SFI leader for refusing to sign fabricated cash vouchers sometime back. The lady teacher was locked in her cabin and threatened by the said leader who later on was nominated as a member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha). Though he is seen regularly in the company of the Chief Minister, police has not taken him into custody despite the intervention of the Governor.

Shinde orders survey of crops damaged due to unseasonal rain in Maharashtra

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid a vehement clamour by the Opposition Congress for immediate assistance to distressed farmers across the state, Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde on Monday ordered a preliminary survey of damage caused to crops in the unseasonal rains witnessed in several parts of the state in the past few days.

After Shinde directed the district collectors across the state to conduct a preliminary survey of the damage caused to crops due to unseasonal rains, deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis said: "The collectors will make an initial assessment of the situation and do panchnamas of the damage caused to crops. The state will lend assistance to all such farmers who have suffered crop losses".

Fadnavis said that the tillers have been affected in varying degrees in different parts of the state with their rabi season (winter) crops getting damaged because of the sudden rains witnessed in several districts of the state during the last few days. Informed official sources that Maharashtra government would seek an assis-



tance of Rs 2,500 crore from the Centre to provide immediate aid to the affected farmers.

In a related development, the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee president Nana Patole came down heav-

ily on the Shiv Sena (Shinde)-BJP-NCP (Ajit Pawar) alliance government for its failure to provide immediate assistance to the farmers hit by the unseasonal farmers. "Farmers in the state are faced with a

severe crisis and are making repeated appeals to the BJP government but the government is unable to see the plight of the farmers. Due to the insensitive BJP government, farmers are talking about selling their organs to repay their debt. The state government has money to spend on publicity and hold events but it does not have funds to help the distressed farmers," Patole said. Patole said that the unseasonal rains over the last two days had once again caused huge losses to the farmers. Both the cropping seasons this year have gone waste due to natural calamities, and the farmers have become completely debilitated. "The Shinde-BJP-Ajit Pawar alliance government is playing politics even in declaring drought. The government should help the distressed farmers by providing them help to get them out of the crisis, but the government hasn't been bothered. The BJP government is anti-farmer and deeply insensitive," he said. Patole said that his party would raise the farmers' issues in the forthcoming winter session of the State Legislature and force the state government to provide compensation to farmers. He appealed to the farmers to have patience and not take any extreme steps.

'TMC to pay MNREGA wages from its own pocket'

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress has claimed that despite central deprivation of Bengal's MNREGA workers the party had taken all the steps to begin payment of the workers whose wages for the 100 days' work under the MNREGA scheme had been held up by the BJP Government for the past two years.

"Our leader Abhishek Banerjee had promised to arrange for the payment of the deprived MNREGA workers if the Centre would not release funds ... he has kept his promise and efforts are on to clear their dues phase-by-phase," TMC spokesperson and MP Dr Shantanu Sen said adding the 2,500 workers who had gone to Delhi with a delegation led by Banerjee to press for the early release of the MNREGA wages would not have their dues cleared. Banerjee who is also the TMC general secretary had during a dharna at the Raj Bhavan in Kolkata said that he would appeal to "our people's Chief



Minister to arrange for the payment of the unpaid MNREGA workers and if it is not possible by her government to do so in absence of the central funds not coming I promise to get the payments done from our party's end ... wherein we will donate our one month-salary for the cause and out of that donation the initial phase of MNREGA payments will be cleared." Reacting to Dr Sen's statement Pradesh Congress leader Adhir Chowdhury said that the TMC leaders had their stolen money stashed away in different island countries and that it would not be very difficult to bring some

of that money to pay the MNREGA workers to win votes in 2024 general elections. The BJP on the other hand wondered as to how a political party could pay the official wages for government works done by the general people. CPI(M)'s Md Salim on the other hand lambasted both the BJP and the TMC MPs from Bengal for failing to secure the release of the funds. "The non-payment of the MNREGA funds only proves that the MPs from Bengal are inefficient and worthless for their job ...they have failed to stand by the poor workers."

Goods train mows down three elephants

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

A goods train in the small hours of Monday mowed down three elephants including a calf in Alipurduar district of North Bengal, sources said adding the accident took place inside the Buxa Tiger Reserve through which the railway line connecting Siliguri and Guwahati runs. Three other elephants were injured too, forest sources said adding the incident took place while they were crossing the railway line near Shikari Gate between Kachhini and Raja Bhatkha stations off Alipurduar. Previous Kaswan the Deputy Field Director of the Western Range of the Tiger Reserve said that the pachyderms killed comprised a family of three a male, a female and a calf, all three elephants died on the spot. "An inquiry had been initiated. Locals blamed the loco drivers saying that they must have been driving at a great speed as the place where the elephants were killed is a long and straight section where "there was no obstacle to the drivers' vision."

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BJP will liberate Telangana from clutches of BRS: Modi

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Asserting that the BJP will free Telangana from the clutches of BRS, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said it is his party's resolve to send the corrupt leaders of the Chandrasekhara Rao-led party to jail. Modi, who addressed election rallies at Mahabubabad and Karimnagar, said, "the saffron party considers as its responsibility to bring Telangana out of the clutches of BRS... Whatever the scams KCR (K Chandrasekhara Rao) was involved in here" would be probed by the BJP government (if elected). He warned that those who betrayed Telangana's poor and youth will not be spared by the BJP government. "Our resolve is to send the corrupt of BRS to jail." Noting that he had the opportunity to interact with many people during three days of campaign in the state, the PM said Telangana people have already resolved to oust the government of KCR. Lashing out at the Congress and BRS, the veteran BJP leader held both the parties equally responsible for 'destroying' Telangana. "The people of Telangana cannot allow another disease after getting rid of one. I have seen this in Telangana everywhere," he said. Telangana's trust is in BJP and the people of state have decided that the next CM of Telangana will be from BJP, Modi said. Invoking former PM P V Narasimha Rao, he said the soil of Karimnagar has given a PM to the country in the form of Rao and alleged that the "shahi parivar (royal family) of Congress did not like it and insulted him at every step".

"Not just that, even after the demise of Rao saab, the 'shahi parivar' of Congress did not



now does not leave any opportunity to abuse me," he added. Modi had in October claimed that he rejected a request of KCR to join the NDA, in the wake of Hyderabad Municipal Corporation elections in 2020. Noting that Telangana was known for tradition and technology, he alleged that KCR put the stamp of superstition on it. Calling Rao a 'slave of superstition', Modi asked the gathering if they needed a "Farmhouse CM". "Telangana does not need a farmhouse CM," he said. Accusing the Congress and BRS of indulging in 'appeasement politics' and promoting corruption, dynasty politics, he alleged that they also betrayed Dalits and BCs. "Modi highlighted BJP's promises to make a backward caste leader as CM if the party came to power in the state and its promise to do justice to the Madiga community of SCs over its demand for categorisation of SCs for the purpose of reservations. Affirming that change was imminent in Telangana, he said the people have decided to vote out BRS and not to let the Congress in. "A vote for Congress means possibility of KCR government coming again," he said. He also assured that BJP's 'double engine' government would promote investment and modern infrastructure in Telangana. On the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Modi said people of the country have decided to avail his services once again. Later in the evening, Modi held a roadshow from RTC X roads junction to Kachiguda in the state capital. Modi, who was accompanied by state BJP president G Kishan Reddy and MP Lakshman, received a rousing welcome during the event with people showering flower petals on him and some women performing 'aarti' ritual.

Later in the evening, Modi held a roadshow from RTC X roads junction to Kachiguda in the state capital. Modi, who was accompanied by state BJP president G Kishan Reddy and MP Lakshman, received a rousing welcome during the event with people showering flower petals on him and some women performing 'aarti' ritual.

20 killed in lightning strikes amid unseasonal rains in Gujarat; Amit Shah expresses grief

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Twenty people have been killed in lightning strikes in different parts of Gujarat during widespread unseasonal rainfall in the state, an official said Monday.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah condoled the deaths due to bad weather and lightning in various cities of Gujarat on Sunday and said the local administration was engaged in relief work. As per an official of the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC), a total of 20 rain-related deaths have been reported so far from different parts of Gujarat.

All the fatalities were attributed to lightning strikes during unseasonal rainfall which battered the state on Sunday. Four persons died in Dahod district, three in Bharuch, two in Tapi, and one each in Ahmedabad, Amreli, Banaskantha, Botad, Kheda, Mehsana, Panchmahal, Sabarkantha, Surat, Surendranagar and Devbhumi Dwarka, the SEOC official said. Union minister Amit Shah in a post on X on Sunday night said, "I am deeply saddened by the news of the death of many people due to bad weather and lightning in various cities of Gujarat. I express my deepest condolences for the irreparable loss to those who lost their loved ones in this tragedy. The local admin-



istration is engaged in relief work, praying for the speedy recovery of the injured." The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said the rain activity is expected to abate on Monday. As per the SEOC data, as many as 234 out of 252 talukas of Gujarat received rainfall on Sunday, with Surat, Surendranagar, Kheda, Tapi, Bharuch and Amreli districts recording 50-117 mm rainfall in 16 hours, throwing normal life out of gear and causing crop damage. Hailstorms hit some parts of Rajkot, while locals were seen rejoicing the scene created by the sudden showers.

Apart from causing crop damage, the rainfall also affected the ceramic industry of Morbi district in Saurashtra region as factories were forced to remain shut, officials said. IMD's Ahmedabad centre director Manorama Mohanty said rains will abate on Monday and remain concentrated in some parts of south Gujarat and Saurashtra districts.

Yeshwantpur being developed as world-class railway station: Vaishnav

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Monday said Yeshwantpur Railway Station here is being developed as a world-class station with an investment of Rs 377 crore. Speaking to reporters after inspecting some civil work, he said the railway station will have a roof plaza which would also have a children's play area, and space for selling products. Noting that this is one of the most important railway stations in India, Vaishnav said it caters to train traffic coming from Bengaluru (city station), Hassan, Tumakuru, and Hubli-Dharwad and also Delhi. A major redevelopment work has been taken up at Yeshwantpur, where Rs 377 crore is being invested to make it a world-class railway station, the minister said. "Both sides of the station will get connected. Both sides will have an entry and there will be a roof plaza, a very broad, very big roof plaza where people can wait in a very comfortable... Where children can play, local products can be displayed and sold. So, in a very nice way that we have seen all over the world, that kind of railway station is being developed at Yeshwantpur," Vaishnav explained. According to him, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to connect both sides of the city using the railway station is being realised.

The minister said that he had also informed the Railway team on Monday that this station will be catering to huge traffic in the coming 20 to 30 years because suburban, mainline railway and the Metro are joining here. "To cater to additional traffic in the coming years, we should keep the land available... Whatever even if one metre of land is available anywhere, that land should be kept free for expanding in the future," Vaishnav said. Whenever possible, the Railways should try to make the master plan in a way by which the expansion can be done "today itself", he added.

Public Notice: This is to inform the general public that Mr. Nirodh Kumar is the owner of a PLOT AREA MEASURING 40 SQ. YARDS I.E. 33.44 SQ. METER, COMPRISING OF KHASRA NO. 236 KH. SITUATED IN VILLAGE YUSUPUR CHAKSHI-HBERI PARGANA & TEHSIL DADRI, DISTRICT GAUTAM BUDDH NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH, wife sale deed dated 20.06.2014. All interested parties are informed that Mrs. Madhu Devi & Mr. Dharmendra Tiwari is taking loan from Satya Moro Housing Finance Limited Mr. Nirodh Kumar has lost sale deed That Mrs. Madhu returned to UP police on 27.11.2023 vide IAR No. 2023000079284 and if anyone find this document or anyone is having any interest/reluctance/claim in the said property or any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present. Mrs. Prason Lata, Advocate the stipulated Deed dated 27.02.2023 vide IAR No. 22455 executed by Smt. Daljeet Kaur 2. Smt. Manmohan Kaur 3. Smt. Swarn Kaur 4. S. Kowalewski Singh 5. Jagpreet Singh 6. Smt. Suminder Kaurand Relinquishment Deed dated 17.09.2012 vide Doc. No. 22423, executed by Sh. Gurcharan Singh, Sh. Charanjit Singh intended to transferee ownership by way of Sale Deed of the aforementioned property to Aarti Anand. Subsequently, Aarti Ananda in the process of mortgaging the said property with Bajaj Housing Finance Ltd. (Our Client). Any objections or considerations relating to the said property or the interests of our client, if anyone wishes to raise an objection, please do so within the stipulated 7-day period by contacting Law Veritas: North (Advocates & Legal Consultants) at Office No. 11, 1st Floor, Building No. A-44, Sector 16, Noida, UP Pradesh-201301; Landline(s): +91120-3101683/4562809; e-mail: accounts@lvnorth.in

Public Notice: This is to bring in kind notice of general public that Industrial Plot B-16, Sector-1, Noida, U.P. which is registered at Sub Registrar Office-1, Noida in Bahi No.-1, Jild No. 22, at page no. 324 to 347 serial No. 840, on dated 28.11.1980 is being transferred in the name of Shri Manoj Bansal on the basis of registered will dated 03.02.2023 executed by his father Shri Shyam Lal Bansal who is the original allottee of the above said plot. If anyone is having any objection and having any Registered Will executed after 03.02.2023 by the original allottee should file certified copy of said Will or having any objection in absence of any will, he/she should file a suit in this regard with the appropriate court of law and thereafter file his/her objection with the Industries Department of Noida Authority within 30 (Thirty days) of publication of this notice. The said plot shall be transferred in the name of Shri Manoj Bansal thereafter. Manoj Bansal

President Murmu to confer prestigious honour to AFMC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu will confer the prestigious 'President's Colour' to the Pune-based Armed Forces Medical College on December 1 in recognition of its 75 years of 'exemplary service' to the nation, the defence ministry said on Monday. The AFMC is a premier medical services institution and one of the leading medical colleges of the country. The president is the supreme commander of the armed forces and the President's Colour, also known as the 'Rashtrapati ka Nishan', is the highest honour that can be bestowed upon a military unit. One of the highlights of the event will be the ceremonial parade that will be led by women officers leading contingents of the Armed Forces Medical Services personnel serving in the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, according to the ministry.

Couple among four killed in lightning strikes as heavy rains several parts of MP

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Four people, including a married couple, were killed and a boy was seriously injured in multiple lightning strikes in Madhya Pradesh where several parts were lashed by unseasonal rains accompanied by thunder, bringing down the temperatures, officials said on Monday. Heavy showers in the state, where some districts recorded more than 100mm rainfall, and lightning strikes

were reported during the 24-hour period that ended at 8.30 am Monday, they said. Lightning struck a couple and their minor son on Sunday evening when they were returning home on a motorbike in Umarban village of Dhar district, an official said. Mukesh (28) and his wife Champa (27) died on the spot, while their 10-year-old son suffered critical burns and was admitted to a hospital, Umarban police outpost in-charge Prakash Alava

told PTI. In Jhabua district, a 45-year-old man, identified as Lungji Katarra, was killed when lightning struck him while he was working in his agricultural field in Jhavalviya village on Sunday evening. Petlawad sub-divisional officer of police Saurabh Tomar said. Besides, a 48-year-old woman died in lightning strike in the afternoon in Junajhira village of Barwani district, Silawad police station sub-inspector Ayub Shaikh said.

EC must have power to derecognise political parties for violations of conditions, SC told

corrupt practice and amounts to a "bribe" under the Representation of the People Act. The pleas have also said the EC should be empowered to effectively deal with this practice. The written submissions, filed through senior advocate Vijay Hansaria and advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey, said, "The Election Commission of India shall be entitled to deregister a political party on failure to satisfy the aforesaid mandatory conditions and/or such other conditions that the Election Commission may prescribe after complying with the principles of natural justice." "The Election Commission may be directed to frame guidelines for continuance of the registra-

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Whereas, we Pioneer Town Planners Pvt Ltd & Iris Real Estate Private Limited (collaborator) are in the process of undertaking development of Industrial Colony (under Enterprise Promotion policy) after migration from licence no. 8 of 2011-50/131 acres, in village Jharselly, Sector-57, District Faridabad, Haryana, over an area measuring 50.0875 acres (after migration) in accordance with the LOI granted for an Industrial Colony vide memo no. LC-3820-PA(SK)-2023/39111 dated 16.11.2023 by Director General, Town & Country Planning, Haryana, Chandigarh. And whereas, the Layout Plan earlier approved at the time of grant of license for the said colony is now proposed to be revised on account of request made by Pioneer Town Planners Pvt Ltd & Iris Real Estate Private Limited (collaborator) for migration of the said colony. And whereas, the office of Director, Town & Country Planning, Haryana, Chandigarh has required seeking of objections against the migration of the said colony, as a pre-condition for allowing such migration/revision of layout plan of the said colony Accordingly this public notice objections are hereby invited from any of the public in the said colony on the proposed migration/revision of layout plan of the said colony. A copy of the earlier approved Layout Plan (issued with licence no. 8 of 2011) bearing memo no./Endst. No.-DS(N)/LC-2044/2011/752, dated 19.01.2011 & Zoning Plan bearing drawing no 3221 dated 06.06.2012 and the Layout Plan now proposed i.e. issued along with LOI (issued bearing memo no. LC-3820-PA(SK)-2023/39111 dated 16.11.2023) is available for perusal at our office and also on website i.e. https://www.shnjgroup.co and also displayed at our site office for information. The said Revised Layout Plan can also be perused at the office of undersigned as well as in the office of Senior Town Planner, Faridabad. Any public having any objection on the proposed revision in the approved Layout Plan/migration, may file his objection in the office of Senior Town Planner, Faridabad, within 30 days of the publication of this notice, failing which it shall be assumed that there are no objections to the proposed Layout plan/migration of the said colony. Place: Faridabad Manish Raghav (Auth. Representative) Date : November 28, 2023

EC must have power to derecognise political parties for violations of conditions, SC told

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) must have the power to deregister a political party in case of a violation of the mandatory conditions for registration and for breach of laws, the Supreme Court has been told by a petitioner. Fresh written submissions, seeking more punitive powers to the poll panel, have been filed by petitioner and advocate Ashwini Upadhyay ahead of a crucial hearing on his plea on Tuesday. A three-judge bench, headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, is hearing pleas, including the one filed by Upadhyay, alleging that the pre-election promise of freebies by political parties is a

corrupt practice and amounts to a "bribe" under the Representation of the People Act. The pleas have also said the EC should be empowered to effectively deal with this practice. The written submissions, filed through senior advocate Vijay Hansaria and advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey, said, "The Election Commission of India shall be entitled to deregister a political party on failure to satisfy the aforesaid mandatory conditions and/or such other conditions that the Election Commission may prescribe after complying with the principles of natural justice." "The Election Commission may be directed to frame guidelines for continuance of the registra-

tion of the political parties," the submissions said and listed out the mandatory conditions, violations of which should follow punitive action from the poll panel. "The political party (registered unrecognised political parties) has set up candidates in a minimum of 5 per cent of the seats the succeeding two general elections of the State Legislative Assembly and/or two seats in the Lok Sabha held after the registration of the political party, and has obtained a minimum of 5 per cent of the votes polled in the seats contested by it," one of the proposed conditions read. "The political party has filed its annual audit accounts as required under the Transpa-

rency Guidelines dated 29.08.2014 issued by the Election Commission of India within the prescribed time," it said. The political parties shall submit a certificate every year, certifying its existence at the notified addresses and the total number of its registered members as on December 31 prior to the year of the filing of the certificate, it said. Presently, there are eight recognised national political parties and 56 state-level recognised parties. The total number of registered unrecognised political parties in the country is 2,796. Earlier, Hansaria had told the court that the pre-election promise of freebies by political

parties is a corrupt practice and amounts to a "bribe" under the Representation of the People Act. Such a corrupt practice is a ground for declaring an election to be void, he had said. Hansaria had told the bench that the 2013 judgment delivered by a two-judge bench of the apex court in the matter of S Subramaniam Balaji vs The Government of Tamil Nadu and others required reconsideration. In the 2013 judgment, the apex court had noted that after examining and considering the parameters laid down in section 123 of the Representation of the People Act, it had arrived at a conclusion that promises in an election manifesto cannot be read into section 123 for declaring it to be a corrupt practice. Hansaria had submitted that the judgment in the case of S Subramaniam Balaji did not lay down the correct law. "Under section 123 of the RP Act, 1951, 'bribery' is deemed to be corrupt practice for the purpose of the Act. The expression 'bribery' has been defined to mean any gift, offer or promise by a candidate or his agent or by any other person with the consent of a candidate or his election agent of any gratification with the object of inducing an elector as a reward to his candidature." "Thus, the promises made by the political party are nothing but a bribe within the meaning of section 123(1)(A) of the RP Act, 1951, which is a corrupt practice, and if other conditions mentioned in the said section are fulfilled, is a ground for declaring the election to be void under section 100(1)(b) of the Act," Hansaria had said.

4 students among 9 held for supplying drugs in colleges

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

Nine people, including four students from two renowned universities, have been arrested for their alleged involvement in the supply of drugs to college-goers and others. The police have seized a variety of Indian and foreign-origin drugs, including marijuana, cocaine, hashish, MDMA, estimated to be worth around Rs 30 lakh in the black market, and claim international links in the racket. "The arrests have been made by officials of Sector 126 police station as part of a crackdown on narcotics ordered by Police Commissioner Laxmi Singh, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Noida) Harish Chander said. "It's an ongoing crackdown against narcotics in which arrests and seizures have been made in Greater Noida in the past. Now as part of the same campaign, nine people have been arrested by the Sector 126 police station officials," the DCP said. "Four of them are students - two enrolled in MBA and two in LLB programmes at a university here. Narcotic substances like MDMA, ganja, OG, have been seized from



their possession in large quantities," Chander told reporters. "These accused, especially the four students, were supplying the drugs in educational institutions and PGs. They procured high-quality marijuana from Shillong," said the DCP, flanked by Additional DCP Shakti Mohan Avasthy and ACP Rajneesh Verma. Sharing details of recovery from the accused, police said they have seized 15 kg of marijuana procured from Shillong and Udaipur, 30 gm of cocaine, 20 gm of MDMA (pills), 150 gm of hashish and 65 gm of foreign-origin marijuana. "The narcotics recovered is valued around Rs 30 lakh," Chander said. Police said they have seized two electronic weighing machines,

10 mobile phones, Rs 3,200 cash, besides impounding an SUV and two motorcycles - all of which were used for drugs supply by the accused. Those arrested have been identified as Akshay Kumar (32), Rajan Singh (20), Darshan Jain (21), Aditya Kumar (21), Satendra Srivastava (21), Sagar Bajaj (22), Anit Som (22), Apoorva Saxena (28) and Narendra Kumar (28), the police said. "DCP Chander said the Noida Police had developed a link based in Rajasthan, which is Narendra Kumar, who supplied drugs to other accused. The officer said apart from those arrested, three more people's role has come to light. They have been identified and would be arrested soon, he said.

Among those absconding is a man of African-origin but currently residing in Delhi, Chander added. He said the police are contacting educational institutions and sharing information with them while also developing the linkages of the drug supply racket. During questioning, accused Anit Som told the police that he had purchased a few packets of cannabis from a gang which was busted recently in Greater Noida, he said. According to police, accused Akshay Kumar's wife works in Taiwan and he would procure cocaine through her. He would visit Taiwan and return with OG drug, which was then sold here for a rate as high as Rs 10,000 per gm, the police added. "The police are further exploring the two links of drug procurement - one from Taiwan and the other from Nigeria - which have come to light during the initial probe in the case," DCP Chander said. An FIR has been lodged in the case under provisions of the stringent Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, police said, adding further legal proceedings are being carried out.

LG dissolves AAP standing committee for investigating criminal cases

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has dissolved the standing committee constituted by the AAP Government with a putative view to ensure the quality of investigation in criminal cases and their prosecution, saying it was in "gross violation" of the 2014 Supreme Court directions, according to a Raj Niwas order. While scrapping the existing Standing Committee headed by Standing Counsel (Criminal) Delhi High Court and Additional Standing Counsel as Member, Saxena approved the proposal for its reconstitution with Additional Chief Secretary/Principal Secretary (Home) as Chairman and Principal Secretary (Law), Director (Prosecution) and Special Commissioner of Police, as members. "Delhi LG V K Saxena has dissolved the existing Standing Committee constituted by the AAP Government for ensuring the quality of investigation in criminal cases and their prosecution, noting that it was in gross violation of the 2014 Supreme Court directions and subsequent guidelines of the Centre," an official from



the LG office said in a note shared with media on Monday. Saxena noted that there was no reason or justification for the continuation of the existing committee and even his predecessor had time and again objected to it, the official said. He said that in his note on May 11, 2017, his predecessor, Anil Baijal, had directed a review of the constitution of the committee to bring it in conformity with the order of the apex court and reminders were also issued by the LG Secretariat on February 19, 2018, June 22, 2018, October 18, 2018, and May 31, 2019. However, no proposal for the reconstitution of the committee was submitted, the person said. After the enactment of the GNCTD Amendment Act 2023, the Additional Chief

Secretary (Home) proposed the reconstitution of the standing committee with an Additional Chief Secretary (Home) as Chairman, Principal Secretary (Law), Director (Directorate of Prosecution) and Special CP as members. The Supreme Court had in 2014 directed the Home departments of every state to constitute a standing committee with senior officers of police and prosecution departments, vesting them with the responsibility of examining all orders of acquittal and recording reasons for the failure of prosecution in each case. "It was noted by the LG that the existing committee is headed by Standing Counsel (Criminal) with Additional Standing Counsel as Member, who are part of prosecution

and entrusted with the presentation of cases before the court. "Therefore, their role in such cases also comes under the purview of the Committee and inclusion of these officers in the Standing Committee should be viewed as an attempt to dilute the directions/guidelines issued by the Supreme Court/Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India," the official said in the statement. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs had in 2014 issued an advisory on the monitoring of investigations to ensure that the investigating officers, as well as prosecuting officers, discharge their duties. The standing committee was initially constituted by the Home Department with the Director of Prosecution as its chairman. "However, the standing committee was reconstituted with the approval of Delhi Home Minister with Senior Standing Counsel (Criminal) as Chairman in violation of rules," the official claimed. The proposal for reconstituting the committee was also not placed before the then LG for his opinion as "Services" and "Police" were outside the purview of the AAP government at that point, he added.

City air quality severe



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital registered air quality falling once again in the 'severe' category on Monday morning as several areas in Delhi recorded AQI over the 400 mark. Some localities saw AQI less than 400. The current PM2.5 concentration in New Delhi is 16 times above the recommended limit given by the WHO 24 hrs air quality guidelines value. According to a study by IIT Kanpur, IIT Delhi and TERI who are involved with the real-time source apportionment study has highlighted biomass burning, secondary aerosols and vehicles as some of the main contributors to the worrying air quality of the national capital in November this year. The data showed that PM 2.5 have been contributing major

chunk to the pollution in the national Capital. The secondary aerosol, which are particles such as sulfate, nitrate, ammonium formed in the atmosphere from the interaction of various gases. The secondary aerosol potential sources include powerplants, refineries, brick kilns, vehicles, industry, agriculture, organic waste decomposition, and open drains. According to the portal on real-time source apportionment, the share of secondary inorganic aerosols to PM2.5 was 36 per cent on November 23, while next day it came down to 23 per cent and once again spiked to 29 per cent on November 25 and on November 26 it was 26 per cent. According to the portal, the share of vehicles, which consists of the off and on-road vehicles, petrol, diesel, CNG-powered

vehicles, and diesel generator sets to PM2.5 was 22 per cent on November 23, 26 per cent on November 25 and 29 per cent on November 26. Going by the portal, the share of biomass burning, which includes wood, dung, agriculture residue, and plant branches and leaves to PM2.5 was 27 per cent on November 23, 40 per cent on November 24, 37 per cent on November 25 and 30 per cent on November 26. The study project was started by the Delhi Pollution Control Committee in collaboration with IIT Kanpur, IIT Delhi and TERI. Meanwhile, the overall air quality in Delhi continues to be in the 'very poor' category with the AQI at 369 on Monday evening, according to data from the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR).

Two sharpshooters of Arshdeep gang held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Two sharpshooters of international gangster Arshdeep Singh's gang have been arrested following a brief exchange of fire with police near Mayur Vihar of east Delhi. The arrested accused have been identified as Rajpreet Singh (25), and Virender Singh (22) and they were planning to kill Punjabi singer Elly Mangat. The police said that based on secret information, they arrested the sharpshooters, Rajpreet Singh, 25, and Virender Singh, 22, after a brief exchange of fire on the main road leading to the Akshardham temple Sunday night. The duo fired five rounds, two of which hit the bulletproof jacket of the police personnel. In retaliation, the police fired six rounds, and Virender sustained a gunshot injury. He was taken to Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital. Based on their disclosure, another suspect, Sachin Bhati, was arrested from Gautam Budh Nagar. Two revolvers, 13 live cartridges a hand grenade and a stolen motorcycle were seized from them, police said. An FIR for an attempt to murder and under the Explosive Substances Act and the Arms Act have been registered against the



accused. "Based on the disclosure made by the accused, a raid was conducted at Dairy Skaner in Gautam Buddh Nagar of Uttar Pradesh and another associate, identified as Sachin Bhati, suspected to be having a huge cache of arms, was apprehended," police said in a statement. The senior police officer said that during interrogation, the accused admitted that they were tasked by Arshdeep Singh to kill singer Elly Mangat. They had attempted an attack on the singer in October 2023 also in Bathinda but failed to target her. This was because the singer was not at home at the time. A case has been registered against both the miscreants, under the Explosive Substances Act and the Arms Act. The case was registered by the Special Cell of the Delhi Police. Rajpreet was currently wanted

in a murder case of Paramjeet Singh which was committed in January 2023. Paramjit Singh was murdered by the accused and his associates on behalf of Dala. Virender was currently wanted in a criminal case of firing in front of Prem Jewellers of Mod Mandi Punjab. "Firing was carried out on behalf of Arshdeep as he demanded extortion from the owner of Prem Jewellers," said the official. Arshdeep Singh, aged 27 and hailing from Dalla village in Punjab's Moga district, is linked to radical organizations such as the Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) and the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF). Known for engaging in a range of organized criminal activities, Arshdeep is also affiliated with the infamous Canadian gangster Goldy Brar.

DU may provide up to 20 per cent courses through online portal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi University may provide up to 20 per cent of its courses through online medium on the Swayam portal. A proposal in this regard will be placed before the Academic Council during its meeting scheduled for November 30. According to the proposal, colleges may consider to provide up to 20 per cent of the total courses being offered in a particular programme in a semester in online mode. This would supplement the teaching-learning process in the institute, the proposal said. The proposal is expected to be opposed by a large majority of AC members who feel that employment generation at the university will be at risk amid the push for online learning, according to Maya John, assistant professor, Jesus Mary college. "Almost 90 per cent of the Academic Council members will oppose this proposal as it is an anti-student and anti-teacher move. Classroom teaching is very important for many students who come from different backgrounds and this will also impact the need for teaching staff who will be sub-

stituted by online learning on Swayam," she said. The proposal is in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 that aims to achieve 50 per cent Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education by year 2035 with the help of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) offered by the Swayam platform. The Academic Council in June 2019 had sought the Executive Council's approval for the adoption of the UGC (Credit Framework for Online Learning Courses through SWYAM) Regulations, 2016. Earlier this year, the university's Department of Commerce had expressed its desire to implement MOOCs developed by teachers of the department and develop its course content based on the curriculum of the university. A Departmental Council meeting in February had decided and approved details regarding the title of the MOOC to be offered, its course coordinator, and credits to be assigned for the same. Currently, Delhi University does not provide MOOCs through Swayam -- a government portal for free online courses for students.

International Year of Millets celebrated

NEW DELHI: Delhi Public School Rohini organized its Annual Day, 'Millet Moods: A Metaphor in Melody' on Saturday, to celebrate the International Year of Millets, as recognized by the United Nations and Food & Agriculture Organization. The programme commenced with the traditional lighting of the lamp to invoke the blessings of the Almighty. The Chief Guest for the occasion was B. K. Chaturvedi, Chairman, DPS Society. Namita Pradhan, Chairperson, DPS Rohini was the Guest of Honour. Special Guests were Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy, and Dr Tarun Bajaj, Director, APEDA. PTI



Devotees visit the Gurudwara Bangla Sahib on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ranjan Dimri

Scam in tendering process of STPs operated by DJB: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday alleged a scam in the tendering process for upgrading sewage treatment plants operated by the Delhi Jal Board and demanded that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tender his resignation immediately. Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters here, BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia claimed the Delhi Jal Board invited bids for upgradation of five sewage treatment plants (STPs) in the city and for upgradation and augmentation of another five to increase their capacity. While the estimated cost of the projects was around Rs 1,500 crore, they were awarded to the contractors at an increased rate of Rs 1,938 crore, Bhatia claimed. Responding to BJP allegations, the AAP said now the BJP is alleging that some officers of DJB have violated tender guidelines. "The Delhi government has itself asked DJB and Finance Department to identify errant officers based on complaints received so far, but no action has been taken so far. The Ministers play no role whatsoever in the tendering



process, which is all handled by concerned officials. It is not the Minister's responsibility to go into the technicalities and rules of NGT, DPCC, or CPCB; but rather the job of DJB officials to take cognisance of such standards," the AAP said in a statement. Earlier, the BJP spokesperson further charged that bids were invited and tenders were awarded only after cartelisation to ensure that no honest contractor gets the project... This is worrisome, Arvind Kejriwal you have committed one more scam," the BJP spokesperson charged. "Look at Arvind Kejriwal's mechanism. The L1 (lowest) bid was at Rs 392 crore but the contract was awarded at an increased cost of Rs 408 crore...Prima facie this is a scam worth Rs 450-500 crore in awarding contracts," he added. "If there is anyone who is syn-

onymous with corruption and an expert in loot, it's one and only 'kattar beimaan' (outright dishonest) Arvind Kejriwal... If at all there even a little shame left, Arvind Kejriwal should immediately resign as Delhi Chief Minister and let the law take its course," Bhatia said. "It's your politics of 2012-13 that if anyone faces any allegation the person should immediately resign from his post and until proven innocent," he added. Raising the issue, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva has written to central probe agencies and Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena, seeking an investigation into alleged irregularities in the tendering process for upgrading the sewage treatment plants run by the DJB. "Estimates were prepared by the consultant on the basis of a single quotation, resulting in the estimates being higher than the market rate. During the process, the rates of items/works (mainly civil works) were prepared on higher sides and thereafter, works were awarded at Rs 1,938 crore -- 28 per cent higher than the estimated cost of Rs 1,508 crore," Sachdeva alleged.

Address water contamination in New Friends' Colony in 24 hours, says Atishi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Water Minister Atishi on Monday demanded that complaints of contaminated water in New Friends Colony be addressed within 48 hours, and also asked the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) for a compliance report on the matter. Exemplary action would be taken against officers to ensure there is no laxity in the future, Atishi said. "It is the responsibility of the DJB to ensure that every resident in Delhi gets clean and adequate water. DJB CEO should ensure that the problem of contaminated water is resolved within 48 hours and also give a compliance report on the same," she said. "Strong and exemplary action would be taken against concerned officers to ensure there was no laxity in the future in ensuring clean water to all residents of Delhi," the water minister said in her communiqué expressing her displeasure to DJB. The minister said Heads must be rolled if residents of Delhi are getting dirty water. In a related development, a section of Delhi Jal Board contractors association went on a strike on Monday over non-payment of dues, its general sec-



retary Vinay Mangla said and claimed that around 1,150 contractors will halt their work until payments are made to everyone. "It is an open-ended strike and we are expecting it to go on for a week," he said. The Delhi Jal Board Contractors Welfare Association had written to the additional chief engineer mentioning that the contractors would stop all ongoing works due to non-payment of funds. "After detailed deliberations and finding no option, it was unanimously decided that all ongoing works related to water leakages, water contamination, maintenance of water supply, settled sewerage system, maintenance of sewerage system, operation of tube wells and pumping stations, providing sewer beldars, engagement of labours and de-silting work will be stopped from November 27," the letter read. DJB Vice-

Chairman Somnath Bhati said the Delhi Government has been doing everything possible to ensure the release of funds for the board for the last three months. Meanwhile, Water supply in several areas, including Rohini, will be affected from Wednesday to Thursday due to a shutdown for interconnection of the water main at the Keshopur drain and the Peeragarhi Chowk, the DJB said. Residents have been advised to store sufficient water according to requirement, and water tankers will be available on request, the board said in a post on X. "Due to shutdown for interconnection at Keshopur drain and Peeragarhi Chowk (Rohtak Road) from 10 am to 10 pm on November 29, the water supply in several colonies/areas will not be available/will be available at low pressure from the evening of November 29 to morning November 30," the DJB said. The "affected areas are - Rohini Sector- 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 22, 23 and 25, Madhuban chowk, Mangolpur, Sultampur, Paschim Vihar, Major Bhopender Singh Nagar, Mahavir Nagar, Krishna Park, Janakpuri and their adjoining areas," it said.

J&K, NE region can drive India's growth story: Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Monday said that Jammu and Kashmir and the unexplored north-eastern region have huge natural resources that would drive India's future growth story during the Amrit Kaal towards attaining a 'Viksit Bharat @ 2047', an official statement quoted Singh as saying. The value addition to India's growth is going to come from these unexplored regions during the next 25 years, the Minister of State for Personnel added. Singh, who represents Udhampur constituency of Jammu and Kashmir in the Lok Sabha, said the discovery of lithium in Reasi district may well turn out to be 'India's next big story', giving a multifold boost to the country's economy, according to the

December 8, an official statement said. "The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the unexplored north-eastern region (NER) have huge natural resources that would drive India's future growth story during the Amrit Kaal towards attaining a 'Viksit Bharat @ 2047', an official statement quoted Singh as saying. The value addition to India's growth is going to come from these unexplored regions during the next 25 years, the Minister of State for Personnel added. Singh, who represents Udhampur constituency of Jammu and Kashmir in the Lok Sabha, said the discovery of lithium in Reasi district may well turn out to be 'India's next big story', giving a multifold boost to the country's economy, according to the



statement. "Analysis suggests that the value of lithium deposits of Reasi might be higher than [the one found] in China," he said, stating that lithium is a key component in rechargeable batteries and there is huge demand for it as the world turns to renewable energy. Singh said, the success of 'aroma mission' and 'purple revolution' in the Baderwah and Gulmarg regions of Jammu and Kashmir has resulted in over 3,000 startups engaged in lavender cultivation alone. "Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh have sent delegations to J-K to study the lavender cultivation model and have evinced interest in emulating the aroma mission," the statement issued by the Personnel Ministry quoted the minister as saying.

Stating that an increasing number of items from J-K have been geo-tagged, Singh called upon the JKAS officers to promote the sale of GI-tagged products from the UT to boost the local economy. He said that ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office in 2014, he has made it a commitment to bring the neglected and remote regions of India including J-K, Ladakh, the islands and the northeast region into the national mainstream. PM Modi has introduced several governance reforms for the socio-economic upliftment of society, he added. "Public policy in our country is currently aimed at enhanced transparency and accountability in governance with focus on fiscal federalism, transforming rural India, and improving the quality of public service

delivery," the minister said. The 7th capacity building programme is being attended by 26 JKAS officers working in the ranks of secretaries, special secretaries, additional secretaries, CEOs, directors, joint directors, development officers among others, the statement said. The training workshop is tailored to equip civil servants of Jammu and Kashmir in delivering robust and seamless services to the people, it said. "The cutting-edge knowledge and new skill set acquired during this programme will help these civil servants in efficient public service delivery to improve the lives of people. The aim of this programme is to reorient officers to work with single-mindedness to improve the quality of life and create opportunities for the people," the statement said.

Denial of legal aid creates existential challenge to vulnerable: Dhankhar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Monday said denial of legal aid creates an existential challenge to the vulnerable, and said affirmative initiatives and policies can help overcome such problems faced by the weaker sections. He also said that the Global South should shed the shackles of its colonial past and strive together to reverse the historical wrongs that have perpetuated injustice and inequality. "Time has come to follow India's example and emulate the same ... Our country is in the process and legislations are under consideration of Parliament that will bring about sea change in our outlook and totally curb and contain those exploitative provisions in procedure and penalty," he said. The vice president was apparently referring to three bills which seek to replace the IPC, CrPC and the Evidence Act. Addressing the first regional conference on "Ensuring Access to Quality Legal Aid for the Vulnerable: Challenges and Opportunities in the Global South," he said Parliament has embarked on a journey of legal reformation.



Promoting mediation, repealing archaic laws that hinder progress and enacting new laws that address contemporary challenges are some of the key areas on which bills are being considered and passed. Access to legal aid and justice system, he felt, is quintessential to nurturing and blossoming of fundamental human values and fostering equitable societies. He referred to the declaration in the preamble of the Indian Constitution "We, the people of India," saying it reflects the spirit of an inclusive document aimed at safeguarding the rights of every citizen, regardless of background, circumstances, or social standing. "Prescription in Article 32 of the constitution, the right of

every individual to move the Supreme Court for the enforcement of fundamental rights was eloquently reflected by B R Ambedkar as the 'soul of the Constitution', "he pointed out. He also said Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud is in mission mode to secure, particularly for the marginalised sections, availability of legal aid and access to justice with ease. He recalled that the CJ has initiated in the last one year series of affirmative innovative people-centric steps that have turned out to be game changer in bolstering both legal aid and easy access to justice system by vulnerable segments of society. Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, CJ Chandrachud and senior judges of the Supreme Court were present.

India, US to finalise Predator drone deal by March US Congress expected to clear supplies in a few weeks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India is looking at sealing a landmark deal to procure 31 MQ-9B Predator long-endurance armed drones from the US under a government-to-government framework by March with the US Congress expected to clear the supplies in the next few weeks, people familiar with the matter said. American and Indian government officials will hold the final series of negotiations on the procurement after Washington responds to India's Letter of Request (LoR) for the acquisition of drones from US defence major General Atomics (GA), sources said. India is procuring the long-endurance 'hunter-killer' drones to crank up the surveillance apparatus of the armed forces, especially along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China. Though the price of the drones will be finalised in the negotiation process, it is estimated that the procurement would cost around USD 3 billion. The people cited above said New Delhi and Washington will depite their respective teams to firm up the deal including finalising the cost



and other nitty-gritties. The aim is to seal the deal by March next year, they said. As part of the laid down process, the agreement will be between the Indian government and American authorities and the Pentagon will convey to General Atomics about the requirement of the Indian armed forces, they added. It is understood that the issue of India's proposed procurement of the drones figured in US Defence Secretary Lloyd J Austin's talks with his Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh in Delhi earlier this month. Asked at a media briefing as to when the procurement will

be finalised, Austin said it will be announced at the right time. "Well, again, you know, we've -- at the right time, we'll announce the deal. I think the government, the officials in the government are doing everything necessary to make sure that that capability ... You (India) get that capability as quickly as possible," he said. The Defence Acquisition Council headed by Singh on June 15 accorded the Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) or initial approval for the acquisition of 31 MQ-9B drones from the US under the foreign military sale (FMS)

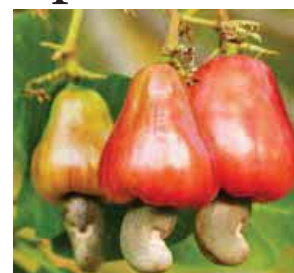
route. In June, both sides also reached an agreement under which American aerospace major General Electric will partner with Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd to produce jet engines for Indian military aircraft in India. The Sea Guardian drones are being procured for the three services as they can carry out a variety of roles including maritime surveillance, anti-submarine warfare and over-the-horizon targeting. While the Navy will get 15 Sea Guardian drones, the Indian Air Force and the Army will each get eight Sky Guardian drones. The high-altitude long-endurance drones are capable of remaining airborne for over 35 hours and can carry four Hellfire missiles and around 450 kgs of bombs. In 2020, the Indian Navy had taken on lease two MQ-9B Sea Guardian drones from General Atomics for one year for surveillance in the Indian Ocean. The lease period has been extended subsequently. In their over 50-minute talks on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Joe Biden vowed to "deepen and diversify" the bilateral major defence part-

nership while welcoming forward movement in India's procurement of 31 drones and joint development of jet engines. The India-US defence cooperation has been on an upswing in the last few years. In June 2016, the US designated India a "Major Defence Partner" paving the way for sharing of critical military equipment and technology. The two countries have also inked key defence and security pacts over the past few years, including the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016 that allows their militaries to use each other's bases for repair and replenishment of supplies. The two sides also signed C O M C A S A (C o m m u n i c a t i o n s Compatibility and Security Agreement) in 2018 which provides for interoperability between the two militaries and the sale of high-end technology from the US to India. In October 2020, India and the US sealed the BECA (Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement) agreement to further boost bilateral defence ties. The pact provides for the sharing of high-end military technology, logistics and geospatial maps between the two countries.

National system for export of cashew nuts being developed

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

With food safety becoming a major concern of consumers worldwide and farm to fork traceability, need of the day, the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Development Authority (APEDA) is in the process of developing a national traceability system for export consignments of cashew nuts. TraceNet is an internet based electronic service offered by APEDA to the stakeholders for facilitating process certification for export of organic products from India which comply with the NPOP or NOP standards. TraceNet collects, stores and reports - forward and backward traces and quality assurance data entered by the operators / producer groups and certification bodies within the organic supply chain in India, explained an official from the APEDA, an organisation under the Union Ministry of Commerce. The move to put cashew nuts on a traceability system follows increasing demand for the cashew nuts in the global market. The proposed Cashew nut tracker will be on the line of the GrapeNet, the first-ever fresh grapes exported to the European Union. The success of GrapeNet had encouraged APEDA to launch a similar traceability system for pomegranates (AnarNet), peanuts and some organic products too. "In the future, APEDA may intervene in the automation of the cashew industry. Training of professionals, registration of cashew processing units, and a traceability system will be formulated for cashew,



replicating peanuts. "APEDA will disseminate cashew-related information to stakeholders. APEDA is dedicated to continually exploring innovative methods, leveraging technology, and strengthening trade relations to ensure that Indian cashew products reach every corner of the world," said the official. After Côte d'Ivoire, India is the second largest producer and exporter of Cashew Nuts with a share of more than 15 per cent, followed by Vietnam in the world's cashew export. Netherlands, Japan, and Saudi Arabia are the major importers of cashew nuts from India. Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are the major cashew producing states in India. India primarily exports Cashew Nuts with small quantities of Cashew Nut Shell Liquid and Cardanol, according to the official. During 2021-22, the cashew exports by value grew from US\$ 420 million in 2020-21 to US\$ 452 million in 2021-22, witnessing a growth of 7 per cent. APEDA is working towards exploring new markets for cashew in the international markets of Japan, Saudi Arabia, UK, Spain, Kuwait, Qatar, USA and European countries, etc, the official added.

Soap helps fight malaria carrying mosquitoes, find US scientists



"It's a race now to develop alternative compounds with new modes of action." Both laboratory tests and field trials have shown that neonicotinoids, a special class of insecticide, are a promising alternative to target populations showing resistance to existing insecticides, said Caroline Fouet, Research Assistant Professor at UTEP. Neonicotinoids, however, do not kill some mosquito species unless their potency is boosted. In this case, Fouet said, soap is the boosting substance. In 2020, there were an estimated 241 million cases of malaria worldwide, according to the Centers for Disease Control, resulting in 627,000 deaths. In a new study published on Friday in PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases, the team selected three low-cost, lime-seed-oil based soaps that are prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa -- Maitre Savon de Marseille, Carolin Savon Noir and La Perdrix Savon -- and added them to four different neonicotinoids, acetamiprid,



clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam. In all cases, the insecticides drastically enhanced potency, the team wrote in the study. "All three brands of soap increase mortality from 30 per cent to 100 per cent compared to when the insecticides were used on their own," said Ashu Fred, first author and doctoral student at Cameroon's University of Yaounde. The team also tested the addition of soap to a class of insecticides known as pyrethroids. In those cases, however, they saw no benefits. The team hopes to conduct additional testing to establish exactly how much soap is needed to enhance insecticides. "We would love to make a soap-insecticide formulation that can be used indoors in Africa and be healthy for users," Kamdem said. "There are unknowns as to whether such a formulation will stick to materials like mosquito nets, but the challenge is both promising and very exciting."

'Common skin bacterium can cause itch by acting directly on nerve cells'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Scientists at Harvard Medical School have shown for the first time that a common skin bacterium, Staphylococcus aureus can cause itch by acting directly on nerve cells. The findings, based on research in mice and in human cells, are published in journal Cell. The research adds an important piece to the long-standing puzzle of itch and helps explain In such conditions, the equilibrium of microorganisms that keep our skin healthy is often thrown off balance, allowing S. aureus to flourish, the researchers said. Up until now, the itch that occurs with eczema and atopic dermatitis was believed to arise from the accompanying inflammation of the skin. But the new findings show that S. aureus single-handedly causes itch by instigating a molecular chain reaction that culminates in the urge to scratch. "We've identified an entirely novel mechanism behind itch - the bacterium Staph aureus, which is found on almost every patient with the chronic condition atopic dermatitis. We show that itch can be caused by the microbe itself," said Isaac Chiu, senior author, associate professor of immunology in the Blavatnik Institute at HMS. The study experiments showed that S. aureus releases a chemical that activates a protein on the nerve fibers that transmit signals from the skin to the brain. Treating animals with an FDA-approved anti-clotting medicine successfully blocked the activation of the protein to



interrupt this key step in the itch-scratch cycle. The treatment relieved symptoms and minimized skin damage. The findings can inform the design of oral medicines and topical creams to treat persistent itch that occurs with various conditions linked to an imbalance in the skin microbiome, such as atopic dermatitis, prurigo nodularis, and psoriasis. The repeated scratching that is a hallmark of these conditions can cause skin damage and amplify inflammation. "Itch can be quite debilitating in patients who suffer from chronic skin conditions. Many of these patients carry on their skin the very microbe we've now shown for the first time can induce itch," said study first author Liwen Deng, a postdoctoral research fellow in the Chiu Lab. Researchers exposed the skin of mice to S. aureus. The animals developed intensifying itch over several days, and the repeated scratching caused worsening skin damage that spread beyond the

original site of exposure. Moreover, mice exposed to S. aureus became hypersensitive to innocuous stimuli that would not typically cause itch. The exposed mice were more likely than unexposed mice to develop abnormal itching in response to a light touch. The analyses showed that V8 triggers itch by activating a protein called PAR1, which is found on skin neurons that originate in the spinal cord and carry various signals - touch, heat, pain, itch - from the skin to the brain. Normally, PAR1 lies dormant but upon contact with certain enzymes, including V8, it gets activated. The research showed that V8 snips one end of the PAR1 protein and awakens it. Experiments in mice showed that once activated, PAR1 initiates a signal that the brain eventually perceives as itch. When researchers repeated the experiments in lab dishes containing human neurons, they also responded to V8, said the study.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath along with the Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and foreign guests inaugurating the splendid Dev Deepawali celebration by lighting diyas at Namoo Ghat.

CM inaugurates Dev Deepawali celebrations by lighting diyas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath along with the Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri and foreign guests inaugurated the splendid Dev Deepawali celebration by lighting diyas at Namoo Ghat on the auspicious occasion of Kartik Purnima on Monday evening. The CM Yogi Adityanath welcomed the ambassadors of 70 countries, 150 foreign delegates and their family members at Namoo Ghat from there they embarked on a cruise to watch the grand celebration. Thereafter, the CM reached Manikarnika Ghat where he attended a programme at Satua Baba Ashram. The CM also worshipped at Shri Kashi Vishwanath Mandir.

Earlier, on reaching the airport in Babatpur, the CM was welcomed by the UP Tourism Minister Jaiveer Singh, MP BP Saroj, Zila Panchayat Chairperson Poonam Maurya, MLAs Saurabh Srivastava & Sushil Singh, Divisional Commissioner Kaushal Raj Sharma and DMS Rajalingam. From the airport, the CM reached Namoo Ghat.

It was a rare scene when the stretch of 85 Ganga ghats spread several kilometres in semi-circle shape were glittered with 12 lakh diyas (earthen lamps), while Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham decorated with 11 ton flowers. The ghats were adorned with attractive tricolour spiral facade and LED lighting arrangements adding to the grandeur of Dev Deepawali celebration.

For the ambassadors of 70 countries, 150 foreign delegates and their family members riding on a cruise, it was an unforgettable moment to watch Ganga Ghats glittered with diyas, 12 lakh in quantity including one lakh which were made from cow dung conveying the message of nature preservation, laser show at Gang Dwar of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Mandir, fireworks in the stretch of one km on the sand across Ganga and Maha Ganga Aarti at Dasawamedh Ghat, ancient Dashashwamedh Ghat and other Ghats performed by as many as 21 Vedic scholars and as many as 42 girls in the form of Riddhi-Siddhi. The Maha Aarti events were performed under the auspices of Ganga Seva Nidhi, Gangotri

Seva Samiti and Kendriya Dev Deepawali Mahasamiti. The 3D laser mapping show also continued highlighting the rich heritage of this mythological city of Lord Shiva at Chet Singh Ghat for the fourth consecutive year.

Despite all restrictions on the arrival of outside boats from adjoining districts of Mirzapur, Chandauli and Ghazipur, there were traffic jams like situation in the river as thousands of people watched the grandeur of the festival either from mid-stream or from across the river.

With the festival, the month-long event of lighting Akashdeep in the memory of martyred soldiers and police personnel also concluded. At Dashashwamedh Ghat, senior officers of Army, Air Force, CRPF, NDRF and others were present.

At the mythological Panchganga ghat, Hazara was lit as per the tradition. It was the ghat where the festival was being organised for a long, more than a century, whereas at other parts of the ghats as well as ponds, it got a grandeur shape in recent two-three decades. On the occasion, the

people also lit diyas at their homes.

By the time when the diyas started being lit, there was not an inch of space left at any of the important ghats as they were packed with the people. The tricolour spiral facade and LED lighting on all the poles installed on the ghats apart from main crossings at Atulanand, Kutcheri, Ambedkar Park, Teliabagh, Lahurabir, Maldahiya, Maidagin, Godowlia and others made this City of Lord Shiva shining like the stars in the sky.

On the occasion, elaborate security arrangements were made at ghats to avoid any untoward incident and the festival was watched through CCTV cameras.

The Water Police personnel were keeping watch at different ghats, while National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel remained alert to keep watch on the ghats through patrolling in motor boats.

To see the grandeur of the festival, a large number of tourists as well as celebrities came here and most of the hotels were booked fully.

Thousands take holy dip in Ganga

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Thousands of devotees thronged various Ganga ghats on Monday to take a holy dip in the river Ganga on the auspicious occasion of Kartik Purnima. Heavy rush of devotees was also seen at the temples including Kashi Vishwanath temple. In view of the rush of people, elaborate security arrangements were made at various ghats and several traffic restrictions were imposed especially in the central city area of Dashashwamedh, southern part of Assi and Bhaissaur in the northern part near Rajghat.

Water Police and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel were seen active along with expert divers. Senior police officers in view of the rush of devotees were camping there.

Heavy rush of devotees was seen particularly at Dashashwamedh, Rajendra Prasad, Ahilyabai, Man Mandir, Assi, Sheelta, Scindia, Panchganga, Nagwa,



Devotees taking a holy dip in Ganga on the auspicious occasion of Kartik Purnima.

Bhaissaur, Rajghat, Narad, Kedar, Hanuman, Ravidas and Tulsi Ghat. Meanwhile, the activists of Namami Gange launched a massive cleanliness drive to collect the garbage

from the river. During the bathing period, the activists led by regional convenor (Kashi Unit) Rajesh Shukla appealed to the people not to throw plastic bottles, polythene bags,

flowers etc into the river and put the same into the dustbins. He said that the festivals of Kartik Purnima and Dev Deepawali give us a message of saving the rivers.

Prakash Utsav of Guru Nanak Dev Ji Maharaj celebrated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The 554th Prakash Utsav (Guruparv) of the founder and World Guru of Sikhism, Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji Maharaj was celebrated with traditional gaiety, religious fervour and enthusiasm at Gurubagh Gurdwara on Monday. On the occasion, the gurdwara was decorated in a grand manner. Heavy rush of Sikh families was seen at the gurdwara throughout the day.

During the day, the programme began in the wee hours with Shahana Sangat which was followed by showering flowers, Naam Simran, Path Sukhmani Sahib, Asa Di Vaar Kirtan etc. From 9 am, the students of Guru Nanak English School (Shivpur), Guru Nanak Khalsa Girls Inter College and Guru Nanak English Medium School (Gurubagh) presented shabad kirtans and then Bhai Ranjit



Singh, the chief granthi of the gurdwara, delivered discourses followed by presentation of shabad kirtans. Later, in the afternoon langar was held.

In the evening, the Deepotsav was held at Gurudwara in Nichchi Bagh. At Gurudwara in Guru Bagh, the programme started around 7.30 pm which continued till midnight hours. At the end of the Path Sahib, ardas as well as the langar of the Guru was

served. The city is important for the Sikhism like the Hinduism and Buddhism because in 1563 Vikram Samvat, Guru Nanak Dev, the first Guru of Sikhs, had arrived in the city along with some of his followers and stayed here for almost one month and during the period he also delivered religious discourses. Gurubagh Gurdwara is the same place where Guru Nanak Dev Ji Maharaj had

delivered his discourses. Varanasi is also the place where the ninth and tenth Gurus of the Sikhs had passed some days.

The tenth and last Guru of Sikhs, Guru Govind Singh stayed sometime during his childhood along with his father at Nichibag where presently a gurdwara is also located. Some of the articles used by Guru Govind Singh and his father are still preserved at this Gurdwara.

Devotees throng Sangam on Kartik Purnima

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Lakhs of devotees thronged the holy Sangam on the auspicious occasion of Kartik Purnima to take a dip into the sacred waters of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati. Though fog had covered the bathing ghats, people braved the chill and started reaching there in early morning hours. A huge rush of devotees was also witnessed at Yamuna ghats. Owing to fog and clouds, residents could not have darshan of the Sun God on Kartik Purnima. In the evening the Sangam bank and several other ghats were decorated with lakhs of glittering diyas and glowing candles to celebrate Dev Deepawali.

Gurudwaras attracted thousands who offered special prayers besides 'ardas' and 'langar' were organised.

BUS CATCHES FIRE: A Lucknow-bound AC Shatabdi bus caught fire near Beli Hospital in the afternoon



Devotees perform religious rituals after taking a holy dip in the river Yamuna on Kartik Purnima, in Prayagraj on Monday PTI

hours. No casualty has been reported. According to reports

smoke started coming out from the engine and flames were also visible. Passengers got

down in a huff and within minutes, flames engulfed the entire bus.

Disabled girl ends life: Five cops suspended

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Five police personnel, including the outpost incharge, have been placed under suspension after the suicide by a physically disabled girl in Chilibila Bazar, Pratappur.

Reports said that some musclemen had placed lock on her beauty parlour at Maurya Crossing, Chilibila. It is alleged that when no action was initiated against the miscreants, the girl hanged herself and ended her life on Sunday.

Agitated residents and

shopowners blocked the Prayagraj-Ayodhya highway for hours and chased away the police party. Three shops on the Maurya crossing were initially owned by Makkhan Lal Jaiswal. He had six sons who fought among themselves after the death of Makkhan Lal for possession of the above shops.

Kanchan Jaiswal, physically handicapped daughter of Makkhan Lal had opened a beauty parlour in one of the above three shops.

Kanchan lived with her brothers, Ashwini, Manish, and

Harshit, while three brothers Sachin, Rishi, and Shahi lived separately.

The other three brothers sold the shops of their share to a musclem, who reached the spot and placed lock on the whole building and shooed the residents away threatening them.

Kanchan approached the police repeatedly to get justice, but she got disappointed all the time. She committed suicide by hanging herself on Sunday.

The residents got agitated, closed the whole market and

pelted stones on the shop of the accused and blocked traffic on Prayagraj-Ayodhya highway demanding the immediate arrest of the accused. They also levelled allegations on the police of partisan attitude. Police personnel, who had reached there to clear the traffic jam, were chased away by the locals.

When the officials later reached the spot, placed the cops under suspension and removed the lock placed by the accused, things became normal.

Annual sports & athletic meet held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The 162nd annual sports and athletic meet of Boys' High School (BHS) and College was held on Sunday. An alumnus of the school, Justice Samit Gopal, Judge, High Court of Judicature at Allahabad was the chief guest.

Principal DA Luke and Academic Supervisor CB Luke accorded a warm welcome to the chief guest.

Addressing the gathering, the principal encouraged the students to actively take part in the field and track events in the true sportsmanship spirit. In the battle of mettle, fortitude, courage and determination St Patrick's House in a spectacular display of field and tracks events bagged 510 points and won the prestigious Athletic Championship Trophy. St Andrew's House with 464 points came second while St George's House and St Peter's House with 298 and 138 points were placed in the third and fourth positions respectively.

Spreading the colours of brilliance and excellence, the four Houses namely, St Andrew's House (Blue), St Patrick's House (Green), St Peter's House (Yellow) and St George's House (Red), displayed a synchronous march-past on the beats of the Army band. The marching contingent was led by sports captain Mohd Arsh Siddiqui.

The chief guest, Justice Samit Gopal took the salute of the impressive march-past.

On behalf of the competitors, the sports captain took the oath and solemnly pledged to uphold the spirit of true sportsmanship. Thereafter, the chief guest declared the 162nd annual



al sports and athletic meet open.

The ceremonial lighting of the torch was a breath-taking spectacle. The star achievers in academics, sports and games who performed brilliantly carried the torch. College captain Ansh Mishra carried the torch, followed by Saarthak Singh who topped in the ICSE (10th) examination in 2023 and secured third rank in the all India merit list. Finally sports captain Mohd Arsh Siddiqui lit the torch.

In his brief address, the chief guest reminisced his school days and said that sports and games are a part of the school curriculum. He said gold medals aren't really made of gold, but of sweat, determination and hard-to-find alloy called guts.

The students showcased multifaceted talent in drills and races and enthralled the audience. To name a few were 'Aqua Babies' at the Treasure Island' by Playway, Nursery and Prep, 'Festivals, Fun and Frolic' by classes I, II and III, 'The Jungle Book' by classes IV and V, 'G 20-One Earth, One Family, One Future' by classes

VI and VII and 'Thriller' by classes VIII to XII.

It was a vibrant showcase of talent and teamwork, spanning from Playway to class XII. The youngest participants from Playway, Nursery and Prep displayed adorable yet coordinated drills, while the boys from classes I to XII demonstrated exceptional athleticism in various races. The event resonated with cheers as each group showcased their unique skills and sportsmanship. The seamless coordination and vibrant energy displayed by students across all age groups left an indelible mark, highlighting the holistic development fostered at BHS. Each child contributed to the success of this memorable Sports Day.

The lap of honour and the Tug-o-war by the 1988 and 1998 batches of alumni were a treat to watch. The reunion of the sons going grey were appreciated and cheered by the audience as well as students.

The function came to an end with a vote of thanks by the Principal DA Luke followed by the singing of the national anthem.

The results are as follows—

Project Milan: Five couples reunite

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Under Project Milan programme five couples who were living separately over petty issues got reunited in 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 sub-inspector and in-charge of FCC and was assisted by constable Savitri Yadav and Sunita Devi, counsellors Dr Krishna Singh, Nirmal Rai and Parwati Pandey.

OBSERVED: The Constitution Day was observed across the district on Sunday. A seminar was organised at the Civil Court in which District Judge Anmol Pal, other judges

and lawyers expressed their views and stressed on maintaining the rule of law. At the office of divisional commis-

sioner (SP) Abhinandan said the nation must be kept on the top. On the occasion oath for unity and integrity of the



Constitution Day being observed at the Collectorate on Sunday

sioner Additional Commissioner Abhay Kumar Pandey spoke about the importance of the Constitution. At Police Lines Superintendent

nation was administered to the cops. **ARRESTED:** The Chunar police on Sunday arrested an accused of raping a minor girl.

One person had on October 24 lodged a complaint against an unknown person alleging that his minor daughter had been enticed away. After registering the case the police started the investigation and added relevant sections and arrested a resident of Ward No. 3, Churk under Churk police station, Sonbhadra district and sent him to jail.

CAUGHT: The Rajgarh police caught two juvenile offenders in a case of culpable homicide not amounting to murder on Sunday. Subhash Kori of Baghaura Pokhadaur village under Rajgarh police station had lodged a case on October 23 alleging the assault of his family members. After registering the case the police started the investigation and caught two juvenile offenders and sent them to juvenile home on the order of the court.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Winter blues

Delhi-NCR needs a working plan to deal with the ubiquitous air pollution, not fancy ideas

Barely before you could complete that sneeze, back are the smog, haze and hazardous air to assault your nostrils, lungs and overall health. After Delhi and adjacent States stopped burning farm stubble following a Supreme Court hearing, there was some respite and the authorities conveniently forgot about the menace. But as the temperature falls, the heavy air does not let polluted air rise and Delhi-NCR once again finds itself ensnared in toxic air. Besides stubble burning, construction activity, vehicular and industrial pollution and several other factors contribute to air toxicity but a working plan to deal with it is still not in place. A few weeks back when the AQI was at hazardous levels, the Delhi Government had announced with fanfare that it would seed clouds to cause artificial rain and lick down the suspended particulate matter at a cost of crores. But like several other fancy schemes, this plan too has fizzled out. The talk of this expensive experiment, if not carried out now,



would turn out to be much ado about nothing. The Delhi Government was considering to bring about artificial rain through cloud seeding. The ambitious initiative is not without its share of benefits, disadvantages and hefty costs. Cloud seeding is the artificial generation of rain, involving the introduction of particles such as silver iodide crystals, potassium iodide and dry ice into clouds. These particles facilitate the condensation of water vapour, leading to the formation of raindrops or ice crystals, subsequently resulting in rainfall.

Artificial rains have several benefits, including the dispersal of air pollutants and the reduction of concentrations of dust, smoke, smog, haze and chemicals in the atmosphere. It can also improve moisture levels for crops, proving advantageous to the agricultural sector. However, the success depends on suitable meteorological conditions, limiting its applicability. It is not foolproof and should not be considered a guaranteed solution. The effectiveness of cloud seeding varies from project to project, and the use of potentially harmful chemicals like silver iodide may have adverse effects on plants, leading to iodism, a type of iodine poisoning. Artificial rains may alter climatic patterns, leading to undesirable or destructive weather conditions, such as flooding and storms. The cost of cloud seeding is significant, with an estimated expense of ₹1 lakh per sq km. While cloud seeding presents itself as a potential solution to the air quality crisis, its drawbacks and uncertainties raise questions about long-term viability. As the Government contemplates this ambitious intervention, a balance between addressing immediate concerns and considering the broader ecological impacts must be struck. What Delhi needs is a mix of time-tested solutions which are plenty and available across the world; all we have to do is to get the one that best suits our requirements, not what may cause more problems than it solves.

PICTALK



Devotees take part in a procession on Buddha Purnima, in Varanasi

PTI

Vijayan's public relations tour may end in a fiasco

Kerala CM goes all out to tom-tom his achievements but the ground reality is very different

Political commentator Jayashankar terms the comments by Jayarajan and Balan as reflections of the simmering groups in the CPI-M. "Both the leaders are upset with Vijayan and his new son-in-law Mohammed Riyas for sidelining them by denying them tickets in the 2021 assembly election. Jayarajan and Balan were frontrunners for the post of member of the polit bureau which fell vacant following the demise of Kodyeri Balakrishnan, the former party secretary, Vijayan favoured M V Govindan, a sidekick for decades, while Jayarajan and Balan had to eat humble pie," said Jayashankar.

The public snubbing given by Vijayan to K K Shylaja, former health minister, and her husband Bhaskaran during the Sadass has upset the women activists in the State. The flooding of the capital city of Thiruvananthapuram because of last week's heavy downpour has proved that the State administration is incapable of resolving minor issues like water logging and cleaning of drainages in the city, once described as a



clean and neat town, Because of the Nava Kerala Sadass, no ministers or government secretaries were available at Kalamassery where a stampede at Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) claimed the lives of four students who were attending a musical night late Saturday evening. After the 2018 floods which devastated the State (caused by the sudden and simultaneous opening of the shutters of all dams), Pinarayi Vijayan undertook an official junket with family, friends and close officials to all European countries to study how floods and landslides are managed by them. It is more than five years since Vijayan and his

entourage travelled across Europe but to date, no action has been taken to control floods or waterlogging. The experience at Thiruvananthapuram is an eye-opener that Kerala is lightyears away from ensuring the safety and welfare of its people.

Fortunately for the CPI-M and Vijayan, there is a Government at the Centre that could be blamed for any mishaps and disasters happening in the State. But that comfort came down on Saturday as Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman gave a piece of her mind to the State Government's allegation that the Centre was not releasing funds to Kerala. "Tell me the details of the funds which the Centre has not released to you. Whatever you have asked for was sanctioned immediately. The Kerala Government instead of making unsubstantiated allegations should come forward and tell us details of the funds which have not been released by the Centre," said the Union Finance Minister. Luckily for Vijayan, none of the ministers of his cabinet were present while

Sitharaman thundered from the stage (They were all busy singing peans to Karana Bhoothan, as Vijayan prefers to be addressed by his servile).

The Chief Minister and his acolytes have failed to notice the statements by Balan and Jayarajan who have a lot of grievances to settle with the former. The Opposition Congress is not in a position to enjoy the "guerilla war" in CPI-M as the Grand Old Party is faced with charges of malpractice in the organizational elections held recently. The allegation by Congress leaders is that a group owing allegiance to K C Venugopal manipulated the polls with fake identity cards. Some of the identity cards used by party members had Tamil superstar Ajit as a voter. Well, this is just the tip of the iceberg. The Youth Congress President Rahul Mankoothathil was being interrogated by the Crime Branch of the Kerala Police when reports last came.

(The writer is a special correspondent with the Pioneer; views are personal) **Concluded.**



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

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FIRST COLUMN

TOWARDS A HARMONIOUS MILIEU

The inner conflict must be stopped to achieve inner harmony



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

It is quite natural anywhere in the world when there is a change of power, there would definitely be an extra burden on the new government to resolve the conflicts & issues that are left over by the outgoing government. However, according to political experts, there have never been, in the past, so many conflicts and of such a vast variety as today & because of these conflicts, much part of the human resources as well as government funds is wasted.

Thus, keeping in mind the immense loss of mankind due to these conflicts, there is always a strong desire by government's all over the world to eliminate such misconduct. However, before moving ahead in this direction, people in power need to understand that one peculiarity of these conflicts is that these do not die after having lived their period but leave seeds for future conflicts or engender other conflicts before they wither away.

Today literally every government puts in constant hard efforts to resolve political conflicts, restore communal peace, settle industrial disputes, end militaristic confrontations and so on, but we find that despite best efforts by the people in power, we are no longer near our goal. Why is it so? There is no doubt in this that every sensible person wishes that these conflicts, which are the enemies of man and which recur with more or less vigor after lying dormant for a while, be ended somehow. But unfortunately, we are passing through such a long and dark tunnel that we are yet unable to see the light at the other end. Perhaps one of the main reasons for our failure is that we try to end these various kinds of conflicts separately.



But we fail to realise that such piecemeal efforts will not serve any purpose because, before we have eradicated the causes of conflicts in one sphere, these would reappear in an aggravated form in another sphere and before we have brought the trouble under control in the other sphere, conflict would have appeared again in the first sphere that had become comparatively free for a while, from the troubles. Surprisingly this would keep going on and on, making us crazy & out of mind. So, then what actually is the remedy?

In other words, how to have durable universal harmony? Sounds interesting! Isn't it? A thorough & deep analysis of the nature of the forementioned conflicts would lead us to the discovery of the truth that the source of all these conflicts is the human psyche. We ourselves are the source or generators of these conflicts. After all, political, economic, religious and other aspects are the various aspects of the human personality, aren't they? These are the manifestations of various human interests.

So, it is disharmony at this source that causes various kinds of disharmony. How can disharmony in various spheres be eliminated unless its source is plugged and the leakage at that point is stopped? Hence, if there is a conflict between man's mind and intellect, or man's emotions and intellect, or between samskaras and intellect or even between intellect and intellect, then this is bound to find its manifestation in various forms like political, economic, religious, etc. Therefore, necessary that the inner conflict within human beings be first stopped to achieve inner harmony.

The values that bring and sustain harmony in our relationships of all kinds and at all levels are: love, justice, fair play, humility, co-operation, and honesty. Remember! our relationships at personal, communal, racial, ethnic or international level cannot be harmonious unless we internalise these values through spiritual knowledge, practice of positive thinking, silence, good behavior and meditation. So, let us join our hands to bring universal stability through inner stability thereby creating a harmonious environment to live in.

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

Oniononomics: Peeling back the layers



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Once a silent player in the market, the onion, today, is a vocal symbol of inflationary pressures, supply-chain disruptions and demand-supply dynamics



Onion prices are set to stay high for at least a month because there's not enough supply. Even though the government removed the 40% export duty to make overseas sales more profitable and also introduced a minimum export price (MEP) to discourage exports, however, despite these measures, onion exports are expected to remain strong due to high global demand. As of Tuesday, November 22, 2023, the average retail price of onions across India stands at Rs 59.09 per kg, as reported by the Consumer Affairs Ministry. The modal price, representing the most frequently occurring value, is recorded at Rs 60 per kg nationwide. Notably, in the Capital City of Delhi, onion prices have experienced a decline, currently resting at Rs 60 per kg. In the history of India's culinary landscape, the humble yet indispensable ingredient that has played a pivotal role in the nation's kitchens for centuries is the onion. While skyrocketing prices of onion have started dipping, what was once a tear-inducing, flavour-enhancing ally in the hands of every home cook, has now become the centre of a financial storm, leaving consumers shedding more than just tears. The recent surge in onion prices, reaching a staggering ₹80-90 per kilogram, had sent several shockwaves – while the blame game by political parties continued.

However, a look at a history of the arrival of onion in India, and one could say that its journey to the Indian subcontinent is a tale as vibrant and delicious as the dishes they enhances. With their origins traced back to central Asia, onions embarked on a culinary journey to India, navigating trade routes with enriching (culinary) discoveries. Evidence from ancient texts and archaeological excavations indicates that onions have woven themselves into the fabric of Indian cuisine for more than 5,000 years, contributing richness and intricacy to the taste profiles of innumerable dishes. It is believed that in India, onion has been grown from ancient times as mentioned in a



OVER THE COURSE OF CENTURIES, ONIONS EVOLVED FROM BEING MERELY A CULINARY ESSENTIAL TO A SYMBOL REPRESENTING PROSPERITY AND WELL-BEING

famous early medicine treatise 'Charaka Samhita (6 B.C.).'

It is believed that humans have been using onions since the Neolithic period, and they are still used all over the world. The onion was considered a symbol of eternity by the ancient Egyptians, who used it in religious ceremonies. Onions were also used by the Greeks and Romans, who valued them for their medicinal properties. Onion cultivation spread across Europe and was brought to the Americas by settlers. There are other theories about onion that it is most likely an Asian species native to North West India, Baluchistan, and Afghanistan. According to Google, onion was most likely named after the city built by ONIA in 1703 B.C. near the Gulf of Swez.

Historical records also suggest that onions were introduced to India by the Persians and Egyptians. The ancient Indian text, Chanakya's 'Arthashastra', mentions the cultivation of onions and their consumption as a staple food item during the Mauryan Empire (322-185 BCE). With the widening of trade routes, the appeal of onions experienced a surge. Without exaggeration, one can claim that onions have earned their popularity among chefs and home cooks due to their incredible versatility. The medieval period witnessed a significant culinary transformation in Indian cuisine, particularly influenced by the Mughals. Renowned for their appreciation of rich and aromatic flavours, the Mughal rulers used onions in the preparation of elaborate Mughlai dishes. In the southern regions of India, onions found their way into diverse regional cuisines such as onions with mustard seeds, curry leaves and so on. Meanwhile, in the

northern, western and eastern parts of the country, onions became a kitchen staple, integral to the foundation of numerous everyday recipes. People in the northern belt also started using onions as prevention from the scorching heat waves during summer.

In India, however, onions extend beyond their culinary utility and hold deep cultural and symbolic significance. They are often used in traditional medicinal practices, though like garlic, in Hindu traditions, onions aren't used during religious festivals and offerings to the deity. It is generally believed that garlic and onion possess strong and pungent qualities and are considered to be "rajasic" or "tamasic" in nature, associated with heightened activity and a negative influence on spiritual practices, meditation, or mindfulness. Thus, to maintain a pure and calm state of mind, some individuals choose to avoid them.

Onions have a longstanding history in Ayurveda too, the ancient Indian system of holistic healing. Ayurveda places great emphasis on the balance of bodily elements and views food as a potent form of medicine. Onions are believed to possess various medicinal properties and are used to treat a range of ailments because of their antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial properties, helping alleviate respiratory issues, such as coughs and colds, and are believed to have a positive impact on digestion.

The pungent flavour of onions is thought to stimulate digestive juices, aiding in the digestion process. 'Easy Ayurveda.Com' mentions that "onion is anti-ageing, rejuvenating, aphrodisiac and improves intelligence. It improves skin complexion,

useful for skin disorders. Over the course of centuries, onions evolved from being merely a culinary essential to a symbol representing prosperity and well-being. In folklore and traditions, the onion gained reverence for its perceived medicinal benefits, believed to bring good fortune and ward off malevolent spirits. Ironically, our forebears could not have foreseen that this humble, tear-inducing vegetable would influence politics and economics alike to the surprise of economists and policymakers, drawing worldwide attention.

Once a silent player in the market, the onion, today, is a vocal symbol of inflationary pressures supply-chain disruptions and demand-supply dynamics. However, the surge in onion prices not only mirrors the difficulties encountered by farmers and traders but also underscores the complex interplay between market forces and consumer demands.

Nevertheless, amidst the challenges posed by escalating onion prices, there lies an opportunity for resilience and reform. The collective woes and tears shed while cutting onions can spark a broader dialogue on agricultural practices, supply chain resilience, and the necessity for sustainable economic policies. Like the fusion dishes that blend Indian and global flavours, resolving the onion crisis demands a fusion of thoughtful consideration of various factors, which the policymakers, farmers, and consumers must collaborate in peeling back the layers of this issue and addressing its root causes.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, views are personal)

Democracy thrived in ancient India

The democracy in ancient India was more robust than the democracy of Athens and Rome



KS RADHAKRISHNAN

India's democratic legacy extends far beyond the very origin of democracy itself. The fact is that democracy in India was not only established earlier but was also more organized and inclusive than its counterparts in the West. Kudavolai is an ancient election system used to elect the members of the village administration. In this method, people gather in the ward and write the names of the eligible candidates on a slip of palm leaf. Then they gather it together, put it in a pot and choose it after a shuffle. This elective system showcased meticulous planning and inclusivity. The kudavolai system was practised from the 9th century to the 16th century. The evidence for this is found in

three inscriptions from the 12th regnal year of Parantaka Chola. Of these, two were found in Uttaramerur and the other in Pallipakkam village, Thanjavur. Many refer to this kudavolai system as an example of Tamilnadu's democratic tradition. The Kudavolai electoral system shows how Manu Smriti was built and maintained during the Cholas period.

Uttaramerur Election What are the qualifications to stand in an election? Who can stand? Were answered in the constitution which was clearly written in the Chola period. Uttaramerur, which has a 1250-year history is situated in Kanchipuram district, about 90 Km from Chennai. We will be amazed to see this 1000-year-old

inscription that looks like it was written yesterday. Uttaramerur was divided into 30 families. The members of the respective family should select one person from that family. Candidates must possess some basic qualifications. The stone inscription clearly described how every village was categorised as Kudumbu, which we call a ward in modern-day parlance. There is stark similarity between the present-day electoral requirement of candidates to declare their wealth and assets with that of Chola-era practice. There was also a provision to disqualify the people's representatives from contesting elections if any candidate failed to declare his property and money they won.

Moreover, if he is disqualified he and his close relatives could not contest the election. The inscription at Uttaramerur has interesting details of the resolution of the general assembly and the kudavolai system which was followed to elect representatives to the village assembly or Sabha. The inscription on the temple walls, too, speaks about the prevalence of village assemblies in the other parts of the state. Acts of misconduct including accepting bribes, misappropriating others' property and the like were strictly prohibited, if the village mates knew about the illegal activities, the member would be disqualified within a year. If proven guilty of misconduct, he will be disqualified from contesting

future elections. People who speak about eradicating corruption and collecting lakhs of rupees are called "sagasam". If they are protected by some others, even the protectors cannot stand for the election. Breach of ethics has become a norm: There are reports of electoral malpractice, malfeasance, and booth violence in present times. To avoid such malpractices, the whole process was transparent and was to be done in the presence of the people. The inscription refers to the elected one as "Perumakkal". No payment was made for the Perumakkal. After the election committees were formed, the functions of the sabha were many and varied. Out of the 30 elected mem-

bers, 12 members were appointed to the Annual Committee, 12 members were appointed as members of the Garden Committee and 6 members to the Tank Committee. These committees looked after the administration of the subjects entrusted to them. Besides managing the common land, the collection of taxes was also exclusively done by them. The collection of taxes was extremely done by them. It assisted the central officers in surveying the land and assessing the tax. It recorded the transfer of property and settled land disputes. The irrigation was planned at its best, and each pond and other water bodies were maintained regularly as a result, rich agricultural

practices flourished. Thousand years have passed, and mankind witnessed many changes. Is the electoral system mentioned in the inscription suitable for this era? Before coming to a conclusion, try it in villages, otherwise at least in colleges, student leaders can be elected in an ethical way without campaigning and party rivalry. But if we compare the discipline, sacrifice, and dedication that the people of that time had to present day leaders, the less said the better.

(The writer is a political activist and an advocate; the views are personal)

This is the first part of a two-part series on ancient Indian democracy.

To be continued...

Israel Hamas agree to extend truce for two more days

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Israel and Hamas agreed to extend their cease-fire for two more days past Monday, the Qatari government said, bringing the prospect of a longer halt to their deadliest and most destructive war and further exchanges of militant-held hostages for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

The announcement, made by Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesman Majid Al Ansary in a post on X, came on the final day of the original four-day truce between the warring sides. A fourth swap of hostages for prisoners under that deal was expected later Monday. Qatar, along with the United States and Egypt, has been the key mediator in the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas. Israel has said it would extend the cease-fire by one day for every 10 additional hostages released. After the Qatari announcement, Hamas confirmed it had agreed to a two-day extension "under the same terms."

But Israel says it remains committed to crushing Hamas' military capabilities and ending its 16-year rule over Gaza after its Oct. 7 attack into southern Israel. That would likely mean expanding a ground offensive from devastated northern Gaza to the south, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have crammed into United Nations shelters, and where dire conditions persist despite the increased delivery of aid under the truce.

Israel will resume its operations with "full force" as soon as the current deal expires if Hamas does not agree to further hostage releases, with the goal of eliminating the group and freeing the rest of the captives, government spokesperson Eylon Levy told reporters on Monday.

So far, 58 hostages have been released during the current truce, including 39 Israelis. Before the truce, four hostages were freed, another rescued and two were found dead inside Gaza.

After weeks of national trauma over the around 240

US Navy seizes attackers who held Israel-linked tanker

Dubai (AP): Armed assailants seized and later let go of a tanker linked to Israel off the coast of Yemen on Sunday before being apprehended by the United States Navy, officials said. Two ballistic missiles fired from Houthi-controlled Yemen then landed near a US warship aiding the tanker in the Gulf of Aden, raising the stakes amid a series of ship attacks linked to the Israel-Hamas war. Yemen's internationally recognised government blamed the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels for the attack, though the rebels in control of the capital, Sanaa, did not acknowledge either the seizure or the missile attack.

The attackers seized the Liberian-flagged Central Park, managed by Zodiac Maritime, in the Gulf of Aden, the company, the US and British militaries and private intelligence firm Ambrey said.

The US military's Central Command said in a statement early on Monday that its forces and allies, including the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Mason, responded to the seizure and demanded the armed assailants release the tanker. "Subsequently, five armed individuals embarked the ship and attempted to flee via their small boat," Central Command said. "The Mason pursued the attackers resulting in their eventual surrender."

The Central Command did not identify the attackers, but said a missile launch from Houthi-controlled Yemen followed early Monday morning. "The missiles landed in the Gulf of Aden approximately 10 nautical miles (18.5 kilometres) from the ships," the statement said. "The USS Mason ... was concluding its response to the M/V Central Park distress call at the time of the missile launches. There was no damage or reported injuries from either vessel during this incident."

Early Monday morning, Zodiac said the vessel carrying phosphoric acid and its crew of 22 sailors from Bulgaria, Georgia, India, the Philippines, Russia, Turkey and Vietnam were unharmed. "We would like to thank the coalition forces who responded quickly, protecting assets in the area and upholding international maritime law," the company said.

Zodiac described the vessel as being owned by Clumvez Shipping Inc., though other records directly linked Zodiac as the owner. London-based Zodiac Maritime is part of Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer's Zodiac Group. British corporate records listed two men with the last name Ofer as a current and former director of Clumvez Shipping, including Daniel Guy Ofer, who is also a director at Zodiac Maritime.

Yemen's internationally recognised government, which is based out of nearby Aden, blamed the rebels for the seizure in a statement carried by their state-run news agency. "The Yemeni government has renewed its denunciation of the acts of maritime piracy carried out by the terrorist Houthi militias with the support of the Iranian regime, the most recent of which was the hijacking of the Central Park," the statement read. The attack happened in a part of the Gulf of Aden that is in theory under the control of that government's forces and is fairly distant from Houthi-controlled territory in the country. Somali pirates are not known to operate in that area.

Zodiac Maritime has been targeted previously amid a wider yearslong shadow war between Iran and Israel. In 2021, a drone attack assessed by the US and other Western nations to have been carried out by Iran killed two crew members aboard Zodiac's oil tanker Mercer Street off the coast of Oman.

people abducted by Hamas and other militants, scenes of the women and children reuniting with families have rallied Israelis behind calls to return those who remain in captivity.

"We can get all hostages back home. We have to keep pushing," two relatives of Abigail Edan, a 4-year-old girl and dual Israeli-American citizen who was released Sunday, said in a statement.

Hamas and other militants could still be holding up to 175 hostages, enough to potentially extend the cease-fire for two and a half weeks. But those include a number of soldiers, and the militants are likely to make much greater demands for their release.

A THIRD RELEASE OF HOSTAGES AND PRISONERS: On Sunday, Hamas freed 17 hostages, including 14 Israelis, and Israel released 39 Palestinian prisoners — the third such exchange under the truce.

Most hostages appeared to be physically well, but 84-year-old Elma Avraham was airlifted to Israel's Soroka Medical Center in life-threatening condition because of inadequate care, the hospital said.

Avraham's daughter, Tali Amano, said her mother was "hours from death" when she was brought to the hospital. Avraham is currently sedated and has a breathing tube, but Amano said she told her of a new great grandchild who was born while she was in captivity. Avraham suffered from several chronic conditions that required regular medications but was stable before she was kidnapped, Amano said Monday. So far, 19 people of other nationalities have been freed during the truce, mostly Thai nationals. Many Thais work in Israel, largely as farm laborers.

The Palestinian prisoners released were mostly teenagers accused of throwing stones and firebombs during confrontations with Israeli forces, or of less-serious offenses. Many Palestinians view prisoners held by Israel, including those implicated in attacks, as heroes resisting occupation.

Musk visits Israel to meet top leaders

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Elon Musk, who's been under fire over accusations of antisemitism flourishing on his social media platform X, paid a visit Monday to Israel, where he toured a kibbutz that was attacked last month by Hamas militants and was set to meet with top leaders.

The billionaire and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu toured the Kfar Azza kibbutz, which was stormed by Hamas militants on Oct 7. Musk, wearing a protective vest and escorted by a phalanx of security personnel, used his phone to take photos or videos of the devastation, according to video released by Netanyahu's office.

Musk also was due to meet Israeli President Isaac Herzog and Benny Gantz, a former defense minister who's now part of a special war Cabinet.

Government spokesperson Eylon Levy declined to say whether Musk was invited or came on his own. X, formerly known as Twitter, did not



This handout photo provided by Haim Zach/GPO shows Sharon Hertzman, right, hugging a relative as they reunite at Sheba Medical Center in Ramat Gan, Israel, Saturday Nov. 25, 2023. Sharon Hertzman and her daughter Noam, 12 years old, were released by Hamas after being held as hostages in Gaza for 50 days. AP/PTI

respond to a request for comment. Israel's communications minister, Shlomo Karhi, tweeted earlier Monday about a deal that his ministry had reached with Musk's Starlink

satellite internet company. "As a result of this significant agreement, Starlink satellite units can only be operated in Israel with the approval of the Israeli Ministry of

Communications, including the Gaza Strip," Karhi wrote, without providing further details. Musk has faced accusations of tolerating antisemitic messages on the platform since purchasing it last year, and the content on X has gained increased scrutiny since the war between Israel and Hamas began.

A slew of big brands, including Disney and IBM, decided to stop advertising on the platform after a report by liberal advocacy group Media Matters said ads were appearing alongside pro-Nazi material and as Musk endorsed an antisemitic conspiracy theory.

Musk responded on X this month to a user who accused Jews of hating white people and professing indifference to antisemitism by saying, "You have said the actual truth."

Netanyahu last met with Musk in September, when he told the Tesla CEO that he hopes he can find a way to roll back antisemitism and other forms of hatred within the limits of the First Amendment.

Sunak hails 'huge vote of confidence' at Global Investment Summit in UK

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Monday announced that the world's leading investors have committed GBP 29.5 billion in new projects and capital as a "huge vote of confidence" in the UK economy.

The British Indian leader, who welcomed CEOs of some of the world's leading businesses for a Global Investment Summit at Hampton Court Palace in London, said that thousands of jobs will be created across the country, including tech, life sciences, renewables, housing and infrastructure. Blackstone, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan Chase, Barclays, HSBC and Lloyds Bank are among those represented at the "British Ideas - Past, Present and Future" entitled summit, to be followed by a reception at Buckingham Palace hosted by King Charles



III. "Today's investments, worth more than GBP 29 billion, will create thousands of new jobs and are a huge vote of confidence in the future of the UK economy," said Sunak. "Global CEOs are right to back Britain - we are making this the best place in the world to invest and do business... Attracting global investment is at the heart of my plan for growing the economy.

With new funding pouring into key industries like clean energy, life sciences and advanced technology, inward investment is creating high-quality new jobs and driving growth right across the country," he said.

Downing Street points out that the new wave of investments come after UK Chancellor Jeremy Hunt unveiled the "biggest business tax cut" in modern history at last week's Autumn Statement with a permanent extension of capital allowances, GBP 4.3 billion of business rates support and a GBP 7 billion Growth Fund. "The numbers speak for themselves: we have the third highest levels of inward investment in the world at USD 2.7 trillion, we're number one in Europe for new investment projects, and last year alone we created 107,000 jobs through inward investment," said UK Business and Trade Secretary

Kemi Badenoch, who opened the summit with Sunak.

"People want to invest in a country with vision, ideas and growth, and our Summit showcases all these qualities and proves why the UK is the most exciting and innovative place in the world to invest," she said.

According to the UK government, the summit will also see billions for the country's burgeoning tech sector, which last year became the third in the world to be worth USD 1 trillion.

Following the recently organised AI Safety Summit, Microsoft has pledged GBP 2.5 billion to build critical AI infrastructure, bringing more next-generation AI datacentres and thousands of graphic processing units to the UK. In the field of renewables, clean energy-tech company Aira will be investing GBP 300 million into heat pump rollouts, new jobs and upskilling.

Wilders ally quits over graft charges

The Hague (Netherlands): A party ally of far-right Dutch election winner Geert Wilders on Monday quit his role in the building of a new governing coalition over fraud allegations, throwing the process of creating a new government into turmoil before it had begun. Gom van Strien, a senator for Wilders' Party for Freedom, was appointed last week as a "scout" to discuss possible coalitions. He was set to meet Wilders and other party leaders on Monday, but those meetings were cancelled.

Van Strien has denied wrongdoing after Dutch media reported that he was embroiled in a fraud case. But on Monday morning, he issued a statement saying that "both the unrest that has arisen about this and the preparation of a response to it" hampered his work seeking a coalition. Van Strien is an experienced but largely unknown senator for Wilders' party, known by its Dutch acronym

PVV.

He had been tasked with making an inventory of possible coalitions and reporting back to the lower house of the Dutch parliament by early December so that lawmakers could debate the issue on December 6 before appointing another official to begin more concrete talks on forming a coalition.

Wilders' PVV was the shock winner of last week's Dutch election in a stunning shift to the far right in Dutch politics that sent shockwaves through Europe. Long an outsider largely shunned by mainstream parties, Wilders is now front and centre of moves to form a new ruling coalition. However, his hopes of quickly forming a right-of-centre coalition were dealt a blow last week when the new leader of the mainstream centre-right party of outgoing Prime Minister Mark Rutte said her party would not join a coalition led by the PVV. AP

Suspect in shooting near University of Vermont held

Vermont (US): Police have arrested a suspect in the shooting of three young men of Palestinian descent who were attending a Thanksgiving holiday gathering near the University of Vermont campus on Saturday evening.

Agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives arrested Jason J. Eaton, 48, while conducting a search of the shooting area in Burlington at 3:38 p.m. on Sunday, the Burlington Police Department said in a statement. Authorities collected evidence during a search of Eaton's apartment in a building in front of the shooting location.

He is scheduled to be arraigned on Monday, police said. The attack that injured the three men around 6:25 p.m. on Saturday may have been a hate crime, authorities previously said. AP

Christopher Luxon sworn in as NZ PM

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Christopher Luxon was sworn in as New Zealand's prime minister on Monday and said his top priority was to improve the economy. The 53-year-old former businessman leads a conservative coalition after his National Party struck a deal on Friday with two smaller parties following a general election last month.

After the swearing-in ceremony, which was presided over by Governor-General Cindy Kiro, Luxon told reporters the job was an "awesome responsibility".

He said he would hold his first Cabinet meeting on Tuesday and look to quickly finalise a 100-day plan. He said he also planned a visit to Australia before Christmas Day.

Luxon said he needed to get a Treasury briefing on the state of the government's finances. "We are concerned



and worried that it's been a deteriorating picture for a number of months now," Luxon said.

Under the coalition agreement, Luxon has promised to deliver tax cuts and train 500 more police officers within

two years. He has also promised less government bureaucracy, including a 6.5 per cent cut to the public service.

Luxon said it would be up to ministry chief executives to figure out how to make the

cuts, whether by stopping programmes, not filling vacancies or laying off some workers.

The new government also plans to repeal tobacco restrictions approved last year by the previous government, includ-

ing requirements for low nicotine levels in cigarettes, fewer retailers and a lifetime ban for youth. Luxon said his government disagreed with parts of the policy, including concentrating distribution. He said smoking rates had been coming down for 30 years.

"We will continue to make sure we have good education programs and encourage people to take up vapes as a cessation tool," Luxon said. But critics said the plan was a setback for public health and a win for the tobacco industry.

Chris Hipkins, who officially resigned as the nation's 41st prime minister early Monday, said he wished Luxon and his coalition partners well. He said the country had been through tough times but the economy was turning a corner. Hipkins, who held the top job for 10 months after Jacinda Ardern unexpectedly resigned in January, plans to remain in Parliament as opposition leader.

UK cop guilty for mimicking woman's Indian accent

PTI ■ LONDON

A police officer from northern England has been found guilty of gross misconduct by a disciplinary tribunal for mimicking the Indian accent of a woman who had called the West Yorkshire Police call centre to report a hate crime. Patrick Harrison was found guilty following a misconduct hearing last month, and the panel concluded that he would have been dismissed had he not already resigned as a Police Constable (PC) from West Yorkshire Police.

The incident, which occurred in November last year, involved a phone call with a female complainant - named only as "SA" - who overheard the PC mimicking her and reported it to an anti-

racism helpline. "On 29.11.2022, former PC Harrison was on duty, working in the Force Call Centre, when he made a call to SA, a female member of the public who had reported a hate-related assault," reads the judgment.

"The former officer asked SA for more details in relation to why she believed that it was a hate crime. Having had the conversation, the former Officer failed to clear the line and repeated back some of the phrases SA had used, mimicking her accent whilst doing so. SA heard these comments and made a report to Tell MAMA," it said.

Harrison accepted that his behaviour was "unacceptable and inexcusable" and that it breached the standards of professional conduct. During the

course of the misconduct hearing, it also emerged that he acted to conceal his wrongdoing and did not report what he had done at the time.

He was found to have called SA back shortly after the first call on a different phone, which was not recorded. The panel felt it was likely he did so in order to see whether SA had heard what he had said.

Their judgment goes on to state: "The former officer's actions caused SA psychological distress and resulted in her withdrawing her direct cooperation with the police, such as her loss of trust and confidence in the police." "If the former officer's actions become known more widely, there will be significant reputational damage to the police service as a whole.

'Pope Francis getting antibiotics intravenously'

Vatican City (AP): Pope Francis is receiving antibiotics intravenously to treat a lung inflammation and will scale back some appointments, but he doesn't have pneumonia or fever, the Vatican said on Monday.

Francis himself on Sunday revealed that he was suffering from the inflammation problem, explaining why he didn't keep his weekly window appointment to greet people in St. Peter's Square. Instead, he gave his blessing from the chapel of the hotel on Vatican grounds where he lives.

Vatican's press office director, Matteo Bruni, said in a written statement on Monday that the inflammation was causing some respiratory difficulties for Francis, whose 87th birthday is next month.

Irish author Paul Lynch's 'Prophet Song' wins Booker Prize 2023

PTI ■ LONDON

Irish author Paul Lynch's "Prophet Song" was named the winner of the Booker Prize 2023, beating London-based Indian-origin author Chetna Maroo's debut novel "Western Lane", at a ceremony in London. Lynch, 46, won for his novel presenting a dystopian vision of Ireland in the grips of totalitarianism, something the author describes as "an attempt at radical empathy".

Set in Dublin, "Prophet Song" tells the story of a family grappling with a terrifying new world in which the democratic norms they are used to begin to disappear.

"I was trying to see into the modern chaos. The unrest in Western democracies. The

problem of Syria - the implosion of an entire nation, the scale of its refugee crisis and the West's indifference," said Lynch, who won the GBP 50,000 literary award.

"Prophet Song" was the bookies' favourite to win this year's Booker Prize and makes Lynch the fifth Irish author to win the prestigious prize after Iris Murdoch, John Banville, Roddy Doyle and Anne Enright. "From that first knock at the door, 'Prophet Song' forces us out of our complacency as we follow the terrifying plight of a woman seeking to protect her family in an Ireland descending into totalitarianism. We felt unsettled from the start, submerged in - and haunted by - the sustained claustrophobia of Lynch's pow-

erfully constructed world," said Canadian novelist Esi Edugyan, the chair of the Booker Prize 2023 judging panel.

Lynch received his trophy from Sri Lankan author Shehan Karunatilaka, last year's Booker winner for "The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida", at the awards ceremony held at Old Billingsgate in London.

"The judges established at the start of the final meeting that any of the six books on the shortlist would be a worthy winner," noted Gaby Wood, Chief Executive of the Booker Prize Foundation.

Among the six shortlisted works was Kenya-born Chetna Maroo's novel set within the context of the British Gujarati milieu, which was praised by the Booker judges for its use of

the sport of squash as a metaphor for complex human emotions. It revolves around the story of an 11-year-old girl named Gopi and her bonds with her family.

"It's also been called a coming-of-age novel, a domestic novel, a novel about grief, a novel about the immigrant experience," said Maroo of her shortlisted "sports novel".

Sarah Bernstein's "Study for Obedience", Jonathan Escoffery's "If I Survive You", Paul Harding's "The Other Eden", and Paul Murray's "The Bee Sting" completed the 2023 shortlist. Each of the shortlisted authors received GBP 2,500 and a unique hand-bound edition of their book designed by six fellows of the Designer Bookbinders society.

Prez Xi heads to Shanghai to boost business confidence

PTI ■ BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping is expected to make his first visit to Shanghai - the communist giant's commercial hub - on Tuesday, days after his high-profile visit to the US where he promised to "tear down barriers" amidst dwindling foreign investments in the country.

Xi, 70, who presided over the powerful Politburo meeting of the ruling Communist Party on Monday to review guidelines on policies and measures for promoting high-quality development in the country, will visit Shanghai on Tuesday, his first to the commercial hub, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported. With a population of more than 25 million and contributing nearly four per cent of China's economic output, Shanghai is home to some of the biggest foreign investments in the country, including Tesla, General Motors, Walt Disney and the 10-year-old Shanghai Free-Trade Zone (FTZ), a testing ground for China's economic reforms.

There is, however, no official announcement of Xi's visit to the city which was hit hard by a harsh two-month-long COVID-19 lockdown in 2022 during which its population was confined to their dwellings under Xi's 'zero COVID' policy. The lockdown was enforced after the city was hit hard by the Omicron variant of COVID-19 for about eight months.

Since, 2021, the world's second-largest economy has been hit hard by recurring and prolonged lockdowns of various cities which exasperated China's economic woes, denting the business confidence including its once-booming property sector.

Xi's first visit to Shanghai where he was previously the CPC's boss comes close to his successful visit to the US this month where he had a "strategic and historic" summit with US President Joe Biden during which the two leaders agreed to tone down their harsh policies and rhetoric against each other.

While their summit sparked speculation of a subtle shift in US-China power



dynamics, Xi in his address to the APEC CEO summit in San Francisco earlier this month pledged to tear down foreign investment barriers and promised to invite foreign capital with "heart-warming" measures. "We will strive to tear down the barriers to the flow of innovation factors, deepen reform of the digital economy, and promote free and orderly flow of data in compliance with the law," he said in his speech aimed at ridding sagging business confidence in China leading to shifting of supply chains.

During his trip to

Shanghai, Xi is expected to encourage city officials to pursue more market liberalisation to spur cross-border trade and capital flows via the mainland's gateway city amid mounting worries about China's decoupling from the West, Ding Haifeng, a consultant at Shanghai financial advisory firm Integrity said.

"Shanghai's role as an economic locomotive will be further highlighted following the top leader's visit," he told the Post. Observers say China's current economic woes were largely attributed to Xi's emphasis more on security issues denting business confidence. "In the past five years, however, security concerns have taken top priority," Post columnist Wang Xiangwei said.

Last year, in his keynote speech at the 20th Communist Party national congress, Xi spoke of pursuing development as the government's central task but devoted far more time to national security and social stability, Wang wrote in his column in the Post on Monday.

China calls for a ceasefire in Myanmar

Beijing (AP): Beijing called for a cease-fire in Myanmar after a coalition of ethnic fighters seized several crossings along Myanmar's border in the past month. However, China will continue live-firing drills on its side of the frontier aimed at "testing the mobility, border control abilities and firepower capabilities of the military units so that the People's Liberation Army is ready for any emergency," the army newspaper PLA Daily said on Sunday.

Myanmar heavily relies on trade with China, especially for importing manufactured goods and exporting agricultural products. Unrest in Myanmar's border region has been a constant irritant to China, which nevertheless backed the military leaders who seized power in the Southeast Asian nation in 2021 from an elected government. Yet China is highly wary of conflicts spilling over the shared border that is already rife with drug trafficking and people smuggling. Cybercrime targeting Chinese victims has become a major concern, and China has pushed hard to eliminate the groups based in Myanmar and other countries and to send the perpetrators back to China for prosecution.

Imran sent to 14-day judicial remand in corruption case

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A Pakistani accountability court on Monday sent Imran Khan on a 14-day judicial remand in a corruption case, rejecting the request of the country's anti-graft body for extending the jailed former prime minister's physical remand. Judge Muhammad Bashir of the Islamabad Accountability Court presided over the hearing of the Al-Qadir Trust corruption case held at the Adiala jail in Rawalpindi, where Khan is currently jailed. The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

The 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party chief has been incarcerated in the high-security jail in Rawalpindi since September 26 in various cases.

Khan, the primary accused and his wife Bushra Bibi, 49, were present during the hearing held at the high-security jail. Khan's sisters, Aleema Khanum and Noreen Khanum, were also present during the hearing, the report said. Judge Bashir rejected the National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) request for extending the former premier's physical remand in the Al-Qadir Trust corruption case. Instead, he sent the PTI chief on a 14-day judicial remand, according to the report.

On Sunday, the former cricketer-turned-politician was interrogated for over two hours in the Adiala jail by a NAB team in the case, a senior official of the apex anti-graft watchdog told the Dawn newspaper. Officials from the accountability bureau have been visiting the Adiala jail since November 15 to investigate Khan's role in the case.

The Al-Qadir Trust case is about the settlement of 190 million pounds, about Rs 50 billion, which the UK's National Crime Agency sent to Pakistan after recovering the amount from a Pakistani property tycoon. Khan, being the prime minister then, instead of depositing in the national treasury, allowed the businessman to use the amount to partly settle a fine of about Rs 450 billion imposed by the Supreme Court some

ECP says ex-PM not a 'prisoner of conscience'

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's election commission has said that former prime minister Imran Khan is not a "prisoner of conscience" and he is jailed because he is accused in various cases, including for the misuse of a diplomatic cable. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) made the statement in response to Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party's remarks in its 24-point Charter of Demand ahead of general elections in the country on February 8.

The PTI in the charter sent to the ECP on November 6 by its Secretary General Omar Ayub Khan described 71-year-old Khan, also Chairman of the party, as a "prisoner of conscience."

It also said the party was being victimised and persecuted as a political entity. The ECP, however, dismissed the charge and said that "it has no role" in this alleged victimisation. The Express Tribune newspaper reported. The ECP in its response to the charter on November 22 said: "Former PM and Chairman Imran Khan is in jail in different cases

including [the] cipher case." The term "prisoner of conscience" refers to a person who has been put in prison for holding political or religious views that are not tolerated in the State he/she lives in. The cricketer-turned-politician has been incarcerated in the high-security Adiala jail in Rawalpindi since September 26 in various cases.

The ECP reiterated the "no-role" statement in response to PTI's claim that its leaders were coerced into giving interviews and statements against the party and parting ways with it. The polls oversight authority clarified that it could not refrain any political leader from joining or leaving any party. On the PTI's claim that it was not getting a level-playing field, the ECP said it had already issued directions to all caretaker governments for providing a level-playing field to all. When the PTI pointed out that the general elections were not taking place within the constitutionally stipulated period of 90 days, the ECP said the issue had been deliberated by the Supreme Court.

years ago. The tycoon, in return, allegedly gifted about 57 acres of land to a trust set up by Khan and Bushra Bibi to establish the Al-Qadir University in the Sohawa area of the Jhelum district of Punjab. The notice served to the accused says that the anti-corruption body took cognisance of the commission of offences of corruption and corrupt practices as defined under the NAB laws.

Iran adds warship to Caspian fleet

Tehran (AP): Iran's navy on Monday added a destroyer capable of launching cruise missiles to its Caspian Sea fleet, state media reported. The 1,400-ton Deilaman destroyer, named for a town in north of Iran, is 95 metres (312 feet) long and 11 metres (36 feet) wide and is able to launch torpedoes while travelling at 30 knots (56 kph, 35 mph), the state-owned IRNA news agency said.

Deilaman can detect more than 100 targets, including vessels, drones, helicopters, submarines and aircraft, simultaneously, the report said. During a ceremony marking the inauguration of Deilaman, Maj. Gen. Mohammad Hossein Bagheri, chief of the Armed Forces General Staff called the Caspian a "sea of peace and friendship" and said Iran's naval power there will serve "peace, security of commercial fleets, confronting terrorists and probable incidents in the future." This is the sixth warship Iran has commissioned in the Caspian Sea, the largest inland body of water in the world, shared by Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran.

N Korea restores border guard posts as tensions rise over satellite launch

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea is restoring front-line guard posts that it had dismantled during a previous period of inter-Korean rapprochement, South Korea's military said Monday, after animosities spiked between the rivals over the North's recent spy satellite launch. The two Koreas previously dismantled or disarmed 11 of their guard posts inside their heavily fortified border, called the Demilitarised Zone, under a 2018 deal meant to ease front-line military confrontations. But the deal is now in danger of being scrapped as both Koreas openly threaten to

breach it. The 2018 agreement required the two Koreas to halt aerial surveillance and live-fire exercises at no-fly and buffer zones that they established along the DMZ, as well as remove some of their front-line guard posts and land mines. The deal left South Korea with 50 board guard posts and North Korea with

150. After North Korea claimed to place its first military spy satellite into orbit on Nov 21, South Korea said it would partially suspend the deal and resume aerial surveillance along the DMZ in response. South Korea said its response was "a minimum defensive measure" because the launch showed the North's intentions to strengthen its monitoring of the South and improve its missile technology. North Korea immediately slammed South Korea's decision, saying it would deploy powerful weapons at the border in a tit-for-tat measure. The North said it also won't abide by the 2018 deal any longer.

South Korea's Defence Ministry said in a statement Monday that it detected North Korea building guard posts at border sites where its dismantled guard posts once stood, and that North Korea deployed troops and heavy weapons there. The ministry distributed to media outlets photos of North Korean soldiers building a guard post and moving a suspected recoilless rifle to a newly built trench. South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol ordered the military to keep a close watch on the North and maintain a firm readiness, according to his office. The South Korean Defence Ministry later said it's ready to "promptly and strongly punish" North Korea over any provocation that it launches. South Korea, the United States and others strongly condemned the North's satellite launch, which they viewed as a provocation that threatens regional peace. United Nations Security Council resolutions

ban any satellite launches by North Korea because the world body regards them as covers for testing its long-range missile technology. North Korea says it has sovereign rights to launch spy satellites to cope with what it says are escalating US-led military threats.

On Monday, Kim Song Gyeong, a senior North Korean Foreign Ministry official, called the US and others' condemnation of the satellite launch "a typical expression of the most heinous and brazen-faced violation of sovereignty that denies the justification of the existence" of North Korea.

Half a million left without power in Crimea after Black Sea storm

AP ■ MOSCOW

Almost half a million people have been left without power and one person was killed after a storm in the Black Sea area flooded roads, ripped up trees and took down power lines in Crimea, Russian state news agency Tass said.

The storm also hit southern Russia and sent waves flooding into the beach resort of Sochi, blew the roof off a five-story building off in Anapa and damaged homes and schools in Kuban, the state news agency said. It was part of a weather front that earlier left one person dead and hundreds of places without electricity amid heavy snowfall and

strong blizzards in Romania and Moldova on Sunday.

The storm prompted several Crimean regions to declare a state of emergency after it became the strongest recorded in the past 16 years with wind speeds reaching 144 kph (almost 90 mph), Tatyana Lyubetskaya, a Russia-installed official at the Crimean environmental monitoring department, told Tass. The government in Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, told people to stay at home on Monday and closed government offices including schools and hospitals as strong winds are still expected on Monday. The head of one Crimean region, Natalia Pisareva, said

everyone in the Chernomorske area of western Crimea had lost water supply as well as central heating because pumping stations had lost power. There were also reports of a problem with a gas pipeline in Saky, western Crimea.

In an aquarium in Sevastopol, around 800 exotic fish and animals died after the room they were in was flooded, the Crimea 24 TV channel reported. In Russia, the Caspian Pipeline Consortium stopped crude oil loading at the Novorossiysk port Monday due to the "extremely unfavourable weather conditions", including winds of up to about 86 kph and waves of up to 8 metres (26 feet) in height.

Ukraine has new way to get its grain to world despite Russia's Black Sea threat

Kyiv (AP): Grain thunders into rail cars and trucks zip around a storage facility in central Ukraine, a place that growing numbers of companies turned to as they struggled to export their food to people facing hunger around the world. Now, more of the grain is getting unloaded from overcramped silos and heading to ports on the Black Sea, set to traverse a fledgling shipping corridor launched after Russia pulled out of a UN-brokered agreement this summer that allowed food to flow safely from Ukraine during the war.

"It was tight, but we kept working...we sought how to accept every ton of products needed for our partners," facility general director Roman Andreikiv said about the end of the grain deal in July. Ukraine's new corridor, protected by the military, has now allowed him to

"free up warehouse space and increase activity".

Growing numbers of ships are streaming toward Ukraine's Black Sea ports and heading out loaded with grain, metals and other cargo despite the threat of attack and floating explosive mines. It's giving a boost to Ukraine's agriculture-dependent economy and bringing back a key source of wheat, corn, barley, sunflower oil and other affordable food products for parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia where local prices have risen and food insecurity is growing. "We are seeing renewed confidence among commercial operators keen to take Ukrainian grain cargoes," said Munro Anderson, head of operations for Vessel Protect, which assesses war risks at sea and provides insurance with backing from Lloyd's, whose

members make up the world's largest insurance marketplace. Ihor Osmachko, general director of Agroprosperis Group, one of Ukraine's biggest agricultural producers and exporters, says he's feeling "more optimistic than two months ago."

"At that time, it was completely unclear how to survive," he said. Since the company's first vessel departed in mid-September, it says it has shipped more than 300,000 metric tons of grain to Egypt, Spain, China, Bangladesh, the Netherlands, Tunisia and Turkey. After ending the agreement brokered by the UN and Turkey, Russia has attacked Ukraine's Black Sea ports — a vital connection to global trade — and grain infrastructure, destroying enough food to feed over 1 million people for a year, the UK government said.

SAR TELEVENTURE LIMITED (Formerly SAR Televance Private Limited) CIN: U45202HR2019PLC080514						
Regd. Off.: Plot No. 346 A, 2nd Floor, Udyog Vihar, Phase-4, Gurugram-122016 Haryana						
Contact: +91-8587050050, Email: info@sartelevance.com						
EXTRACT OF STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE HALF YEAR ENDED 30.09.2023						
(Rs. in Lacs)						
Sl. No.	Particulars	6 Months Ended on			Year Ended	
		30.09.2023 Unaudited	30.09.2022 Unaudited	31.03.2023 Unaudited	31.03.2023 Audited	31.03.2022 Audited
1	Total Income from Operations	3581.49	320.91	2619.97	3251.63	475.34
2	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or extraordinary Items#)	419.03	20.03	376.26	427.32	2.73
3	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/or extraordinary Items#)	419.03	20.03	376.26	427.32	2.73
4	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or extraordinary Items#)	405.88	13.98	343.34	388.36	3.71
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period (Comprising Profit/(Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax))	405.88	13.98	343.34	388.36	3.71
6	Equity Share capital	210	4.18	65.29	65.29	4.18
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) as shown in the Audited Balance Sheet of the previous year	3344.48	11.89	1.11	1.11	11.89
8	Earning per Share (face Value of Rs. 10/- each)(not annualised)					
	1. Basic	5.09	6.7	53.21	91.08	1.78
	2. Diluted	5.09	6.7	53.21	91.08	1.78

NOTES:
1. The above is an extract of the detailed format of half year financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the half year financial Results are available on the Stock Exchange website www.nseindia.com. The same is also available on the Company's website www.sartelevance.com.
2. The above results duly reviewed by the Audit Committee, were approved by the Board of Directors in their meeting held on 27.11.2023.

For SAR Televance Limited
(Formerly Known as SAR Televance Private Limited)
(Rahul Sahdev)
Managing Director

Date: 27.11.2023
Place: Haryana

SAR TELEVENTURE LIMITED (Formerly SAR Televance Private Limited) CIN: U45202HR2019PLC080514						
Regd. Off.: Plot No. 346 A, 2nd Floor, Udyog Vihar, Phase-4, Gurugram-122016 Haryana						
Contact: +91-8587050050, Email: info@sartelevance.com						
EXTRACT OF STATEMENT OF STANDALONE UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE HALF YEAR ENDED 30.09.2023						
(Rs. in Lacs)						
Sl. No.	Particulars	6 Months Ended on			Year Ended	
		30.09.2023 Unaudited	30.09.2022 Unaudited	31.03.2023 Audited	31.03.2023 Audited	31.03.2022 Audited
1	Total Income from Operations	321.94	320.91	324.85	645.77	475.35
2	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or extraordinary Items#)	54.23	20.03	97.7	117.73	2.73
3	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/or extraordinary Items#)	54.23	20.03	97.7	117.73	2.73
4	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or extraordinary Items#)	41.08	13.98	64.8	78.78	3.71
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period (Comprising Profit/(Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax))	41.08	13.98	64.8	78.78	3.71
6	Equity Share capital	210	4.18	65.29	65.29	4.18
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) as shown in the Audited Balance Sheet of the previous year	2673.14	11.89	823.13	823.13	11.89
8	Earning per Share (face Value of Rs. 10/- each)(not annualised)					
	1. Basic	0.52	6.7	10.04	18.47	1.78
	2. Diluted	0.52	6.7	10.04	18.47	1.78

NOTES:
1. The above is an extract of the detailed format of half year financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the half year financial Results are available on the Stock Exchange website www.nseindia.com. The same is also available on the Company's website www.sartelevance.com.
2. The above results duly reviewed by the Audit Committee, were approved by the Board of Directors in their meeting held on 27.11.2023.

For SAR Televance Limited
(Formerly Known as SAR Televance Private Limited)
(Rahul Sahdev)
Managing Director

Date: 27.11.2023
Place: Haryana

INTEGRATED INDUSTRIES LIMITED
(Formerly known as Integrated Technologies Limited)
CIN: 107190L1995PLC277176

Registered Office: 288, Basement, AGCR Enclave Delhi - 110092, India.
Corporate Office: B-16, Second Floor, Sector-2, Noida 201301, India.
E-mail: info@integratedindustries.in Website: www.integratedindustries.in
Mobile: +91 9811060171 Phone: 011-45511351 Fax: 011-45511351

NOTICE OF 02/2023-24 EXTRA-ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING, E-VOTING INFORMATION

NOTICE is hereby given that the 02/2023-24 EXTRA-ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING of the Members of Integrated Industries Limited formerly known as Integrated Technologies Limited ("Company") will be held on Wednesday, December 20, 2023 at 12.00 P.M. (IST) through Video Conferencing/Other Audio Visual Means ("VC/OAVM"), without the physical presence of the Members at the EGM, to transact the business as set out in the EGM Notice. Members attending the EGM through VC/OAVM shall be reckoned for the purpose of quorum under Section 103 of the Act.

In compliance with the Circulars, EGM Notice has been sent only through electronic mode to those Members whose email ids are registered with the Company/Registrar and Transfer Agent (RTA)/Depository Participant ("DP"). The emailing of EGM Notice to all members is available on the Company's website at www.integratedindustries.in, website of the Stock Exchange i.e. BSE Limited at www.bseindia.com, and on the website of National Securities Depository Limited ("NSDL") at www.evoting.nsdl.com.

Manner of registering / updating email address, mobile number and bank account mandate

Members whose email ids are already registered with the Company/RTA/DP, may follow the instructions for remote e-Voting as well as e-Voting at EGM as provided in the EGM Notice. Members who have not registered their email ids, are requested to register the same for receiving all communications including Notices etc. from the Company electronically as per process mentioned below:-

- Members holding Equity Shares of the Company in physical mode are requested to provide a duly signed Form ISR-1 along with supporting documents to the Company's Registrar and Share Transfer Agent-Skyline Financial Services Private Limited, either at their office at Skyline Financial Services Private Limited, D-153/A, 1st Floor, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-I, New Delhi-110020, Tel: 011-40450193-97; or by e-mail at admin@skylinert.com. The said form is available on the website of the Company at www.integratedindustries.in
- Members holding Equity Shares of the Company in dematerialised form are requested to register / update their email address, mobile number and bank account details with their relevant depositories through their depository participants.

Instructions for remote e-Voting and E-voting during EGM

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 108 of the Act read with Rule 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014, as amended from time to time, and Regulation 44 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 ("Listing Regulations"), Members will be provided with the facility to cast their vote electronically, through the remote e-Voting facility (before the EGM) and e-Voting facility (at the EGM), on all the resolutions set forth in EGM Notice. The facility of casting votes will be provided by NSDL. Facility for e-Voting at the EGM will be made available to those Members who are present in the EGM through VC/OAVM facility and have not cast their vote on the resolutions through remote e-Voting. The Members who have cast their vote by remote e-Voting prior to the EGM may also attend/ participate in the EGM through VC/OAVM but shall not be eligible to vote at the EGM. All the Members are informed that:

- The business as set forth in the EGM Notice will be transacted through voting by electronic means in the form of e-Voting.
- The voting rights of member(s) shall be in proportion to their shares in the paid up equity share capital of the Company as on the cut-off date i.e. Wednesday, December 13, 2023. A person whose name is recorded in the register of members or in the register of beneficial owners maintained by the depositories as on the cut-off date, i.e. Wednesday, December 13, 2023 only shall be entitled to vote through remote e-Voting/e-Voting at the EGM.
- Any person who acquires shares of the Company and becomes member of the Company after sending the notice of the EGM and holding shares as on cut-off date i.e. Wednesday, December 13, 2023, may obtain the User ID and password by sending an email to evoting@nsdl.co.in or info@skylinert.com by mentioning their Folio No./DP ID and Client ID. However, if a person is already registered with NSDL for remote e-Voting then existing User ID and password can be used for casting the votes.
- The remote e-Voting period commences at 09:00 A.M. (IST) on Sunday, December 17, 2023 and ends at 05:00 P.M. (IST) on Tuesday, December 19, 2023. The remote e-Voting module shall be disabled by NSDL for voting thereafter. Once the vote on a resolution is cast by the Member, the Member shall not be allowed to change it subsequently.
- During this period, Members holding shares either in physical form or in dematerialized form may cast their vote by remote e-Voting before the EGM.
- The Members will be provided with the facility for e-Voting at the EGM and those Members participating at the EGM & who have not already cast their vote by remote e-Voting before the EGM, will be eligible to vote at the EGM.
- The Members who have cast their vote by remote e-Voting prior to the EGM may also attend/participate in the EGM through VC/OAVM, but shall not be eligible to vote again at the EGM.
- Detailed process and manner of remote e-Voting, e-Voting at the EGM and instructions for attending the EGM through VC/OAVM is being provided in the EGM Notice and also available on the Company's website at www.integratedindustries.in and on the website of NSDL at www.evoting.nsdl.com.
- In case of any queries, you may refer the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Shareholders and e-voting user manual for Shareholders available at the download section of www.evoting.nsdl.com or call on toll free no.: 1800 1020 990 and 1800 22 44 30 or send a request to NSDL at evoting@nsdl.co.in who will also address the grievances connected with the voting by electronic means.
- The Board of Directors has appointed Ms. Loveleen Gupta (FCS No. 5287), Practising Company Secretary as "Scrutinizer" to scrutinize the process of e-voting during the EGM and remote e-voting held before the EGM in a fair and transparent manner.
- The Results shall be declared within two working days of the conclusion of the EGM and the same, along with the consolidated Scrutinizer's Report, shall be placed on the website of the Company at www.apfminvest.com, NSDL at www.evoting.nsdl.com and shall be communicated to BSE Limited at www.bseindia.com.

For Integrated Industries Limited
(Formerly known as Integrated Technologies Ltd)
Sd/-
(Priyanka)
Company Secretary & Compliance Officer

Date: 28.11.2023
Place: Delhi

'Commerce Ministry working to remove trade barriers'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Commerce Ministry is working to address issues related to non-tariff barriers and market access for domestic products in sub-Saharan African countries like Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana and Gambia to boost India's exports, an official said.

The official said meetings have been held with Indian missions of the sub-Saharan African countries with which India has significant bilateral trade.

The major trading partners of India in that region in 2022-23 were South Africa (total trade USD 18.9 billion, exports USD 8.5 billion); Nigeria (USD 11.85 billion, exports USD 5.15 billion); Togo (USD 6.6 billion, exports USD 6 billion); and Tanzania (USD 6.5 billion, exports USD 3.93 billion).

The other countries were Mozambique (USD 5 billion, exports USD 2.5 billion); Angola (USD 4.22 billion, exports USD 621 million); and Kenya (USD 3.4 billion, exports USD 3.2 billion).

"A virtual meeting with Indian Mission of top 10 countries (bilateral trade-wise) in sub-Saharan African region was held in September to discuss



the overall economic and commercial relations with those countries, export performance and non-tariff barriers which are acting as impediments to bilateral trade and enhance exports," the official said.

A similar meeting was also held with Indian Missions in GCC countries. GCC is a union of six countries in the Gulf region — Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain. The council is the largest trading bloc of India.

The bilateral trade in 2022-23 with these countries stood at USD 52.76 billion with Saudi Arabia; USD 84.8 billion with the UAE; USD 18.77 billion with Qatar; USD 13.8 billion with Kuwait; and USD 12.4 billion with Oman.

The ministry has asked exporters to focus on potential key sectors such as food, electronics and engineering, and major markets to boost exports.

It has suggested focus on organising fairs and exhibitions at global scale.

India's merchandise exports rose 6.21 per cent to USD 33.57 billion in October this year, even as the trade deficit touched a record high of USD 31.46 billion during the month.

Imports increased 12.3 per cent to USD 65.03 billion during the month due to a jump in gold imports.

Cumulatively, exports during the April-October period this fiscal contracted 7 per cent to USD 244.89 billion, while imports fell 8.95 per cent to

USD 391.96 billion.

The trade deficit during the seven-month period was USD 147.07 billion against USD 167.14 billion in the corresponding period last year.

Think-tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) in its report, released in August, has said India needs to act in a fast-track manner for removal of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) being faced by domestic exporters in different countries to achieve one trillion dollar outbound shipment target for goods by 2030.

Key Indian exports that face high barriers include ceramic tiles in Egypt; and microbiological reagents in Saudi Arabia, the report added.

Most Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) are domestic rules created by countries with an aim to protect human, animal or plant health and environment. NTM may be technical measures like regulations, standards, testing, certification, pre-shipment inspection or non-technical measures like quotas, import licensing, subsidies, government procurement restrictions.

When NTMs become arbitrary, beyond scientific justification, they create hurdles for trade and are called NTBs.

S&P ups India's growth forecast to 6.4%

Robust domestic momentum to offset headwinds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

S&P Global Ratings on Monday raised India's growth forecast for the current financial year to 6.4 per cent, from 6 per cent, saying that robust domestic momentum has offset headwinds from high food inflation and weak exports.

However, it cut the growth estimates for the next fiscal (2024-25) to 6.4 per cent, from 6.9 per cent, as it expects growth to slow on a higher base, subdued global growth and lagged impact of interest rate hike.

"We have revised up our projection for India's GDP growth for fiscal 2024 (ending in March 2024) to 6.4 per cent, from 6 per cent, as robust domestic momentum seems to have offset headwinds from high food inflation and weak exports," S&P said.

The estimates of S&P is a shade higher than other international agencies. The IMF, World Bank, ADB, and Fitch expects India's GDP to expand 6.3 per cent in the current fiscal.

The RBI has projected GDP growth at 6.5 per cent for current year as well as next financial year. The Indian economy grew 7.2 per cent in the 2022-23 fiscal year ended March 2023.

The country's real GDP rose 7.8 per cent year-on-year in the June quarter, up from 6.1 per



cent in the March quarter.

To reign in inflation, the RBI had hiked benchmark interest rates by 250 basis points since May last year. The apex bank has held the repo rate steady at 6.5 per cent since February.

In its Economic Outlook for Asia Pacific, S&P said growth this year and the next is on track to be the strongest in emerging market economies with solid domestic demand - India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

Fixed investment has recovered considerably more than private consumer spending in India, it said.

In India, there was a transitory spike in food inflation in the July-September quarter, but it

appears to have had little effect on underlying inflation dynamics.

Still, headline inflation remains above the Reserve Bank of India's target of 4 per cent, suggesting it will be a while before the rate cycle turns, S&P said.

"In Australia, India, and the Philippines, lingering inflation risks are keeping central banks occupied. The government plans to expand fiscal policies in several countries could complicate central banks' policy-making," S&P said.

Risks remain but so also does the potential for growth in the region. In coming months, the spotlight may shine a little more brightly on emerging

markets where domestic demand is strong, S&P said.

With regard to China, S&P said the outlook for the country has improved, but obstacles still remain.

S&P raised its 2023 and GDP growth forecast for China to 5.4 per cent and 4.6 per cent.

Still, with the property sector struggling and confidence subdued, the growth outlook remains moderate, it said.

"China is coping while its neighbors step up. A property downturn is still a pain point for the Chinese economy, but growth momentum has slightly improved because of policy support," said Louis Kuijs, Asia-Pacific chief economist at S&P Global Ratings.

E-buses expected to account for 11-13 per cent of new bus sales by FY25: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Electric buses are expected to account for up to 13 per cent of new bus sales by FY2025, rating agency ICRA said on Monday.

Many state Electric Vehicle (EV) policies have announced specific targets and timelines for e-bus adoption, thereby creating a road map for electrification, it noted.

With significant operational savings vis-à-vis conventional diesel buses, ICRA said it expects the demand for e-buses to continue to rise.

"ICRA foresees electric buses (e-buses) to be at the forefront of India's electrification drive, with the segment expected to witness healthy traction going forward. ICRA estimates e-buses to account for 11-13 per cent of new bus sales by FY2025," it said in a report.

According to the report, it expects government subsidies and evolving technologies to play a role in further reducing the capital costs involved in e-buses.

The traction in the e-bus segment is already visible over the past couple of years, with e-bus volumes as well as penetration levels improving consistently to 7 per cent in FY2023, ICRA noted.

Steady progress has been made towards meeting the e-bus deployment targets under the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and



Electric Vehicles (FAME) scheme, and this is likely to gain pace over the coming months till the scheme expires in March 2024.

ICRA noted that the government has sought to spur e-bus adoption through bid aggregation under tenders floated by Convergence Energy Services Limited (CESL).

With the enhanced volumes under these tenders due to demand aggregation, there was healthy interest and participation by the Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) in the first two tenders, even without subsidies on offer in the second tender, it stated.

"However, CESL's third tender saw limited OEM participation due to a lack of a payment security mechanism and a dry lease model of operation proposed for it, and had to be subsequently scrapped. Addressing these concerns of the OEMs

would be critical to ensuring the increased pace of e-bus adoption in the country," it added.

The government has also recently announced the PM e-Bus Sewa scheme, which aims to provide 10,000 e-buses to 169 cities under a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model.

With the FAME II scheme expiring in March 2024, such demand aggregation by CESL or under the PM e-Bus Sewa scheme is expected to support the e-bus volumes as subsidies get gradually phased out, ICRA said. "Addressing the OEM concerns related to the implementation of payment security mechanisms, the availability of long-term funding avenues, etc. Would remain critical to ensuring that the pace of electrification achieved so far is maintained going forward," it added.

Fractional ownership of property as investment tool to get boost from Sebi regulation: Experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Market regulator Sebi's decision to allow the setting up of small and medium REITs will help regulate and propel the growth of new-age investment avenue called fractional ownership of rent yielding real estate assets, according to industry players.

Real estate technology platforms facilitating fractional ownership of rent-yielding properties welcomed the Sebi decision to regulate fractional ownership real estate market, which is still at a nascent stage in India.

Proptech platforms such as YOURS, ALYF, hBits, and WiseX are helping investors in having fractional ownership of primarily office and luxury holiday homes assets.

Real estate consultants like Square Yards and 360 Realtors have also entered into this space.

On Saturday, the Sebi board approved amendments to REITs (Real Estate Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014 in order to create a regulatory framework for the facilitation of Small and Medium REITs (SM REITs), with an asset value of at least Rs 50 crore vis-a-vis minimum asset value of Rs 500 crore for existing REITs.

Welcoming the move, Shrawan Gupta, Founder and CEO of YOURS -- a platform



for fractional ownership of luxury second homes -- said the Sebi initiative to regulate SM REITs and real estate fractional ownership segment is a positive and necessary step.

"The guidelines proposed by Sebi are crucial for formalising the sector, instilling investor faith, and addressing the complexity of Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) securities issuances. Particularly beneficial for retail investors unfamiliar with such structures, the regulation is anticipated to contribute to the growth and acceptance of this innovative form of property ownership, aligning with established practices in developed nations," Gupta said.

Saurabh Vohara, Founder and CEO at ALYF, also hailed Sebi's action, saying this will help enhance transparency, investor security, liquidity,

and seamless exit options within the fractional ownership realm.

"This move holds the potential to create a dual positive impact: formalising fractional ownership as an investment class, thereby attracting a segment of portfolios towards a larger market, and fostering the supply of hospitality assets to meet the escalating demand in the travel and hospitality sectors," he said.

The fractional ownership industry is all set to see a remarkable transformation, Vohara felt.

Shiv Parekh, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, hBits, described Sebi's approval to set up SM REITs as a "watershed moment" in Indian real estate investment.

He said the hBits has always been bullish on the potential of the concept of fractional ownership of real estate assets

and its potential in democratising access into real estate for retail investors.

"Sebi's move to put a regulatory framework on fractional ownership of real estate is a strong testament to trust of the regulator on this new-age investment avenue and it further reinforces our belief on the model," Parekh said.

The regulator's move will provide significant impetus to investor confidence and allow them to explore opportunities in the commercial real estate space in much more depth, he added.

Aryaman Vir, CEO at WiseX, termed it a progressive move in regulating the fractional ownership framework.

"Sebi's acknowledgement on the growing trend of fractional ownership platforms and extending regulatory oversight is commendable. We believe that it will not only foster investor interest in the real estate space but also ensure investor protection, common disclosure practices, and a robust redressal mechanism," Vir said.

Further, he said the lowered minimum asset value of Rs 50 crore for Small and Medium REITs will open exciting opportunities for investors seeking more accessible entry points into real estate ownership.

The Sebi board approved a regulatory framework for SM

REITs that provides for the structure, migration of existing structures meeting certain specified criteria, obligations of the investment manager, including net worth, experience, and minimum unit holding requirement, investment conditions, minimum subscription, distribution norms and valuation of assets.

In August, Sebi had floated a consultation paper for regulating all web-based platforms offering fractional ownership of real estate assets to protect small investors.

Such fractional ownership of real estate assets was proposed to be brought as Micro, Small and Medium REITs under Sebi's REITs rules. Typically, fractional investment of real estate through Fractional Ownership Platforms (FOPs) is an investing strategy in which the cost of acquisition of real estate is split among several investors, who invest in securities issued by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) established by an FOP. Such SPVs purchase real estate assets.

FOPs allow investors to own a certain percentage or fractional share in the real estate asset through the securities issued by the SPVs.

Some FOPs are operated by real estate agents or brokers (before the property is purchased) and as property managers thereafter.

Mines Ministry working on policy for critical minerals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Mines Ministry is in the process of preparing a policy for critical minerals which will include a road map for strengthening the supply chain of these essential resources, an official release said on Monday.

Critical minerals such as copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare earth elements are essential components in many of today's rapidly growing clean energy technologies - from wind turbines and electricity networks to electric vehicles.

"The strategy will also identify the responsibilities of different ministries of Government of India in ensuring the resilience of the supply chain of critical minerals," the Mines Ministry said in a statement.

The ministry is also preparing a strategy for recycling of metals which will help to increase the recycling capability and streamline the recycling process and will also

work with partner countries to co-develop mineral processing and raw material manufacturing capabilities. Apart from strengthening the domestic mechanisms, collaborative international efforts through multilateral and bilateral engagements have been made to build a resilient critical minerals value chain.

The Ministry of Mine is actively engaging in new partnerships and alliances like the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP), the Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement.

The mines ministry is organising an outreach programme on 'Role of the Government and Industry in Driving the Global Action of Critical Minerals' on Wednesday in the national capital. The event will be attended by Ambassadors, Mission Heads of various countries as well as representatives of businesses in India and other stakeholders.

LIC keen to keep part of its stake in IDBI Bank to reap benefit of bancassurance

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned LIC, promoter of IDBI Bank, has said it plans to retain a part of its stake in the lender to harness the benefits of the bancassurance. Along with the government, Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) will also divest its stake in IDBI Bank but may not exit completely, LIC Chairman Siddhartha Mohanty told PTI in an interview.

"We have made it clear that IDBI Bank is our number one partner in bancassurance. We will retain the some stake in IDBI Bank so that the bancassurance partnership continues," he said.

The government, which owns over 45 per cent stake in IDBI Bank, and life insurance behemoth LIC, with a 49.24 per cent shareholding in the lender, have jointly decided to sell a 60.7 per cent stake. IDBI Bank became a subsidiary of LIC with effect from January 21, 2019, after the acquisition of an additional 82,75,90,885 equity shares.



On December 19, 2020, IDBI Bank was reclassified as an associate company due to the reduction of LIC shareholding to 49.24 per cent, following the issuance of additional equity shares by the bank under a qualified institutional placement (QIP).

IDBI Bank has been the strongest contributor to the bancassurance channel, he said, adding for the bancassurance arrangement to continue, LIC may not be required to hold the entire stake. Bancassurance is an arrangement between a bank and an insurance company, allowing the latter to sell its products to the bank's customers and others through the branch network. Earlier this month, Department of Investment and Public Asset Monetisation

(DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said the stake sale in IDBI Bank may not be completed by March 2024. The transaction is "on course", but there are aspects like the RBI's fit and proper criteria, which need to be complied with, Pandey said, adding, "We practically don't think that before March, we can conclude it (IDBI Bank stake sale)". About the concerns of shareholders on the low price of LIC shares post-listing, Mohanty said, "We are very much concerned about the interest of our shareholders and taking steps to create margin by adopting various means, including by changing product mix".

Solar capacity installations in India fall 47 per cent to 5.6 GW during Jan-Sep

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has reported a 47 per cent fall in solar installations at 5.6 GW during January-September 2023, amid delay in project execution, according to research firm Mercom India.

The installations were also down in the July-September quarter this year at 1.9 GW, a 34 per cent fall, over 2.8 GW solar capacity installed in the same period a year ago, the research firm said.

However, on a quarter-on-quarter (QoQ) basis, the installations increased almost 6 per cent compared to 1.8 GW in Q2 2023.

"During the first nine months of 2023, 5.6 GW of solar was installed in India. Solar capacity additions fell nearly 47 per cent compared to 10.5 GW installed in 9M 2022," Mercom India Solar Market Update report said.

The utility-scale installations dropped more than 54 per cent year-over-year (YoY) to 4.2 GW. "Barring significant negative developments, installations in 2024 should grow exponentially. Declining prices (of ped products) are now the cause of slower growth (com-



pared to rising prices earlier) as developers and installers push procurement to the last minute. Hopefully, the market can handle the expected rush in Q1 2024 and thrive," Raj Prabh, CEO of Mercom Capital Group said.

The extensions granted to several large-scale solar and hybrid power projects and those facing delays due to land and transmission issues primarily affected installations in January-September 2023.

The oversupply of modules in China further lowered the average selling prices of solar modules, which have fallen consecutively over the last four quarters.

The challenges in securing transmission connectivity increased further with the

change in project timelines. During Q3, the project developers also lacked clarity on application procedures under the amended regulations for long-term access to transmission networks.

However, the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) issued clarifications towards the quarter's end, which is expected to ease the process over the next few quarters. Several projects stuck in the habitat of the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) are still waiting for the Supreme Court order to receive transmission connectivity.

India's cumulative installed solar capacity, including total rooftop solar installations, surpassed 69 GW as of September 2023.

ADITI WINS IN SPAIN

PTI ■ MARBELLA (SPAIN)

Star Indian golfer Aditi Ashok dished out a bogey free final round after a stunning back nine to win the Andalucia Costa del Sol Open de Espana tournament for her second title of the season here.

Aditi's final round of 66 with a back nine of 5-under 31 saw her finish at 17-under as she beat Anne Van Dam (68) of the Netherlands by two shots on Sunday.

It was Aditi's second win of the season and fifth of her career on the Ladies European Tour. She began the 2023 season with a win in Kenya in the first event of the year and ended it with another trophy here in the last event.

It was an impressive week for Aditi, who had finished fourth at the Tokyo Olympics, as she shot 69-68-68-66 at Real Club de Golf Las Brisas.

"It started out slow, I was missing a lot of birdies for the first six to eight holes. I hit it close on seven, after that I felt like I still had a chance. Initially, it felt like I was two shots away the whole time. I'm glad I picked up on the back nine," said Aditi.

"It was a great battle. Anne (Van Dam), when she's playing good, she can blow the field away and win by five to 10 shots. I knew I had to not stop making birdies and to keep trying.

"Her par when she hit the trees on 15 and my long putt, that



switched the momentum a little bit. She is a great player and kept me honest out there."

Aditi, who was in a tie for second place overnight, didn't make her first birdie until the seventh but that kickstarted her momentum.

She added two more on the 10th and 13th but it was her three birdies on the trot on 15, 16 and 17 which sealed her title.

"On the front nine I wasn't hitting it as good, somewhere on the back on 13 when I hit that

8-iron close I feel I made a good swing and it just picked up from there. I made three or four good swings and all of those were in makeable range. I guess the 16th tee shot was the shot of the day," she said.

"One 18, I have struggled with that tee shot and missed it right almost all four days. It was a weird lie in the rough, I didn't know if it would go left on me, and it did. I was just trying to make sure I had a good look at par."

India's other star Diksha Dagar (67) ended tied-seventh on 10-under-par, along with defending champion Caroline Hedwall, Norway's Madelene Stavnar, France's Celine Boutier and Spanish amateur Andrea Revuelta. Diksha improved over the last two rounds after starting with 72-71. She carded 68-67 over the weekend.

Aditi, who played only eight events this season, finished fourth on the Race to Costa del Sol, while Diksha was third.

In the 2023 Race to Costa del Sol, Trichat Cheenglab took the trophy with a tally of 1,966.52 points ahead of Boutier and Dagar.

Cheenglab followed in the footsteps of compatriot Athaya Thitikul and became the sixth player to win both the Race to Costa del Sol and Rookie of the Year titles in the same season.

Dutch star Anne Van Dam ended the week in second place on 15-under-par after a final round of 68 (-4).

Van Dam, who has won this tournament twice previously, went toe-to-toe with Aditi throughout the final round and had five birdies and one bogey on her scorecard.

"It was a tough day. I was in there all day and it was super close. Aditi just came out and played unbelievably and she definitely deserved to win this week," said Van Dam, a five-time winner on the LET.

"I'm very pleased with my season overall. I came close six times now, I just need to keep working hard and the wins are right around the corner."

Spain's Ana Peláez Trivino ended the week in third place after a final round of 68 (-4) which included five birdies and one bogey. Sweden's Linn Grant and Australia's Kirsten Rudgeley finished in a tie for fourth place on 12-under-par with Belgium's Manon De Roey in outright sixth.

National Boxing: Sagar, Sachin advance

PTI ■ SHILLONG

Commonwealth Games silver medallist Sagar and World Youth champion Sachin packed a punch as they advanced in the Men's National Boxing Championships here on Monday.

Railways pugilist in the 92-plus category, Sagar, winner of silver at the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games, hardly broke a sweat on way to vanquishing Uttarakhand's Shubham Singh with the referee stopping the contest in round one.

Sagar will take on Services' Satish Kumar in a round-of-16

match on Tuesday.

Services' Sachin, the 2021 World Youth gold medallist, was on a roll in the 57kg class from the opening round itself against Punjab's Vishal Kumar.

His relentless, power-packed punches were too strong for Vishal to handle. Sachin comfortably finished the bout with a unanimous 5-0 win.

He will face Rajasthan's Roshan Saini in the round of 16 on Tuesday.

Reigning World Youth champion in 63.5kg category Vanshaj, representing Services, also dominated the bout against Ashish of All India Police (AIP).

The youngster showcased his

technical superiority by giving his opponent no chance of a comeback and sealed the match with a 5-0 win. Vanshaj will be up against Uttar Pradesh's Ratandeep Sharma in the round of 16.

Three-time national champion Varinder Singh (60kg), representing Railways, also moved into the round of 16 with a 5-0 verdict over Maharashtra's Vishal Nupe.

Varinder will take on Lokesh Khichi of Rajasthan on Tuesday in a round-of-16 clash. A total of over 350 boxers across 13 weight categories are participating in the championships.

Angry Everton fans march to Goodison Park

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Everton fans marched in their thousands to Goodison Park ahead of a match against Manchester United, protesting against the decision to dock their team a Premier League-record 10 points for breaching financial rules.

Supporters on the march on Sunday held up pink cards featuring the word "corrupt" and the logo of the Premier League, and chanted "We shall not be moved." On one huge banner read the message: "Where there is power, greed and money ... There is corruption."

There is widespread anger at the Merseyside club at the severity of the sanction handed out by a disciplinary commission after Everton went less than 20 mil-



lion pounds over the maximum losses allowed of 105 million pounds (\$130 million) across a three-year period,

according to the league's profit and sustainability rules.

This was Everton's first match since the club received a punish-

ment that many in soccer feel doesn't fit the crime. It made for a hostile atmosphere inside Goodison Park as fans jeered the

Premier League anthem and waved the pink cards when the players came out of the tunnel before kickoff.

There was a huge chant in the 10th minute - marking the 10 points docked - accusing the league of corruption.

Everton started the game tied for points with last-place Burnley, five points from safety, and stayed there after losing 3-0 to United, despite an encouraging performance for large parts of the game.

Everton manager Sean Dyche said it had been "a tough 10 days to take the news."

"Most people think how unjust it is, including our fans, myself and the football club. We have to perform and win games."

Dyche said his team showed character in the circumstances.



Rodrigo scores twice as Real Madrid beats Cadiz 3-0

AP ■ MADRID

Rodrigo made the most of his last-minute addition to the Real Madrid lineup, scoring two beautiful goals and setting up another by Jude Bellingham in a 3-0 win against Cadiz that put Madrid at the top of the Spanish league.

Rodrigo swiftly went past the Cadiz defenders before hitting the top corner with goals in the 14th and 64th minutes, and then provided the assist in Bellingham's 74th-minute goal on Sunday. Madrid moved a point ahead of Girona, which hosts Athletic Bilbao on Monday. Madrid was four points ahead of third-place Atletico Madrid, which beat Mallorca 1-0 at home on Saturday with a goal from Antoine Griezmann. Atletico has a game in hand.

It was Bellingham's 14th goal with Madrid in all competitions. The England international, who had been nursing a shoulder injury, leads the Spanish league with 11 goals.

Rodrigo was set to start the match on the bench but made the starting 11 at the last minute after Brahim Diaz fell ill with stomach problems.

"Rodrigo made the difference in the game today," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said.

It was Rodrigo's first game since he said last week that he was the

target of racist abuse on social media following Brazil's 1-0 loss to Argentina in South American World Cup qualifying.

The Brazil forward has scored five goals in his last three games with Madrid. He calmly dealt with defenders while scoring his goals on Sunday, first inside the area and then in a breakaway. Also out for Ancelotti's team because of injuries were Vinicius Junior and Eduardo Camavinga, who got hurt during the international break. It was the second straight league win for Madrid, which is unbeaten in eight matches in the competition. Cadiz looked threatening at times but couldn't avoid seeing its winless streak in the league extend to nine matches, with six losses and three draws. It stayed in 16th place, two points from the relegation zone.

Defending champion Barcelona remained fourth after a 1-1 draw at Rayo Vallecano on Saturday.

RAMOS SENT OFF: Sevilla's winless streak in the league reached seven matches after a 2-1 loss at Real Sociedad, when veteran defenders Sergio Ramos and Jesús Navas were sent off late in the game.

Ramos was shown a straight red card after a dangerous sliding tackle, while Navas was sent off - also with a straight red - for complaining. Ramos was initial-

ly shown a yellow card but video review reversed the referee's decision and he ended up being awarded the red.

Sociedad moved to fifth place with the home win. The Basque Country club took the lead with an own-goal by Sevilla goalkeeper Marko Dmitrovic three minutes into the match and added to the lead with Umar Sadiq finding the net with a shot from outside the box in the 22nd.

Sevilla, which dropped to 15th, got on the board with a header by Youssef En-Nesyri in the 60th.

MORALES' HAT TRICK: Villarreal ended a two-match losing streak in the league with a 3-1 win against Osasuna, with José Luis Morales scoring a second-half hat trick.

The win moved the team coached by Marcelino García Toral to 12th place. Osasuna, which scored late through Alejandro Catena, dropped to 14th. It has lost three of its last four matches.

Also Sunday, Real Betis beat Las Palmas 1-0 at home with a 19th-minute goal by striker William José. Betis stayed in seventh place, four spots ahead of Las Palmas. Second-to-last Granada fired coach Paco López on Sunday, two days after the team's 3-1 loss at Alaves.

Martínez scores again as leader Inter draws 1-1

AP ■ MILAN

Lauro Martínez scored again but Inter Milan had to be content with a share of the spoils as the Serie A leader drew 1-1 at second-place Juventus.

Martínez's 13th league goal of the season canceled out Dušan Vlahović's opener in the Derby d'Italia on Sunday. Inter remained two points above Juventus. Third-place AC Milan is six points behind its city rival, with defending champion Napoli two points further back in fourth. Both Milan and Napoli played on Saturday.

Inter faces another tough trip next weekend when it visits Napoli.

It was a matchup in Turin between two fierce rivals occupying the top two spots. Inter was looking to move five points clear while Juventus knew it could leapfrog into the lead. Both sides had early chances in a match that was intense and entertaining from the start. Juventus broke the deadlock in the 27th minute through a move started and finished by Vlahović. The Serbia forward won the ball in midfield and then sent Federico Chiesa down the left before racing into the area to collect the ball back and steer it into the bottom right corner.



The home side's advantage lasted just six minutes, however, before Marcus Thuram and Martínez — who have become one of European soccer's most dangerous attacking duos - combined again for the equalizer. The move began with Inter goalkeeper Yann Sommer and quickly moved forward where Thuram crossed from the right and Martínez got in front of Juventus defender Federico Gatti

for an angled drive into the bottom left corner.

Former Juventus winger Juan Cuadrado was brought on in the 69th minute to loud boos from the home fans and he was jeered every time he touched the ball. Cuadrado joined Inter on a free transfer in July after eight seasons at Juventus, where he won a number of trophies including five Serie A titles.

TEAM GOAL: Paulo Dybala

and Stephan El Shaarawy scored late as Roma beat lowly Udinese 3-1 and closed the gap on the top four.

Roma - which had a poor start to the season - moved up to fifth, three points behind Napoli and 11 points behind Inter.

It was Udinese's first defeat in nearly two months and left it a point above the relegation zone. Jose Mourinho's side took the lead in the 20th minute when

Dybala floated in a free kick and Gianluca Mancini beat his marker to head the ball in across the face of goal.

Udinese had been pushing at the start of the second half and it equalized in the 57th when Martin Payero whipped in a cross from the left for Florian Thauvin to head in at the back post. Roma restored its advantage nine minutes from time with a great team move that it finished off when Romelu Lukaku backheeled the ball to Dybala, who drilled it into the bottom left corner.

Lukaku also had a hand in Roma's third, in the final minute, as he controlled a long ball before laying it off to Edoardo Bove, who passed it on first time for El Shaarawy to sweep into the far bottom corner.

SEVEN-GOAL THRILLER: Domenico Berardi scored twice, including a stoppage-time winner, to help Sassuolo to a 4-3 victory at Empoli and end a six-match winless run for his team. Sassuolo moved up to 13th, five points above the relegation zone and 18th-place Empoli, which had surprisingly won at Napoli in the previous round.

Substitute Ilario Monterisi also scored in stoppage time to send Frosinone to a 2-1 win over Genoa.

Sinner leads Italy to its first Davis Cup title

AP ■ MALAGA (SPAIN)

Jannik Sinner capped his perfect week by leading Italy to its first Davis Cup title in nearly five decades. Sinner took his record to 5-0 this week by beating Alex de Minaur 6-3, 6-0 in the second singles match of Sunday's final, giving Italy a 2-0 win over Australia for its first Davis Cup title since 1976.

Matteo Arnaldi had given Italy the first point with a 7-5, 2-6, 6-4 win over Alexei Popyrin. The No. 4 Sinner beat top-ranked Novak Djokovic in the singles and doubles matches in

Saturday's semifinal showdown against Serbia.

The 22-year-old Italian needed 1 hour, 21 minutes to seal Italy's victory against Australia. "We are all very young. We are really hungry to try to win one more time for our life, but having this feeling at least once, it is a really special feeling," said Sinner, who has beaten nine top-10 players since September, though he lost to Djokovic in the ATP Tour Finals a week ago.

Arnaldi earlier saved eight break points before getting a break of his own to close out the first match in the decisive

third set.

"I think I won one of the most important matches of my life," the 44th-ranked Arnaldi said. The Italians, who had never won the title other than in 1976, had lost the three finals it played against Australia, which was last year's runner-up to Canada.

Australia eliminated Finland in the last four this year. The Aussies are 28-time champions but haven't lifted the trophy at men's tennis top team event since captain Lleyton Hewitt won on the winning squad as a player in 2003.

"There hasn't been another



nation that's gone back-to-back in the last two years, so we are showing a pretty good effort collectively," De Minaur said.

"We are very, very close. It stinks like hell. We'll be back. We'll get this. I mean, we've got a very, very strong future ahead of us."

Australia this year became just the second nation to win 200 Davis Cup ties, with the United States being the other.

Matteo Berrettini was not in the Italian team because of an injury but he was in Malaga supporting his countrymen. "Thanks to Matteo," Sinner

said. "He has had a very tough year (with) a lot of injuries. For all of us, that he came here, it means a lot. He gave us a lot of positive energy."

MALAGA AGAIN: The final 8 of the Davis Cup Finals will stay in Malaga for another year.

Spain was awarded a wild card Sunday for the group stage in Valencia. This year's finalists, Italy and Australia, also go straight through to the group stage in September. So does Great Britain, which lost to Serbia in the quarterfinals.

India will be serious challenger for 2024 T20 World Cup title: Ravi

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Former head coach Ravi Shastri firmly believes that India will be a "serious challenger" in the next year's T20 World Cup due to a strong nucleus in the shortest format but reminded that rising to the occasion in knockout games is a must to emerge triumphant. It has been more than a week since Australia trumped India, in what turned out to be a one-sided final in Ahmedabad, with the country's cricket fraternity still reeling with the outcome, given that the hosts had a 10-match unbeaten run going into the title clash. Shastri said India have found a nucleus of young players ahead of next year's T20 World Cup, to be played in the Caribbean and the USA from June 4 next year. "It was heart-breaking but a lot of our guys will learn, the game moves on, and I see India winning a World Cup very soon," Shastri said. "It might not be a 50-overs (one)



that easily because you have to rebuild the side but 20-overs cricket, the very next one India will be very serious challenger because you have got the nucleus. This is a shorter format of the game. Your focus should be on that." With the presence of impact players such as Hardik Pandya,

Suryakumar Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah and Rinku Singh, India have a strong T20 core. Shastri admitted that it still hurts to recall that India, who were the strongest team in the competition, did not deliver in the final. "To be honest, it still hurts from the outside, that we could not

win the cup because we were the strongest team." "Nothing comes easy — even the great man Sachin Tendulkar had to wait (for) six World Cups to win one. You don't win (a) World Cup (easily), to win a World Cup you have got to be damn good on that big day," Shastri said during the registra-

tion launch of the Indian Street Premier League here. "What you do earlier does not count, on that big day, that is when you rise to the occasion. Even before the start of the tournament you knew that, what happens (in terms of the format). "Early doors (are there), (and) once top four teams are there, in the semifinal and final, those two days if you perform, you win. And those were the two days when Australia performed when they came from nowhere," said the former India skipper. "They lost the first two, but on the D-day, the two days, they did," Shastri said about Australia, who won the 50-over World Cup title for a record sixth time. With the Indian bowlers performing in unison led by Mohammed Shami, who claimed 24 wickets, Shastri said it gave India the 'best chance'. "The way the bowling stood up towards the mid stage of the tournament you thought they had a great, great chance," he said.



3rd T20I: India aim to seal series

PTI ■ GUWAHATI
The stylish Tilak Varma wouldn't mind some quality batting time before his possible exit from the playing eleven as the Indian team aims to take an unassailable lead in the third T20 International against Australia here on Tuesday. Shreyas Iyer, who was given a week's rest after the World Cup final, will join the squad for the last two games in Raipur and Bengaluru, taking vice-captaincy duties from Rituraj Gaikwad. That effectively means that Iyer will walk into the playing XI and there is a strong possibility that he will replace Tilak. The replacement has more to do with combination rather than form. After near-flawless batting performance in back-to-back games, the new-look Indian team would like to keep its foot firmly on the pedal on a new journey with a young leader like Shubman at the helm," the head of GT think-tank said.

the Pakistan Test series would be his next international assignment. **POSSIBLY TILAK'S LAST CHANCE IN SERIES:** India's top-order has ticked all the boxes with Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rituraj Gaikwad and skipper Suryakumar Yadav hitting a half-century each. Ishan Kishan, showing no signs of rustiness even after spending nearly five and half weeks on the World Cup bench, has got two half centuries under his belt. Rinku Singh, with two superb rear-guard knocks, has consolidated his status as designated finisher in this format and is slowly ensuring a permanent No.6 slot for him in this batting order ahead of the T20 World Cup. However, Tilak, who has not missed any of India's last 12 T20 Internationals, is in a tricky place as he bats No.5 and he faced just 12 deliveries in the last two games. In the first game, he scored 12 runs off 10 balls with two boundaries in a chase of 209. In the second game in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday, he faced the final two deliveries of the Indian innings as Rinku was promoted ahead of him to give the final push. It would be interesting to see if skipper Suryakumar himself drops a place down in the batting order and gives his younger colleague a chance to play few more balls and get some runs under his belt before Iyer comes calling in the next game in Raipur. **IMPROVED BOWLING PERFORMANCE:** Considering the nature of tracks on offer, Indian

bowlers put up a far improved performance in the second game after conceding 208 runs in the series-opener. While the dot ball count in the first two games remained nearly the same — 45 in the first and 44 in the second — what has significantly improved is the decrease in boundary percentage while defending in dew-laden conditions in Thiruvananthapuram. From being hit for 24 fours in the first game, the same Indian attack cut it down to half in the next game. Prasadidh Krishna, after being creamed by Jos Inglis and Steve Smith in Visakhapatnam, made a strong comeback with three wickets in his second spell. However, one needs to also factor in that Prasadidh was bowling with a cushion of a mammoth target of 235. He was not under pressure. Even the normally profligate Arshdeep Singh, for a change, nailed his block-hole deliveries during death overs. **THE SQUADS:** **India:** Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Rituraj Gaikwad (vice-captain), Ishan Kishan, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Tilak Varma, Rinku Singh, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Shivam Dube, Ravi Bishnoi, Arshdeep Singh, Prasadidh Krishna, Avesh Khan, Mukesh Kumar. **Australia:** Matthew Wade (captain), Aaron Hardie, Jason Behrendorff, Sean Abbott, Tim David, Nathan Ellis, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Glenn Maxwell, Tanveer Sangha, Matt Short, Steve Smith, Marcus Stoinis, Kane Richardson, Adam Zampa.

Gujarat Titans appoint Shubman as captain

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Gujarat Titans on Monday appointed Shubman Gill as their captain for the 2024 season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) following Hardik Pandya's decision to move back to Mumbai Indians. The Gujarat Titans will receive Rs 15 crore from MI for the all-cash trade deal apart from a hefty undisclosed transfer fee, a part of which will also go to the cricketer. Once Pandya's exit was sure, 24-year-old opener Gill was an obvious captaincy choice, having got the coveted 'orange cap' in the last season with 890 runs, second to only Virat Kohli's all-time record of 973. "I am delighted and proud to assume the captaincy of Gujarat Titans and thank the franchise for their trust in me to lead such a fine team. We have had two exceptional seasons and I keenly look forward to leading the team with our exciting brand of cricket," Gill said in a statement. Pandya, on his part, took to 'X', formerly twitter to express his emotions. "This brings back so many wonderful memories. Mumbai. Wankhede. Paltan. Feels good to be back," Pandya commented on 'X' on a video depicting his entire

TEAM RESPECTS PANDYA'S DECISION TO MOVE TO MI



journey for Mumbai Indians. GT Team Director Vikram Solanki acknowledged Pandya's contribution to the team's success in then last two seasons. "As the first captain of Gujarat Titans, Hardik Pandya has helped the franchise deliver two fantastic seasons that resulted in winning one IPL championship and one appearance in the final," Solanki was

quoted as saying in a statement. "He has now expressed a desire to return to his original team Mumbai Indians. We respect his decision and wish him all the very best in his future endeavours," the former England batter further added. Solanki, who has closely worked with Gill, vouched for his maturity. "Shubman Gill has shown growth in

stature and standing over the last two years at the highest level of the game. We've seen him mature not only as a batter but also as a leader in cricket," Solanki opined. "His maturity and skill is evident in his on-field performance and we are extremely excited to embark on a new journey with a young leader like Shubman at the helm," the head of GT think-tank said. **THRILLED TO WELCOME BACK HARDIK, SAYS MI OWNERS:** Mumbai Indians owners Nita Ambani and Akash Ambani both termed Pandya's return as a "happy homecoming". "We are thrilled to welcome Hardik back home! It's a heartwarming reunion with our Mumbai Indians family! From being a young scouted talent of Mumbai Indians to now being a team India star, Hardik has come a long way and we're excited for what the future holds for him and Mumbai Indians," Ambani said. Her son Akash spoke about the balance that the all-rounder lends to any team. "It is a happy homecoming. He provides great balance to any team he plays. Hardik's first stint with the MI family was hugely successful, and we hope he achieves even more success in his second.

the Pakistan Test series would be his next international assignment. **POSSIBLY TILAK'S LAST CHANCE IN SERIES:** India's top-order has ticked all the boxes with Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rituraj Gaikwad and skipper Suryakumar Yadav hitting a half-century each. Ishan Kishan, showing no signs of rustiness even after spending nearly five and half weeks on the World Cup bench, has got two half centuries under his belt. Rinku Singh, with two superb rear-guard knocks, has consolidated his status as designated finisher in this format and is slowly ensuring a permanent No.6 slot for him in this batting order ahead of the T20 World Cup. However, Tilak, who has not missed any of India's last 12 T20 Internationals, is in a tricky place as he bats No.5 and he faced just 12 deliveries in the last two games. In the first game, he scored 12 runs off 10 balls with two boundaries in a chase of 209. In the second game in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday, he faced the final two deliveries of the Indian innings as Rinku was promoted ahead of him to give the final push. It would be interesting to see if skipper Suryakumar himself drops a place down in the batting order and gives his younger colleague a chance to play few more balls and get some runs under his belt before Iyer comes calling in the next game in Raipur. **IMPROVED BOWLING PERFORMANCE:** Considering the nature of tracks on offer, Indian

I'm trying to play all my shots: Jaiswal

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Talented India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal is learning the ropes fast and has been trying to be fearless, which is evident from his boundary-laden 25-ball 53 against Australia in the second T20 International here. The 21-year-old right-hander struck nine fours and two sixes during his knock to give India a rollicking start. He shared 77 runs with Rituraj Gaikwad (58) for the opening stand before getting out in the sixth over. India posted a mammoth 235 for 4 and restricted Australia to 191 for 9 for a 44-run win. "It was really special for me. I was trying to play all my shots, be fearless, take bowlers on. I was fully sure with my decisions," Jaiswal said after the match on Sunday. "I have been told by (captain) Surya (Kumar Yadav) and (coach) VVS (Laxman) bhai to express myself. I always think of how I can improve myself around experienced players and nothing else. Still learning." Jaiswal, who was named player-of-the-match, said he was working on improving his fitness level as well as mental strength. "I really worked on my fitness and play shots. I feel the mental stuff is more important in this level. Try to get better each and every day," said the youngster, who made his India debut this year. He has played two Tests and 10 T20 International matches so far. Asked about his mix-up with Gaikwad in the first T20I in Visakhapatnam, which led to the latter's run-out, Jaiswal said, "It was my mistake. I went to him and said sorry. (Marcus) Stoinis



was between me, I was sure but then not sure. I made the wrong call. "I accepted that it was a mistake and it happens. Rutu bhai was humble and said in the gym that next time we are running, we will take secure singles." Rinku Singh, who has been playing the role of a finisher to perfection, said he was enjoying his batting. "I bat in this number a lot so I am calm knowing this position. I like to play each ball according to where it lands. I try to notice whether its a slower ball or fast ball, and I respond accordingly. "I am enjoying with everyone. Feeling good," said Rinku who remained not out on 31 off just nine balls with the help of four boundaries and two sixes. Rinku said he also trained at the nets with the mindset that he

would get just 5-6 overs to bat in a match. "(Role is) Finishing only. I know I'll get 5-6 overs sometimes or maybe 2 overs sometimes. "That's exactly how I practice. As if I'm batting in the last five. That's what VVS sir has also told me to play in the nets," he said. Captain Suryakumar Yadav said his players were taking responsibility and that is taking some pressure off him. "The boys aren't putting too much pressure on me, they're taking responsibility. I told them before the toss to be prepared to bat first," he said. "There was a lot of dew after three overs, told the boys to back themselves. When I saw Rinku in the last game, the composure was brilliant. Today's effort too reminds us of everyone who's done this for India."

Surya is always there to support us: Prasadidh

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Suryakumar Yadav's leadership philosophy is very similar to his T20 batsmanship - uncomplicated and that's what is helping the younger brigade perform well, feels team's leading pacer Prasadidh Krishna. India is already 2-0 up in the five-match T20I series against Australia under Surya's captaincy and Prasadidh himself has got a lot of backing as he came back strongly in the second game with three wickets after being hit for 50 in the first. Asked about Surya's captaincy style, Prasadidh replied, "It shows in the way he (Suryakumar) bats - very similar in his captaincy as well. He trusts his players, backs all of us to do what we want to do and he's there right behind us to support if there's anything going wrong." Rohit Sharma is known to give a lot of freedom to his players and his MI teammate is no different. "That has been the name of the game and then that's the word around freedom, go and execute your plans out there and everyone trusts each other in the team," the Karnataka speedster said. He said he learnt a lot being a part of India's World Cup campaign though he did not play a single match. India lost to Australia in the summit clash. "Being a part of the squad was massive learning for me. That's the biggest learning curve I've had since I've been a part of the team. I got to learn a lot the way people prepare, the amount of information that you can take." However there is no substitute of learning by doing and Prasadidh understood the difference of sitting in a World Cup dug-out and being out there and executing it for the team in pressure scenario. "But I thought the information (that he got during World Cup) was too theoretical for me, I was sitting at the dug out speaking to my teammates. Here (in a match) it is more than theoretical, you need to be able to execute things. It took me a couple of overs (in Visakhapatnam) but after that I was in competition mode." **TACKLING THE DEW:** While India had the luxury of defending a huge score like 235, Prasadidh admitted that bowling second under lights in Sunday's match



was difficult as the ball was really getting wet due to dew at the Greenfield International Stadium. "It was quite difficult to bowl. We were planning to tackle dew even in Vizag but luckily we didn't have to do much there. But here (Thiruvananthapuram) it was really wet. Even in the eighth over when Mukesh (Kumar) was bowling, there was a lot of dew," Prasadidh said at the post match press conference. "But this is part of the challenge of playing in India. As a bowling unit, we need to learn to tackle dew. It is really difficult but then we need to adapt to it. We were prepared, we knew that dew was going to play a huge role." Elaborating on how the team prepared for bowling with dew, he said, "You need

to find out what is working out for you and then go with that. We tried a lot of things - cutters, length balls and yorkers. Slower ball was skidding through, and we executed some yorkers well. "We did practice with wet balls after putting them in water, but then there's no real game pressure during practice, unlike a match. You can't do much about the dew. You do practice, but then when it comes to the match, it's a different ball game. "I got a fresh towel when I finished the third over and then fourth over, the second ball, the towel is all wet," said the 27-year-old pacer who returned with figures of 3/41 on Sunday. Prasadidh even spoke to the pitch curator who told him that a part of the soil was

brought from Karnataka. "So, we knew that it was going to be slightly on the slower side but with dew, we knew that it was going to play a role and batting would be easier in the second half." He praised spinners Axar Patel (1/25) and Ravi Bishnoi (3/32) for the way they bowled under dew. "There was dew in the sixth, seventh and eighth over. The way Axar came to bowl the way he did, Ravi Bishnoi picked up two wickets at crucial junctures. They played a very important role despite dew setting in. "That is what what we do as a bowling unit. There will be days when one or two among us may not have a great that but others will chip in," he concluded.