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MOST WANTED TERRORIST NABBED IN DELHI

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a breakthrough against the Pune ISIS module, the Delhi Police arrested three Islamic State terrorists on Monday. One of them is Mohammad Shahnawaz, also known as Shafi Uzzama, who had a reward of ₹3 lakh on his head. Shahnawaz was on the most wanted list of the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

According to the Delhi Police, the trio had been planning to carry out terror incidents in north India, taking instructions from handlers based abroad.

Addressing a Press briefing, Special Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) HS Dhaliwal, said, "Last month NIA declared award on three persons allegedly involved in blast cases. Among them, Mohammad Shahnawaz, the main accused, has been arrested with his two associates — Mohammad Rizwan Ashraf and Mohammad Arshad Warsi."

Shahnawaz was arrested from Southeast Delhi's Jaitpur area on Sunday night. Ashraf and Arshad were nabbed from Lucknow and Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh, respectively. All the three suspected terrorists, who are engineers and have expertise in assembling bombs, were produced in a court earlier in the morning and have been sent to seven days of police custody.

While responding to media queries, Dhaliwal said, "Shahnawaz is a mining engi-



Delhi Police's Special Cell with most-wanted terrorist Shahnawaz and his associates after arresting them for their links with an ISIS module, in New Delhi on Monday

neer from Visvesvaraya Institute of Technology, and he had knowledge of blast mechanisms. He hails from Hazaribagh in Jharkhand. His wife, Basanti Patel, is converted to Islam and is now known as Mariam. She is currently on the run."

Dhaliwal added that bomb making literature sent from Pakistan-based handlers and other incriminating materials were recovered from Shahnawaz's hideouts.

He said initial interrogation revealed that these people conducted elaborate reconnaissance in Western Ghats, southern India, including Hubballi, Dharwad, and Ahmedabad in Gujarat to establish their hideouts.

They wanted to make their base in Western Ghats, the police said. During the inves-

tigation, it was revealed that they had been instructed to procure all items they needed locally so that external role in their work is not exposed.

Shahnawaz had managed to escape from the custody of the Pune Police. Last month, the NIA had released pictures of Shahnawaz, who was wanted in the Pune ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) module case.

"The arrests were made following a tipoff from an arrested accused of another ISIS module in Delhi. Elementary plastic tubes, iron pipes, different types of chemicals, timing devices, etc, which could have been used in making explosive devices, were seized from Shahnawaz, along with a pistol and cartridges," the police alleged.

Dhaliwal said the ongoing

crackdown has exposed the pan-India reach of the ISIS module. "Their aim was to target well-known people and inflict maximum casualties," he said, adding that they have also uncovered the funding trail behind such activities.

Warsi, police said, is also from Jharkhand. He had completed a BTech in Mechanical Engineering from Aligarh University and was pursuing a doctorate from Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi. Ashraf holds a BTech in computer science. Originally from Azamgarh in Uttar Pradesh, he had also trained as a cleric.

Earlier this month, the NIA had announced ₹3 lakh each for information about Shahnawaz and three other terror suspects: Rizwan Abdul Haji Ali, Abdulla Faiyaz Shaikh alias Diaperwala and

Talha Liyakat Khan.

Shahnawaz, Abdulla and Rizwan were radicalised into joining the ISIS mission over Telegram app, it is learnt. It is alleged that they were linked to an ISIS module at Pune in Maharashtra.

Initially dismissed as petty thieves, further questioning revealed their association with ISIS as part of a sleeper cell.

Shahnawaz, along with two accomplices named Mohammad Imran Mohammad Yunus Khan and Mohammad Yunus Mohammad Yakub Saki, faced arrest by the Kothrud police in Pune on July 18 after attempting to steal a two-wheeler. While the police were en route to their residence in Kondhwa, Pune, for a search operation,

Shahnawaz made a daring escape by leaping out of the police vehicle. Police uncovered that Khan and Saki, who originally hailed from Ratlam in Madhya Pradesh, were purportedly implicated in a different terrorism case registered in Rajasthan.

In this case, explosives were found inside a car back in March 2022. Both Khan and Saki carried a reward of ₹5 lakh each for information leading to their capture. On July 22, the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad assumed control of the investigation. As part of their probe, the ATS detained more individuals, including an IT engineer named Qadir Dastagir Pathan and SN Kazi in Kondhwa.

Khalistanis lay siege to Indian mission in UK

PTI ■ LONDON

A group of pro-Khalistan protesters on Monday gathered outside the High Commission of India here, waving anti-India placards and chanting slogans amid strong Scotland Yard presence.

The protest, which was promoted by British Sikh groups on social media, was organised to draw attention to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations last month of alleged Indian involvement in the killing of wanted terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada.

The allegation has been strongly rejected by the Ministry of External Affairs as "absurd and motivated".

"Sikhs will raise domestic issues, including the suspicious death of activist Bhai Avtar Singh Khanda," reads the call for Monday's protest.

There were several uniformed Metropolitan Police officers on guard and patrolling on foot outside India House, which was cordoned off to restrict the small group of turbaned men and some women opposite the building outside Waldorf Hotel at Aldwych in

central London.

Several police vehicles also patrolled the area throughout the roughly two-hour-long demonstration during which the protesters made speeches in Punjabi and raised pro-Khalistan slogans.

Earlier on Monday, the Sikh Federation (UK) organised a press conference in London to announce a formal request being submitted to the Chief Coroner for England and Wales to open an inquest into the death of Avtar Singh Khanda, a pro-Khalistan UK-based Sikh activist who died in Birmingham in June.

"Given the timing of Khanda's death, and the fact that death threats had been made by those with connections to Indian politics before his death, his case is at the very least suspicious," said Michael Polak, the family's barrister.

Following speculation around the 45-year-old's passing earlier this year, the local West Midlands Police had stated that there were "no suspicious circumstances" surrounding the death. The official cause of death post-mortem was stated as acute leukaemia or blood cancer.

Earlier on Saturday, pro-Khalistan extremists blocked the Indian High Commissioner to the UK, Vikram Dorwaiswami, from entering a gurdwara in Glasgow. The Indian mission dubbed the incident "disgraceful" before reporting it to the UK government.

In a statement issued on Saturday, the High Commission of India in London said that three people from outside Scotland "deliberately disrupted" the visit on Friday evening, and one even attempted to violently force open the diplomatic vehicle as senior diplomats arrived at Glasgow Gurdwara Guru Granth Sahib on Albert Drive.

As they hurled threats and abuses, the High Commissioner (HC) and Consul General of India (CG) decided to leave the premises to avert any further altercation.

"On September 29, 2023, three persons — all from areas outside Scotland — disrupted a planned interaction organised by the Gurdwara Committee for the community, the High Commissioner (HC) and the Consul General of India (CG)," said the High Commission of India statement.

Caste survey opens can of worms

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
PATNA/NEW DELHI

The Nitish Kumar-led Government in Bihar on Monday released findings of its long-awaited caste survey, disclosing that Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) together make up a significant 63 per cent of the State's entire population.

The first Caste Census was conducted during the British colonial era in 1872, with the last one taking place in 1931.

The data which could spur demands for similar caste-based census elsewhere is a key agenda of the Opposition INDIA bloc. And this could provide an advantage to Nitish and his alliance in the upcoming elections in the Hindi heartland, where caste-based politics holds significant sway.

The Congress, which is a major constituent of the Opposition grouping called INDIA, has welcomed the announcement while another Grand Alliance partner Lalu Prasad-led RJD has expressed satisfaction that their long-standing demand for a caste census has finally been fulfilled.

The Opposition BJP, however, voiced dissatisfaction with the caste survey, stressing that it did not give an idea of the



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar speaks with the media regarding the caste-based census report in Patna on Monday

"changed social and economic realities" over the years.

State BJP president Samrat Choudhary said his party had "given its consent" for the exercise and would make an assessment of the findings which have now been made public.

According to the data released here by Development Commissioner Vivek Singh, the State's total population stood at a little over 13.07 crore, out of which the Extremely Backward Classes (36 per cent) were the largest social segment followed by the Other Backward Classes at 27.13 per cent.

Backward caste politicians

have long claimed that the population of castes they represented numbered far more than the conventional wisdom based on the 1931 census, which was the last time a caste headcount was conducted and released.

The survey also stated that Yadavs, the OBC group to which Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav belongs, were the largest in terms of the population, accounting for 14.27 per cent of the total.

Dalits, also known as the Scheduled Castes, accounted for 19.65 per cent of the total population in the State, which is also home to nearly 22 lakh

(1.68 per cent) people belonging to the Scheduled Tribes.

Those belonging to the "unreserved" category, which denotes the proverbial "upper castes" who dominated politics till the Mandal wave of the 1990s comprise 15.52 per cent of the total population.

Nitish said he will convene a meeting of all the nine political parties with an electoral presence in the State legislature and the facts and figures will be shared with them.

RJD president Lalu Prasad said declaring the survey will set the tone for a nationwide caste census which will be undertaken if "We form the next Government at the Centre".

Both the leaders have played an instrumental role in the formation of the INDIA bloc, which affirmed its commitment to holding a caste census at a meeting it held in Bengaluru recently.

The survey establishes that the State's population is overwhelmingly Hindu, with the majority community comprising 81.99 per cent of the total population, followed by Muslims (17.70 per cent).

Christians, Sikhs, Jains and those following other religions as also the non-believers have a minuscule presence, together making up for less than one

per cent of the total population.

The grand old party in recent months has pushed for caste census and announced if the Modi Government does not carry out a caste census, it will be conducted as soon as the Congress Government is formed so that every section can get their right.

Interestingly the Congress in 2010 felt, being a secular State, should "discourage community distinction". The Group of Ministers headed by the then Union Minister Pranab Mukherjee decided that caste census is not advisable.

Before that first Prime Minister late Jawaharlal Nehru took a stand against caste census while late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi too followed the Nehru policy.

Another Congress stalwart and former Prime Minister late Rajiv Gandhi had hit out at the VP Singh Government for implementing the Mandal Commission report on OBC reservations by saying it will divide the country.

The caste survey in Bihar was ordered last year after the Narendra Modi Government at the Centre made it clear that it would not be able to undertake a headcount of castes other than SCs and STs as part of the census.

Jeene Bhi Do Yaaro



People from different walks of life participated in a rally to raise voice against cruelty to animals at Jantar Mantar on the eve of the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. During the rally, signatures for a petition addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking his attention on the issue were also collected, an official statement from the organisers said. The rally was organised by India Unites For Animal Rights, a citizen-led movement. As many as 43 NGOs and animal rights groups, including People for Animals and Perroyayuda Welfare Foundation, were part of the event

Pioneer photo



The Nobel Prize in medicine has been awarded to Hungarian-American biochemist Katalin Kariko and American physician-scientist Drew Weissman for enabling development of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines. In the photo above, Katalin Kariko, left, and, Drew Weissman pose with their trophies during the Japan Prize presentation ceremony in Tokyo on April 13, 2022

AP/PTI

Nobel for COVID saviours

AP ■ STOCKHOLM

Two scientists won the Nobel Prize in medicine on Monday for discoveries that enabled the creation of mRNA vaccines against COVID-19 and that could be used to develop other shots in the future.

Hungarian-born American Katalin Karikó and American Drew Weissman were cited for contributing "to the unprecedented rate of vaccine development during one of the greatest threats to human health in modern times," according to the panel that awarded the prize in Stockholm.

The Nobel panel said the pair's "groundbreaking findings... Fundamentally changed

our understanding of how mRNA interacts with our immune system."

Traditionally, making vaccines required growing viruses or pieces of viruses — often in giant vats of cells or, like most flu shots, in chicken eggs — and then purifying them before next steps in brewing shots.

The messenger RNA approach is radically different. It starts with a snippet of genetic code that carries instructions for making proteins. Pick the right virus protein to target, and the body turns into a mini vaccine factory. But simply injecting lab-grown mRNA into the body triggered an inflammatory reaction that usually destroyed it.

Karikó, a professor at

Szeged University in Hungary and an adjunct professor at the University of Pennsylvania, and Weissman, of the University of Pennsylvania, figured out a tiny modification to the building blocks of RNA that made it stealthy enough to slip past those immune defences.

Karikó, 68, is the 13th woman to win the Nobel Prize in medicine. She was a senior vice president at BioNTech, which partnered with Pfizer to make one of the COVID-19 vaccines.

She and Weissman, 64, who is a professor and director of the Penn Institute for RNA Innovations, met by chance in the 1990s while photocopying research papers, according to Penn Today, the university's

news website.

WHY DO MRNA VACCINES MATTER?

Dr Paul Hunter, a professor of medicine at Britain's University of East Anglia, described the mRNA vaccines as a "game changer" in helping to shut down the coronavirus pandemic, crediting the shots with saving millions of lives.

"If it hadn't been for the mRNA technology, COVID would have been much worse... Vaccines generally were the turning point in slowing down COVID and the mRNA vaccines were just so much better than all the others," he said, noting that the main vaccine used in the UK, made by AstraZeneca, is barely in use anymore.

"We would likely only now be coming out of the depths of COVID without the mRNA vaccines," Hunter said.

Dr Bharat Pankhania, an infectious diseases expert at Exeter University, said that a major advantage of mRNA technology was that vaccines could be made in extremely large quantities since their main components are made in laboratories.

Pankhania predicted the technology used in the vaccines could be used to refine vaccines for other diseases like Ebola, malaria and dengue, and might also be used to create shots that immunise people against certain types of cancer or auto-immune diseases like lupus.

GUEST COLUMN

Lal Bahadur Shastri: the unflickering saga of morality and altruism



Neeraj Kumar Pande

History often illustrates the achievements and social contributions made by luminaries. However, a few pages highlighting the outstanding dimensions of their personality end up turning sepia over time. It's only when we flip these pages from history that we realise that more light needs to be shed on these. For these are inspiring, unforgettable and worth remembering more often. One such illustrious Indian freedom fighter, statesman and political leader, whose contribution has been spectacular in modern India's political, economic and social spectrum was Lal Bahadur Shastri, known to most as the second Prime Minister of independent India (1964-66). Someone who had fought against myriad daunting odds with incredible courage and grit. His humble demeanour, politeness and simplicity won the hearts of millions, including his cynical critics. He was born on October 2, 1904 in a humble family from modern day Uttar Pradesh. Raised in his maternal grandfather's household, he received a rather austere upbringing. However, being a meritorious student, he secured a sound school as well as college education. Inspired by his school teacher and mentor Nishkameshwar Prasad Mishra, Shastri gradually inculcated a spirit of immense nationalism in his heart. Not

only was he motivated to participate in the freedom movement, but also became deeply inspired by the Satyagraha ideology of Mahatma Gandhi.

From quite a young age, Shastri took a keen interest in the philosophies of Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Annie Besant. It was this charm for understanding ancient Indian culture, religion and spirituality that later chiseled his patriotic inclinations. After receiving a rich nationalist education in Indian heritage from the Kashi Vidyapeeth University, he received the title- Shastri (scholar). This symbolised the bachelor's degree awarded by the institution to him, but it eventually became a part of his name. It was during his youth that he was deeply moved by Gandhi's call of non



cooperation, non violence and Satyagraha. In fact he disengaged from his school to take an active part in the non-cooperation movement flagged off during 1920-21. However this proved to be just a stepping stone in mainstream Indian politics. By 1928 Shastri had become an active member of the Indian National Congress and subsequently participated wholeheartedly in the Quit India Movement of 1942. His Gandhian philos-

ophy, honest conduct and selfless contribution to the freedom struggle had already won him huge popularity among vast sections of masses.

Hence it was hardly a surprise when in 1952, Jawaharlal Nehru invited him to the first cabinet of the Republic of India as the Minister of Railways and Transport. At this point he totally redefined the ethical foundations of Indian politics by resigning from his post immediately after the 1956 Mahbubnagar train accident took place. By taking moral responsibility for mishaps during his tenure he carved a new epitome of humanity, morality, honesty and philanthropy. No wonder then that he was the unanimous choice as the second Prime Minister of India in 1964 after Nehru's demise. He was strongly committed to the socialist economic policies espoused by Nehru and this reflected in his economic policies as well. Shastri was a visionary who had been handed down a lopsided Indian economy, rife with financial difficulties, import dependence and faulty balance of trade. He hence resolved to take several ambitious initiatives such as The White Revolution - national campaign to increase the production and supply of milk. He also promoted the Green Revolution in India in 1965, with a foresight to boost food grain production in the country. His leadership acumen was internationally lauded as he handheld the nation during the India - Pakistan war of

1965. As the nation celebrated the victory in the war, Shastri heralded his popular slogan - 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan'. Through this he encouraged Indian soldiers to defend their motherland at all cost and alongside gave inspiration to the farmers to leave no stone unturned for increasing the production of food grains in the country to reduce our dependence on food imports.

Shastri was equally committed to the non alignment principles of Nehru and wanted to promote cordial relations with neighbouring nations. He himself opined, "India has stood for the principle of coexistence and championed it all over the world. Peaceful coexistence is possible among nations no matter how deep the differences between them, how far apart they are in their political and economic systems, no matter how intense the issues that divide them." In his personal life, he was a man of high morals, self discipline and perseverance. Even in the capacity of the leader of the nation, he continued to maintain a low profile. During the Indo-Pak war of 1965, Shastri refused to accept any salary from the government. He would also refuse any valuables or expensive gifts offered by people. He would famously say, "At heart I'm a simple poor man, I cannot afford to buy expensive things for my family." These words from a man of his stature and position were and will continue to be unprecedented in the political legacy of India. Shastri was an ardent critic of cultural malpractices. He profoundly criticised the discriminatory caste system which was deeply entrenched in the society of his times. In fact he gave up his own family surname as an expression of hatred towards

caste divide. He had also encouraged women education as he believed that unless women get emancipation, Indian society could only become partially progressive.

In honour of his multifaceted contribution to the country, he was bestowed with the most prestigious national honour - the Bharat Ratna, posthumously in 1966. The India-Pakistan war officially spiralled to an end on January 10, 1966. However the nation lost its most valuable gem the following day. Shastri breathed his last in Tashkent, leaving behind a legacy of unparalleled greatness. Today as the world grapples with new age concerns such as ecological degradation, social-political conflicts, economic deprivation and technological challenges, the only promising solution is reverting back to the ideals laid by luminaries like Lal Bahadur Shastri. Whether it be his humility, simplicity, kindness, sense of utmost responsibility towards duty or patriotism, he was an epitome of virtues in the veritable sense. His ideals, if imbibed by the younger generation, can usher a modern India built on a morally stronger edifice. His unforgettable words continue to reverberate aloud - "We want freedom for our country, but not at the expense or exploitation of others, not us to degrade other countries...I want the freedom of my country so that other countries may learn something from my free country so that the resources of my country might be utilised for the benefit of mankind."

(The author is a retired civil servant. Views expressed are personal)

21 new cases reported, active dengue cases drop to 267

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

There was a considerable drop in the number of new dengue cases reported in the State on Monday. The Health department reported 21 new cases of the vector-borne disease with the total number of active cases also having dropped to 267. The cumulative number of dengue cases in the State is 2,788 out of which 2,505 patients have recovered. Out of the 21 cases reported on Monday, 10 were reported from Nainital district, six from Dehradun and five from Haridwar. No new cases were reported from the 10 remaining districts. Dehradun has remained on top of the tally of dengue cases with 981 cases reported so far. Similarly, the cumulative



number of dengue cases in other districts is 639 in Pauri, 462 in Haridwar, 441 in Nainital, 85 in Udhampur Singh Nagar, 57 in Chamoli, 45 in Champawat, 25 in Rudrapur, 23 in Bageshwar, 21 in Tehri and nine in Almora. No cases have

been reported so far in Uttarkashi and Pithoragarh districts. Out of the 16 dengue patients who have died so far, 13 died in Dehradun district while three deaths were reported in Nainital district.

Various schools of Uttarakhand among top 10 in national survey

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Various schools in Uttarakhand have featured in the Annual EducationWorld India School Rankings 2023-24. The results of the survey conducted by C-For were declared recently. This survey features various schools in Dehradun, Mussoorie and Nainital in the top 10 rankings nationwide. In the vintage legacy co-ed day schools category, Saint Thomas College, Dehradun was ranked eighth nationally.

Saint George's College, Mussoorie was ranked third among the vintage legacy boys boarding schools while Saint Joseph's College, Nainital was ranked sixth in the category. Convent of Jesus and Mary, Waverly, Mussoorie was ranked first among vintage legacy girls boarding schools, Sherwood College, Nainital was ranked third and Wynberg

Allen School, Mussoorie was ranked fourth among vintage legacy co-ed boarding schools. Among boys boarding schools, The Doon School, Dehradun was ranked first, Welham Boys School, Dehradun was ranked second, Birla Vidya-mandir, Nainital was ranked fourth, Guru Nanak Fifth Centenary School (Boys), Mussoorie- was ranked fifth and the GD Birla Memorial School, Ranikhet was ranked seventh.

Among girls boarding schools, Welham Girls School, Dehradun was ranked first jointly with Scindia Kanya Vidyalaya, Gwalior, Ecole Globale International Girls School, Dehradun was ranked second, Unison World School, Dehradun was ranked third, Hopetown Girls School, Dehradun was ranked fourth, The Doon

Girls School, Dehradun was ranked seventh and Vantage Hall Girls Residential School, Dehradun was ranked ninth. In the co-ed boarding schools category, Selaqui International School, Dehradun was ranked second jointly with

The Assam Valley School, Balipara while Kasiga School, Dehradun was ranked fourth. Among international residential schools, Mussoorie International School was ranked second while Woodstock School, Mussoorie was ranked first among vintage legacy international residential schools. Among government boarding schools, Rashtriya Indian Military College, Dehradun was ranked first and Oak Grove School, Dehradun was ranked sixth while Him Jyoti School, Dehradun was ranked second in the philanthropy schools category.

UJVNL remembers Gandhi & Shastri

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The UJVNL Limited observed the birth anniversaries of Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri at its head office in Dehradun on Monday. The officers and the employees participated in various pa-

leaders of the country. He stressed that the people should tread the path shown by them while lauding them as founts of inspiration for world peace and harmony. Among senior UJVNL officers present on the occasion



triotic programmes organised on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, the UJVNL director (projects) Suresh Chandra Baluni dwelt on the multifaceted personalities and the monumental nation-building works of these two great

were the executive director Himanshu Awasthi and the managing director Pankaj Kulshrestha. The manager (administration and security) Rakesh Kumar conducted the commemorative programmes.

WKL concludes in Doon

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Women Kickboxing League (WKL) concluded at Parade Ground. The State president of Uttarakhand Amateur Kickboxing Association (UAKA) Arvind Kumar Kotnala informed that kickboxing had been recently included under the Khelo India programme.

The WKL was organised

under Khelo India in collaboration with UAKA to promote kickboxing. Rajpur Road MLA Khajan Dass motivated the participants on the occasion. About 200 female athletes from different districts of Uttarakhand along with 16 national referees and 21 coaches participated in the league, he added.

Congress leaders pay tributes to Gandhi, Shastri on anniversary

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The leaders of Congress party paid glowing trib-

said Gandhi gave the mantra of do or die on August 8,



utes to Mahatma Gandhi and former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri on their birth anniversaries on Monday. Giving floral tributes to the leaders, the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Karan Mahara said that everyone should walk on the path created by them. He

1942 and said that independence is not for cowards. The party's State vice president Mathura Dutt Joshi, former MP Pradeep Tamta, media in charge PK Agarwal, chief spokesperson Garima Dasauni and others also paid homage to Gandhi and Shastri on the occasion.

NDUSS remembers Gandhi & Shastri on their anniversaries

PNS ■ LALKUAN

The Nainital Dugdh Ut-padak Sahakari Sangh (NDUSS) observed the birth anniversaries of Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri at its administrative office in Lalkuan on Monday. Officials informed that the day was marked by flag hoisting and paying floral tributes to the portraits of these two leaders. Also, patriotic songs were presented and sweets were distributed among the gathering to mark the occasion. The

NDUSS general manager Nirbhay Narayan Singh in his address stressed on unity among the people of the country and urged all to carry on with the spirit of cooperation in time to come. This aside, about two dozen employees of NDUSS were felicitated for remaining committed to their works in the wake of the September 25 ammonia gas leakage at the milk plant operated by the union.



End discrimination against girl child for better society: Arya

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Women Empowerment and Child Development (WECD) minister Rekha Arya said that discrimination against the girl child should end to build a better society. She was speaking at a programme on women empowerment and nutritious future at University of Patanjali on Monday. Arya informed the students about the importance of women's empowerment in the society. She said that in today's time, women are not lagging behind men in any field. They are making progress in every field and becoming empowered socially, economically, spiritually and politically, she added.

She exhorted students to follow the path of MK



Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri for a better life. Concerning the male-dominated society she opined that na-

ture has given equal rights to boys and girls, in such a situation, there is a need to end discriminatory thinking to-

wards girls.

Commenting on the approval of the Women's Reser-

vation Bill, Arya said, "With this, definitely in the coming time, our women will also be better represented in the Lok Sabha. When strong women are empowered, they will play a role in building a strong country and state." The minister also spoke about the various steps being taken for women empowerment in Uttarakhand.

Addressing the gathering, university vice chancellor Acharya Balkrishna said that Patanjali has been on the forefront of women empowerment in the State and across the nation. He spoke in detail on education, values and plans for women empowerment, stressing that defending women is necessary for saving human values and culture.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS
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Free treatment to more than 9 lakh patients under Ayushman scheme

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

More than nine lakh patients have received free treatment under the Ayushman scheme in the State so far. Health minister Dhan Singh Rawat informed that the government has so far spent Rs 1,700 crore on providing free treatment under the scheme. The maximum number of patients have availed the benefit of this scheme in Dehradun district with more than 2.47 lakh getting free treatment.

It will be recalled that the facility of free treatment costing upto Rs five lakh is provided per family in one year under the Ayushman scheme in the State. Rawat said that since the start of the scheme till the present, more than nine lakh people have received free medical treatment under it. The feedback being received from all the districts from the treated patients and their caretakers is satisfactory. Stating that the government has spent about Rs 1,700 crore on providing free treatment to beneficiaries under this scheme, the minister said that the State government is committed to addressing the issues of public health. Every person is being provided proper treatment with strict instructions being issued to the officials

concerned to ensure this, he claimed. Rawat further averred that the work under the scheme is being executed in a better manner, for which the Central government has also awarded the State.

The chief executive officer of the State Health Authority Dr Anand Srivastav said that all attempts are being made to ensure that the benefit of Ayushman scheme reaches all the people. Targets have also been set for preparing Ayushman cards and Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) cards in the State, he added.

According to official data, 2,47,350 patients have received free treatment under the scheme in Dehradun district, 24,063 in Almora district, 10,396 in Bageshwar district, 32,033 in Chamoli district, 14,874 in Champawat district, 1,53,791 in Haridwar district, 78,617 in Nainital district, 75,687 in Pauri district, 27,798 in Pithoragarh district, 53,573 in Tehri district, 1,32,633 in Udhm Singh Nagar district and 30,134 in Uttarkashi district. A total of 9,00,493 patients have received free treatment under the scheme so far.

Two couples arrested from Punjab for scam worth crores

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The police arrested four people from Punjab's Rupnagar district in the wee hours of Monday for having allegedly embezzled crores of rupees from investors and banks in Dehradun a decade ago. The accused committed this fraud purportedly to get loans and provide flats to investors in Dehradun. All the accused are shrewd criminals and 12 cases under different

said that the accused Prem Dutt Sharma and Arun Sagan along with their wives Sunita Sharma and Aradhna Sharma respectively belong to Punjab. They scammed people in 2013 in the name of selling flats in a multi-storey residential complex in the name of Artigo Residency in Rajpur's Malsi area. The four accused were working as an organised gang to embezzle people's money

various cases and the court had also issued non-bailable warrants against them. The police had also raided all possible places in the past but could not nab them despite all these efforts. However, SSP added, the police team continued secretly collecting information about all accused and finally arrested them from Punjab in the wee hours of Monday. Singh said that the



acts are registered against them in various police stations of the district, said the Dehradun senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh. He

and seven cases of fraud are already registered against them in Rajpur police station, the SSP said. He said that the accused were absconding in

accused were living a luxurious life in Punjab and the police will ensure they are brought to justice for their crimes.

Sacrifices of statehood activists created Uttarakhand: Dhami

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said that a separate State of Uttarakhand was created due to the struggle and sacrifice of the statehood activists. Terming the incident of October 2, 1994 in

commitments and dreams of the statehood movement. He added that the government has made a commitment to provide honour and authority to the statehood activists and it has decided to provide 10

Union minister for State Ajay Bhatt said that Uttarakhand was created due to the sacrifice of statehood activists. He said that during the tenure of PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Uttarakhand was carved out



Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh as an unfortunate event the CM said that brutal force was used on the statehood activists on the day which resulted in martyrdom of many activists. The CM was addressing a programme organised to pay homage to the martyrs of statehood movement at Muzaffarnagar in UP on Monday. Dhami said that the State government is committed to the development of the State on the lines of the

per cent reservation to them. The government has also increased the pension of statehood activists and has decided to provide pension to their dependents after their deaths. The CM said that a uniform pension will be provided to all the statehood activists. He said that the State government is committed to make Uttarakhand the best State in the country under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

of UP and it was he who gave a special industrial package to the State.

The BJP Uttarakhand president Mahendra Bhatt said that the foundation of development of the State is being laid in accordance with the aspirations of the statehood activists. Union minister of State Sanjeev Baliyan, UP minister UP Kapil Dev Agarwal, MLA Pradeep Batra and others were present on the occasion.

UTC employees to commence planned phased protest today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Uttarakhand Transport Corporation (UTC) employees will be on a one-day strike at the Inter State Bus Terminal (ISBT) in Dehradun on Tuesday as part of their planned phased protest against the corporation management. The members of the Uttarakhand Roadways Sanyukt Morcha (URSM) said that they will be on a one-day strike at Haldwani bus station and Tanakpur bus station on Thursday and Friday respectively. The union members will march to the secretariat in Dehradun on the morning of October 10 and if the government still takes no action on the demands of the employees, they will go on an indefinite strike from midnight the same day. All major transport unions have come together under URSM against the corporation management to unanimously present their demands before the government. The URSM mainly consist of four major unions which are Roadways Karamchari Sanyukt Parishad, Uttaranchal Roadways Karmchari Union, Uttarak-



hand Employees Roadways Union and SC ST Workers Union. Their main demands are the regularisation of hundreds of employees and the purchase of 500 new roadways buses. Besides this, they are also demanding strict action against illegal operations of private buses in cities affecting the business of roadways buses. The employees also want immediate job appointments in UTC for the dependents of the deceased. They are also demanding arrear payment of the seventh pay scale and a raise in dearness allowance to all employees from January 1, 2023 along with the

commencement of the house rent allowance. Their demands further include uniforms in winter and summer. The employees have also raised an objection to the hiring of employees via agencies and demanded direct recruitment from UTC besides regularising drivers and conductors. The union members said that they had informed the UTC administration regarding the plan of their protest in advance while making it clear that they will commence indefinite protest from October 10 if the government fails to fulfill their demands.

UP teenager and Delhi man drown in rivers

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A teenager from Uttar Pradesh and a young man from Delhi died after drowning in the Yamuna and Ganga rivers in the Dehradun district in two separate incidents on Monday. The officials said that a boy named Asiyan (17) who belonged to UP's Sitapur area had gone to Dak-

of the river swept him away when he was bathing in it, said the officials. The local police called the rescue teams of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) to conduct the search operation. The team retrieved the victim's body after an intensive search operation and handed it over to the police.

In another incident, Shivam Singh (24) from Delhi drowned in the Ganga river in Rishikesh near Neem beach while bathing along with friends. The officials said that according to his friends, they decided to bathe in the river after rafting. The leg of the victim slipped and the river swept him away. The police called SDRF who retrieved the body from 15 feet depth in the river with the help of divers. The police will



patthar's Katapatthar area along with his friends to take a bath in the Yamuna river. According to his friends, the strong current

hand over the bodies of both victims after completing the necessary procedure, added officials.

Hemkund Sahib to close for winter on October 11, pilgrimage picks up as weather clears

PNS ■ JOSHIMATH

The pilgrimage to Hemkund Sahib is in its last stage with the Gurudwara slated to be closed to the pub-

Sahib so far this year. The Hemkund Sahib management trust chairman Narendrajit Singh Bindra informed that



lic on October 11. The number of people visiting the shrine has increased recently after the clearing of the weather. According to officials, more than 1,62,000 people have visited Hemkund

the pilgrimage has picked up after the weather cleared recently. The number of visitors has also increased as the Gurudwara is set to close for the winter later this month.

Police penalise 360 vehicles for improper parking outside eateries at night

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Considering that improper parking of vehicles outside eateries on main roads at night affects traffic in the city, the traffic police penalised 361

was conducted during these hours as these are considered peak business hours for eateries. Many people outside eateries do not pay attention

Rajpur Road, East Canal Road and space near Gandhi Park, Rispana bridge and Vidhan Sabha area among others. The officials said that the police



vehicles in the past one week. Besides this, the police also seized two mobile food shops for the violation of traffic rules. The officials said that this checking campaign was conducted from 6 PM to 9 PM by two teams of the City Patrol Unit (CPU) and traffic police. They said that the campaign

to how they park their vehicles which causes severe traffic congestion even on broad roads. This causes a nuisance to commuters and increases the risk of accidents, said the officials. The checking was done in areas where people visit the most eateries serving junk food like Chakrata Road,

also penalised several vehicles outside liquor shops for improper parking. The traffic police have appealed to people to park their vehicles at designated parking spots, especially at night, to ensure it does not disrupt traffic.

Pension Maha rally, a wake-up call for govt on OPS: Painyuli

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The president of Uttarakhand chapter of National Movement for Old Pension Scheme (NMOPS) Jeetmani Painyuli has claimed that the success of the Pension Maha rally at Ramlila Ground in New Delhi on October 1 has given a wake-up call to the government. He said that those in power must have understood the writing on the wall and the intention of the employees. Painyuli added that the 'vote for restoration of OPS' campaign will be launched soon.

On Monday the executive committee of Uttarakhand OPS went to the Raj Ghat in New Delhi to pay homage to Mahatma Gandhi. Later in the day the members of the committee visited the Rampur Tiraha in Muzaffarnagar district to pay homage to the martyrs of the statehood movement.

A meeting of the executive was organised in Dehradun in the afternoon in which the members expressed gratitude to the employees for making the Pension Maha rally a success. The employees are demanding the abolition of the

month and the government makes an equal contribution. The employees are finding the NPS non lucrative and are demanding the restoration of OPS in which the retiring employee gets 50 per cent of his last drawn salary as pen-



New Pension Scheme (NPS) which was started in the year 2004. Under the NPS a portion of the salary of the employees is deducted every

sion. In the OPS the employees also get the benefit of Dearness Allowance (DA), family pension and commutation.

Nine months on, Auli ropeway remains closed

Uncertainty looms over resumption of service in time for winter season

PRADEEP BHANDARI ■ JOSHIMATH

The Auli ropeway has been closed since January this year when Joshimath was experiencing land subsidence. The Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam (GMVN) is believed to have suffered considerable loss due to the ropeway to Auli not operating for about nine months now. The resumption of the operation of this ropeway is still uncertain at a time when the advent of the winter season is not far. A large number of tourists visit Auli during the winter season and the number of

visitors increases after snowfall when visitors enjoy various snowsports in this famous tourist destination.

It will be recalled that the operation of the ropeway from Joshimath to Auli has been closed since January 5 after Joshimath city started experiencing land subsidence. Considerable subsidence had occurred near tower number one of the ropeway, due to which the operation of the facility was closed in view of public safety. It should be men-

tioned here that people travelling to Badrinath, Hemkund Sahib and Valley of Flowers were unable to visit Auli by ropeway this year.

The tourists interested in reaching the destination travelled by vehicles. Locals are uncertain about whether the operation of the ropeway will be resumed after the scientific report is received. Meanwhile, the GMVN which operates this facility is believed to have suffered considerable loss due to the inoperation of the ropeway. During 2022, from January to August a total of 38,311 people had visited Auli and the GMVN had earned revenue amounting to Rs 38,311,000 during this period. The locals in the tourism business believe that tourist movements to Auli may be affected if the operation of the ropeway is not started during the winter season.



Gehlot Government destroying Rajasthan: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday made a scathing attack on the “corrupt” Ashok Gehlot-led Congress Government in Rajasthan and accused it of destroying the State as he made it amply clear that party’s election symbol “Kamal” is the “only face” of the BJP in the assembly poll. The Prime Minister claimed that Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot had already “accepted defeat” by requesting him not to stop schemes initiated by the Congress in Rajasthan. Addressing a rally in Chittorgarh, Modi said Rajasthan tops the list when it comes to crime, riots, atrocities against women, Dalits and backward classes and also mentioned the incident of behead-

ing of a tailor in the state. The Prime Minister also addressed public meeting in another election bound state of Madhya Pradesh and inaugurated and laid foundation stones for projects worth over Rs 19,000 crore there. “Nearly 2.25 lakh families will enter into their new homes before Dussehra, Dhanteras and Diwali this year,” said Modi in Gwalior. In Madhya Pradesh Modi slammed Opposition forces as “anti-development” saying “they have hatred towards growth because of their politics.” “Our target is to ensure Madhya Pradesh emerges as one of the top three states; your votes will help achieve this goal, he said adding “Next five years crucial for Madhya Pradesh’s development; double



engine government is necessary in the state” BJP ensured ‘BIMARU’ tag was removed from Madhya Pradesh; party brought MP among top 10 states in terms of development, said the Prime Minister. Rajasthan top the list when it comes to crime, riots, atrocities against women, Dalits and backward classes, Modi said at a rally in Chittorgarh. In Chittorgarh public rally, the prime minister said that he feels pain when atrocities against daughters take place anywhere in the country but charged that the Congress has made this a tradition in Rajasthan. He also assured the people that all public schemes initiated by the Congress government will continue if the BJP is elected to power in Rajasthan. “Gehlot knows that the

countdown of the Congress government has started. He in a way has congratulated the BJP by publicly requesting that the schemes should not be stopped. I assure you that BJP will not stop any scheme of public interest but will try to improve it. This is Modi’s guarantee,” he said. The prime minister said if his party has voted to power, action against the corrupt and those involved in the alleged paper leak mafia will be taken. In Chittorgarh rally , Modi also gave a clear indication that no chief minister face will be projected in the poll-bound state. The BJP, he said, will contest the assembly election on the party’s symbol ‘lotus’. “Hmara chehra kamal hain, Umvedwar kamal hai, usiko jitana hain”, he said.

Former chief minister Vasundhara Raje, BJP state president CP Joshi, leader of opposition Rajendra Rathore, union minister Arjun Meghwal were among the political leaders present at the rally. There has been much speculation whether Raje will be declared the chief ministerial face by the BJP in Rajasthan. Modi will visit Chhattisgarh and Telangana on Tuesday to launch a slew of development projects in the two poll-bound states. The Prime Minister’s Office said Modi will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth more than Rs 26,000 crore from Jagdalpur in Chhattisgarh and more than Rs 8,000 crore from Nizamabad in Telangana.

Arsh Dala planning terror attacks: Intelligence

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Designated “individual terrorist” Arshdeep Singh Gill alias Arsh Dala, based in Canada, involved in various criminal activities such as extortions and murders in India through his network of gangsters has now diversified his network to perpetrate terror attacks in the country. Arsh Dala has formed an association with another US-based terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun of banned terror outfit “Sikhs for Justice” for fanning anti-India activities, an Intelligence dossier has warned. Arsh Dala has been designated “individual terrorist” under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. “It has come to notice that Arsh Dala has formed an association with USA-based Gurpatwant Singh Pannun of



Sikhs for Justice. It has been learnt that Arsh Dala and Gurpatwant Singh Pannun have colluded to carry out suspicious activity in Gurdaspur in Punjab,” the report said. The dossier further said, “Previous activities of Gurpatwant Singh Pannun suggest that he might look to hoist pro-Khalistan flags and graffiti on Government buildings and other public places but

his collusion with Arsh Dala this time suggests that they might try to carry out some terror activity.” Dala, according to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), has been operating from Canada for the last three-four years and allegedly executed many killings in Punjab over the last few years. “He has been guiding and commissioning terrorist acts and also promot-

ing terror, violence and large scale extortion in India on behalf of the Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF). Besides smuggling weapons from Pakistan, they (Dala and his associates) were also involved in recruitment of youth to carry out acts of violence and terror in the country at the behest of the KTF,” the NIA had earlier said. NIA had registered a suo moto case on August 20, 2022 under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 in connection with the terror activities of banned Khalistani terrorist organisations in India. The agency has been cracking down on individual terrorist outfits and terrorists conspiring to smuggle terrorist hardware, such as arms, ammunition and explosives besides raising funds for carrying out terrorist acts in the

country. The syndicates run by Dala, Lakhbir Singh alias Landa and Lawrence Bishnoi among others have been alleged to be spreading their mafia style criminal networks in the northern States of India and were involved in commission of many sensational crimes, such as the murder of popular singer Sidhu Moosewala. and large-scale extortions from businessmen and professionals. Their crimes, according to the NIA, included killing of Maharashtra builder Sanjay Biyani, as well Sandeep Nangal Ambia, an international Kabaddi organiser in Punjab. Many of these conspiracies were found to have been masterminded from abroad, including Pakistan and Canada, or by leaders of syndicates lodged in jails, according to the NIA.

India, Tanzania to bolster defence ties on Army Chief Pande’s visit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Tanzania will review the entire spectrum of their bilateral defence ties and explore ways to further bolster them during Army Chief General Manoj Pande’s four-day visit there starting Monday. Giving details of his schedule, army officials said here, the visit reinforces the long-standing defence ties between the two countries. Pande will visit Dar es Salaam, the Tanzanian capital, the historical city of Zanzibar, and Arusha. He will engage in discussions and meetings with a host of dignitaries and senior officers from Tanzania. During his visit, the Army chief is likely to call on



Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan. Officials said high on the agenda are the planned meetings with Defence Minister Stergomena Lawrence Tax and Chief of Defence Force General Jacob John Mkunda. Pande will also be visiting Zanzibar and call on President Hussein Ali Mwinyi. In addition, interac-

tion with the Commander of the 101st Infantry Brigade General Saidi Hamisi Saidi is also scheduled. Pande will also be addressing the National Defence College and interacting with Major General Wilbert Augustine Ibuge Commandant and the faculty. Additionally, a meeting with Brigadier General Stephen Justice Mnkande, Commandant of the Command and Staff College, Duluti is also planned during the visit. The visit also coincides with the 2nd India Tanzania Mini DEFEXPO being conducted at Dar-es-Salaam which will showcase the growing prowess of the Indigenous defence industry complex of India, they said.

ICG’s pollution control vessel arrives at Indonesian port

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant demonstration of India’s commitment to address regional marine pollution threats, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) ship Samudra Prahari, a specialized Pollution-Control Vessel, arrived at the port of Tanjung Priok, Jakarta, Indonesia, on Sunday, Coast Guard Guard officials said here on Monday. This visit, a part of India’s Association of South East Nations (ASEAN) initiatives for Marine Pollution Response, underscores India’s expertise and collaborative efforts in tackling regional maritime challenges, particularly those related to marine pollution threats. During this overseas deployment from September 11 to October 14, the specialized Pollution Control Vessel earlier made port call in Bangkok, Thailand from September 16 to 20. Equipped with a Chetak helicopter in Pollution Response configuration, the vessel highlights



India’s commitment to enhancing pollution response capabilities in the region, officials said. As a part of an overseas exchange program, the ship has aboard 13 National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets, who will participate actively in the ‘Puneet Sagar Abhiyan’ thereby giving the Abhiyan an international reach. This program focuses on beach cleanups and similar activities, fostering collaboration with partner nations. The ship received a warm

welcome from BAKAMAL (Indonesia Maritime Security Agency) band playing fanfare and other welcoming military tunes as a gesture to their Indian friends. During the four day stay of ship at Jakarta, ICG ship will engage with BAKAMLA in professional exchanges, cross-deck visits, tabletop exercises, Pollution Response demonstration, Joint Yoga session, joint exercises, as well as official and social engagements, including visits to capacity-building facilities.

1 held, weapons seized after raids in CPI(Maoist) conspiracy case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Monday arrested one person and seized weapons, cash and incriminating material in raids across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in the Munchingiputtu CPI (Maoist) conspiracy case. Multiple raids were carried out across 62 locations in the two States, leading to the arrest of one Chandra Narasimhulu, a State Executive Committee Member of the Pragathiseela Karmika Samakya (PKS), from Satya Sai district of Andhra Pradesh, the NIA said in a statement. A pistol, along with 14 rounds, was seized from the location. An amount of 13 lakh was seized from one of the premises in Kadapa district, while Maoist literature and documents were seized from other locations, it said. The raids covered 53 locations in Guntur, Palanadu, Vijayawada, Rajhmundry, Prakasam, Bapatla, Eluru, East Godawari, Dr BR Ambedkar Konaseema, Visakhapatnam,



Vizianagaram, Nellore, Tirupati, Kadapa Satya Sai, Anantapur, and Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh. Nine locations were raided in Telangana in the districts of Hyderabad, Mahabub Nagar, Hanumakonda, Ranga Reddy and Adilabad, the agency said. “The custodial interrogation of the arrested accused is expected to yield further information about the conspiracy relating to the attempts of various frontal organisations to further the activities of the proscribed CPI (Maoist) outfit,” it said. The frontal organisations

include Civil Liberties Committee (CLC), Amarula Bandhu Mitrala Sangham (ABMS), Chaitanya Mahila Sangham (CMS), Kula Nirmulana Porata Samathi (KNPS), Patriotic Democratic Movement (PDM), Pragathiseela Karmika Samakya (PKS), Praja Kala Mandali (PKM), Revolutionary Writers Association (RWA) or Viplava Rachaital Sangam (VIRASAM), Human Rights Forum (HRF), Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners (CRPP) and Indian Association of Peoples Lawyers (IAPL).

Ships of Navy’s 1st Training Squadron on visit to Malaysia



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As part of the Indian Navy’s long range deployment in South East Asia, the ships of First Training Squadron (1TS) -INS Tir, INS Sujata, and ICGS Sarathi are on a visit to Port Klang, Malaysia from September 30 to October 3, navy officials said here on Monday. During the visit the activities being undertaken by the crew of ITS include various pro-

fessional and community interactions, training exchanges, cross deck visits and sports fixtures with personnel of Royal Malaysian Navy, as well as ships open for visit of school children, they said. The deployment of 1 TS is aimed at exposing the trainees to the sociopolitical, military and maritime linkages of India with the friendly countries in the Indian Ocean Region and strengthening of bilateral engagements between the two Navies.

Personal consumption, possession of e-cigarettes violation of law: Ministry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of no let up in cases of air travellers arriving with e-cigarettes at various airports in the country, Union Health Ministry has clarified that its personal consumption as well as possession of any such devices in any form, quantity or manner is in violation of the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarette Act (PECA) 2019. The clarification was sent to the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MCA) last month, official sources said, adding it will strengthen the enforcement of the ban. There has been cases of confiscation of vaping devices from travellers passing through Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Kolkata, Delhi and Bhavnagar airports. The travellers argue that they had purchase them for personal use.



Just last month, Bengaluru Customs officials had held two persons for allegedly smuggling 1,590 packets of e-cigarettes worth Rs 15.9 lakh from Malaysia. The ministry said that though there is no explicit mention of prohibition of individual use of e-cigarette in PECA, the law has been enacted to prohibit the production, manufacture, import, export, transport, sale, distribution, storage and advertisement of e-cigarettes. “Therefore, possession of

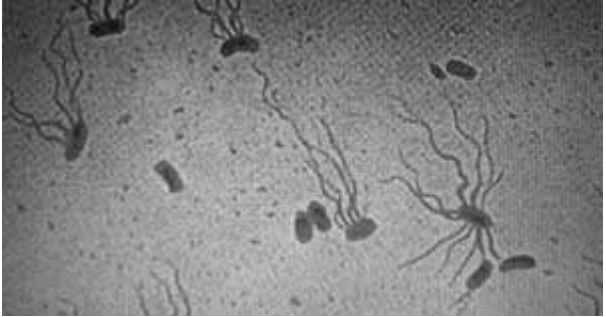
e-cigarette within the country in any quantity is not possible without contravening the provisions of PECA, 2019,” said Dr Pulkesh Kumar, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Health. The ban includes a prohibition on all forms of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems, Heat Not Burn Products, e-Hookah and similar devices. The law was enacted in the interest of public health and to protect the people from harm, the health ministry said. Despite heavy penalties and imprisonment, e-cigarettes are reported to be widely available across a range of sources including tobacco vendors, general stores, and online providers. The health ministry has also launched an online portal to facilitate reporting of violations under PECA. This portal will allow the ministry

to take necessary action on violations. Anyone can report these violations at “http://www.Violation-reporting.In”. The government has also expressed concern regarding the alarming rise in its use amongst youth. In May, the ministry issued a public notice for effective implementation of the Act. Later in July, the ministry sent notices to 15 websites selling e-cigarettes, asking them to stop advertisement and sale of such products. The ministry, earlier in February, had written to all states and UTs to ensure effective compliance of the government’s ban on e-cigarettes. In a letter addressed to chief secretaries of all states and Union territories, it had flagged the sale of e-cigarettes at stationary stores near educational institutions.

India scouting for indigenous POC test for antibiotic resistant typhoid strains

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Grappling with two highly antibiotic resistant strains of typhoid fever, India is now scouting for indigenously developed improved point of care (POC) test that can help distinguish the duo variants so as to ensure effective management of the life-threatening disease. In this connection, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) under the Union Health Ministry has invited expression of interest (EOI) from the manufacturers and research institutes for development of diagnostic In Vitro kits for diagnosis of the drug resistant strains. The move follows concerns that existing typhoid diagnostic tests, such as the Widal test, TUBEX, Typhidot, and Test-It (KIT), have shown sub-optimal sensitivity and specificity to the two serovars namely Salomonella. Typhi (S.



Typhi) and Salmonella enterica serovar Paratyphi (S. Paratyphi) which have become resistance to many antibiotics. Moreover, the S Typhi and S Paratyphi strains are indistinguishable, thus making it crucial for clinicians to differentiate between them before starting antibiotic therapy due to their different antibiotic susceptibility profiles, said an ICMR scientist on the need for next generation in vitro kits. “There is an urgent need for indigenously developed, improved typhoid POC tests

that offer higher sensitivity and specificity. Such tests would enable healthcare professionals to promptly and accurately diagnose typhoid, leading to more appropriate and targeted treatment, which in turn, could result in better patient outcomes and reduced antibiotic misuse,” further added the scientist. While the morbidity and mortality of S. Typhi make it a greater public health concern, the increasing prevalence of S. Paratyphi in certain regions necessitates a next-generation

diagnostic test capable of detecting both the strains, she explained. Improved disease diagnostics will support the government in guiding interventions program efforts to prevent the diseases, said the ICMR scientist on the need for the next generation detection kit. “S. Typhi, the bacterium responsible for typhoid fever, has developed resistance to multiple antibiotics, including three frontline agents. India is bearing a high burden of the disease. It is estimated that there are 11-21 million cases of enteric fever worldwide each year, resulting in 120,000-160,000 deaths. “Due to lack of proper diagnosis and heterogeneity of disease, the exact burden of disease is unclear but extrapolation of regional data estimates 586 cases per 100,000 person-years typhoid/paratyphoid incidence in India,” said the scientist.

District judge flags off cycle rally

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The birth anniversaries of 'Father of the Nation' Mahatma Gandhi and former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri were celebrated with simplicity and joy in the district here on Monday. In the morning, the national flags were hoisted in all government, semi-government offices and schools. Thereafter, tributes were paid to the statues of Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri by garlanding them.

Additional Commissioner Manoj Singh in the Commissionerate Office auditorium, Additional District Magistrate (Civil Supplies) Jawahar Lal Srivastava in the Collectorate's Rifle Club paid homage to the statues of Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri.

On the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, District Judge and Chairman District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Ajay Kumar Vishwesh flagged off the cycle rally of school-children as part of the cleanliness and awareness campaign in the District Court premises. Thereafter, live telecast of the e-inauguration programme related to cleanliness and awareness campaign organised on the occasion of Gandhi



District Judge AK Vishwesh flagging off a cycle rally on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti in Varanasi on Monday.

Jayanti was seen and heard in the video conferencing hall.

While presiding over the programme organised in the Commissionerate auditorium, Additional Commissioner Manoj Singh informed the people in detail about the life and struggles of Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri.

He said that taking inspiration from these great men, we should take a pledge that we will work with complete honesty and transparency for the public interest and welfare of the people in the last line of society. This would be a true

tribute to these great personalities. Presiding over the programme organised at Rifle Club, the ADM (Civil Supplies) Jawahar Lal Srivastava, quoting the life struggles of Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri, said that Mahatma Gandhi was a priest of truth and non-violence.

He shook the British rule by making non-violence a weapon in the country's freedom struggle, while Lal Bahadur Shastri gave the slogan 'Jai Jawan Jai Kisan' to make the country self-reliant in the field of food production and its result is being seen today as the

country has become a self-sufficient in food production. He further highlighted his concept of 'Antyodaya', especially regarding the welfare of the weak, thoughts regarding emotional unity, national unity and integrity.

Besides, Gandhian philosophy of life was propagated in schools and colleges and debate competitions/ seminars were organised for students on various aspects of Gandhi's life and emphasis should be laid on bringing equality and harmony in the society by staying away from caste discrimination.

Modi's cleanliness message from Kashi becomes mass movement

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

By using a shovel from Assi on the banks of 'Mokshadayini' Ganga and a broom in the streets of Banaras in November, 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had given the message of cleanliness to the country, which has now become a mass movement. Later, the campaign gained momentum when Yogi Adityanath became the Chief Minister in 2017 as he linked the cleanliness system of the religious, spiritual and cultur-

al city to the Kashi Integrated Command Centre (KICC), due to which the entire waste management started being monitored from this centre and it has resulted in improving the cleanliness conditions of ghats, streets and main roads.

Nagar Swashtya Adhikari Dr Narendra Pratap Singh said that for solid waste management, a team of more than 6,000 people starts cleaning and door-to-door garbage collection from early morning and takes it to the processing plant. "This entire management is

monitored from KICC," he said, adding that, here the attendance of employees is taken through 130 biometric devices. Besides, he said that 174 locations of 20 garbage houses are also monitored with 433 cameras. "270 garbage trucks are tracked with GPS. 902 volume sensors and other sources measure the amount of garbage generated by the city. About 700-800 tonnes of garbage is generated daily in Varanasi, Dr Singh informed, adding that the roads are cleaned with mechanised

cleaning machines and water is sprayed to remove dust. Apart from this, cleanliness of 235 public and community toilets is also taken care of.

Swachh Bharat Mission, which has been running for nine years, has taken the form of a mass movement with public participation. In Prime Minister Narendra Modi's parliamentary constituency Varanasi, state Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is paying special attention to development as well as keeping the city clean.

Spl cleanliness campaign launched

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

On the auspicious occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, 'Special Cleanliness Campaign 3.0' was launched by the Department of Posts in Varanasi region. Postmaster General (PMG) of Varanasi Region Krishna Kumar Yadav, while garlanding the statue of the 'Father of the Nation' Mahatma Gandhi in a function organised at the Varanasi Cantt Head Post Office, motivated all the officials of the Department of Posts to make the vision of Swachh Bharat and Swachhata Hi Sewa meaningful as thought by Mahatma Gandhi.

He also gave a call for active participation in the cleanliness campaign, which will run till October 31. He also delivered the message of environment protection by planting saplings of Rudraksha, Aawala and Ashoka in the Head Post Office premises



PMG KK Yadav launching a special cleanliness campaign 3.0 in Varanasi on Monday.

with the Director of Postal Services (Prayagraj) Gaurav Srivastava, Superintendent of Posts Vinay Yadav and Assistant Director Brijesh Sharma. Besides, Yadav administered the cleanliness pledge to the employees. He also inspired them to contribute in keeping their environment clean by

being a part of this special campaign and gave the message of better health, fitness and cleanliness.

During the event, postal employees also motivated the people by running a cleanliness campaign in the post office premises, postal colony, parks, garden and surrounding areas.

Assistant Account Officer Santoshi Rai, inspectors (Posts) Shrikant Pal, Inderjit Pal, Dilip Pandey, Postmaster Varanasi Cantt Arvind Sharma, Rahul Verma, Anand Pradhan, Rakesh Kumar, Manish Kumar, Anurag Shukla, Gyan Sagar and others were also present.

Swachhata Pakhwada ends at BLW

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As per the guidelines of the Ministry of Railways, 'Swachhata Pakhwada' organised from September 16 concluded in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) here on Monday on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi when the General Manager (GM) Basudev Panda and other senior officers paid tributes to the 'Father of the Nation'.

Principal Chief Electrical Engineer SK Srivastava, Principal Chief Materials Manager Rajneesh Gupta, Principal Chief Medical Officer Dr Devesh Kumar, Principal Chief Personnel Officer Ranvijay, Chief Vigilance Officer Pramod Kumar Chaudhary, Chief Materials Manager Trilok Kothari, Chief Mechanical Engineer (Service) Neeraj Jain, Chief Engineer Vinod Kumar Shukla, Chief Safety Officer SB Patel, Chief Electrical Engineer (Loco) Arun Kumar Sharma, Chief Electrical Engineer (Inspection) MK Singh, Deputy Chief Personnel Officer Shyam Babu, Senior Personnel Officer (Headquarters) Raj



GM Basudev Panda inaugurating the concluding function of Swachhata Pakhwada at BLW in Varanasi on Monday.

Kumar Gupta, Public Relations Officer Rajesh Kumar, Staff Council's member Naveen Sinha and other heads of departments, officers and employees present there and

they took a pledge for cleanliness while lighting the lamp and offering floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi.

The entire cleanliness fortnight programmes were imple-

mented under the guidance of Chief Safety Officer SB Patel under the auspices of the Safety department with the cooperation of all other departments.

Shiv Ganga Express best organised train

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The most popular 12559/12560 Banaras-New Delhi Shiv Ganga Express has been declared as best organised train while Siwan as best station in A and A1 category, Ghazipur City best station in B category, Chhapra best organised coaching depot and Banaras Railway Colony best organised residential colony under Swachhta Fortnight. All of them were awarded by Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Vineet Kumar Srivastava on the occasion of the 154th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in a function organised at the Officers' Club at Lahartara here on Monday. The DRM paid floral tributes to the portraits of 'Father of the Nation' Mahatma Gandhi and former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and administered an oath to the employees to voluntarily keep their residences and workplaces clean and adopt environment friendly behaviour.

The winners were rewarded with shields. Banaras Coaching Depot Officer Vineet Ranjan received shield for Swachhta Rail Train Shiv Ganga Express, while Chief Health Inspector/ Bhatni Amit Kumar Mishra, Chief Health Inspector for Swachh Station A1 category/ Siwan Radheshyam Raman, Chief Health Inspector for Swachh Station B Category/Ghazipur City Usha Yadav, Chief Health Inspector for Swachh Railway Colony, Banaras, Kamlesh Singh, Coaching Depot Officer Ajit Kumar for Swachh Office Chhapra Coaching Depot/Chhapra were honoured with citations.

Along with this, in order to



DRM VK Srivastava felicitating an employee in Varanasi on Monday.

conclude the Cleanliness Fortnight organised by Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) under the theme of 'Swachhta Hi Seva', cultural programmes were organised under the aegis of Environment and Housekeeping Management (EnHM) department.

The prize distribution programme was inaugurated by lighting the lamp by the DRM along with chairperson of Divisional Women's Welfare Organisation Monica Saxena and others. On the occasion, the DRM presented plants and handmade jute bags to the officers.

In the cultural programme organised on this occasion, cleanliness songs were presented by the members of

Mandal Kala Samiti and a captivating dance drama was presented by the children of NER Junior High School.

An inspirational street play was staged by the members of Bharat Scouts and Guides District Association, Varanasi to stop the use of plastic, increase public awareness about cleanliness and adopt nature friendly behaviour.

At the end of the programme, the artistes and children who performed well were appreciated and rewarded by the DRM.

Earlier, Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (EnHM) Apoorva Swarnkar welcomed everyone. Additional Divisional Railway Manager (Infra) Roshan Lal Yadav, ADM (Operations) Rajesh

Kumar Singh, Chief Medical Superintendent Dr RJ Chaudhuri, Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (C&W) Anubhav Pathak, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (Traction) RN Singh, Senior Divisional Signal & Telecommunication Engineer Rajat Priya, Senior Divisional Engineers Rishi Srivastava, Satyam Singh and Anuj Verma, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (Operation) Anil Srivastava, Senior Divisional Safety Officer Balendra Paul, Divisional Mechanical Engineer (EnHM) Abhishek Singh, Divisional Personnel Officer Vivek Mishra, Assistant Commercial Manager AK Suman, Assistant Commercial Manager Prashant Kumar and others were also present.

Floral tributes paid to Gandhi, Shastri

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Swachhta Pakhwada closing ceremony was organised at the North Central Railway (NCR) headquarters on Monday where tributes were paid to the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi and former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri on their birth anniversary. A cycle rally was organised at North Central Railway (NCR) headquarters to mark the occasion.

The Swachhta Pakhwada was celebrated in the NCR from September 16 to October 2. During the conclusion of Swachhta Pakhwada on Monday a function presided over by Additional General Manager (AGM) Chandra Prakash Gupta was held at the NCR headquarters. The programme started with the AGM and other officers offering floral tribute to Mahatma Gandhi



and Lal Bahadur Shastri. The AGM also released a pamphlet and it was distributed among the people present to create awareness about cleanliness.

A cycle rally was also organised. It started from the NCR headquarters and ended at the Rail Gaon railway colony stadium. A large number of senior officers and staff of NCR headquarters, including

the AGM, enthusiastically participated in this rally.

Senior officers of various departments of NCR and a large number of officers, employees and their families were present.

TRIPLE MURDER CASE: Action is being initiated against the police and the Revenue department officials and staff whose 'negligence' and 'parti-

san attitude' claimed the life of an elderly Dalit person, his pregnant daughter and son-in-law in Mohiuddinpur Ghaus village of Kaushambi district. The incident had taken place on September 15 and the matter had reached the chief minister. Kaushambi SP Brijesh Kumar Srivastava after preliminary inquiry, sent SO of Sandeepan Ghat Kotwali Dilip Singh and out post incharge of Harraypur to Police Lines.

Subhash, son of the deceased Hori Lal Pasi, met the chief minister and told him that the 'illegal' act of the chakbandi officials led to this triple murder. District Magistrate Sujit Kumar found three lekhpals of Chakbandi department prima facie guilty and placed them under suspension. The assistant chakbandi officer is also under scanner and his suspension has also been recommended.

Cycle rally to create awareness about air display

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

To spread awareness about the air display at Sangam on October 8 a cycle rally was conducted on Monday from the headquarters Central Air Command (CAC) to Sangam and back. The event was flagged off by Dr Suneeta Kapoor, president, AFFWA (Regional). Air Marshal RGK Kapoor, Air Officer

Commanding-in-Chief, CAC led the team comprising 35 air warriors who participated in the rally with lot of fervour. The rally reached Sangam near VIP Ghat braving heavy rain. The public was informed about the visibility of aerial display from Sangam Ghat, Saraswati Ghat, Arail Ghat, Jhusi side of Sangam, Shastri Bridge and surrounding areas. The rally spread the message of awareness about the aerial display to

the citizens of Sangam city. AOC-in-C explained that the first aircraft flight in our country was from Naini in 1911. He lauded the efforts in Swachhata Abhiyan and felicitated the shramiks (workers) who participated in cleanliness efforts in Sangam area. He expressed gratitude to media and its personnel in their endeavour to spread awareness about the aerial display and urged people to witness the unprecedented

display in large numbers. The air warriors also interacted with the local population and informed them about the air display over Sangam. They exhorted them to witness the event 2:30 pm onwards on October 8 from one of the locations at Saraswati Ghat, Jhusi village, Shastri Bridge or Arail Ghat. The rally also offered an opportunity to youth to know about various exciting career options in the Indian Air Force.

Stress on dedication, honesty for progress of nation

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

The birth anniversary of Father of the Mahatma Gandhi and former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri was observed across the district on Monday. District Judge Anmol Pal after hoisting the national flag and garlanding the portraits of the heroes paid his tributes in a programme organised under the aegis of the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) in the Civil Court. He said it will be a real tribute to the leaders if we followed their path honestly. He exhorted the people to adopt the path of dedication and honesty for the progress of the nation. Secretary of the DLSA and ADJ Lal Babu said Gandhi was committed to cleanliness.

District Magistrate Priyanka Niranjana after hoisting the tricolour at the Collectorate building garlanded the statue of Gandhi at Gandhi Ghat. She garlanded



District Magistrate Priyanka Niranjana paying tributes during a programme to mark the birth anniversary of Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi and former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri at the Collectorate on Monday

the statues of heroes, including Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri, at Shaheed Udyan. Superintendent of Police (SP) Abhinandan garlanded the portraits of Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri at the Police Lines. Additional Superintendent

of Police (ASP/City) Srikanth Prapajati and Circle Officer (CO) Sadar Shailendra Tripathi hoisted the flag at the police office, CO (City) Ajay Singh at City Kotwali, CO (Lalganj) Manjari Rao at Lalganj police station, CO (Operation) Anil Kumar Pandey at Madihan police station and CO

(Chunar) Uma Shankar Singh at Chunar Kotwali. At the Rajdeep PG College Kailhat a day-long programme was organised and Director RB Singh addressed a gathering.

MISHAP DEATH: One person died in road mishap in an area under Kachhawaan on police station on Sunday. According to a report, Azad Kumar Bind (55), a resident of Bachchhaanv Meerapur village under Mirzamurad police station in Varanasi was on the way on his bike when it was hit by a vehicle near Barapur village under Kachhawaan police station. After the accident the vehicle driver managed to flee from the spot.

On getting information the police reached the spot and brought the victim to the hospital where the doctor declared him as brought dead. On the basis of the papers recovered from his pocket the police informed the kin of the victim and completed the legal formalities.

FIRST COLUMN

TOLERANCE IS THE KEY TO PEACE

Tolerance can bring about lasting peace in the world



RAJYOGI **BRAHMAKUMAR** NIKUNJ **JI**

Most of us have come across many such situations in life wherein the question of Tolerance comes up and we are required to choose whether to tolerate or retaliate. If, for example, a person who has no control over his tongue or is uncultured, impolite, short-tempered and ill-mannered talks in an offensive or insulting language or behaves rudely and roughly with us, then what would we do?

Well! A cultured and spiritualised person, under such a situation, would choose to tolerate, because he knows very well that when tolerance is lost, temper is also lost and the loss of both means the loss of mental balance. Hence, in such a situation, one should not feel hurt, injured or mauled and should not think of revenge. Instead, one should pity such a person and give him vibrations of peace to recover from his temper. This kind of approach or attitude would enable one to remain calm, composed and dignified. Tolerance, in such provocative situations, is a Value that saves one's life. Tolerance, joined by humility, has great Value even as a matter of policy, strategy or tactic.

So, if one loses tolerance in such hot situations even for a moment, one may even lose one's life or face a still more complicated situation, fraught with grave consequences and unpredictable repercussions. Looking at it from this angle, one can say that tolerance is not only a high-class virtue and moral value but it is a non-violent strategy for self-defence and survival and also a weapon for victory. Remember! Our tolerance and Humility can melt or mellow the minds of our bitter critics and opponents while it enables us to be in a state of peace. It creates harmony in the course of time and even the most arrogant person, at some point in time, expresses appreciation of our amazing tolerance in the face of grave aggravation. Along with this, we should also learn to forget and forgive some lapses and shortcomings of others in the spirit of friendliness or brotherhood, or else we cannot have goodwill, amity co-operation and peace.



However, most people ask this question: how long should we allow our tormentor to continue with his cruel acts, his nefarious designs and his dirty ways? Should we tolerate injustice? If we do so, wouldn't it mean our silent consent to his acts of depriving those who deserve justice? Also, it would mean our connivance in his acts of punishing those who are not at fault. Isn't it a kind of self-imposed servitude, servility and slavery? The answer is that we must put forth our moral resistance. We must make our disapproval manifest through our non-cooperation in such acts. Better still, we must use our skill of persuasion at proper moments. We must make efforts to enable this man of blinded intellect to see the real nature of his act and the attendant evils and the following consequences.

We must have the spiritual power to change his heart, to transform him from being stone-hearted. We must try to give a healing touch to this mentally and morally sick person. We must pity him rather than lose our moral sense and react with a feeling of rancour and vengeance. That would be our tolerance. But the question that ultimately comes up is whether we have that spiritual power to transform a sinner into a saint. For that, we must check our stock of spirituality and fill ourselves with the power again through Yoga-Mediation as one would recharge one's battery with the help of a dynamo. With our high spiritual power, we can use tolerance as a tool of social transformation and can be God's instrument for uplifting a man, fallen from his seat of morality.

(The writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist; views expressed are personal)

Timeless traditions: Thathera metal craft



SUKHDEV **SINGH**

Thathera metal craft has been on the UNESCO list for almost a decade now, but the struggle of the artisans making these utensils continues



Despite the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage inscription of the thathera craft of Jndiala Guru since 2014, the financial and social condition of the craftsmen has not improved much. Recognising the cultural heritage worth of the 'thathera' metal craft in Jndiala Guru, in its 9th session held in Paris in 2014, UNESCO 'Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage' decided to inscribe the craft on its list. This is the first metal craft from India to find a place in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list. Thus, not only Punjab but India should be proud of it. "But just the pride cannot feed the craftsmen and keep the craft vibrant", says a craftsman seeking anonymity.

S Hardev Singh of the 'father' community says, "The younger generation is opting out of this family profession because it neither earns money nor respect. Although Ayurveda recognises the advantages of eating in copper, bronze and brass utensils, the 'use and throw' cheaper alternatives are pushing it out of use". Instead of popular cosmetic measures, the government should take concrete steps of waiving taxes and continuing the old quota system of issuing scrap as the raw material directly and only to the working craftsmen to reduce the cost and prices of objects to face the competition. Further, it can help market the products as art pieces and utilitarian objects. The government can check the entry of middlemen who buy raw materials from the Indian Army on auction and then distribute them among the craftsmen to produce objects for them at low labour rates. "In the current practice, a craftsman has no claim of ownership of the product and after the day-long hard work earns only 500-600 a day", a craftsman quips. He asks, "Is this the value of skill or the wage of labour? How would my son like to pursue this profession?"



THE SCIENCE OF AYURVEDA IN INDIA RECOGNISES THE RELEVANCE OF THESE METALS FOR HEALTH

(The writer is a retired professor from Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar; views are personal)

Recently, the Punjab government has declared the Thathera Bazar a Heritage street and built a gate at the street entry symbolising the value of the craft, but has neither waived off its share in GST nor taken any serious steps to help them improve their condition. The question is how the gate and the heritage street status would help if there were no craftsmen in the street.

The UNESCO recognition has, of course, created some hype in the media. Some agencies have succeeded in getting the study projects sanctioned adding to their profiles and justifying their jobs but have not advocated the case forcefully enough to deliver at the ground. Some art and craft dealers have tried to reap benefits by tagging the products with UNESCO recognition to sell them at premium prices while the craftsmen continue to work as labourers at low rates.

This is where the shoe pinches and the government should step in to save the craft, the craftsmen and the cultural heritage of the state. The thathera craft is practised at several other places in India but the uniqueness of the craftsmen in Jandiala Guru is their continuance as a community to practice the family tradition of handmade copper and brass utensils. The ten to twelve-generation tradition of fathers in Jandiala Guru and their craft is a journey of place and people in and through time. The knowledge systems transmitted from generation to generation and the continued relevance of their products to the people make the craftsmanship a 'living tradition', fulfilling the three-tier criterion of 'people, place and time' to identify the craft as the Cultural Heritage.

According to the Amritsar District Gazetteer of 1883, "Besides the city [Amritsar]...the only trade centre worthy of notice is the town of Jandiala, which is known for its manufacture of brass and copper vessels in which it has a brisk export trade" (p.117). If so, the trade perfected worthy of export must have started during the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh or before.

While the utensils are tangible objects, traditional knowledge, skills and art are intangible. Both the craft and its knowledge conventions have been recognized in the UNESCO inscription. The craftsmen of Jandiala Guru use the conventional knowledge and skills of 'forging' instead of 'casting' metal to shape it as a utensil. Using the method of forging, they hammer the metal plates with the help of a mallet. After heating the plates in a small hand-driven furnace, they consistently thump and beat a plate to make it malleable and ductile.

Then the parts of a utensil are made by cutting, heating and curving the metal sheet; then these parts are joined with each other. There are five methods for joining of metals: soldering, brazing, flux, riveting and welding. The fathers of Jandiala Guru use brazing and riveting. Brazing is a process of joining two or more metals by pouring a molten filler metal into the joint. The utensils made from the metal sheets are then cleaned with diluted acid and scrubbed with tamarind water and sand. The whole process of polishing is carried out with hands and feet. This final process brings out the

rich texture and colour of the metal. Finally, the utensils are ornamented with hand-engraved designs with patterns of delicate dents of small size and round shapes looking like small stars.

Utensils are art objects "produced not only for their use but also for their beauty possessing an artistic image which expresses their function". Thus the contribution of craftsmen to the development of culture and civilization, on the one hand, and to the fulfilment of utilitarian and aesthetic needs, on the other, has been great in human history.

Eating and cooking in the mud, copper, brass and bronze utensils is good for health and taste. The science of Ayurveda in India recognizes the relevance of these metals for health. The references to Bronze for health healing can be found in several tracts like Ashtanga Samgraha/ Hridaya, Rajtarangini and Bhavprakash. In contrast with glass, plastic and steel, bronze shows nil microbial presence one hour after being washed in hot water. Copper is said to kill harmful bacteria and viruses. It helps prevent cell damage and slow ageing due to its antioxidant and anti-carcinogenic properties.

As copper, which is well known as a biocide, is the major content in alloy metal of brasses, utensils made from brass have the beneficial effect of restricting the growth of microorganisms. While the craftsmen must be acknowledged as educated and skilled worthy of social respect and honour; their craft must be supported and promoted as our precious cultural heritage.

Turning challenges of food insecurity into opportunity

Food loss can impact food security and nutrition by influencing the four aspects of food security: food availability, access, utilisation, and stability

Food insecurity, hunger and environmental degradation are being aggravated by food loss and waste, globally. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that — in terms of economic value — 14 per cent of the world's food is lost from post-harvest up to, but not including, the retail level. In India, 4-6 % of cereal and 5-12 % of vegetables are being lost every year.

FAO on the fourth International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste (IDAFLOW), calls upon the need to adopt the Food Loss Index (FLI) methodology and monitor losses throughout the supply chain from production to consumption. In collaboration with FAO, IASRI-ICAR



TAKAYUKI **HAGIWARA**

(The writer is a country head & representative of FAO in India; views are personal)

has estimated the FLI for India. These estimates are based on the three national-level surveys conducted by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries to estimate the harvest and post-harvest losses of major crops and commodities in the country. India has been a torchbearer for the world as the only country that has established a robust system of regular surveys for monitoring food losses. These surveys conducted in India have provided the foundations for the development of the FLI methodology globally and for the technical support, FAO provides to countries across the world.

Food loss is a recurring issue due to several causes stemming from different stages of the food supply chain and

socio-economic factors. To address these issues and to ensure food security in the country, mitigating the challenges along the supply chain is critical. FAO works closely with the government and relevant bodies to identify these challenges and find solutions. Food Loss, a leading cause of Hunger, Food Insecurity and Climate Change. Food loss can impact food security and nutrition by influencing the four aspects of food security: food availability, access, utilization, and stability. As per FAO's report, India's food loss percentage stands at approximately 4.5%.

The highest levels of food loss occur in nutrient-rich foods such as fruits and vegetables, meat and fish. It is also estimated that 8 to 10 % of

global greenhouse gases are generated by the food that ends up in landfills. This results in unstable climate conditions thereby affecting crop yields, reducing the nutritional crop quality and supply chain disruptions.

FOOD LOSS IN INDIA

Inadequate storage and transportation infrastructure coupled with post-harvest losses contribute to a substantial amount of food loss in the country. The fragmented and complex supply chain with multiple intermediaries involved further escalates the problem leading to food loss at almost every stage.

Food loss is a pervasive issue resulting in critical economic, social, and environmental implications in the country, limiting India's ability

to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

WAY FORWARD

FAO draws attention to the critical need to measure post-harvest losses across the country. This approach aligns with achieving SDG 12, Target 12.3 which seeks to halve per-capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses, and SDG 2 — Zero Hunger.

FAO firmly believes that it is crucial to identify the channels where significant losses occur. Disaggregation of data at subnational levels throughout the supply chain will help locate loss points and their impact. This, in turn, will support targeted intervention

and necessary aids. A critical requirement for effective decision-making is improved data, which can drive innovation, promote best practices, and optimize resource allocation.

Addressing India's food loss challenge requires a comprehensive and coordinated effort from various stakeholders, including the government, farmers, food processors, retailers, and consumers. Improvements in localised infrastructure, storage, transportation, processing, packaging, market linkages, and awareness campaigns to change consumer behaviour, are critical.

It is essential to identify the channels in harvest and post-harvest operations in which substantial losses are taking place for further technological

interventions. Food loss is a global challenge. Countries must adopt the globally agreed methodology and measurement techniques for the computation of FLI which also provides a platform for global comparability and cross-learning opportunities.

Reducing food loss will help conserve resources and reduce the environmental footprint associated with food production and disposal. FAO firmly believes that India as the leader for the Global South can address this issue and demonstrate a way forward in reducing food loss that is essential to achieving efficient, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient agri-food systems for better production, better nutrition, better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind.

At least 10 die after church roof collapses in Mexico

AP ■ CIJUED MADERO (MEXICO)

The roof of a church collapsed in northern Mexico during Sunday Mass, killing at least 10 people and injuring around 60, authorities said as searchers probed in the wreckage throughout the night and into Monday morning looking for survivors and more victims.

Approximately 30 parishioners were believed to have been trapped in the rubble when the roof caved in, officials said.

Searchers crawled under the roof slabs and officials brought in dogs to help search for possible survivors.

The Tamaulipas state police said about 100 people were in the church at the time of the collapse.

The state security spokesman's office said early Monday that 10 people had been confirmed dead from the

collapse, which it described as likely being caused by a structural failure. The office said 23 of the 60 injured remain hospitalized, with two in serious condition.

Tamaulipas state police said units of the National Guard, the state police and state civil defense office and the Red Cross were involved in the operation.

The Mexican Council of Bishops issued a statement saying that "we join in prayer at the tragic loss of life and those injured." Bishop José Armando Alvarez of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Tampico said the roof caved in while parishioners were receiving communion at the Santa Cruz church in the Gulf coast city of Ciudad Madero, next to the port city of Tampico.

The diocese later posted a list of people who had been injured, including a 4-month-old baby, three 5-year-olds and

two 9-year-olds.

The number of young victims — police officers said three of the dead were children — may have been due to the fact that baptisms were to take place at the church.

"We lament the painful loss of people who were there celebrating the baptism of their children," Alvarez wrote. At the same time, there were signs of hope.

"From underneath the rubble, thanks to Divine Providence and the work of the rescue teams, people have been pulled out alive!" Alvarez's diocese wrote in a statement posted on its social media accounts. "Let's keep praying!"

He also called on anyone who had wood to donate to bring it to the church, apparently to shore up the roof while rescue teams crawled inside.

Photos published by local media showed what appeared

to be a concrete and brick structure, with parts of the roof fallen almost to the ground.

Security camera footage from about a block away showed the unusual, gabled roof simply collapsed downward.

Walls did not appear to have been blown outward, nor was there any indication of an explosion, or anything other than simple structural failure.

The roof appeared to be made of relatively thin poured concrete, and photos distributed by state authorities showed the roof slab resting on the top of pews in some parts of the church. That left open the possibility there were air spaces for any survivors.

"At this time, the necessary work is being performed to extract the people who are still under the rubble," Alvarez said in a taped message. "Today we are living through a very difficult moment."

UK Treasury chief to hike min wage Tax cuts ruled out while inflation stays high

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Britain's Treasury chief announced a hike in the national minimum wage on Monday, as the governing Conservative Party tries to persuade voters it is on the side of those who are struggling financially.

But Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt ruled out tax cuts, saying they would fuel inflation. "I do want us to have lower taxes," Hunt told Sky News before his speech. But he said "it's very difficult to see" it happening this year.

That message was not what many Conservatives at the party's annual conference wanted to hear. Hundreds of them packed a room to applaud as former Prime Minister Liz Truss — whose seven weeks in office plunged Britain's economy into crisis — demanded Hunt slash taxes in his fall budget next month. Hunt told the Conservatives' annual confer-



ence that the hourly rate for workers 23 or older will rise in April from 10.42 pounds (\$12.70) to at least 11 pounds (\$13.40). The exact amount will be set after a recommendation by the Low Pay Commission, an advisory body. Hunt said that will mean a raise for more than 2 million workers.

Hunt also pledged to toughen the rules on social benefits in an attempt to stem the flow of working-age people out of the workforce, a trend that has accelerated since the coronavirus

pandemic.

"Those who won't even look for work do not deserve the same benefits as people trying hard to do the right thing," he said. The party is trying to sprinkle voter-pleasing measures such as the pay increase at the conference, which may be the last before a national election due in 2024. But the government's spending power is constricted by the UK's sluggish economy and stubbornly high inflation that hit double digits last year and now stands just below 7%. The right-of-centre Tories, in power since 2010, are lagging far behind the centre-left opposition Labour Party in opinion polls. Voters are weary after years of political turmoil over the UK's exit from the European Union, the coronavirus pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis fuelled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who took office just under a year ago, is facing grumbling — and even open rebellion — from

some Conservative members and lawmakers.

Sunak steadied the economy after his predecessor Truss crashed the pound and trashed Britain's reputation for fiscal prudence with her tax-slashing economic plans. She left office after just 49 days.

Many Conservatives doubt whether Sunak — the party's fifth leader since 2016 — can restore its popularity to the level that saw the party win an 80-seat majority in the 650-seat House of Commons in 2019. The prime minister then, Boris Johnson, resigned in mid-2022 amid scandals over his ethics and judgment.

In recent weeks, Sunak has sought to take the initiative with a clutch of measures depicted as easing the economic burden on taxpayers. He has delayed a ban on selling new gas and diesel cars and watered down other green measures that he said imposed "unacceptable costs" on ordinary people.

'At least 13 killed in Spain nightclub fire'

Madrid (AP): A fire broke out in a nightclub in the southeastern Spanish city of Murcia on Sunday, killing 13 people and injuring several others, authorities said. The fire started around 6 a.m. in the popular Teatre nightclub and quickly tore through the venue, according to Spain's state news agency EFE. It was not immediately clear what caused the fire. A video shared by Murcia's fire service showed firefighters trying to control flames inside the nightclub. Police and emergency services worked to secure the interior of the club to avoid a possible collapse and were trying to locate and identify the bodies. Officials said the death toll could increase. The city council declared three days of mourning with flags flown at half-staff on public buildings throughout the region of Murcia.

Fire at Egypt police HQ injures 38

Cairo (AP): A huge fire broke out early Monday at a police facility in northeastern Egypt, injuring at least 38 people before firefighters were able to extinguish the blaze several hours later, authorities said. The cause of the fire, which ripped through the multistory police headquarters in the Suez Canal province of Ismailia, was not immediately clear.

Interior Minister Mahoud Tawfiq, whose ministry oversees police forces, rushed to the site in the city of Ismailia, about 125 kilometres (77 miles) northeast of Cairo. He said a committee was set up to investigate the fire.

Hossam Abdel-Ghaffar, a spokesperson for the Health Ministry, said in a statement that 12 of the injured were treated at the site, while 26 others were taken to hospitals.

All but two suffered from

breathing difficulties; seven of the injured were treated and discharged, he said.

It was not immediately clear how many police were in the building at the time. Local media reported that the police building was severely damaged in the blaze.

Videos circulating on social media shows flames and black smoke pouring out of the building.

The state-run MENA news agency said firefighters managed to put out the fire after several hours.

Safety standards and fire regulations are poorly enforced in Egypt and have been linked to many deaths.

In August 2022, a fire at a packed Coptic Orthodox church during morning services in Cairo killed 41 worshippers in what was one of Egypt's deadliest fires in recent years.

Trump denounces civil fraud case as a 'scam'

AP ■ NEW YORK

Former President Donald Trump denounced the civil fraud case over his business practices as a politically motivated "scam" as he arrived defiantly for a trial in the lawsuit, which could cost him control of Trump Tower and other prized properties.

"This is a continuation of the single greatest witch hunt of all time," he said as he made a voluntary trip to a New York court for a trial that has high stakes for him.

"It's a scam. It's a sham," the Republican said, reiterating claims that New York Attorney General Letitia James' suit is a politically motivated attempt to thwart his return to the White House.

"What we have here is an attempt to hurt me in an election," he charged, adding: "I don't think the people of this country are going to stand for it." He looked away from

James, a Democrat, as he passed her on the way into court, with a disgusted look on his face.

The suit accuses Trump and his company of deceiving banks, insurers and others by habitually lying about his wealth in financial statements.

Judge Arthur Engoron already has ruled that Trump committed fraud in his business dealings. It is a non-jury trial, so Engoron will decide on six other claims in the lawsuit.

James, a Democrat, is seeking \$250 million in penalties and a ban on Trump doing business in New York. The judge's ruling last week, if upheld on appeal, could force Trump to give up New York properties including Trump Tower, a Wall Street office

building, golf courses and a suburban estate. Trump, the Republican front-runner in the 2024 presidential race, has denied wrongdoing. He says that James and the judge are undervaluing such assets as Mar-a-Lago, and that it didn't matter what he put on his financial statements because they have a disclaimer that says they shouldn't be trusted.

In posts overnight on his Truth Social site, he said he was going to court "to fight for my name and reputation,"

denounced the case as "A SHAM," and called on the attorney general and judge to resign.

Before the trial

Monday, James reiterated her position that Trump for years engaged in "persistent and repeated fraud."

"No matter how powerful you are, and no matter how much money you think you have, no one is above the law," she said on her way into the courthouse.

Trump isn't expected to testify for several weeks. His trip to court Monday marked a remarkable departure from his past practice. Trump didn't go to court as either a witness or a spectator when his company and one of its top executives was convicted of tax fraud last year. He didn't show, either, for a trial earlier this year in which a jury found him liable for sexually assaulting the writer E Jean Carroll in a department store dressing room. In some ways, though, this new trial comes with higher stakes. James, a Democrat, is seeking \$250 million in penalties and a ban on doing

business in New York.

Engoron's ruling of last week, if upheld on appeal, would also shift control of some of his companies to a court-appointed receiver and could force him to give up prized New York properties such as Trump Tower, a Wall Street office building, golf courses and a suburban estate. Trump called it a "corporate death penalty". In a post Sunday night on his Truth Social platform, Trump wrote that Engoron is "unfair, unhinged, and vicious in his PURSUIT of me."

Engoron will decide on six remaining claims in James' lawsuit, including allegations of conspiracy, falsifying business records and insurance fraud.

James' lawsuit accused Trump and his company of a long list of falsehoods in the financial statements he gave to banks. In a recent court filing, James' office alleged Trump exaggerated his wealth by as

Smoky haze on Indonesia's island prompting calls for work from home

AP ■ PALEMBANG (INDONESIA)

More than 300 forest and peatland fires on Indonesia's Sumatra island caused hazy skies across the region on Monday, prompting government officials to ask people to work from home. The military, police and local government were working together to extinguish the fires, which were burning in 316 places across South Sumatra province, but their work was complicated by the extreme dry weather, said Iriansyah, the head of the South Sumatra Disaster Management Agency.

The smoky haze drifted from the fires toward Palembang, the capital of South Palembang province, causing unhealthy air conditions for the area's 1.7 million people. "There is a high potential for people to suffer from respiratory tract infections, coughing, shortness of breath and eye irritation," said

Iriansyah, who like many Indonesians uses only one name. The government in South Sumatra last week called on schools to delay their opening time, as the haze tends to decrease during the day. But on Monday, the schools asked students to attend classes online, as the air quality had worsened and was categorised as "dangerous". "We are worried as the haze is getting worse in Palembang...Many children are sick and we can only pray that this disaster will pass quickly," Umi Kalsum, a private sector worker and mother, told The Associated Press on Monday.

Forest and peat fires are an annual problem in Indonesia that strains relations with neighboring countries. Smoke from the fires has blanketed parts of Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and southern Thailand. Some parts of Malaysia said they experienced smoke from the Indonesian

fires since last week. Malaysia's Environment Department chief Wan Abdul Latiff Wan Jaffar last week said the return of smog in some parts of the country was due to hundreds of forest fires in Indonesia. "Overall, air quality in the country has deteriorated," he said in a statement. "Forest fires that occur in the southern part of Sumatra and the central and southern parts of Kalimantan, Indonesia have caused haze to cross borders." But Siti Nurbaya Bakar, Indonesia's Environment and Forestry Minister, said in a statement on Monday there has been no transboundary haze from Indonesia to Malaysia. Satellite data from Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency shows that the haze in Indonesia was in several areas in Sumatra and Borneo islands. Wind direction in Indonesia is generally from southeast to northwest-northeast.

Work starts on turning Adolf Hitler's birthplace into police station

Braunau am Inn (Austria) : Work started Monday on turning the house in Austria where Adolf Hitler was born in 1889 into a police station, a project meant to make it unattractive as a site of pilgrimage for people who glorify the Nazi dictator.

The decision on the future of the building in Braunau am Inn, a town on Austria's border with Germany, was made in late 2019. Plans call for a police station, the district police headquarters and a security academy branch where police officers will get human rights training.

On Monday, workers put up fencing and started taking measurements for the construction work. The police are expected to occupy the premises in early 2026. A years-long back-and-forth over the ownership of the house preceded

the overhaul project. The question was resolved in 2017 when Austria's highest court ruled that the government was within its rights to expropriate the building after its owner refused to sell it. A suggestion it might be demolished was dropped.

The building had been rented by Austria's Interior Ministry since 1972 to prevent its misuse, and was sublet to various charitable organisations. It stood empty after a care centre for adults with disabilities moved out in 2011.

A memorial stone with the inscription "for freedom, democracy and liberty. Never again fascism. Millions of dead remind us" is to remain in place outside the house.

The Austrian government argues that having the police, as the guardians of civil liberties, move in is the best use for the building. AP

'India will help maintaining sites connected to Gandhi in S Africa'

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

India will assist in maintaining all sites connected to Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa, the Indian envoy here said on Monday as the world marked the 154th birth anniversary of the global peace icon.

On the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, High Commissioner Prabhakar Kumar paid floral homage to the bust of Gandhi at the Constitutional Court premises here, which was once a prison where the Mahatma and his followers served sentences during their resistance to discriminatory laws.

Gandhi served four terms of imprisonment between 1908 and 1913 here, including his very first sentence in South Africa.

The bust was unveiled in 2012 by then-President Pratibha Patil when she paid a visit to South Africa. "In all my postings abroad, I have always garlanded the statue of Mahatma Gandhi and now in South Africa, where I am doing so for the first time, it is very special, because Gandhiji was here for 21 years," Kumar said.

After the garlanding, Kumar visited permanent exhibitions at the venue dedicated to the lives of both Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, who served 27 years as a political prisoner of the apartheid government before becoming South Africa's first democratically-elected president in May 1994.

The diplomat said he is also looking forward to attending the installation of a seven-foot statue of Gandhi at Tolstoy Farm, the once-thriving commune established by Gandhi about 30 km south of Johannesburg during his tenure as a lawyer in the city.

After falling into complete disrepair due to vandalism, only the foundation of Gandhi's original zinc and wood home was left, surrounded by tall grass, until interventions by Gandhian activist Mohan Hira and the Mahatma Gandhi

CJ, Maha minister mark Gandhi Jayanti in London

London (PTI): The Chief Justice of India, Justice Dhananjaya Yeshwant Chandrachud, and Maharashtra Minister for Cultural Affairs Sudhir Munganitwar were among the special guests at the annual Gandhi Jayanti celebrations in London on Monday. The Indian diaspora gathering at the iconic Gandhi statue at Tavistock Square in London, assembled by the Indian High Commission in London and India League, included floral tributes to the Mahatma and addresses reflective of his message. Students of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in London performed a selection of Mahatma Gandhi's favourite bhajans, including 'Raghupati Raghav' and 'Vaishnava Jan', as community leaders and parliamentarians gathered for the sombre ceremony which concluded with a Buddhist prayer. "Today, on his 154th

birth anniversary, we remember Mahatma Gandhi for his teachings, wisdom and compassion for humankind," said Justice Chandrachud in his address to the gathering.

"Mahatma Gandhi is a name that is known to everyone in the world. A name which stands for the principle of truth and non-violence. A name which calls for universal peace. A name which inspires hope that we shall make our world a better place than it was before," he said. The Chief Justice described Bapu, as he is lovingly known in India, as a guiding light for all Indians in a spiritual sense.



Remembrance Organisation (MGRO).

With support largely from the Indian government, Tolstoy Farm has now been restored to some extent with a fruit orchard, a Peace Garden with flowers and shrubs, and a library.

Hira arranged for an artisan from India to sculpt the latest statue at his residence here before moving it to Tolstoy Farm. Kumar pledged further support for Tolstoy Farm.

"The support from India will continue...all the places connected with Mahatma Gandhi (in South Africa) will receive attention from the government of India," the envoy

said.

Standing next to a wall-sized image of the two leaders together, prepared for the exhibition although they had never met, Kumar reflected on the special relationship between Gandhi and the African National Congress (ANC) led by Mandela. "Gandhiji was here and the ANC got a lot of inspiration from Gandhiji and thereafter Nelson Mandela also always admired Gandhi and said a lot about him, so this exhibition is an inspiration for all of us, Indians and South Africans," he said.

The exhibitions are very popular among foreign tourists, who visit the site daily.

Nobel in medicine goes to two scientists

Karikó, Drew Weissman's work enabled creation of vaccines against COVID-19

AP ■ STOCKHOLM

Two scientists won the Nobel Prize in medicine on Monday for discoveries that enabled the creation of mRNA vaccines against COVID-19 and that could be used to develop other shots in the future. Hungarian-born American Katalin Karikó and American Drew Weissman were cited for contributing "to the unprecedented rate of vaccine development during one of the greatest threats to human health in modern times," according to the panel that awarded the prize in Stockholm.

The panel said the pair's "groundbreaking findings ... fundamentally changed our understanding of how mRNA interacts with our immune system." Traditionally, making vac-



cines required growing viruses or pieces of viruses — often in giant vats of cells or, like most flu shots, in chicken eggs — and then purifying them before next steps in brewing shots.

The messenger RNA

approach is radically different. It starts with a snippet of genetic code that carries instructions for making proteins. Pick the right virus protein to target, and the body turns into a mini vaccine factory. But simply injecting

lab-grown mRNA into the body triggered an inflammatory reaction that usually destroyed it. Karikó, a professor at Szeged University in Hungary and an adjunct professor at the University of Pennsylvania, and Weissman, of the University of Pennsylvania, figured out a tiny modification to the building blocks of RNA that made it stealthy enough to slip past those immune defences. Karikó, 68, is the 13th woman to win the Nobel Prize in medicine. She was a senior vice president at BioNTech, which partnered with Pfizer to make one of the COVID-19 vaccines. She and Weissman, 64, who is a professor and director of the Penn Institute for RNA Innovations, met by chance in the 1990s while photocopying research papers, according to Penn Today, the

university's news website.

Dr. Paul Hunter, a professor of medicine at Britain's University of East Anglia, described the mRNA vaccines as a "game changer" in helping to shut down the coronavirus pandemic, crediting the shots with saving millions of lives.

"If it hadn't been for the mRNA technology, COVID would have been much worse," he said. "Vaccines generally were the turning point in slowing down COVID and the mRNA vaccines were just so much better than all the others," he said, noting that the main vaccine used in the UK, made by AstraZeneca, is barely in use anymore

"We would likely only now be coming out of the depths of COVID without the mRNA vaccines," Hunter said.

‘Open hearing of Imran bail plea may affect ties with other countries’

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan’s top investigation agency Monday informed a court here that an open hearing of former premier Imran Khan’s bail plea in a case related to the alleged disclosure of state secrets could pose a “risk of deteriorating relations” with other countries.

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Saturday filed a charge sheet in the Special Court established under the Official Secrets Act, declaring Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman Khan and Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi “principal accused” in the cipher case. Both Khan and Qureshi are currently detained in jail on judicial remand.

The FIA on Monday informed the Islamabad High Court (IHC) that an open hearing of Khan’s bail plea in the cipher case could pose a “risk of deteriorating relations with other countries,” Dawn newspaper reported.

The post-arrest bail pleas of Khan and Qureshi were rejected by the special court earlier, following which the former premier approached the IHC seeking the same.

Khan, 70, was arrested in August after the case was filed against him for allegedly violating the Official Secrets Act by disclosing a secret diplomatic cable (cipher) sent by the country’s embassy in Washington last year in March.

Qureshi, 67-year-old former foreign minister, was arrested under the Official Secrets Act for violating the secrecy of the official cable sent by the Pakistani embassy in the US to the foreign office when he was the foreign minister.

On September 26, the judicial remand of Khan and Qureshi was extended till October 10 and as per the IHC’s orders, the PTI chairman was shifted to Rawalpindi’s Adiala jail from the Attock district jail.

Last week, the FIA filed a petition in the IHC seeking in-camera proceedings of Khan’s bail plea in the case.

On Monday, IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq took up the FIA’s plea.

“We also have to present statements regarding other countries before the court. By bringing such statements before an open court, there is a risk of deteriorating relations with other countries,” prosecutor Shah Khawar said during the hearing.

Additional Attorney General (AAG) Munawar Iqbal Dogal also presented the code of conduct for diplomatic state documents before the IHC.

Khan’s lawyer Salman Safdar pointed out that the FIA’s request, which was meant to prevent matters from being made public, contradicted its stance that the PTI chief had already “made the cipher public.”



Subsequently, the IHC reserved its verdict on the FIA’s plea seeking in-camera proceedings of Khan’s bail plea.

Separately, a two-member bench of the IHC on Monday accepted a set of petitions filed by Khan’s party against trial courts’ decisions to dismiss his bail in nine cases.

Last month, local courts of Islamabad had rejected nine petitions of the PTI chief seeking bail in first information reports (FIRs) registered against him over violent protests.

Meanwhile, a special court on Monday summoned Khan and Qureshi on October 4 in the cipher case.

Special court judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain issued notices to respondents saying that statements of witnesses are sufficient to summon the accused in the court, Geo News reported. The judge directed the superintendent of Adiala

jail to present the PTI leaders before the court on October 4.

Khan and Qureshi have been placed in column 3 in the charge sheet which describes the names and addresses of the accused sent for trial.

The FIA invoked in the charge sheet sections 5 and 9 of the Official Secrets Act which may lead to a death sentence, or two to 14 years’ imprisonment if proven.

The cricketer-turned-politician is charged with the violation of the Official Secrets Act in connection with the leakage of a confidential diplomatic cable from Pakistan’s embassy in Washington.

In March last year, ahead of the vote of no-confidence that resulted in his ouster, Khan pulled out a piece of paper - allegedly the cipher - from his pocket and waved it at a public rally in Islamabad, claiming it was the evidence of an “international conspiracy” being hatched to topple his government. However, during the interrogation with the joint investigation team (JIT) in the jail on August 26, Khan denied that the paper he waved at a public gathering last year was the cipher. He also admitted to losing the cipher, saying he couldn’t recall where he kept it.

His principal secretary Azam Khan stated before a magistrate and the FIA that the Khan used it for his ‘political gains’ and to avert a vote of no-confidence against him.

Indian mining tycoon, son among six killed in Zim plane crash

Johannesburg (PTI): An Indian billionaire and his son were among the six individuals killed when their private plane crashed near a diamond mine in southwestern Zimbabwe after experiencing a technical fault, according to media reports.

Harpal Randhawa, the owner of RioZim, a diversified mining company producing gold and coal as well as refining nickel and copper, along with his son and four others was killed when the plane crashed in the Zvamahande area of Mashava, iHarare, a news and media website in Zimbabwe, reported.

The Cessna 206 aircraft, owned by RioZim, was en route from Harare to the Murowa diamond mine when the tragic incident occurred on Friday. The single-engined aircraft crashed near the Murowa Diamonds mine, which is partly owned by RioZim. mThe plane experienced a technical fault, possibly resulting in a mid-air explosion, before plummeting into Peter Farm in the Zvamahande region.

All passengers and crew onboard lost their lives in this accident, the report said.

The Herald, a state-owned daily newspaper, quoted police as saying four of the victims were foreigners and the other two Zimbabweans.

“The Zimbabwe Republic Police reports a plane crash which occurred on September 29 between 7.30 am and 8 am, where six people are confirmed dead,” police said.

“The Murowa Diamond Company (RioZim)-owned white and red Zcam aircraft had left Harare for the mine at 6 am and crashed about 6km from Mashava.”

RioZim confirmed the crash and said it was working with relevant authorities to gather more information.

Names of the deceased are yet to be released by police but journalist and filmmaker Hopewell Chinono, who was a friend of Randhawa, confirmed his death. “I am deeply saddened by the passing of Harpal Randhawa, the owner of RioZim who died today in a plane crash in Zvishavane. Five other people including his son, who was also a pilot but a passenger on this flight, also died in the crash,” wrote Chinono on X.

“My thoughts are with his wife, family, friends and the RioZim community.”

Turkiye strikes suspected Kurdish militant targets in northern Iraq

AP ■ ANKARA

The Turkish defence ministry says its warplanes have carried out raids on suspected Kurdish rebel targets in northern Iraq on Sunday following a suicide attack on a government building in the Turkish capital.

A ministry statement said some 20 targets of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) were “destroyed” in the aerial operation, including caves, shelters, and depots.

Earlier, a suicide bomber detonated an explosive device near an entrance of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, injuring two police officers. A second assailant was killed in a shootout with police on Sunday, the interior minister said. A news agency close to the PKK said the group has claimed responsibility for the suicide bombing.

The attack happened hours before Turkey’s Parliament was set to reopen after its three-month summer recess with an address by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Two police officers were slightly wounded in the bombing near an entrance to the Ministry of Interior Affairs, Minister Ali Yerlikaya said on X. Assailants who arrived at the scene inside a light commercial vehicle carried out the attack, he said.

“Our heroic police officers, through their intuition, resisted the terrorists as soon as they got out of the vehicle,” Yerlikaya later told reporters. “One of them blew himself up, while the other one was shot in the head before he had a chance to blow himself up.”

“Our fight against terrorism, their collaborators, the (drug) dealers, gangs, and organised crime organisations will continue with determination,” he said.

The interior minister did not say who was behind the attack. However, ANF News, a news agency close to the banned Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK, reported on Sunday night that the group had claimed responsibility for the blast.

Leftist extremists and the Islamic State group have also carried out deadly attacks throughout Turkey in the past.

Erdogan gave his speech in Parliament as planned and called the attack “the last stand of terrorism.” “The soundrels who targeted the peace and security of the citizens could not achieve their goals and they never will,” he said.

The president reiterated his government’s aim to create a 30-km safe zone along Turkey’s border with Syria to secure its southern border from attacks.

Turkiye has launched sev-

eral incursions into northern Syria since 2016 to drive away the Islamic State group and a Kurdish militia group, known by the initials YPG, and controls swaths of territory in the area.

Turkiye views the YPG as an extension of the PKK, which is listed as a terror group by Turkey, the United States, and the European Union. The PKK has waged an insurgency against Turkey since 1984. Tens of thousands of people have died in the conflict.

Last year, a bomb blast in a bustling pedestrian street in Istanbul left six people dead, including two children. More than 80 others were wounded. Turkey blamed the attack on the PKK and the YPG.

The State-run Anadolu Agency reported that the two attackers on Sunday had seized the vehicle in the central province of Kayseri from a veterinarian. The pro-government daily Sabah reported that they shot the man in the head and threw his body into a ditch by the side of the road. They then drove the vehicle to Ankara, roughly 300 km away.

Security camera footage on Sunday showed the vehicle stopping in front of the ministry, with a man exiting it and rushing toward the entrance of the building before blowing himself up. A second man is seen following him.



An aerial acrobatics team, the Canadian Snowbirds, performs during the Pacific Airshow at Huntington Beach, California, on Sunday AP/PTI

Pak court gives police one week to recover Imran’s key ally Sheikh Rashid

Islamabad (PTI): A Pakistani court on Monday ordered the police to recover within a week Awami Muslim League chief and former interior minister Sheikh Rashid, a key ally of former premier Imran Khan, after his lawyer claimed that the politician had been arrested.

Rashid, 72, was detained by “plain clothes men” from his residence in Bahria Town of Rawalpindi on September 17 and shifted to an undisclosed location, his lawyer Sardar Abdul Raziq Khan had said.

Rashid’s nephew Sheikh Shakir and houseworker Sheikh Imran had also been arrested and taken to an “undisclosed location”, according to the lawyer.

Later, police submitted City Police Officer (CPO) Khalid Hamdani’s report to the court,

which stated that Rashid was neither in their custody nor was he arrested by the Rawalpindi police. Last week, Rashid’s lawyer told the court that his client was arrested by the Rawalpindi police. However, police denied having the politician in their custody.

The court then directed the police to locate Rashid’s whereabouts and asked the law enforcement agency to make an all-out effort for his recovery.

On Monday, Justice Sadaqat Ali Khan of the Lahore High Court’s (LHC) Rawalpindi bench resumed the proceedings over the plea against the former interior minister’s arrest. The court ordered the police to recover the AML chief within a week and present him before the court, Dawn newspaper reported.

Pakistan launches anti-polio vaccine drive targeting 44M children amid tight security

Islamabad (AP): Pakistan launched its second nationwide anti-polio campaign of the year Monday in an effort to inoculate 44 million children under the age of 5 amid signs the country was close to eradicating the disease.

Caretaker Prime Minister A n w a r u l - H a q - K a k a r launched the five-day vaccination campaign in the capital, Islamabad, and urged parents in a televised address to cooperate with the 350,000 health workers who are going door-to-door to administer vaccine drops to children.

The campaign was taking place under heavy security. The government deployed police and security forces to ensure the safety of the inoculation drive workers.

Vaccine providers and the police assigned to protect them have been attacked during past anti-polio campaigns, which militants falsely claimed were a Western conspiracy to sterilise children. Pakistan has registered two new polio cases since January, a blow to the goal of eradicating a disease that affects the nervous system and can cause severe paralysis in children.

Pakistan and neighbouring Afghanistan are the only two countries in the world where polio continues to threaten the health and well-being of children.

Pakistan came close to eradicating polio in 2021, when only one case was reported, and last year reported about two dozen cases.

‘Private sector desperate to take migrants despite negative narrative’

AP ■ GENEVA

The new head of the UN’s migration agency said on Monday that the private sector is “desperate” for their countries to take in migrants to mop up labour shortages, especially in the West — endeavouring to steer a narrative away from reticence and suspicion about migrants in many parts of the world.

Amy Pope, the first woman to head the International Organisation for Migration, sought to play up the economic benefits of migration for rich nations with aging populations and declining workforces — in the face of “build-the-wall” rhetoric in the United States to block migrants from Latin America and right-wing movements in Europe that want to keep foreigners out.

“We hear from ... the private sector globally, but especially in Europe and in North America, that they are desperate for migration in order to meet their own labour market needs and in order to continue to fuel innovation within their own companies,” Pope, who is American, told reporters.

She said the evidence was “fairly overwhelming” that migration benefits economies by filling jobs, powering innovation or “fuelling the renovation or revitalisation of aging communities.”

“Migration, on the whole, is a benefit. That’s not to say that the rhetoric around migration reflects the fact that it is a tremendous benefit.”

Governments who open up to migration often do so at their political peril: The Biden administration — which



New head of UN’s migration agency Amy Pope

strongly supported Pope’s candidacy — recently gave work permits to nearly 500,000 Venezuelans, whose home country has been in economic and political turmoil in recent years to help get them to work, pay taxes and stop being a burden on public finances.

But critics insist such policies are likely to encourage migrants to flock to the United States, and say they take manual and blue-collar jobs and put downward pressure on wages.

Pope insisted that countries must ensure legal and proper “pathways” to migration, a longstanding call by UN institutions.

“The difference today is that 30 of the biggest economies have experienced very significant labour shortages — and we are seeing it everywhere,” she said, adding that agriculture, construction, health care and hospitality were among the sectors affected.

Pope said her first trip abroad in the job will be to East Africa, where drought and the impacts of climate change have driven many to flee.

She said 80 per cent of

African migrants stay in Africa, and said her job was “not to focus just on south-to-north migration, which I know occupies a lot of the political space and a lot of the print space.”

She pointed to shrinking humanitarian aid budgets, the need to draw in the private sector into the “conversation” to support migration, and signs that migration is set to continue to grow.

“Whether it’s climate change, whether it’s conflict, whether it’s the inability to find a job or a future at home, or violence within neighbourhoods or communities, more and more people are looking to find a better life somewhere else in the world,” she said of a message gleaned from her talks last week with migration experts in Asia.

Pope officially took over Sunday from Antonio Vitorino of Portugal, her former boss, whom she outlasted in a US-vs.-European Union showdown earlier this year. The Geneva-based agency has only had two non-American directors-general since its founding in 1951, and today it brings together 175 member countries and more than 20,000 staff.

European diplomats meet in Kyiv to support Ukraine

AP ■ KYIV

Some of Europe’s top diplomats gathered Monday in Kyiv in a display of support for Ukraine’s fight against Russia’s invasion as signs emerge of political strain in Europe and the United States over the 19-month-old war.

European Union foreign ministers converged on the Ukrainian capital for an unannounced informal meeting that officials said would review the bloc’s support for Ukraine and discuss Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s proposed peace formula. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the foreign ministers’ first joint meeting outside EU borders signalled that the 27-nation bloc’s support is “unwavering,” and underscored the EU’s commitment to Ukraine.

The United States, the EU and the United Kingdom have provided massive military and financial support to Ukraine, enabling it to stand up to the Kremlin’s attack. The assistance is crucial for Ukraine’s weakened economy and has so far been open-ended.

But uncertainty has set in over how long Kyiv’s allies will keep sending it aid worth billions of dollars (euros).

US President Joe Biden on Sunday reassured allies of continued US financial support for the war effort, after Congress averted a government shutdown by adopting a short-term funding package that dropped assistance for Ukraine in its battle against Russia.

Many US lawmakers acknowledge that winning approval for Ukraine assistance in Congress is growing more difficult as the war grinds on. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told reporters that Ukraine held discussions

with representatives of both parties in the US Congress to ensure more help will arrive. “The decision was taken as it was, but we are now working with both sides of the Congress to make sure that it does not repeat again under any circumstances,” Kuleba said. “The question is whether what happens in the US Congress last weekend is an incident or a system. I think it was an incident,” he added.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Monday he didn’t doubt that Washington “will continue to be directly involved in the conflict.”

At the same time, Russian President Vladimir Putin is wagering that international support for Kyiv will sooner or later begin to flag, and Peskov said the fatigue will eventually bring “fragmentation” of Ukraine’s foreign assistance.

The largely symbolic EU meeting in Kyiv took place after the weekend election victory in EU member Slovakia of Robert Fico, whose pro-Russian agenda has increased the question marks about the EU’s continued support for Kyiv.

The small eastern European country could bring more tension to the EU’s discussions on Ukraine, as has happened with Hungary’s at-times cool attitude toward Kyiv.

Budapest has maintained close relations with Moscow and argued against supplying arms to Ukraine or providing it with economic assistance. Slovakia operates a key rail line used to transport western military hardware to Ukraine.

Peskov, the Kremlin spokesman, didn’t comment directly on what Moscow expects from the new Slovak government, saying that a governing coalition is yet to be formed there. The foreign min-

isters of Hungary and Poland were not at the Kyiv gathering. However, it is not unusual for diplomats to skip such informal meetings.

Four of the 27 countries sent high-ranking officials instead of their diplomacy chiefs, EU officials said.

Even so, French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna described the gathering as “an exceptional diplomatic gesture” that “shows Ukraine is part of our European family.”

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen said Europe must be ready to provide further help “for many good reasons.”

“First of all, in order to support Ukraine, but also to send a strong trans-Atlantic signal that what’s going on on our own soil is something we have to take on a great responsibility for,” Løkke Rasmussen said.

are expected to occupy the premises in early 2026.

A years-long back-and-forth over the ownership of the house preceded the overhaul project. The question was resolved in 2017 when Austria’s highest court ruled that the government was within its rights to expropriate the building after its owner refused to sell it. A suggestion it might be demolished was dropped.

The building had been rented by Austria’s Interior Ministry since 1972 to prevent its misuse, and was sublet to various charitable organisations. It stood empty after a care centre for adults with disabilities moved out in 2011. AP

China’s next lunar mission to carry payload from Pakistan

PTI ■ BEIJING

China’s next lunar mission scheduled for 2024 will also carry a payload from Pakistan, the country’s space agency has said, as the two all-weather friends step up their cooperation in the space sector.

The Change-6 lunar mission is currently undergoing research and development work as planned, state-run news agency Xinhua reported on Friday quoting China National Space Administration (CNSA). The Change-6 mission, with the launch scheduled for around 2024, is tasked with bringing back samples from the far side of the moon. To date,

all 10 lunar sampling missions conducted by humans have taken place on the near side of the moon, The Global Times newspaper reported.

The far side is generally older and contains the Aitken Basin, one of the three major lunar landforms, making it of significant scientific value, the report said, quoting CNSA.

The Change-6 mission aims at landing the South Pole-Aitken Basin on the far side to explore and collect lunar samples from different regions and ages.

To promote international cooperation, the Change-6 mission will carry payloads and satellite projects from dif-

ferent countries and regions - France’s DORN radon detection instrument, the European Space Agency’s negative ion detector, Italy’s laser retroreflector, and Pakistan’s CubeSat, the CNSA said.

A CubeSat is a miniaturised satellite from Pakistan. Earlier this year, Pakistan also sent seeds to the Chinese space station, Tiangong, for research into environmentally tolerant seeds. Similarly, Pakistan is exploring the possibility of a formal agreement to join both the Tiangong space station, as well as the more ambitious China-led base on the lunar South Pole, the Dawn newspaper reported last month.

Work starts on turning Adolf Hitler’s birthplace in Austria into police station

Braunau am Inn (Austria) : Work started Monday on turning the house in Austria where Adolf Hitler was born in 1889 into a police station, a project meant to make it unattractive as a site of pilgrimage for people who glorify the Nazi dictator. The decision on the future of the building in Braunau am Inn, a town on Austria’s border with Germany, was made in late 2019. Plans call for a police station, the district police headquarters and a security academy branch where police officers will get human rights training. On Monday, workers put up fencing and started taking measurements for the construction work. The police

are expected to occupy the premises in early 2026.

A years-long back-and-forth over the ownership of the house preceded the overhaul project. The question was resolved in 2017 when Austria’s highest court ruled that the government was within its rights to expropriate the building after its owner refused to sell it. A suggestion it might be demolished was dropped.

The building had been rented by Austria’s Interior Ministry since 1972 to prevent its misuse, and was sublet to various charitable organisations. It stood empty after a care centre for adults with disabilities moved out in 2011. AP

India to clock 6.5% GROWTH in FY24: Rajiv Kumar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian economy will grow at around 6.5 per cent in the current fiscal as the country's macroeconomic situation is benefiting from the reforms that have been taken up in the last nine years by the Narendra Modi-led government, former NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar said on Monday.

Kumar further said that India needs and can grow at 8 per cent-plus as that level of economic growth is required to meet aspirations of the country's young population and to generate sufficient jobs for its workforce. "My growth projection (of

India's GDP growth in FY 2023-24) is 6.5 per cent. "And I think we can easily maintain this (growth) over the next few years," he told PTI in an interview.

India's GDP growth in 2022-23 was 7.2 per cent, lower than 9.1 per cent in 2021-22.

According to Reserve Bank of India's projections, India's GDP is likely to grow at 6.5 per cent in the current fiscal year.

Kumar further said, "Macroeconomic situation India is benefiting from the reforms that have been implemented in the last nine years. Therefore, both the external macroeconomic balance as well as the domestic ones are in good

shape." He said that India's current account deficit is manageable, the country's foreign exchange reserves are sufficient to cover about 11 months of imports and the foreign direct investment flows are continuing.

On the domestic side, Kumar said inflation is beginning to come down to the target levels and the government tax revenues have shown a good 16 per cent increase over last year. "So, this will take care of the fiscal situation and lead to fiscal consolidation. As a result of this improvement, the rating agencies have improved their ratings and JP Morgan has included India in its international bond indices," he said.



According to Kumar, the only weakness that he sees is that the private corporate investment is not yet responding in the manner that "we would expect, but that also is beginning to improve as demonstrated by

the increase in bank credit growth over the last six months".

Expressing concern over decline of India's exports between April and August by about 11 per cent compared to the same period last year, he said,

"This reflects our age old situation which is that India's export performance is strongly correlated with the global trade performance."

Kumar pointed out that as the global trade has weakened, India's exports performance has also weakened given the weak demand in Europe, the US and other developed economies.

"We have to change this. We must do whatever we can to ensure that our exports have a greater share of world markets," he said.

On some US-based economists' claim that India is overstating economic growth, Kumar said that the Ministry of Statistics and Programme

Implementation (MoSPI) must take a firm position and give enough reasons as to why they are using the wholesale price index (WPI) deflator and not the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as GDP deflator.

"And that needs to be firmly established once and for all," Kumar emphasised.

Meanwhile, India's real GDP growth was 7.8 per cent on a year-on-year basis in Q1 FY24, as per the Income or Production Approach.

Recently, former chief economic advisor Arvind Subramanian, in an article, argued that India's GDP is not measured from the expenditure side and measured only from the income

side. This tends to over estimate GDP growth.

Last month, chief economic advisor V Anantha Nageswaran rejected criticism of "statistical discrepancy" in the first quarter GDP data, saying when the same statistical authority reported the severest contraction in the first quarter of 2020, the naysayers had called it credible as it suited their narrative.

The article by Nageswaran was written in light of debates over India's economic performance and economist Ashoka Mody, a Princeton University professor, raising concerns regarding the country's GDP growth rate for the first quarter of the financial year 2023-24.

Lava eyes 10% smartphone market share in 2 years with investment of ₹600 crore in R&D, marketing

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Home-grown mobile devices maker Lava International expects to capture 10 per cent market share in under Rs 30,000-priced smartphone segment on account of up to Rs 600 crore investment in product development and marketing in the next two years, a senior company official said.

Lava International President Sunil Raina told PTI that at a time when several Indian mobile phone companies succumbed to the pressure of aggressive pricing of foreign players around 2016-17 coupled with challenges posed by demonetisation and GST implementation, Lava focussed on its core strength and re-worked on the growth strategy.

The company relaunched its smartphone business with a small pause with focus on customer experience around devices and providing repair service at home, Raina said.

He said that the company has realised that technology has to be competitive for growth along with visibility.

"With branding and product development, we will invest Rs 500-600 crore in the next two years with a large part of it will go in product development," Raina said.



He said that the company has decided not to load smartphones with bloatware — which are pre-loaded apps on mobile phones.

"We have decided we will not put out any bloatware in the phone. We have taken some hit on what could have been earned from bloatware only because we don't want to compromise on consumer experience. I also believe that bloatware is going to be short-lived because consumers don't like it and what consumers don't like doesn't last long," Raina said.

He said that consumers are very unhappy about bloatware because they get irritated with unwanted advertisements, unwanted notifications and bloatware makes devices slow and very vulnerable to security issues.

Raina said most of the brands are not providing software updates on the devices that patch security loopholes and improve performances of the devices.

"In the last 2-3 years, we have not missed any single update," he said.

Raina said that the company has over 800 service centres but still decided to come up with "service at home" where the company sends engineers to the home of consumers for repair.

"In Agni 2, we have gone a step ahead and started giving replacement at home if their is any hardware fault," he said.

While the India smartphone market has recorded continuous decline in shipment since April 2022, Raina said that with new strategy Lava's smartphone busi-

ness grew over 200 per cent last year and this year it is growing at the rate of 300 per cent.

"We expect to grow by 100 per cent on average in the next 2-3 years. Our plan is to get 10 per cent market share in sub-Rs 30,000 price range smartphones. Right now we have around 2 per cent share," he said.

Lava president said that the company will leverage its retail channel strength as well as boost online growth to meet the target.

The company at present sells products through 1.2 lakh retail stores which largely include feature phones only.

Lava claims to have 25 per cent share in the feature phone segment.

"We will fully leverage our offline strength. As of now we sell our product through 1.2 lakh retailers. Smartphones are not present in the entire 100 per cent of that universe. We will look at taking smartphones to most of the outlets and strong presence across all geographies in the country," Raina said.

Lava also plans to strengthen online business to meet its target. "Online earlier used to account for 10 per cent of our total sales. Now online contributes 25 per cent of our total which we will grow further," Raina said.

Remarkable 5G adoption drives India's global speed ranking 72 places higher, says Ookla

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The mobile download speeds in India have seen significant boost with launch of 5G services, and the country has climbed 72 places higher to clinch 47th spot in Speedtest Global Index, according to Ookla.

This puts India not only ahead of its neighbours like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, but also some G20 countries, such as Mexico (90th), Turkey (68th), the UK (62nd), Japan (58th), Brazil (50th place), and South Africa (48th place).

India's speed performance has seen a 3.59 times increase



since the introduction of 5G, with median download speeds improving to 50.21 Mbps in August 2023, from 13.87 Mbps in September 2022.

"This improvement has led to India's rise in the Speedtest

Global Index, moving up 72 places, from 119th place to the 47th position," it said.

The 5G deployments have led to an improved overall user experience across all telecom circles with operators investing in

backhaul infrastructure.

The launch of 5G technology by operators like Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel has led to a substantial increase in 5G subscribers, and operators still have ambitious roll-out plans, with the deployment of a significant number of 5G base stations across the country.

In fact, 5G has not only brought faster speeds but also higher customer satisfaction, as indicated by the Net Promoter Score (NPS), which shows that 5G users in India consistently rate their network operators more positively compared to 4G users.

Sebi extends deadline to confirm or deny market rumours

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi has extended the deadline for mandatory confirmation or denial of market rumours by listed companies.

The deadline has been extended for the top 100 listed companies by market capitalisation to February 1, 2024, from October 1 this year at present, according to the latest circular by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi).

Similarly, for the top 250 list-

ed entities, the rule will kick in on August 1, 2024, from the current requirement of April 1, 2024.

The rule is aimed at strengthening the corporate governance of listed entities.

"It has been decided to extend the effective date of implementation of...The LODR (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) rules for top 100 listed companies by market capitalisation to February 1, 2024, and for top 250 listed companies by market



capitalisation to August 1, 2024," Sebi said.

Earlier in June, Sebi notified rules asking these listed compa-

nies by market capitalisation to confirm, deny, or clarify any market rumour reported in the mainstream media.

As per the disclosure requirements, these companies will have to "confirm, deny or clarify any reported event or information in the mainstream media, which is not general in nature and which indicates that rumours of an impending specific material event" are circulating amongst the investing public within 24 hours from the reporting of the information.



WhatsApp bans 74 lakh accounts in August

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Meta-owned WhatsApp banned 74 lakh accounts in August, keeping in line with IT rules, according to the latest India monthly report by the messaging platform.

Of these, 35 lakh accounts were proactively banned, before any reports from users.

The 'user-safety report' contains details of user complaints

received and the corresponding action taken by WhatsApp, as well as WhatsApp's own preventive actions to combat abuse on the platform. "Between August 1 and August 31, a total of 7,420,748 WhatsApp accounts were banned. 3,506,905 of these accounts were proactively banned, before any reports from users," it said.

An Indian account is identified via a +91 phone number.

Google with HP partnership start producing Chromebooks in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Google in partnership with HP has started manufacturing Chromebooks in India, the PC maker said on Monday.

The Chromebook devices are being manufactured at the Flex Facility near Chennai, where HP has been producing a range of laptops and desktops since August 2020.

"We're partnering with HP to manufacture Chromebooks in India - These are the first Chromebooks to be made in India and will make it easier for Indian students to have access to affordable and secure computing," Google CEO Sundar Pichai on Monday said in a post on X.

An HP spokesperson confirmed that the production of Chromebooks has started in India.

New Chromebooks are available online from a price range starting at Rs 15,990 apiece.

HP is one of the applicants under the government's Rs 17,000 crore production-linked incentive scheme for IT hardware.

Chromebooks come at a



lower price compared to notebooks with proprietary operating system.

A joint statement of Google and HP said Chromebooks are leading devices in K-12 education, helping over 50 million students and teachers across the world.

The local production of Chromebooks expands HP's India-made PC portfolio. HP has been expanding its manufacturing operations in

India since 2020, and from December 2021, started manufacturing a wide range of laptops in India, including HP EliteBooks, HP ProBooks, and HP G8 series notebooks.

It has also expanded its portfolio of locally manufactured commercial desktops by adding various models of desktop mini towers (MT), mini desktops (DM), small form factor (SFF) desktops, and a range of All-in-One PCs.

Exporters seek Government intervention for affordable credit to MSMEs, seek ECLGS extension

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Exporters have sought the central government's intervention in providing affordable and easy availability of credit to MSMEs amid global headwinds due to lack of liquidity.

In a letter to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, apex exporters' body Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) requested for the extension of Emergency Credit Linked Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) till March 31, 2024 and restoration of interest subsidy benefit of 5 per cent to manufacturer MSMEs.

It said some of the MSME sectors are affected due to a dip in exports on account of a global demand slowdown.

FIEO has urged extending the ECLGS 'till March 31, 2024' as it will help micro, small and medium enterpris-



es sail through this difficult time and bounce back when the situation improves.

"With interest rates firming up, MSMEs are getting credit at not less than

8-11 per cent. The subvention for the interest equalisation scheme was reduced as interest rates were coming down. However with complete change in situation, there is an urgent need to restore

interest equalisation benefit of 5 per cent," it added.

MSMEs account for about 40 per cent in the country's total exports.

India's exports declined 6.86 per cent to USD 34.48 billion in August, for the seventh month in a row, due to a fall in shipments from key sectors like petroleum and gems and jewellery on subdued global demand.

The trade deficit (difference between imports and exports) during the month touched a 10-month high of USD 24.16 billion.

Cumulatively, exports during April-August this fiscal contracted 11.9 per cent to USD 172.95 billion. India's exports contracted 15.88 per cent in July.

Exports sectors, which recorded negative growth in August, include tea, coffee, rice, spices, leather, gems and jewellery, textiles, and petroleum products.



Power consumption grows 10.7% to 140.49 billion units in September

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The country's power consumption grew 10.7 per cent to 140.49 billion units in September mainly due to increased use of cooling appliances amid unusually humid weather conditions.

In the year-ago period, power consumption stood at 126.91 Billion Units (BU), higher than 112.43 billion units in September 2021, according to government data.

The peak power demand met — the highest supply in a day — rose to 239.97 GW in September. The peak power supply stood at 199.50 GW in September 2022 and 180.73 GW in September 2021.

The power ministry had estimated the country's electricity demand to touch 229 GW during summer. The demand did not reach the projected level in April-July due to unseasonal rain.

The peak supply, however, touched a new high of 224.1 GW in June and before dropping to 209.03 GW in July. Peak demand touched 238.19 GW in August.

Spokesperson of the Tata Power Delhi Distribution Ltd, which supplies electricity to 70 lakh people in Delhi, told PTI that the demand has remained higher mainly due to unusually higher temperature levels this year.

The spokesperson said in the coming months, demand is expected to remain on the higher side due to festivities.

In September, the Tata Power Delhi Distribution's power consumption was estimated at 1,110 MUs (million units), compared to 1,035 MUs in a year ago.

Shriram General to diversify: Official

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Shriram General Insurance has planned to diversify its product portfolio by focusing more on the non-motor segments like marine, fire, during the current financial year, a top official said.

Motor insurance has been the core of the business for the Jaipur-based firm accounting to about 92 per cent, company Chief Underwriting Officer Shashi Kant Dahuja said.

As part of the diversification plan, the company would launch new insurance products under the fire, marine, engineering segments, he said.

"The idea is to double our non-motor business to around 15 per cent in two to three years from the current 7-8 per cent," Dahuja told PTI in an interaction.

The non-motor business was growing at 70 per cent, he said.

To strengthen its presence in the non-motor business, he said the company would launch products in cyber insurance, pay as you drive, theft and pet insurance, soon.

"As a business strategy we don't want to be excessively dependent on one vertical and we also want to diversify our products slowly and increase our non-motor portfolio to 15 per cent over the next 2-3 years," he said responding to a query.

For the quarter ended June 30, 2023, Shriram General Insurance reported a profit of Rs 98 crore, up by 37 per cent over the corresponding quarter of last year.

The Gross Written Premium during the quarter under review was at Rs 560 crore, up by 39 per cent from Rs 401 crore registered in the same period of last year.

On the overall business growth targeted, he said the company has set a plan of growing 30 per cent during the current financial year.

"This year, we will grow the overall business by 30 per cent. The general insurance industry grew by 12 per cent between April and August this year, but our growth has been strong and



we hope the momentum continues for the remaining months," he said.

On the surge in electric vehicles in the domestic market, he said the sales of EV insurance policies were growing faster and the company issued policies worth Rs 82 crore during last financial year.

"EV is a good business for us. Last year, we wrote policies worth Rs 82 crore, while we have achieved that mark in the first six months of the current financial year, we expect Rs 200 crore in this segment, by the end of this fiscal," he said.

Dahuja said the company was also expanding its employee base with plans to add 700 people during the current financial year.

"The growth in business will be driven by aggressive recruitment of employees and agents. We have 3,780 employees now and will recruit another 700 in the current fiscal," he explained.

"Similarly, we have nearly 63,000 agents and that will increase to 1.50 lakh over the next couple of years," he said.

On the medical policy segment, he said the company would grow this segment as it was witnessing traction in the market in the 'Benefit-based health insurance' category.

"Shriram General Insurance will also grow its medical policy segment. Insurers offer two types of products - indemnity based and benefit-based policy. The most commonly known health insurance is the indemnity-based health insurance which is popularly known as Medicaclaim," he said.

INDIA MAKE QUARTERS IN ALL SIX TEAM EVENTS

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Indian archers showed tenacity and authority in equal measure to storm into the quarterfinals in all the six team events of the Asian Games here on Monday.

The Indians played five team elimination rounds and dropped just one set on way to their respective quarterfinal matches in both recurve and compound sections.

India have got a bye into the quarters by virtue of topping the qualifications in the women's compound team event.

India remained in contention in all five gold medals up for grabs in compound section with all the four archers — Ojas Deotale, Abhishek Verma, Jyothi Surekha Vennam and Aditi Swami — progressing to their respective individual quarterfinals in the afternoon session.

In the recurve section, Dhiraj Bommadevara and Atanu Das advanced, while India's campaign ended in women's individual section, in the only blip of the day.

First, it was the top-seeded compound mixed team of Ojas Deotale and Jyothi Surekha Vennam, who showed the way as they dropped just one point from 16 arrows to eliminate UAE's Amna Alawadhi and Mohammed Binamro 159-151.

The duo will take on formidable Malaysia (No 8 seed) in the quarters, and thereafter, they should have an easy draw till the final.

Then, the Indian recurve mixed pair duo of Atanu Das and Ankita Bhakat were at their resilient best and overcome a first-set deficit to defeat Malayasia in a three-setter.

The fifth seeded Indian duo of Das and Ankita rallied to beat the Malaysian team of Syaqlera Binti Mashayikh and Muhamad Zarif Syahir Bin Zolkepeli 6-2 (39-38, 37-36, 39-33).

The Malaysia pair enjoyed a 2-0 lead with three 10s including one X in the first set. But, the experienced Indian duo bounced back with two 10s and went on to draw level, as the Malaysians crumbled under pressure.

The Malaysians hit the red-ring (8) once and went on to lose the second by a slender one-point margin.

There was more misery in store for the Malaysians who shot into the red ring thrice (8-8-8), while Das-Ankita drilled in three perfect 10s en route to a six-point win in the third set.

The Indian pair sealed the issue with three more 10s in the fourth set and set up a last-eight clash against the fourth-seeded Indonesians.

Should they overcome the Indonesian challenge, the Indians may run into the top-seeded Koreans in a potential semifinal clash in the Olympic-qualifying event.

There are six quota spots available from the Asian Games — the recurve mixed team winners and two archers ranked high in the individual events.

CAMPAIGN ENDS IN WOMEN'S INDIVIDUAL RECURVE SECTION



In compound men's team event, the second-seeded Indian trio of Ojas, Abhishek Verma and Prathamesh Jawkar thrashed 15th seed Singapore (Woon Teng NG, Lee Chung Hee Alan, Jun Hui Goh) 235-219.

The Indian triumvirate had a cautious start and had four 10s to take

a 58-55 lead. But the Indians came on their own from second end onwards and dropped just three points to rout their rivals by a 16-point margin.

The compound men's team is pitted against lower-ranked Bhutan in the quarters and will likely face the third seeded Chinese Taipei in the

semifinals. The top-seeded Indian women's compound team of Jyothi, Aditi Swami and Parneet Kaur, who got a bye into the quarters, will open its campaign against ninth-seeded Hong Kong, who ousted Bangladesh 225-218.

The Indian men's recurve team

of Das, Dhiraj and Tushar Shelke beat Hong Kong's Kwok Yin Chai, Law Kwun Pok Lucien and Wn Chun Kit 6-0 (58-47, 57-49, 57-55) in a lopsided contest.

The third-seeded Indians, who face lower-ranked Mongolia (No 11) in the last-eight, have an easy draw till the final, with Korea and Japan in the top half. The unfancied women's recurve team of Ankita Bhakat, Bhajan Kaur and Simranjeet Kaur also shone through, ousting 12th seeded Thailand.

The fifth-seeded Indians won 5-1 (49-47, 54-54, 55-54) and are pitted against fourth-seeded Japan in a tough quarterfinal match-up.

ARCHERS EXCEL IN INDIVIDUAL ELIMINATIONS

Reigning world champion Deotale began with an easy defeat of Ahmad Alshatti (Kuwait) 148-138. He then overcame Chen Chieh-Lun of Chinese Taipei 146-145 in a tough contest.

The fourth seeded Verma defeated Belal Aynman Alawadi of Saudi Arabia 147-139, and then ousted Nguyen Van Day (Vietnam) 146-142 to make the last-eight.

Verma and Deotale are in the opposite halves and will head for a potential final clash, should they win their respective semi-finals.

Jyothi and her protege Aditi, once again, are headed for a possible face-off after sailing into their respective quarters without much fuss.

Aditi had beaten Jyothi 145-149 in the semifinal before becoming the world champion at Berlin in August this year.

Jyothi beat Anuradha Wijesinghe Karunaratne of Sri Lanka 145-132, and then accounted for Fatimah Saad Mahmood Almashhadani 146-141.

Aditi prevailed over Imayung Rai of Nepal 149-137, while she overwhelmed Syahara Khoerunisa of Indonesia 148-146.

In recurve section, Atanu Das beat Bin Mohamad Khairul Anuar of Malaysia 6-4 (27-27, 29-28, 24-28, 26-26, 29-28) in a challenging five-setter.

He then overcame Robert Nam of Tajikistan 7-1 (28-26, 28-28, 26-25, 28-26) to make the last-eight.

Dhiraj Bommadevara had to come through a tie-breaker to make the quarters with a tough 6-5 (27-27, 28-30, 28-27, 28-27, 25-29) (10-8) win over Muhammad Hakim Ahmed Rubel of Bangladesh.

The Army man rallied to beat Lam Dorji of Bhutan 6-2 (27-28, 30-29, 30-26, 28-27).

India's campaign ended in women's individual section. Bhajan made a pre-quarters exit, going down to reigning Olympic champion An San of South Korea 3-7 (28-27, 25-28, 28-28, 27-28, 27-28).

Ankita lost to Rezza Octavia in the second round, enduring a 5-6 (26-27, 28-27, 27-28, 25-25, 26-25) (9-10) defeat in the shoot-off.



Parul, Priti bag silver and bronze in 3000m steeplechase

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

India's Parul Chaudhary and Priti secured silver and bronze medal respectively in the women's 3000m steeplechase at the Asian Games here on Monday.

Parul clocked 9:27.63 sec to claim the silver medal ahead of compatriot Priti, who made a strong finish to clinch the bronze with a personal best time of

9:43.32 sec.

Winfred Mutile Yavi of Bahrain won the gold with a Games record timing of 9:18.28 sec.

In August this year at the World Championships held in Budapest, Parul registered a national record in 3000m steeplechase with a time of 9:15.31 sec, and in the process qualified for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

AP ■ HANGZHOU (CHINA)

China is simply relentless in its domination of the Asian Games.

At the games five years ago in Jakarta, Indonesia, the country won 132 gold medals and 287 medals overall.

This time, into Day 9 with five full days remaining, China has already broken its mark for gold medals and is very close to matching the overall total from five years ago. With 290 gold medals awarded, China has won almost half - 141. Its overall total stood at 255, just short of the 287 mark set in 2018. Host nations typically get a "home field" bounce when hosting the Olympics or a large multi-sport event like the Asian Games.

ROLLER SKATING: Skater Jung Cheolwon crossed the line in Monday's 3,000-meter relay and began to celebrate thinking he'd won the gold medal for South Korea.

But he was shocked when the scoreboard showed South Korea had finished second to Taiwan, which clocked 4 minutes, 05.692 seconds. South

Korea finished in 4:05.702.

Jung apologised to his teammates for his costly error. "I made a rather big mistake," the 27-year-old Jung said. "I didn't come at full speed to the finish line. I let my guard down too early. I am very sorry."

KURASH ENDS: Uzbekistan failed to completely dominate the ancient martial art of kurash, which has its roots in the Central Asian country. The sport debuted in the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia.

Uzbekistan won four of the seven gold medals available. But China picked up two gold and Iran added another.

On Monday on the closing day, Liu Yi of China defeated Zahra Bagheri of Iran 3-0 in the women's 87-kilogram division, and Sadegh Azarang of Iran defeated Kim Ming-yo of South Korea 10-0.

On Sunday, Yu Dan of China won the women's 70-

footsteps, she has completed MBBS from SRM Medical College in Chennai, and has also done Masters in Clinical Embryology. "My mother runs a hospital and I have joined there. I have taken a break for the Asian Games. I will join after I reach home," said Aarathy. "It is difficult at times to divide time between studies and my sport but I was able to manage it with support from my family and my husband," she said.

Aarathy trains at the Nehru Indoor Stadium in Chennai.

"I trained for two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening. Before the Asian Games, we took special permission to train longer there."

Aarathy married Tamil Nadu cricketer Sandeep Warrier in 2019 and she said he is her "best supporter".

"I am continuing my passion and he has not told me anything to change it after marriage. He is very supportive."

Talking about the bronze medal in Hangzhou, she said, "Skating for 22 years has obviously paid off. I'm very happy about the younger players who have come into the team. They did a good job and kept calm."

"Sadly, roller skating is not an Olympic sport. But winning bronze will definitely open up a lot of opportunities for the players because skating is not on the priority list in India."



4:34.861s to bag the third place on the podium behind gold medalists Chinese Taipei (4:19.447) and silver winner South Korea (4:21.146).

"Winning bronze will definitely open up a lot of opportunities for us because we are not on the priority list in India. Sadly, this isn't an Olympic sport,"



kilogram final against Donya Aghaei of Iran.

Yu is a former judoka that China has moved into kurash because of its similarities to other martial arts.

"In terms of throws and grips, there are many similarities between wrestling, judo

and kurash," Yu said. "It has helped me a lot."

TRIATHLON: Japan completed its sweep of the triathlon gold medals by winning the mixed relay on Monday.

Kenji Nener won the men's gold on Friday and Yuko Takahashi added the women's

title on Saturday. Both ran on Monday in the winning team event, which saw China take the silver and Honk Kong the bronze.

"It was tough," Takahashi said. "I was almost dead at the end, but I gave it everything."

Many triathletes competed in the world championships in Pontevedra, Spain, on Sept. 22-24 and then rushed to China.

ESPORTS: Esports wrapped up Monday as one of the most talked about events at the Asian Games.

Going into bronze- and gold-medal games, China led the medal table with three gold and four overall. South Korea had two gold and also four overall. Thailand was the only other nation with gold and also had four overall. Taiwan had four overall but failed to win gold.

Malaysia won the bronze on Monday in Dota 2, defeating Kyrgyzstan 2-0.

20 cuts and 26 stitches later, Aarathy rises to win medal

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Things looked gloomy for Aarathy Kasturi Raj after a nasty fall in May that required 26 stitches to treat more than 20 cuts, including few deep ones on her forehead.

But, with her physician mother by her side, the Indian roller skater recovered in time to win a historic bronze medal at the Asian Games. Her goal achieved, Aarathy, who has completed her MBBS, will rejoin her mother in running the hospital they own.

Aarathy suffered the injury during training exactly four months before the start of the continental showpiece.

The 29-year-old said it was scary but she took the injury in her stride and recovered quickly after rehabilitation with her physician mother taking care of her.

"I had a scary incident on May 26 this year and I had 26 stitches. There were deep cuts on my forehead," Aarathy told PTI after playing a part in the bronze medal win in the women's 3000m team relay. "I started training on the bike, did rehab."

Daughter of a businessman



father C Kasturi Raj and gynaecologist mother Mala Raj in Chennai, Aarathy took to skating at the age of seven and after frequent falls, numerous bruises and bleeding, she is now an Asian Games medallist.

"It's a dream come true moment, I took to this sport at the age of seven and since then, it has been my passion."

"My parents wanted me to play some sport and my mom

was the one who was behind this," said Aarathy.

Having competed in several national and international events, Aarthy has won more than 100 medals. She was also ranked world number five.

Asked why she took up a sport which can injure her often, she said, "Every sport involves some risks of getting injured. It is part and parcel of sport."

Following in her mother's



Ghosal progresses, Joshna exits from Asian Games

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Star Indian squash player Joshna Chinappa made a shock exit from the women's singles event but veteran Sourav Ghosal sailed into the quarterfinals of men's singles at the Asian Games here on Monday.

Taking the court first, Chinappa lost 1-3 to lower-ranked Heo Mingyeong of South Korea in the pre-quarterfinals.

The 37-year-old, who received a first-round bye, went down 4-11, 12-10, 9-11, 8-11 in 37 minutes to the South Korean, ranked 158th, in the round of 16. The result is a major upset as Joshna was a medal favourite.

The Chennai player had won a singles bronze in the 2018 edition.

She also has two silver medals and as many bronze in team events at the Asian Games, including the one she picked up in this edition last week.

She has been hit by injuries recently and lack of game time has pushed Joshna to as low as 70 in the world rankings.

The other Indian in the fray, Tanvi Khanna progressed to the quarterfinals with an easy 11-1, 11-3, 11-2 win over Arichaya Chujit of Thailand.

The Indian mixed doubles pair of Anahat Singh and Abhay Singh continued its winning run to enhance its chances of making the quarterfinal.

The duo cruised to a 2-0 (11-5, 11-6) win over Thailand's Anantana Prasertatanakul and Arkaradet Arkarahirunya to stay on top in group D.

Aarthy, a doctor and wife of Indian cricketer Sandeep Warrier, said after the win.

Incidentally, Chinese Taipei (4:05.692) and South Korea (4:05.702) took the top-two spots in the men's event as well.

The Indian trio had clocked 4:15.126 in the heats and bettered it in the final.

"We were really hoping for a medal today, as we knew we were in the mix. Being with the Chinese Taipei and Republic of Korea guys is a really big thing for us, as they're the best in the world, and we are not at that

level yet. We're maybe among the top 15 athletes in the world," Kamble said.

The 24-year-old revealed that his wheel slipped in his second lap which slowed them a bit.

"We were still going to try and fight for silver in the relay, but in my second last lap, in one of the corners, my wheel slipped a little bit and a small gap grew between us and the other teams. After that, it was all about recovering."

For most of the Indian skaters it was a maiden Asian Games appearance.

Indian women's kabaddi team plays out 34-34 draw against Chinese Taipei



PTI ■ HANGZHOU

In an unexpected start to its campaign, the Indian women's kabaddi team was on Monday held to a surprise 34-34 draw by Chinese Taipei in a Group A match at the Asian Games here.

The Indians were made to work hard throughout the contest by their opponents, who earned a bonus point on the last raid of the match to force a draw.

The women side's next assignment will be against South Korea on Tuesday, while the men's team will take on Bangladesh in their Group A match.

India team official V. Tejaswini Bai attributed the draw to nervousness and asserted that her girls will win gold.

"Our team will fight and our team will win. Today we were a little bit nervous, but from now on we will be more relaxed and we will win. I believe and I hope we will win gold."

She added the Chinese Taipei team had improved over the years.

"They are a very good team and they have improved a lot. They are very focussed in kabaddi and I'm happy for that."

After seeing today's perfor-

mance, kabaddi aficionados would have been reminded of the shocking defeat the Indian women's team suffered at the hands of a gritty Iranian side in the gold medal match at the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games.

The Indian women's team did not have an ideal start today but recovered well to finish ahead at the end of the first half.

Defender Hsiu-Chen Feng troubled the Indians, who scripted a late recovery to finish 17-15 after the first half.

For India, Ritu Negi earned the first defensive point through an ankle hold, while Pooja Hathwala took the bonus point in the second half.

India managed to extend their lead by five points at 23-17 before grabbing a 26-20 lead at one stage, but thereafter the Chinese Taipei side came back roaring to level the scores.

Towards the end of the game, Nidhi claimed that she had a touch but the referees did not agree. Pooja then managed a raid point, which took the scoreline to 32-32.

India once again took the lead but the Chinese Taipei side kept coming back and walked off with a drawn result.

Kohli skips optional practice session due to personal reasons

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

India's star batter Virat Kohli didn't join the team's optional practice session here due to personal reasons but is expected to link up with the squad before the second warm-up game against The Netherlands here on Tuesday.

Kohli had left for Mumbai from Guwahati for some emergency personal reasons on September 30 and wasn't available for the afternoon training session at the local college ground here.

"It was an optional session. He is expected to join the squad soon and could play the warm-up game if required," a BCCI source privy to developments told PTI on condition of anonymity.

On the day, skipper Rohit Sharma, batter Shreyas Iyer and pacer Mohammed Shami also skipped the session which was attended by the likes of Shubman Gill, Suryakumar Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah and veteran spin duo Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja.



match against the Dutch will be the last chance for India to get some game time before the start of tournament proper against Australia in Chennai on October

8. The Indians had a full-fledged session with Gill, Surya and KL Rahul batting for a considerable amount of time against the likes of Bumrah and Mohammed

Siraj. Ashwin and Jadeja also rolled their arm over for considerable period of time as they both are going to play a massive

role in this World Cup on tracks which are expected to offer turn.

SURYA WILL BE IN MY XII, SAYS SHASTRI

The warm-up match could be also a chance for Suryakumar Yadav to press his case for a first XI berth ahead of Shreyas Iyer or Ishan Kishan.

"I will be watching him very closely," Ravi Shastri said on ESPN Cricinfo.

"If your top-order is firing, you will play him or Shreyas Iyer? If all guys get runs, that guy becomes X factor in big game. The damage he can do along with Hardik (Pandya), they can take the game away. In Indian conditions, your top order will rarely struggle. Surya will always be in my XII," Shastri said.

But Shastri believes that one should look at the conditions.

"If the track is flat, then it's Surya and if conditions are tough, then Shreyas," said the former head coach.

"Play him (Surya) before the semi-final not just in the semi-final."



Rachin: From cheering for NZ at bar in 2019 to being part of 2023 World Cup batch

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Rachin Ravindra found the night of July 14, 2019, one of the longest and hardest to endure as he watched New Zealand's heartbreaking defeat to England in the ODI World Cup final sitting in a Bengaluru pub.

Ravindra, then all of 19 was on an annual trip to India with his father's cricket club and the roller-coaster experience of watching the final is still etched in his memory.

New Zealand losing that final to England on the boundary count-back rule divides opinion to this day. Rachin, whose first name is inspired by the first names of Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid, remembers that night as it was yesterday.

As a budding cricketer dreaming to represent New Zealand one day, the Indian-origin cricketer was shattered with the outcome of the game and the desire to represent New Zealand grew stronger.

Cut to 2023, he is among the fast rising cricketers in the New Zealand set-up. Primarily a batter, who also takes his left-arm spin very seriously, Rachin has already made a statement with a gutsy 97 as an opener in the World Cup warm-up against Pakistan here last week.

Born to Indian parents in Wellington, Rachin has a strong connect with the cricket mad nation with his family roots in Bengaluru. It was fitting that he made his Test debut in India two years ago and now he is set to make his World Cup debut here.

"Looking back on my Test debut, it was a special and emotional time. Being able to play in India, the fanfare around the game here, to be able to experi-

ence that is pretty special.

"My parents come from Bangalore and it is amazing to play a World Cup here," the 23-year-old PTI referring to the Kanpur Test which he was able to draw for his team while batting alongside number 11 Ajaz Patel.

From watching previous World Cup as a fanboy to now being part of the next one, it has been a pretty "cool" journey for Rachin.

"It is actually quite a story. My dad takes a bunch of age group boys to India (annually) and we were in Bangalore on a senior trip. We were watching the final (2019) in a stock exchange bar.

"I watched the whole final. It was unbelievable and such a rollercoaster experience with the high and lows of the game.

Having Indian supporters around us was pretty cool. It is an experience I will never forget."

New Zealand is probably the most liked team on the planet but on that night, no pleasures were exchanged in that bar. A couple of days ago, New Zealand had ended India's run in the semifinals.

"All of us were New Zealanders, so we were massively going for the Black Caps but quite a few Indians were going for England, probably because of the emotional hangover from the semifinal.

"That created a nice little atmosphere there as we all know how the game went," recalled Rachin.

Did he think then that he will be part of the 2023 batch?

"It has been a great ride. You always think one day you might get a chance. Being a 19-year old at that time, few years into professional cricket, you have those dreams to be part of a World

Cup. It is pretty cool how it has come to fruition," he said.

Experience of cricket tours to India with my dad will come in hand

Rachin, who opens for Wellington back home but bats in the middle-order for New Zealand, feels the experience of playing age-group cricket around the country will help him in this World Cup as the team travels all around India for its nine league games.

"For sure. Any sort of experience playing in India goes a long way. Grateful for these tours of India in my younger days. Goes a long way in playing spin and how to bowl in these conditions, face different type of seamers on different wickets.

"The conditions over here are so different to what we get back home. I think it will definitely come in handy. Prior to this World Cup, I have played in Hyderabad, Chennai, Bangalore, up North.

"It gives you a bit of sense of belonging and calms you down knowing you have played here," said Rachin, whose father Ravi Krishnamurthy has been his coach since childhood.

Rachin might not get to open in the tournament proper like he did against Pakistan but he has already made a statement. However, he is fully aware of his role in the side.

"Naah (laughs)," he responded when asked about opening the innings regularly. "It was a nice wicket to bat on. To be fair I do open for my domestic side, have always been an opener so nice to get the opportunity for New Zealand. Whatever role I get hopefully I would be able to do it," he added.

South Africa lack good all-rounder at No 7, going into World Cup: Graeme



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

South Africa are lacking depth in their batting in the absence of quality all-rounders, an aspect that could affect the team's chances in the World Cup, reckons former skipper Graeme Smith.

There was a time when South Africa boasted of world class all-rounders like Lance Klusener, Jacques Kallis and even a bowling all-rounder like Shaun Pollock but Temba Bavuma's team doesn't have a quality batter at No. 7.

"Where they fall short is, they don't have a lot of depth in batting like some of the other teams have. Who is going to be that all-rounder for them at No.

7? Marco Jansen or someone else," Smith said during an exclusive interview with PTI.

For South Africa to succeed, left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj's control and wicket-taking ability will go a long way, in case Bavuma wants to leave an impression as a leader.

"Whether they go with two spinners or not but Keshav Maharaj needs to have an outstanding tournament. Obviously, he has Tabraiz Shamsi on his wings but reliability of Maharaj is key to Temba as a captain," said Smith, who scored nearly 7000 runs in ODIs.

The 42-year-old, who retired in 2014, is also hopeful that Kagiso Rabada will carry a lot on his shoulders in the

absence of Anrich Nortje and Sisanda Magala due to injuries.

"Rabada, we all know how world class he is and we would like him to have an incredible World Cup tournament. Always carries a lot on his shoulders and you need a couple of key players to play well and then push through knock-out of the tournament and give yourself good chances back-to-back to hold that trophy." Nortje's absence will hurt South Africa on those batting friendly tracks.

"I think Nortje in particular, to win in India in a long tournament, you need players who can contribute. Nortje's pace through the air, wicket-taking ability is certainly going to be missed."

The key to South African campaign will be the top six batters, he said. "If South Africa need to be successful, they would need their 6-7 big players to really have a great World Cup. If you look at top-order you have Quinton, Temba and in that middle-order, really you have really good players of spin, power players like David Miller, Heinrich Klassen and Aiden Markram that's going to be key area for South Africa if they are going to be successful."

Spain's women's team players Putellas, Rodríguez, Paredes appear before judge

AP N MADRID

Two-time Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas and two of her teammates in Spain's women's national team appeared before a judge Monday as witnesses in the investigation of former soccer federation president Luis Rubiales for his kiss on a player.

Putellas, Irene Paredes and Misa Rodríguez all answered questions from the judge in Madrid. Rodríguez appeared in court in the Spanish capital, while Putellas and Paredes testified through video conference from Barcelona.

Spanish state prosecutors have accused Rubiales of sexual assault and coercion on kissing Jenni Hermoso on the lips without her consent during the awards ceremony after the Women's World Cup final in August.

A couple of federation officials and former national team coach Jorge Vilda, who was replaced not long after winning the World Cup in Australia, have been summoned as investigated parties. They are set to appear



before the judge next week. Vilda was among those accused of allegedly trying to convince Hermoso to back Rubiales after the kiss.

Rubiales eventually resigned and the players ended their boycott of the national team after being given some guarantees of change within the federation. Some federation officials have already been fired as a result.

Hermoso is also expected to testify at some point.

According to a sexual consent law passed last year, Rubiales could face a fine or a prison sentence of one to four years if found guilty of sexual assault. The new law eliminated the difference between "sexual harassment" and "sexual assault," sanctioning any unsolicited sexual act.

Fenesta Open: Sureshkumar begins title defence with win over Kesharwani

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reigning men's singles champion Manish Sureshkumar of Tamil Nadu began his title defence at the Fenesta Open National Tennis Championship with a win over Uttar Pradesh's Maan Kesharwani here on Monday.

The No. 4 seed overcame an early challenge from Kesharwani to win 6-4 6-4 and advance to the second round at the DLTA Complex.

Kesharwani's shots from the baseline looked to disrupt the defending champion's rhythm but Sureshkumar was soon back in his groove, playing accurate forehands and backhands to win the match.

The No. 2 seed Karan Singh of Haryana also began the tour-



nament with a comfortable 6-4 6-2 win over Jagmeet Singh.

No. 7 seed Ishaque Eqbal of West Bengal defeated Gujarat's Dhruv Hirpara 6-2 3-6 6-1 to reach the second round. In women's singles, No.4 seed from Maharashtra, Vaishnavi Adkar made a positive start, defeating Sonal Patil 6-3 6-2.

No. 5 seed Sharmada Balu

also made a winning return to the Fenesta Open, defeating Telangana's Paavanii Paathak 6-2 4-6 6-1 to advance.

Sureshkumar said after the match that he was looking to defend his title this year.

"Last year was a good experience as I went on to win the tournament and I would like to continue the same. I played my

first match today and I was not feeling very sharp but as I play more matches here I will get into the groove, and hopefully, I will be able to repeat what I did last season," said Sureshkumar.

The Under-18 boys' category saw top seed Chandan Shivaraj of Karnataka defeat Tamil Nadu's Kavin Karthik KS 6-1 6-3, while Aditi Rawat of Haryana beat Swasti Singh 6-0 7-5 in Under-18 girl's section to move into the second round.

The Fenesta Open offers a prize pool of over Rs 21.5 lakh along with kit allowance for the junior categories.

Over the years, the tournament has witnessed the participation of players such as Rohan Bopanna, Somdev Devvarman, Yuki Bhambri, Sania Mirza and Rutuja Bhosale.

Liverpool says it will 'explore the range of options available' after VAR controversy at Tottenham

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Liverpool criticized the Professional Game Match Officials Limited and warned it will "explore the range of options available" following the VAR controversy at Tottenham.

PGMOL, the referees' governing body in England, admitted Video Assistant Referee officials Darren England and Dan Cook failed to act after Luis Diaz' 34th-minute strike at Tottenham on Saturday was wrongly disallowed for offside. Still images of the incident showed Tottenham's Cristian Romero playing Diaz inside.

The decision was made when the Premier League match was goalless but after Curtis Jones had been contentiously sent off following Darren England's intervention. Liverpool went on to lose 2-1, ending the game with nine players.

The officials were stood down from duty for the rest of the weekend but Liverpool says it will pursue the matter.



A statement read: "Liverpool Football Club acknowledges PGMOL's admission of their failures last night. It is clear that the correct application of the laws of the game did

not occur, resulting in sporting integrity being undermined. We fully accept the pressures that match officials work under but these pressures are supposed to be alleviated, not exacerbated, by the existence and implementation of VAR."

Liverpool said it was "therefore unsatisfactory that sufficient time was not afforded to allow the correct decision to be made and that there was no subsequent intervention."

"That such failings have already been categorized as significant human error' is also unacceptable," the club's statement added. "Any and all outcomes should be established only by the review and with full transparency."

Liverpool said it need to explore its options, "given the clear need for escalation and resolution."

PGMOL had earlier acknowledged that "a significant human error" occurred in the first half of the game and said it would conduct a full review.

Medvedev through to semifinals at China Open. Swiatek wins on debut in Beijing

AP ■ BEIJING

Third-ranked Daniil Medvedev overcame a second-set stumble to beat Frenchman Ugo Humbert 6-4, 3-6, 6-1 and advance to the semifinals of the China Open on Monday.

The Russian struggled to find his usual fluid game in the first two sets but sprung to life in the third set to shake off the 36th-ranked Humbert and progress to his 10th semifinal of the year. "I'm kind of happy that I managed to raise my level in important moments, except a game in the second set," Medvedev said. "It's great that I managed to still find in this tough match these moments of consistency, which is enough to win. That's what you have to do."

The Russian will next face either eighth-seeded Alexander Zverev or

Nicolas Jarry, who play later Monday. Second-ranked, and top-seeded, Carlos Alcaraz plays his quarterfinal match against seventh-seeded Casper Ruud in a night match.

Making her first appearance at the China Open, second-ranked Iga Swiatek advanced to the second round with a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Sara Sorribes Tormo. The Pole fired 27 winners and made 25 unforced errors, breaking serve a total of seven times in the win.

"You have to be patient with her because she's running for every ball," Swiatek said of her No.55-ranked Spanish opponent. "I kind of wanted to just be solid and be intensive but not make too many mistakes with risking."

Swiatek will next face Varvara Gracheva.

Seventh-seeded Ons Jabeur, winner



of the Ningbo Open last week, beat Ashlyn Krueger 6-3, 6-4 and ninth-seeded Caroline Garcia was a 6-2, 6-4 winner over Kateryna Baindl.

China's Wang Xinyu beat wildcard Vera Zvonareva 6-4, 6-3 and 11th-seeded Daria Kasatkina defeated Mayar Sherif 1-6, 6-4, 7-6 (8).

Third-ranked Coco Gauff plays her first-round match later Monday against No.20-ranked Ekaterina Alexandrova.

Jelena Ostapenko, seeded-13th, had a walkover into the round-of-16 after Linda Noskova withdrew due to illness. Ostapenko will face either fourth-seeded Jessica Pegula or Anna Blinkova next.

Also in the second-round, Anhelina Kalinina defeated Daria Saville 6-2, 7-6 (5) and Jasmine Paolini beat Yuan Yue 2-6, 6-3, 6-4.