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BREAK THE AGNIVEER
LOGJAM WITH NEPAL

WORLD 8
SL PRESIDENT REJECTS INTERNATIONAL
PROBE INTO EASTER BOMBINGS

MONEY 10
INDIA'S GDP TO GROW AT 6.3 PER
CENT IN FY24: WORLD BANK

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 4, 2023; PAGES 12 3

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SINDHU ENTERS
PRE-QUARTERS
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INDIA CUTS CANADA DOWN TO SIZE

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
 NEW DELHI

Amid continuing diplomatic stand-off between the two countries, India has reportedly asked Canada to withdraw nearly 40 of its diplomats from India and set the deadline as October 10. Canada has 62 diplomats in India at present. The ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of designated Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. India rejected the allegations as "absurd" and "motivated" and expelled a senior Canadian diplomat in a tit-for-tat move to Ottawa's expulsion of an Indian official over the case. Nijjar, the chief of the banned Khalistani Tiger Force, was shot dead by two masked gunmen outside a gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia, Canada on June 18. Trudeau on Tuesday said Canada was not looking to "escalate" the situation with India amid the diplomatic row between the two countries over the killing of a Khalistani terrorist and asserted that his government will continue to have "constructive relations" with New Delhi. Speaking to reporters in Ottawa, Trudeau also said that it is important for Canada to have diplomats on the ground in India, amid a report by London-based Financial Times that New Delhi wants as many



as 41 of 62 remaining Canadian diplomats out of the country, the Toronto Sun newspaper reported. "Obviously, we are going through an extremely challenging time with India right now," Trudeau was quoted as saying by the Canadian newspaper. He, however, did not confirm the media report that India has asked Canada to withdraw 41 of 62 diplomats from the country. Meanwhile, Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly told reporters in Ottawa that the government believes in having a "strong diplomatic footprint" in India. "We are in contact with the government of India. We take Canadian diplomats' safety very seriously, and we will continue to engage privately because we think that diplomatic conversations are best when they remain private," she said. "In moments of tensions — because indeed there are ten-

sions between both our governments more than ever — it is important that diplomats be on the ground, and that is why we believe in the importance of having a strong diplomatic footprint in India," she was quoted as saying by Global News. On September 21, India asked Canada to downsize its diplomatic presence in the country. Announcing the measure, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi had said the size of Canadian diplomatic staff in India is larger than what New Delhi has in Canada and that there should be a "parity in strength and rank equivalence" in the mutual presence. "We have informed the Canadian government that there should be parity in strength and rank equivalence in our mutual diplomatic presence. Their numbers here are very much higher than ours in Canada. The details of this are being worked out," Bagchi had said. India also announced tem-

India fetches first Gold in Women's Javelin

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Annu Rani rose from the ashes to win a javelin gold, while Parul Chaudhary pulled off a heist to claim the top prize in women's 5000m as Indian athletes bagged six medals from track and field at the Asian Games, here on Tuesday. With two gold, two silver and two bronze, India's medal tally from athletics rose to 22 (4 gold, 10 silver, 8 bronze), surpassing the 20 medals that the country had achieved in the 2018 edition. This has become the highest number of medals in athletics after the 34 won in the inaugural edition in 1951. The 31-year-old Annu, who has been in awful form the whole season, produced a season-best effort of 62.92m in her fourth attempt to become the first Indian woman to win an Asian Games gold in javelin throw. This was her second Asiad medal as she had won a bronze in the 2014 edition. For India, Barbara Webster (bronze in 1951), Elizabeth Davenport (bronze in 1962) and Gurmeet Kaur (bronze in 1998) have earlier won Asian Games medals in the competition. Annu said, "I was trying the whole year and I was not able to give my best. I was feeling depressed and under pressure because the government spent a lot of money sending me abroad for training. This was my last competition of the season and I did not give up. I was determined to give my best."



India's gold medalist Annu Rani poses with the medal during the presentation ceremony of the Women's Javelin Throw Final event at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou on Tuesday



She revealed that she was on the verge of quitting after a series of poor shows but decided against it to give herself a chance. "There were expectations of the family and the country. I was not able to give my best. The whole season was

not going well. In between I was even doing throws of 54m and I thought if I was doing so bad, I would quit. But I told myself that I will not give up so soon and fight till the end." The Uttar Pradesh athlete's earlier best this season was 59.24m which fetched her a gold at the Federation Cup in May. She has been under tremendous pressure after a string of poor shows. She has a personal best of 63.82m, which is the national record. *Continued on Page 2*



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during 'sewa' at Gurudwara Sri Harmandir Sahib (the Golden Temple) in Amritsar on Tuesday

Unease in Congress over Rahul's 'jitni abaadi, utna haq'

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■
 NEW DELHI

A difference of opinion has arisen within the Congress over Rahul Gandhi's support for a caste census, in line with his motto "jitni abaadi, utna haq" (rights proportionate to the population). The party's national spokesperson and a member of the Rajya Sabha, Abhishek Manu Singhvi, initially opposed the Congress' stance on caste census, especially Rahul's position. Later, he deleted his social media post under "party pressure" and issued a statement justifying his party's position. Congress chief spokesperson Jairam Ramesh issued a rebuttal on social media platforms in response to Singhvi's post. He said the Congress firmly supports its Raipur declaration and emphasised that Singhvi's views on caste census were his personal opinions and did not represent the official stance of the Congress or that matter INDIA bloc. Singhvi created a flutter by saying "it will eventually culminate into majoritarianism", a remark he later retracted from social media, attributing it to an error made by his staff. Singhvi also later said he supports caste census on the basis of which rights would be

determined proportionately. As the findings of the Bihar caste census were released on Monday, Rahul batted for a national caste census with a pitch for "jitni abaadi, utna haq". Asked about Singhvi's views, AICC OBC department head Ajay Yadav said, "What Singhvi has said is not the party line. I will not answer to someone who says something different from the party line. Our line is that the poor, deprived and Bahujan Samaj should be given economic and social benefits." Rahul said the caste census of Bihar has proved that 84 per cent of people in the State are OBCs, SCs and STs and their rights should be according to their population. The Nitish Kumar Government in Bihar of which the Congress is a stakeholder has released findings of a caste survey which revealed that OBCs and EBCs constitute a whopping 63 per cent of the State's total population. "Equality of opportunity is never the same as equality of outcomes. People endorsing #jitniabaadiutnaahaq have to first completely understand the consequences of it. It will eventually culminate into majoritarianism," Singhvi earlier said on X. *Continued on Page 2*

Congress trying to snatch rights of Muslims: PM Modi

PTI ■ JAGDALPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday slammed the Congress over its pitch for a nationwide caste census and accused the grand old party of trying to divide Hindus, and sought to know if it wants to curtail the rights of Muslims by advocating population-based distribution of resources. Modi said for him the poor formed the biggest chunk of population in the country and they should have the first right over resources irrespective of which caste or community they belong to, and accused the Congress of dividing society on caste lines for vote bank politics. The PM's statements came a day after the Nitish Kumar Government released a caste survey, which revealed OBCs and EBCs constitute a whopping 63 per cent of Bihar's total population. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, whose party is a constituent of the ruling bloc in the northern State, hailed the Bihar caste survey, saying the country needs a caste-based census to give people their rights as per their proportion in population. Addressing the "Parivartan Mahasankalp" rally of the BJP at Jagdalpur, the headquarters of Bastar district in poll-bound Chhattisgarh, Modi alleged the Congress has entered into a



Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves at supporters as he arrives for an event organised for laying of foundation stone of various developmental projects, in Nizamabad on Tuesday

"secret pact" with a foreign country and takes pleasure in speaking against India, and asked people to remain alert. "Since yesterday (Monday), the Congress has started speaking in a different tune. Congress leaders say the 'abaadi' (population) of people will decide the rights (on resources), but for Modi, poor people are the biggest 'abaadi' of the country and they have the first right over resources. Welfare of the poor is my aim," he said. The BJP's star campaigner referred

to a 2006 statement of then-Prime Minister Manmohan Singh advocating that plans for minorities, particularly Muslims, must have the "first claim" on resources. "I was wondering what former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh ji was thinking? Manmohan Singh ji used to say minorities have the first right over resources of the country and that too the Muslims. But now the Congress is saying proportion in population will decide who

will get how much share of rights. Does it mean they want to curtail the rights of Muslims?" he asked. "Whose population is more? Modi asked, and said will it be possible to ensure distribution of the rights according to social groups' share in demographic mix. 'If they want to divide the rights on the basis of population, then who will have the first right (over resources)? Whose population is more? Congress leaders should clarify whether the rights will be

given according to share in population. Whether the Congress wants to take away the rights of minorities? Should Hindus, who have the biggest population in the country, come forward and claim all the rights?" he said. Attacking the Mallikarjun Kharge-led party, the PM said the national outfit wants to destroy India by dividing the Hindus. "I have been saying for a long time that the Congress is no longer being run by Congress people. Big leaders of the Congress are sitting with their mouths shut. Now those people are running the Congress from behind the curtain who are in nexus with anti-national forces. The Congress wants to destroy India by dividing the Hindus at any cost and wants to divide the poor also. For me, the poor are the biggest community in the country. Welfare of the poor means welfare of the country," he said.

Continuing his attack on the Congress, a key constituent of the opposition INDIA bloc, the PM said the 138-year-old party takes pleasure in speaking against the country. "What secret pact the Congress has entered into with some other country it has not disclosed so far. But people are watching that the Congress takes pleasure in speaking against India. It presents the good things of India in a bad light and enjoys it. It seems their love for the country has declined," he said and asked people to remain alert of them. The poor of India have the first right on its resources, whether they are Dalits, tribals or are from backward classes or general category, said the Prime Minister. "The Congress has only given poverty to the country and divided society on caste lines to secure its vote bank. It has been indulging in the same act today, too. They have been putting behind bars those who have been raising their voices for their rights in Chhattisgarh. On the other hand, the BJP is dedicated towards social justice," he stated. Targeting the Congress government in Chhattisgarh, Modi said, "Sometimes it seems there is a competition between Rajasthan (also ruled by Congress) and Chhattisgarh as to where the maximum number of crimes takes place. Development in Chhattisgarh is only visible either in posts and banners or in the coffers of Congress leaders," he said. Modi said the Congress has a track record of looting natural resources of Chhattisgarh and vowed he will not allow the ruling party to usurp the Nagarnar steel plant located in Jagdalpur.

Indian vaccine to eradicate malaria from world

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Within the past two years, the world has witnessed the development of a second low-cost and highly effective malaria vaccine known as R21/Matrix-M, particularly made for children. This news is heartening, considering the devastating impact of vector-borne malaria as every minute, a child somewhere on the planet succumbs to this disease. Developed in a joint collaboration with Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII), a largest vaccine manufacturer in the world, and the University of Oxford in the UK, the newly approved vaccine will cost less than \$4, cheaper than the current options available.

"As a malaria researcher, I used to dream of the day we would have a safe and effective vaccine against malaria. Now we have two," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director General, after making an announcement that the global health agency has recommended the R21/Matrix-M malaria vaccine which can be developed on a mass scale. There is already an agreement in place to manufacture over 100 million doses annually, with the SII committing to doubling this production within the next two years. Such a substantial scale of production is crucial because it will play a pivotal role in vaccinating individuals at high risk of malaria, thereby helping to curb the disease's transmis-



sion and ensuring the protection of those who are vaccinated. The RTS S/AS01 vaccine developed by the GSK became the first jab against the mosquito-borne disease to receive a WHO nod in 2021 when the world reported approximately 247 million cases and 6,19,000 mortalities worldwide. The WHO's independent advisory body, the Strategic

Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) and the Malaria Policy Advisory Group (MPAG), recommended the use of the vaccine after reviewing its safety, quality and effectiveness standards last month. Their recommendation was based on pre-clinical and clinical trial data which showed good safety and high efficacy in four countries, at sites with both seasonal and perennial malaria transmission. "Demand for the RTS, S vaccine far exceeds supply, so this second vaccine is a vital additional tool to protect more children faster, and to bring us closer to our vision of a malaria-free future," said the WHO Director General. Reacting to the development, Soumya Swaminathan,

WHO's chief scientist, posted on social media, "Great news that a second malaria vaccine is recommended by WHO to be manufactured in India. Will definitely help in malaria control and ultimately elimination." RBM Partnership to end malaria echoed similar views, applauding the development. "...There is no silver bullet to end malaria, but when scaled up alongside existing malaria tools, R21 saves lives," it posted on X media. The R21/Matrix-MTM malaria vaccine has been licensed for use in Ghana, Nigeria and Burkina Faso. In combination with public health measures such as the use of insecticide-treated bed nets, the new shot can help save and improve the lives of millions of

children and their families from the scourge of malaria. In areas with highly seasonal malaria transmission (where malaria transmission is largely limited to 4 or 5 months per year), the R21 vaccine was shown to reduce symptomatic cases of malaria by 75 per cent during the 12 months following a 3-dose series. A fourth dose given a year after the third maintained efficacy. This high efficacy is similar to the efficacy demonstrated when RTS,S is given seasonally. The vaccine also showed good efficacy (66 per cent) during the 12 months following the first 3 doses. A fourth dose a year after the third maintained efficacy. *Continued on Page 2*

Court vacates direction on continuation of Fellows' services

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday vacated its interim direction for continuation of services of professionals engaged as fellows with the Delhi Assembly Research Centre whose contracts were terminated by the Assembly Secretariat.

Justice Subramonium Prasad of the Delhi High Court observed that the Supreme Court had earlier chosen not to stay the letter terminating the services of the Fellows. Therefore, the High Court should not have passed any interim order which effectively stayed the order of the Delhi

Legislative Assembly Secretariat, Justice Prasad said.

The court's order came on an application by the Legislative Assembly Secretariat and other authorities seeking vacation of the interim order of stay passed on September 21 on the ground that the issue is pending before the apex court.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva has welcomed the decision of the court order of stay in the matter of appointment of fellows in Delhi government.

He said Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal should own moral responsibility in the illegal fellowship matter and resign.

In the order, Justice Prasad

noted that the July 5 letter was "specifically challenged" by the Delhi government before the Supreme Court as part of its petition against the Centre's ordinance which took away the control over services from the city dispensation, and the petitioner's contention that the high court can look into the issue since no order has been passed by the top court cannot be sustained.

"In the Order dated 20.07.2023 the Apex Court chose not to stay the letter dated 05.07.2023. The contention of the learned Counsel for the Petitioner that since the Apex Court has not passed any order in the I.A.



No.13505/2023 (against the July letter), it is open for this Court to consider the same, cannot be sustained," the court observed.

The court recorded it was specifically argued before the apex court that the lieutenant governor has terminated the contract of 437 consultants

engaged with statutory bodies under the Delhi Government or with the Delhi legislative assembly.

On September 21, the court had, on a petition by several terminated fellows, directed that their services with the Delhi Assembly Research Centre shall continue till

December 6 and stipends will be paid to them.

The counsel for the petitioners had earlier contended that the services of the fellows, who were appointed after following due procedure, were terminated prematurely in an unceremonious, arbitrary and illegal manner in the aftermath of a letter issued by the services department on July 5.

According to sources, Fellows and Associate Fellows were appointed in the Delhi Legislative Assembly and other departments and organizations of Delhi Government, in gross violation of constitutional provisions of Reservation. Rights of marginalised community

(SC / ST) had been set-aside while making engagements of such Fellows and Associate Fellows.

Even engagements of such Fellows and Associate Fellows were made without approval of the Lt Governor.

This case is an example as to how the public interest is being defeated by the Delhi Legislative Assembly by first engaging private persons violating Constitutional Rights of Reservation of the marginalised community (SCs and STs). Then Minister (Services) / Delhi Legislative Assembly filed applications, and appointing Senior Advocates to make statements before Courts to

allow continuation of such gross illegalities by shaking hands with the Fellows and Associate Fellows (i.e. petitioners) thus acting against the public interest.

"The Legislative Assembly has also appointed certain political workers like Ratnesh Gupta (Prabhari of Aam Aadmi Party in Himachal Pradesh & Madhya Pradesh), volunteers of Aam Aadmi Party on pay and perks disproportionate to regular employees. Some of the volunteers are allegedly issuing directions to the Senior Officers of the Department (example of Ankit Srivastava of DJB)," sources said.

People rush to street as tremors jolt Delhi, NCR

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Strong earthquake tremors jolted parts of Delhi-National Capital Region on Tuesday. According to initial assessments by the National Centre for Seismology the depth of the earthquake is 5 km and magnitude is 6.2.

People in Delhi and the National Capital Region reported strong tremors after the second quake and rushed out of their offices and high-rise residential buildings. No loss of life or property has been reported in the national capital. The Delhi Police also urged them not to panic.



The first quake of magnitude 4.6 hit Nepal at a depth of 10 km at 2:25 pm. A stronger quake — magnitude 6.2 — jolted the Himalayan nation at 2:51 pm, a National Centre for Seismology (NCS) official said. Two more quakes (magnitude 3.6 and 3.1) hit the same region at a depth of 15 km and 10 km at 3:06 pm and 3:19 pm, respectively.

News channels aired visuals of shaking ceiling fans and TV screens. Social media was also flooded with such visuals.

In a video shared by DD News on X, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya and a group of officials were standing in the Nirman Bhawan building complex after the tremors were felt.

The Nirman Bhawan houses offices of the health ministry and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, among other important offices.

People also shared videos of employees of offices in Gurugram rushing downstairs after the tremors were felt in Delhi-NCR. Taking to X, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said in Hindi, "Strong earth-

City Government not paying compensation to farmers: LoP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri claimed on Tuesday that despite the Supreme Court's orders, the Delhi Government is not paying the pending compensation of 130 crores to approximately 150 farmers in Jasola and Madanpur villages.

Alleging this, he also said the government even argued in court that they did not have the money in the account of the ADM/Land Execution Collector (LSC).

Looking at the government's attitude, the court issued an order to seize the immovable property of the ADM office.

The court has taken a firm stance, stating that this decision cannot be appealed, and no stay can be issued on it.

Delhi BJP's chief spokesperson and MLA Abhay Verma said the 76 acres of land in Jassola village was acquired in 1986-87.

This land was acquired to extend 13-A Mathura Road to



Kalindi Kunj.

This land belonged to about 150 farmers, and they were supposed to receive 130 crores as compensation from the Delhi Government.

However, the government has not made this payment. The matter was taken to the Supreme Court, and even the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the farmers, ordering the government to pay the compensation on April 20, 2022.

Bidhuri revealed that when the compensation was not paid, the Saket Court issued an order on July 26, 2023, to attach the immovable property of the

ADM/Land Execution Collector (LSC).

Bidhuri criticized the Kejriwal government, accusing them of hypocrisy for claiming that they are increasing farmers' compensation while refusing to pay and going to the extent of saying they don't have the money in their accounts.

On one hand, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Cabinet members claim that the Government has no shortage of funds, and on the other hand, farmers' rights are being denied, and the compensation for their land is not being paid, the BJP leader claimed.

Warm weather pushes power demand to record high in September

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

An "exceptionally" warm September this year saw a record-breaking power demand in Delhi. The peak power demand of the city exceeded the September 2022 levels on 80 per cent of the corresponding days, according to State Load Dispatch Centre (SLDC) data.

In fact, Delhi's peak power demand clocked 6,993 megawatts (MW) on September 5, 2023, the highest ever for the month of September, the officials said. Last year in September, the highest peak demand was 6,687 MW.

"Delhi's unusually hot weather was reflected in the city's peak power demand, which remained consistently high in comparison to the similar period last year for the last couple of months," an official said. The lowest peak power demand in September 2023 was 4,536 MW on Sep-10 on account of heavy-rains and it

was just once that the city's peak power demand fell below 5000 MW during the month. As opposed to this, on nine occasions or one-third of the time in September 2023, Delhi's peak power demand fell below the 5000 MW, clocking 4028 MW on September 25.

August too witnessed a similar trend and except for one day, Delhi's peak power demand surpassed August 2022 levels every day, the official added. According to the SLDC data, in fact, Delhi's peak power demand clocked the season's high of 7438 MW on August 22, 2023. Since 2012, Delhi's peak power demand has always clocked the season's highest in June and July. Moreover, Delhi's peak power demand has never crossed the 7000 MW in August. This time, crossed the 7000 MW on 4 occasions.

A BSES spokesperson said next-generation technologies like SCADA enable the dis-coms BRPL and BYPL to ensure reliable supply.

Powering A New Growth Story

“ I am delighted to share that, in FY 23 we have delivered the highest ever net profit of ₹11,605 crore, up 16% from the previous fiscal. We registered double-digit growth of 13% in our loan asset book. Continuing with our commitment to maximize shareholders return, we have declared a dividend of ₹13.25 per share which equates to an impressive 132.5% on the share face value. ”

Chairman Speech at 37th Annual General Meeting held on 12th September, 2023

Parminder Chopra
Chairman & Managing Director

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the 37th Annual General Meeting of your company. Let me begin by congratulating you for yet another year of stellar financial performance by your Company.

Operational & Financial Performance

The year 2022-23 was the year of resurgence for PFC, as we emerged from the adverse impact of COVID and achieved impressive growth along with outstanding financial performance.

I am delighted to share that, in FY 23 we have delivered the highest ever net profit of ₹11,605 crore, up 16% from the previous fiscal. This is the third consecutive year in which we are setting a new record for the highest annual profit. We registered double-digit growth of 13% in our loan asset book. As a result, loan asset portfolio surpassed the ₹4 lakh crore mark and stood at ₹4,22,498 crore as on 31.03.2023. We have also achieved an all-time high loan sanctions of ₹2,32 lakh crore and disbursed ₹85,756 crore during the year, underscoring our role as the principal lender to the Indian power sector. On the asset quality front also, significant strides have been made in reducing Non-Performing Assets, resulting in the NPA ratios dipping to their lowest levels in the past seven years. In the fiscal year 2023, the Net NPA ratio stood at 1.07%. Coupled with strong growth, consistent profits and stable asset quality, we continued to have a robust net worth of ₹68,202 crore. Continuing with our commitment to maximize shareholders return, we have declared a dividend of ₹13.25 per share, which equates to impressive 132.5% on the share face value.

Macro-economic scenario & Power Sector Outlook

The global macroeconomic scenario in FY 2022-23 has been challenging, but India has been one of the few bright spots, with the economy continuing to grow at a robust pace, supported by healthy domestic demand and prudent monetary policy. This favourable economic environment is set to benefit the Power Sector's growth. Untapped demand potential is significant, driven by India's vast population of nearly 1.44 billion. The Government's "Make in India" initiative and the Production-Linked Incentive scheme are expected to further boost demand. Projections indicate a 7.18% Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) in India's electricity consumption until 2027.

POWER FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Maharatna Company)

Smt. Parminder Chopra, CMD, Sri Rajy Rajang Jha, Director (Projects) & Sri Manoj Sharma, Director (Commercial) during the AGM opening ceremony with companies in clean energy space at an event on the sidelines of G20 event in Goa.

To address this growing demand, additional capacity would be needed. Government plans to double the installed capacity, with addition of around 500 GW of capacity by 2032, with 87% from non-fossil fuel sources and 13% from fossil fuels, requiring an

emerges as pivotal, with its transformation deeply impacting society. Recognizing this, the Indian government has unveiled the "Panchamrit" agenda, aiming for a non-fossil energy capacity of 500GW by 2030, a billion-ton carbon reduction, a 45% emission intensity decrease by 2030, and net-zero emissions by 2070.

PFC is fully committed to the Government's vision for a Greener India. Today PFC is India's largest renewable financier, supporting almost a fifth of the India's renewable energy capacity.

In the pursuit of India's net-zero objective, in financial year 2023, PFC has achieved significant milestones in promoting clean energy transition. Notably, PFC has sanctioned loan of ₹633 crore to Blu Smart for the purchase of 5000 passenger Electric Vehicles (EVs). This move is expected to lead to emission savings exceeding 100,000 tons of CO2 equivalent. To put this into perspective, it's equivalent to the CO2 absorption capacity of over 5 million fully-grown trees in a year. This transaction also marks the largest E-vehicle asset finance initiative in India, poised to greatly enhance the adoption of clean energy alternatives. Further, PFC's funding of ₹6,112 crore to refinance 1,227 MW solar and wind projects of JSW Energy Group underscores its commitment to sustainable energy. In alignment with Govt. initiative for making urban India "Garbage Free", PFC has cumulatively sanctioned waste to energy projects worth ₹1,600 crore with a combined capacity of 192 MW.

Smt. Parminder Chopra, CMD receiving "Swachhita Pakhwara Award 2022" from Sri Pankaj Agarwal, Secretary (Power), Government of India. The award was conferred to PFC for its exemplary performance under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

Our commitment to making a sustainable future is strong, and we are taking big steps forward. In the current FY 24, PFC is steadfastly working to institute a well-structured approach to our ESG practices, seamlessly integrating Environmental, Social, and Governance principles into our operations. In this direction, PFC has already taken tangible actions to integrate ESG into our business. Recently, we have a focused approach towards ESG, a dedicated Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) unit has been established. This centralized ESG unit will work in close collaboration with various stakeholders to chart the ESG course for PFC.

These endeavours constitute a few immediate steps we have taken towards ESG integration. Our promise is to keep lending

Renewed Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS)

Your company has been designated by the Government of India as the nodal agency for the implementation Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS)

RDSS has an outlay of ₹3,03,758 crore covering Smart metering and infrastructure works, with an estimated Government grant of ₹97,631 crore. The objective of the scheme is to reduce AT&C losses to pan-India levels of 12-15% by 2024-25 and reduction of ACS-ARR gap to zero by 2024-25.

The funding under the scheme will be from the govt. grants, and balance will be counterpart funding from PFC or our subsidiary REC or State's own equity for infrastructure works.

Corporate Governance & Social Responsibility

At PFC, we are committed to upholding the highest standards of transparency, accountability, and disclosure. As a publicly listed company, we adhere to a comprehensive framework of corporate governance frameworks and policies such as the Companies Act, 2013; SEBI's Listing Obligations & Disclosure Requirements Regulations, DPE Guidelines etc. We also have various risk management Committees at Board level & senior management levels which oversees the key functions of our company and provide strategic directions in each area.

This ensures that every aspect of our work is guided by principles that promote integrity, fairness, and responsible conduct.

Acknowledgement

Before I conclude, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to our shareholders who have reposed faith in us. I am grateful to the Hon'ble Union Minister of Power, New and Renewable Energy, Hon'ble Minister of State for Power and the officials of Ministry of Power for their support and guidance. I also thank the Board of Directors for their valuable guidance, our client utilities, employees, various ministries, investors, auditors, regulators and other stakeholders of PFC for their continued support.

Thank you, and let us make Power Finance Corporation's journey ahead even more remarkable.

(Parminder Chopra)
Chairman & Managing Director

Place : New Delhi
Date : 12.09.2023

(This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting held on 12th September, 2023. For full text, please visit www.pfcindia.com)

PFC's Future Business Thrust Areas

We will continue to increase our financing in our traditional business areas of generation and T&D space. This will be further complemented with infrastructure financing. In addition to these areas, our financing endeavours will also be closely aligned with the government's goals and vision for the power sector particularly in clean energy space and RDSS.

Renewable & emerging technologies in clean energy space.

In order to achieve India's energy transition targets, the share of renewable energy in the energy mix, which is presently about 27%, will have to reach 50% by 2030. This requires quadrupling of the present solar and wind generation capacity. We would also have to add about 10 GW of pumped storage capacity and over 100 GWh of battery storage in order to meet the energy balancing needs. Commensurate equipment manufacturing capacity and evacuation infrastructure also need to be in place.

Given the huge investment required for decarbonisation of our economy, funding of energy transition related projects will be PFC's mainstay for the foreseeable future. PFC is focused on funding entire value chain of energy transition. In addition to the traditional solar/wind projects, we are also exploring bankable projects in the fields of renewable equipment manufacturing, energy storage, green evacuation corridors and electric mobility, green hydrogen and ammonia production and manufacturing of electric vehicles.

(A Maharatna Company)

POWER FINANCE CORPORATION LTD.
(A Government of India Undertaking)

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Incessant rain paralyzes life



Children enjoying incessant rain in Varanasi on Tuesday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The incessant rain for the last 24 hours in this month of October has changed the weather conditions. Though the intensity of the rain was not very high, it has, definitely, paralysed normal life badly. It was the second consecutive day when due to continuous rains, not only the normal life was affected badly but it also caused frequent disruption in power supply. Most of the markets, internationally famous 88-odd Ganga ghats and other places wore a deserted look, though generally the city witnesses frequent traffic jams.

However, as the intensity of the rain was not high it rarely caused big water-logging in

even low-lying areas but at several places, it damaged the roads as well as water-logging was seen due to choked sewer and drainage lines, exposing the tall claims of the Nagar Nigam. Even in the surrounding areas of Nagar Nigam building such road side water-logging was seen and as construction work was going on at nearby Sampurnanand Sports Stadium, the road condition there was in a pathetic shape.

According to the Middle Ganga Division-III of Centre Water Commission (CWC), during the last 24 hours till 8 am on Tuesday, Varanasi received 47.4 mm rains, while in comparison to the city, there was heavy rain in Jaunpur which received 66.8 mm rain. Besides, there was 35.8 mm

rain in Ghazipur and 50 mm in Chunar in Mirzapur district in nearby areas of this belt of Purvanchal (eastern UP). Though the rain has increased the misery of the residents of the city areas, it has brought happiness on the faces of farmers, especially paddy growers of adjoining districts known as 'Rice Bowl'.

Besides, the rain disrupted the power supply in many areas frequently as the repair of faults in continuous rains was not easy. The rain also affected some flight services as per the report from Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport, Babatpur as AI-406 from Delhi, AI-695 and QP-1418 both from Mumbai were delayed and UK-621 from Mumbai also arrived late. Rain also

affected train and road transportation as due to slippery conditions at some places, it has slowed down the speed of four-wheelers. Though as the Pitra Paksh is going on and during this period the city has witnessed heavy rush of people to pay pind-daans and offer rituals for the peace of the souls of their forefathers, the ghats wore a deserted look. However, the rush was as usual at mythological Pichas Mochan pond where the people offer pindaan of those family members who met unnatural or untimely deaths. Besides, the rain and changes in weather conditions have increased the possibilities of mosquito menace as the cases of viral fever, dengue etc have increased alarmingly in the city.

Dy CM Maurya inspects work in Shringverpur Dham

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Muslim colony located near Shringverpur Dham here will be relocated somewhere else. For this Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya has directed SDM Soran.

Maurya had come to inspect the work being done in Shringverpur Dham. He instructed to displace the Muslim colony located near the dham.

He asked the officials to coordinate with the people of the Muslim colony and relocate them from here to another place.

Prasad said Prime Minister Narendra Modi can also come to inaugurate the park of this Shringverpur Dham.

Prasad said the resolution taken in 2014 is being realised here today. He said Shringverpur has now become a world pilgrimage.

He said just as Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati meet at Sangam, in the same way Nishadraj and Lord Shri Ram are meeting here too which is giving the message of harmony to the entire country.

During the inspection Maurya said he took complete information about the project from the project manager.

DRIVER HURT AS BUS FALLS INTO DITCH: A driver suffered serious injuries when the bus he was driving went out of control and fell into a ditch on the side of the highway and was completely damaged after hitting a tree on the Balipur national highway in the Uttaraon police station area here on Tuesday.

On being informed the Uttaraon police reached the spot and with the help of an ambulance sent the injured driver to the district hospital for treatment where his condition is said to be critical.

According to information driver Mohammad Monu, of

Lala Bazaar, Handia town, was going towards Prayagraj when as soon as he reached the new vegetable market near Balipur market, the bus slipped due to rain and entered a ditch on the side of the national highway and hit the tree. The driver was trapped inside the bus.

The Uttaraon police reached the spot and took out the injured bus driver with the help of JCB and sent him to the district hospital.

The family members of the bus driver have been informed. After the incident, a huge crowd of local people gathered at the spot.

100 electric buses to run before Mahakumbh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Ahead of Mahakumbh 2025, a total of 100 electric buses will run on the roads of Sangam city. The authorities of UP State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) and the district administration have started conducting the route survey on which these buses will run.

Sources informed that these buses will run on 24 routes in the first phase. These 24 routes have been proposed in the board meeting chaired by the divisional commissioner. After the proposal is officially approved, the list of these routes will be sent to the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Presently 50 e-buses are plying on different routes of the city and 50 more such buses will be arriving by February end next year. Decision on creation of new charging points, maintenance of buses and development of basic facilities will also be taken in the board meeting.

The city will also have a state-of-the-art charging station at Naini. Officials have identified the land for the construction of this proposed depot. As per the plans, Prayagraj will get 100 new e-buses by February 2024 paving the way for every key route being connected through this service.

Recently Additional Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Surendra Kumar Bagde, visited the site

identified for the proposed e-bus depot. This site is quite close to the present charging station that caters to the 50 e-buses plying on the roads of the Sangam city.

HOSPITALS ASKED TO 'RESERVE' 200 BEDS: The district administration has directed all government and private hospitals to keep at least 200 beds as 'reserved' for October 8 - when the grand Air Force flypast will take place in Sangam city. Besides 50 units of blood each (of all blood groups) has to be kept as reserve in AMA Blood Bank, ANHA and SRN blood banks along with 20 unit blood each in Beli and Colvin blood banks. The hospitals have also been asked to ensure that ICU, ventilator and other resources are

fully functional and made available in case of an exigency.

A team of Health department and that of India Air Force (IAF), led by Wing Commander Anil Kumar, visited different hospitals of the city, including Tej Bahadur Sapru Hospital, Motilal Nehru Divisional Hospital, Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital, District Women's Hospital and inquired about arrangements.

The authorities said since a large number of citizens, including VVIPs, will be in the city during the air show and there should be no laxity in preparations. Chief medical officer (CMO) Dr Ashu Pandey has instructed small hospitals to keep five beds reserved in ICUs while big ones have been asked to spare seven beds.

State team visits hospitals to see fever patients

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Astate level three-member team visited various hospitals of the district during the last two days to assess the condition of fever patients. The team included Dr KN Tiwari, Director (Communicable Diseases), Dr Vikasendu Agrawal, State Surveillance Officer and Dr Pankaj Guma, physician, Lokbandhu Rajbandhu Hospital, Lucknow. The team members visited Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya (DDU) Hospital during late night and Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital, Ramnagar and Shri Shiv Prasad Gupta (SSPG) Divisional Hospital, Kabirchaura on Tuesday to get information about the condition of the patients admitted in the wards. They also reviewed the available testing and treatment facilities at these government hospitals.

Talking to the reporters at his office, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary, along with visiting team members apart from Varanasi Division's Additional Director (Health) Dr Manjula Singh and others said that 250 beds are available in DDU Hospital and 50 additional beds can be arranged. At the time of the visit of the state team, a total of 229 patients were admitted in the hospital, out of which 176 patients were admitted due to fever and



CMO, along with state team members and AD (Health), addressing a press conference in Varanasi on Tuesday.

other fever related reasons, out of which 12 patients were dengue positive.

He also informed that all the admitted patients were completely stable and were being given proper treatment in the hospital. "Necessary facilities are available in the hospital for testing dengue and other diseases and medicines and IV fluids are also available in sufficient quantities. Elisa reader is also functional in the hospital for advanced testing," he claimed.

The CMO further informed that there are 153 beds available in LBS Hospital and 20 additional beds can be arranged. "At the time of the visit of the state team, a total of 115 patients were admitted in the hospital, out of which 31 patients were admitted due to

fever and other fever related reasons, out of which eight patients were dengue positive. All the admitted patients were completely stable and were being given proper treatment in the hospital," he said, adding that necessary facilities are available in the hospital for quick diagnosis of dengue and malaria diseases and medicines and IV fluids are also available in sufficient quantity.

Besides, the CMO said that 316 beds are available in SSPG Divisional Hospital and 40 additional beds can be arranged. "At the time of the visit of the state team, a total of 254 patients were admitted in the hospital, out of which 102 patients were admitted due to fever and other fever related reasons, out of which 13 patients were dengue positive.

All the admitted patients were completely stable and were being given proper treatment in the hospital," he claimed, adding that necessary facilities are available in the hospital for quick diagnosis of dengue and malaria diseases and medicines and IV fluids are also available in sufficient quantity. An ELISA reader has also been installed in the hospital for higher testing, on which kits for testing are being purchased.

The CMO has directed all the urban health centres to provide two additional staff nurses each to these three hospitals until the number of fever patients decreases. Besides, he also directed to make available test kits for Elisa test like scrub typhus, leptospirosis, chikungunya etc at SSPG and DDU hospitals.

Change in rules related to giving recognition to private schools

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Children studying in private primary and upper primary schools will now have adequate space to play as the state government has fixed the size of playground for getting recognition for opening a new school.

As per the order dated September 26, detailed instruction have been given to director of basic education regarding change in rules pertaining to giving recognition to private schools. The letter has been issued by Special

Secretary Yatindra Kumar in this regard.

Now for opening primary and upper primary schools in the urban limits, it is mandatory to have a playground of 500 sqm and 1,000 sqm, respectively. Whereas in rural areas, the Basic Education department will give approval for opening a school only if there is a playground of 1,000 sqm and 2,000 sqm respectively. Earlier, there was no strict rule about the size of playgrounds.

In the government order dated January 11, 2019, it was

only written that there should be adequate playground in or around the school premises that can be used by students.

In the existing rule schools should have three classrooms of 270 sqft, one staffroom of 150-150 sqft and one headmaster's room in primary and upper primary schools. Now, an additional room of 400 sqft has also been made mandatory for both types of schools so that educational activities can be conducted conveniently.

Apart from this, a science laboratory of 600 sqft has also been made mandatory. Earlier

there was no provision for this.

Also there should be sufficient number of trees and plants in the school so that children can complete their learning activities in a natural environment.

The application fee for recognition of private schools for classes I to V and VI to VIII has been reduced.

Earlier, fees of Rs 10,000 and Rs 15,000 had to be paid for primary and upper primary level respectively which has been reduced by Rs 5,000 in both the cases.

MLA flags off Spl Communicable Disease Control Campaign

VARANASI (PNS): The MLA from Varanasi Cantonment area Saurabh Srivastava flagged off 'Special Communicable Disease Control Campaign' here on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, he said that the state government is continuously making efforts for the prevention and control of communicable and mosquito-borne diseases like dengue, malaria, chikungunya, filariasis etc. He expressed his views at the inauguration ceremony of the campaign at Swami Vivekananda Memorial Government Hospital in Belhulpur.

To prevent these diseases, a special campaign was launched during the day and this campaign will run throughout the month of October. For this, teams of 10 departments including Health department, Municipal Corporation, Panchayati Raj department etc have been deployed, which will go door-

to-door to prevent diseases and make the community aware. In such a situation, it is also the responsibility of the public to cooperate in the campaign, to be alert and aware, said the MLA.

He said that with the inspiration of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the guidance of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, better medical and health facilities are being provided to all the people. "Along with the district administration and various departments, public representatives will also give full emphasis to make this campaign successful. In the campaign, anti-larva spraying, fogging, cleanliness, hygiene etc will be taken care of to prevent dengue and other diseases. Situation of water logging, dirt, garbage etc will also be removed," he said.

According to him, along with examination and treatment, necessary medicines will also be provided. "Cleanliness

campaign will be run especially in the slum areas of the city. Source reduction work like spraying of pesticide chemicals, destruction of mosquito breeding places etc will be done," he said, appealing to the public that dengue mosquitoes bite only during the day and to protect themselves from this they should wear clothes that cover the entire body. "Use anti-mosquito cream. Use mosquito nets while sleeping," he said, adding that a healthy and better nation can be built only with everyone's cooperation.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said that the Special Communicable Disease Control and Dastak Abhiyan are very ambitious programmes of the Chief Minister. "Just as Japanese Encephalitis (JE) has been controlled to a great extent in the state, similarly diseases like dengue, malaria, filariasis, kala azar, TB, leprosy etc will also be

controlled by running the campaign," he said, adding that the Health department will be the nodal department in this campaign. As many as 10 departments including Municipal Corporation, Panchayati Raj, Animal Husbandry, Women and Child Development, Education, Disabled Public Welfare, Agriculture and Irrigation will make the campaign successful by mutual coordination. The CMO said that maximum publicity work will be done regarding the campaign and in this, cooperation of public representatives, influential persons, various institutions as well as the public will also be taken. District Malaria Officer Sharad Chand Pandey conducted the entire programme. On the occasion, Dr Kshitij Tiwari, Kasim Khan, KK Rai, Sanjeev Singh, Dr Amit Singh, Dr Shishir, Archana Singh, Ajay Mishra, Pradeep Srivastava and Dr Shahid were also present.

Prayagraj administration to publish district gazetteer

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

After around 40 years, the Prayagraj district administration will be publishing the district gazetteer with 11 chapters of information pertaining to history and development of the district.

A detailed questionnaire has been prepared to compile information to be carried in the 11 chapters of the gazetteer. The highlight of the latest gazetteer will be the inclusion of Kumbh Mela, the world famous religious congregation,

which was never mentioned in the British Gazetteer.

Because of its importance the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has recognised the Kumbh Mela as 'Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity' for India and will be specially recorded in the new gazetteer. In the first chapter, the name of the district, formation, geographical location, extent and extension, population, regional languages and dialects of the district, details of religious

communities, beliefs and practices of the district, festivals, fairs etc, administrative units of the district, water resources, forestry etc will find mention.

There will be details of the area, animals and water diversity. Along with this, the major products of the district, eminent personalities, freedom fighters, martyrs etc of the district, details of Lok Sabha-Rajya Sabha-Vidhan Sabha-Legislative Council seats of the district and Doordarshan-Akashvani centre and radio

channels located in the district and other subjects will be included.

Chapter-wise nodal officers have been nominated for this. All nodal officers have been instructed to compile the relevant information and make it available soon.

To prepare its action plan, the officiating district magistrate and CDO Gaurav Kumar held the first meeting of the gazetteer committee during which, he explained in detail the contents of the gazetteer.

One killed in road accident

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

One person died and another sustained serious injuries when a truck hit a standing truck under Lalgarj police station on Monday. Driver Lallan Sharma of Banda was repairing his truck in Patehra Pandey village under Lalgarj police station on the Mirzapur-Rewa highway when the other truck hit it as a result of which he died on the spot. The driver of the other truck Ajay Jaiswal sustained serious injuries. Lalgarj Circle Officer (CO) Manjari Rao said the police reached the spot and launched a rescue operation. She said the body of the deceased could be taken out

with the help of a machine and the injured driver was sent to the hospital. The body was sent for the post-mortem, the police said.

INAUGURATED: MLA Chunar Anurag Singh while inaugurating a road in Bharuhia village under Narainpur block on Monday appealed to village pradhans to keep the area as clean as possible in the larger interests of the people as well as the nation. The MLA accorded a warm reception by locals and the BJP workers by presenting a memento.

FACILITY: Principal Medical College Dr RB Kamal and SIC Dr Tarun Kumar Singh jointly inaugurated the

hormone test facility at the central pathology of the divisional hospital on Monday. He said the new equipment is a boon for the district and added since he had joined as the principal he felt that patients were facing problems for tests like hormone, thyroid, vitamins etc which were very costly. Therefore he approached the authorities and fortunately equipment worth Rs 45 lakh was made available. He hoped that the pathology equipped with modern facilities in which 150 tests could be done will help doctors treat the patients more effectively. Dr Parul Sachan, Dr Vivek Kumar, Dr Sachin Kishore, Dr Durgesh Singh and others were present.

ARRESTED: The Katra Kotwali police arrested an accused in a deadly attack case on Monday. Manoj Kumar Tripathi of Avas Vikas Colony under Katra Kotwali police station had lodged a named complaint on September 30 alleging that the accused had attacked him. After registering the FIR the station house officer (SHO) handed over the case to sub-inspector (S-I) Kunwar Manoj Singh and he started searching for the accused. On being tipped off by an informer, the police team raided the place and nabbed Ankit Singh of Mukeri Bazar. After completing the legal formalities the police sent the accused to jail.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Casting away

Nitish Kumar's survey findings have fired up caste politics just before 2024 elections

Adding a new leaf to caste politics in the Indian context, the Nitish Kumar-led Bihar Government has released the findings of its caste survey on Gandhi Jayanti. The move has raked up controversy as it came after the Union Government showed disinclination to conduct a nationwide caste census. Taking the lead, Bihar made history and became the first State to publish the survey findings since 1931. Caste politics, for long a dominant force in Indian society, has been shaping our political landscape and polity. The data reveals that of Bihar's total population of over 13.1 crore, 36 per cent belong to the Extremely Backward Classes, 27.1 per cent to Backward Classes, 19.7 per cent to Scheduled Castes and 1.7 per cent to Scheduled Tribes, while the general population constitutes 15.5 per cent. Notably, the Yadav community is the largest subgroup within the OBC, comprising 14.27 per cent. This information is expected to ignite a political debate, with calls likely to emerge for an increase



in OBC quotas from the current 27 per cent. The Bihar caste survey is a comprehensive exercise aimed at documenting the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of its population, including their caste affiliations. The release of this data has sparked intense debate and analysis. The OBCs constitute a substantial portion of Bihar's population and have played a pivotal role in the State's politics for decades. The release of caste data has brought to the fore the issue of representation and political empowerment. With a clearer understanding of the numerical strength of different OBC groups, there is a growing demand for enhanced political representation.

Political parties are now under pressure to field more OBC candidates and prioritise their interests. The caste data has the potential to reshape coalition dynamics in Bihar. Understanding the relative strength of different caste groups can influence the formation of alliances and the distribution of tickets among parties. The data can also inform Government policies and schemes, ensuring that these are tailored to address the specific needs of various OBC communities. This could lead to more targeted social welfare programmes and initiatives. However, the release of caste data can further fuel identity politics, both within and outside the OBC category. Communities may vie for recognition and reservation benefits, potentially leading to conflicts. Striking a balance between affirmative action and social cohesion will be a challenge for policymakers. The data has the potential to reshape political strategies, influence policies and redefine the power dynamics among various caste groups. However, it is essential to handle this information with sensitivity and a focus on inclusive development to ensure that Bihar's diverse population benefits from this newfound awareness of caste demographics. Balancing the interests of different communities while fostering social cohesion will be the key to navigating the complex terrain of caste politics in the years to come.

PICTALK



An Agniveer soldier of the second batch celebrates with his mother after the passing out parade in Patna

Break the Agniveer logjam with Nepal



ASHOK K MEHTA

India unilaterally announced Agnipath scheme without consulting Nepal and this has led to the shrinking of Gorkha regiments in the army

There is misplaced excitement over the 40,000 Agniveers recruited last year, the first batch reporting to units in August and the second batch by October. They are full of josh with the rank of Agniveer while the permanent cadre are Sepoys/Rifleman and above. Much is being made of them in Service Headquarters as Outstanding where special cells are monitoring their progress and evaluation for re-enlistment of 25 per cent after 4 years. The truth can only be discovered by conversations with their recipients as I have.

Veterans' critique of Agniveer has not subsided but critique fatigue has overtaken it. By 2030, at the present rate of induction, half the Army will be Agniveers. Then it will be a very unhappy Battalion Commander leading them unless he believes in destiny. Unhappier still will be the Gorkha commanders by then without recruitment of an additional 15,000 Nepali-domiciled Gorkhas which translated on the ground would mean that nearly half of the 42 Gorkha battalions would have disappeared with only Agniveer Indian Domiciled Gorkhas in the majority.

By 2024, the reduction of battalions will start to maintain minimal operational strength. By 2030, I suspect, the Gorkha Brigade will disappear losing its identity and cohesion, converted to Kumaoni and Garhwali battalions. This back-of-the-envelope calculation is on the assumption that the government is unable or unwilling to persuade the Government of Nepal to relent into accepting Agniveer on present terms. With a better package of enhanced service and larger retention (seven years instead of four years of service and 50 per cent instead of 25 per cent re-enlistment) or total exemption from Agniveer, the prospects of Communists in government and opposition accepting terms of recruitment are higher. But it seems as a Nepali ex-serviceman told me: "India has a secret plan to stop the recruitment of Gorkhas and the Communists in my country will oblige". The stars will shortly come into the right



constellation for this, he adds.

Last month, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda was to meet an ex-servicemen delegation before going to the UN and China but that did not happen. As the leader of the ten-year-old insurgency against Royal rule, he knows the value and grit of Gorkha soldiers. He also knows that today's youth, while still attracted by soldiering are equally fascinated by service in foreign countries where they can also be educated and settled lucratively which is happening today in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and other Western countries. Many Nepali Gorkhas have joined the Russian Army whose key attraction is the Right to Residency in Russia after one year of military service. Gorkhas are joining French Foreign Legion, British Army, Singapore Police and like the Sikhs once, can be found all over the world.

Still, there might be many who want to become Agniveers in the Indian Army which is regulated by the 1947 Tripartite Treaty on Recruitment between Britain, India and Nepal which Nepal believes has been violated by the Agnipath scheme. It is another matter that India unilaterally announced Agnipath without consulting a friendly

neighbour, Nepal with which it claims special and unique relations. Gorkha recruitment is a key factor of the bilateral strategic relationship and has provided an assured pro-India platform in Nepal. Nepal has not done its sums on the financial benefit of Agniveer. With approximately 22,000 Nepali Domiciled Gorkha Soldiers (NDG) soldiers and 85,000 Indian Army NDG pensioners being paid on an average of INR 6 lakh and INR 3.8 lakh per annum respectively, total outlay and remittance to Nepal per annum is Rs 4500 crore. The average span of service of soldiers is 20 years and the currency of pension is 50 years. If there is no recruitment under Agniveer, the entire remittance will stop in the next 70 years. If Nepal accepts Agniveer, the overall effect is that Rs 4500 crore will gradually reduce to Rs 1827 crore (40 per cent) which will include the pension of Permanent Cadre Agniveer and salaries of Permanent and Temporary Agniveers. Reduction in pay will be very marginal, from the present Rs 1290 crore to Rs 1242 crore with the Agnipath scheme. Reduction in pension though will be substantial is 68 per cent (Rs 3146 crore to Rs 585 crore) But this will happen in 70 years - in Nepali, (iota pushed) or one generation.

Remittances are the No. 1 earner for the economy as almost one-third of the Nepali population of 30 mn is abroad at any time including in India.

It seems Nepal is shedding its mercenary tag discounting financial benefits. It is also an assertion of its self-respect and dignity. All recent Indian ambassadors to Nepal except one have acknowledged the exceptional role of NDGs and ex-servicemen in promoting bilateral relations and being a strategic asset. Most beguiling though is the silence of the Army hierarchy. Equally puzzling is inaction on the part of Gorkha veterans including a former Army Chief and scores of two and three-star Generals who put their names on various service issue petitions to powers that be. Now they are silent. But saddest of all is that the slow disbandment of the Gorkha Brigade will happen under the watch of the senior-most Gorkha officer of the Army, CDS Gen Anil Chouhan. But his re-enlistment and appointment were under a cloud.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal)



BY 2030, NEARLY HALF OF THE 42 GORKHA BATTALIONS WOULD DISAPPEAR WITH ONLY AGNIVEER INDIAN DOMICILED GORKHAS IN THE MAJORITY

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Swachh Bharat



With the Swachh Bharat mission taking the lead, the country is following in the footsteps of the Prime Minister to bring the best in cleanliness to India. Cleanliness is next to godliness, and people have realized the importance of staying clean during the Covid-19 pandemic and following the rule of law most meticulously. Gandhi mounted a rigorous critique of

the waste behind modern industrial civilization in more ways than we can imagine. The phrase 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness' has finally become more than just an idea. On 2nd October 2014, on the eve of Mahatma Gandhi's 145th birth anniversary, we launched an important campaign, 'Swachh Bharat,' which means Clean India. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has achieved great success in spreading awareness across the country to get rid of many wrong and unhealthy practices. As a result, significant progress has been observed through the Swachh Bharat mission. The real success of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has come full circle, and we have truly benefited in the best way possible.

MR Jayanthi | Mumbai

extended period.

Additionally, exposure to such pollutants can alter the biology of the lungs by causing immune cells to work more frequently than they are accustomed to, leading to worsening lung diseases in the long run. For such populations, doctors recommend spending more time indoors, staying hydrated, and using a humidifier if possible. It's also crucial to avoid burning incense sticks, candles, or smoking tobacco products in proximity to children to maintain indoor air quality. For those with central air conditioning systems, ensure that the filters are efficient enough to capture finer particulate matter from smoke if present.

Arka Goswami | Durgapur

THE LONG-PENDING KAVERI ISSUE

Sir — In the contemporary history of India, the 124-year-old Kaveri water dispute remains unresolved, linked to inadequate rainfall in the Kaveri catchment area. The Kaveri is a sacred river to the people of southern India, worshipped as Goddess Kaveriamma (Mother Kaveri). The advice of former Chief Minister S M Krishna, suggesting that the four riparian states (Tamil

THE BIHAR CASTE SURVEY

Sir — The results of the Bihar caste survey are out. It shows that 27% of the people are classified as backward, and 36% of the population belongs to extremely backward castes. The OBC population has increased significantly. This survey will likely lead to a demand for an increased reservation quota for them in education and jobs. Secondly, we must study and debate the financial upliftment of these people to evaluate whether the caste-based reservation system has yielded any dividends for them or has become a total failure. The Centre was shying away from conducting a nationwide caste survey but now after the Bihar initiative it might have second thoughts on its decision to defer the caste census.

Indeed caste census would help the policy makers to have better directed policies towards underprivileged section of the society but the downside is that it would also lead to a fierce caste politics which would not be in the national interests. The castes are already politicised and while we set out to dissolve the caste identities we are doing just the opposite.

NR Ramachandran | Chennai

CHILDREN AND PARTICULATE MATTER

Sir — Children are particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of particulate matter in the air. This is because they inhale more air relative to their size compared to adults. While particulate matter can harm everyone, young children are more susceptible due to their developing lungs and shorter noses, which are less effective at filtering air. Children also tend to engage in more outdoor activities than adults, making them more prone to experiencing serious symptoms. Therefore, vulnerable populations can suffer long-term health impacts if not treated properly. Increasing incidents like wildfires, unchecked carbon emissions, and so on are expected to affect health over an

NGOs must build capacity for a bigger impact

Capacity building is a continuous process that enables NGOs to strengthen their essential capabilities which go fuel their workforce to bring about a lasting change



NAGHMA MULLA

Organisational development may be termed as the development of strategies, structures and processes that contribute to the effectiveness of an organisation. An effective organisation is characterised by strong financial and technical performance, quality products and services and high productivity. To achieve these indicators of effectiveness, an organisation must utilise a combination of human, financial, and infrastructural resources to improve its product/service delivery and meet its objectives. These resources are organised into specialised departments such as human resources, legal, monitoring and evaluation, communications etc. Capacity building is a structured process that aims to strengthen these organisational capabilities, thereby improving the organisation's efficiency and effectiveness in achieving its purpose.



are dependent upon CSR grants and philanthropic funding for the same. Often these funds are tied to program expenses, as for NGOs, the direct outcomes for communities result from their programs. Pathways for capacity building of NGOs

Capacity building for these functions can be conducted through investments in training and developing existing employees, creating specialised departments for key functions, and hiring talent. To improve their internal capacities, NGOs should put a strong emphasis on leveraging their resources. They must plan and invest in solutions where their investment could make the most significant impact in line with the organisation's strategic goals. Training and development may be conducted through

hiring consultants, investing in courses and workshops and engaging in cross-learning through networking with other NGOs.

Most capacity building requires monetary investments. Hence, the ability of NGOs to raise funds for non-programmatic aspects is of great significance. To increase their ability for such fundraising, NGOs can incorporate a process of self-assessment of their capacities, strengths, and weaknesses. Based on the assessment they can create a roadmap for capacity building and include ways of measuring the impact of capacity building. Including such assessments in their proposals will enable funders to identify the need for non-programmatic funding and gauge the significance of capacity building.

On the funders' side, there should be an acknowledgement of the fact that training and workshops will only have a limited impact on the capacity building of NGOs. There needs to be a stream of funds, apart from the programmatic grants, that can be utilized dedicatedly for strengthening capacities. For

this purpose, the funders should be open to investing in empowering the NGOs in terms of skill-building, learning and other necessary aspects.

Capacity building enables organisations to meet their strategic goals through sound organisational processes, skills, and knowledge. For an NGO, these goals might include empowering communities through improving access to essential services, providing means for income enhancement, and elevating the representation of under-served groups across sectors. For NGOs, their capabilities have a direct bearing on their ability to deliver desired outcomes in the communities that they serve. Therefore, the impact of capacity-building activities by NGOs must also be measured to ensure their effectiveness. Capacity building as a continuous process enables NGOs to strengthen these essential capabilities which go towards fuelling their workforce towards creating impact.

(The writer is the chief executive officer, EdelGive foundation; views are personal)

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

'SHRADHS' ARE MORE THAN JUST RITUALS

'Shradhs' are part of the Vedic culture and cater to the specific needs of ancestors



YOGI ASHWINI

The soul incarnates into a physical body which is made up of the five elements in various permutations and combinations, reincarnating birth after birth depending on the kind of karmas that one does in a lifetime. Certain souls do not reincarnate, either because they are finished with their karmic cycle of the the 'Prithvi lok' or because they are stuck in a different dimension of existence and are unable to manifest in the human body, as their karmic balance is not sufficient to entitle them for human birth. These souls either remain suspended as energies and are called ghosts and spirits or they go to a different dimension of existence called the pitr lok or the lok of the ancestors.

Whatever dimension or level of existence they are in unless they have been freed from the cycle of birth and death, they need energy from their offspring to offset their karmic balance to enable them to reincarnate again.

'Shradhs' are an important part of the Hindu/Vedic culture and cater to these ancestors' needs. On these days the constellations are such that the gateways to the other dimensions open and they are allowed to visit the earth to meet their near and dear ones. These ancestors depend on their children and grandchildren to do good deeds in their name and to chant specific mantras, both these acts free the souls from bondages of these not-desired yonis or levels of existence. It is the basic duty of the family members to perform certain rites and do charity and 'guardian' in the names of their close ones, as only once you are in the human body can you do all this, once out - all is lost and you are dependent on others for your salvation and rebirth (if your karmas do not permit).



At present and age, the youth of the country has no idea about the power and efficacy of the Vedic sciences and the phenomenal knowledge of the Vedic 'mantras' and rituals, the present education system is to be blamed for this as it is completely based on what the colonial masters chose for us, they were fearful of the power of the Vedas and hence destroyed the gurukul system and ensured that we were taught redundant sciences and tweaked history to their advantage the purpose was so that the coming generations lose faith in their culture and follow the colonial masters blindly. The result that they wanted is visible today.

For the younger generations who might be thinking by now that this article reeks of Hindutva and is a fairy tale based on fiction, I would like to point out certain facts of history. In the ancient world, the main cultures flourishing around 4,000 years back were the Egyptians, the Mesopotamians, the Romans, the Mayans etc. and of course our very own culture. None of the present-day religions or schools of thought were present, except the Hindu religion and the Vedic thought. All the cultures are prevalent believed in the other world and traveling of the soul to other dimensions.

Scientists today accept that the ancients had a strong knowledge of mathematics, astronomy, chemistry and physics. The pyramids are aligned in the north-south direction and the shafts in them are pointing towards the three main stars of the Orion belt which the scientists of today say could be the birthplace of stars and human origin.

It is important to note that the Hindu culture is the only culture that predates all the other cultures and is still the largest practised religion, its mantras and practices are not mumbo jumbo but they are a gift of a highly advanced civilisation to the present day humans That's why it has survived till date.

(The is a spiritual guide and well-versed in ancient Vedic sciences of Yoga, Spiritual Healing and Yagyas; views are personal)

Endorsing the principles of women empowerment



SANGRAM MISHRA

We need women at all levels, including the top to make sure women's voices are heard and heeded and not overlooked and ignored

The constitutional amendment bill (128th constitutional amendment) to enact Nari Shakti Vandan Abhiyan meant to provide one-third of seats for women in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies was passed by Lok Sabha by an overwhelming majority and then unanimously in Rajya Sabha. The reservation will come into force soon after the first delimitation (in 2026) It was pronounced by PM Narendra Modi that the women's reservation bill will pave the way for women's empowerment.

A very positive step indeed for an inclusive and holistic development Growth trajectory cannot move in the right direction if about ninety per cent of its population (women population) languishes in impecuniosity, proscription and forbiddance.

Rosa Luxemburg expressed "Women's freedom is the sign of social freedom. To add it can be depicted that women's freedom and empowerment are the initial indications for economic, social, political and intellectual advancement of the nation. Amartya Sen has delineated empowering women is the key to building the future we want. Overall inclusive growth of a nation entails the amelioration of the predicaments of women and poverty-stricken to propel the trajectory of growth in a direction of positive advancement.

Women's empowerment can be stated as a process by which women gain power and control over their own lives and acquire the ability to make strategic choices. In short, empowerment entitles women to take charge of their personal development. It aims at raising the self-esteem and self-confidence of women by eliminating discrimination in all forms (and manifestations) of violence against women and girl child. As such this empowerment can be categorized into five main parts and those are social, educational, economic, political and psychological. And the five pillars on which empowerment is based are education health, security, finance and emotion.

The steps to be followed in women's empowerment are clarity and support. While Clarity signifies clarifying goals and expeditions, support is meant to support those steps by providing resources they need to succeed and remove obstacles, trying to restrict and hinder progress. The four stages of empowerment are self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-belief and self-realization and the four methods of empowerment are communication, critical thinking, collaboration and creativity.

The meaning of empowerment in lexicon semantics is depicted as the granting of political, social, and economic power to an individual or a group. As opposed to interdiction and emaciation, empowerment rests, and authorizes to inculcate confidence and strength in the individual or the group to accomplish the vested task. Kofi Anan said there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. It is said that women's empowerment is intertwined with respect for human rights.

Various enactments have been taken up by the government in the past for protection and vindication of women's causes. Those are the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956, The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, Domestic Violence



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT CAN BE STATED AS A PROCESS BY WHICH WOMEN GAIN POWER AND CONTROL OVER THEIR OWN LIVES AND ACQUIRE THE ABILITY TO MAKE STRATEGIC CHOICES

(The author is a super-annuated senior IAS officer)

Act, 2005 and the Sexual Harassment of Women in Workplaces Act, 2013 etc.

The need of the hour is to redefine the status of women in society and to eradicate the exclusion process of women from citadels of socio-economic and political power. The challenges faced by women (spatial and temporal factors) emanates from various factors like hegemonic patriarchy, perpetration of discrimination and exploitation, lack of education, the prevalence of poverty (exploited as domestic help, sex-slavery), health and safety (maternal mortality rate in India as 301 per 1000 and about many women are dying in India due to childbirth complication every year), gender discrimination and child abuse (no role in decision making in the family or outside and female feticides) crime against women (murder, rape, dowry deaths etc) girls and women trafficking and domestic violence.

The most important task at hand is for a paradigm shift in approach and empowerment in all spheres of life. Mahatma Gandhi wrote "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world".

Empowering women in education (by giving them support to take the lead) and in business (economic independence is very much linked and associated with women empowerment) is also important. Other issues like the problem of working women, gender bias, technological advancement sexual harassment should also be addressed for effective assimilation of women in the decision-making process in the country, coming out of age-old discrimination and

exploitation exacerbating their predicaments - Empowerment of women in fact should start with economic empowerment of women (poverty eradication and micro credit etc) and women's perspectives should be included in designing and implementing macro and micro economic and social policies by institutionalising their participation in the process.

Empowering women would also be a key to control population growth. Because the spread of illiteracy, poverty and hegemonic patriarchy have relegated their position to a cypher level both in the family and in the social circle. Early marriage, frequent childbirth to add to work workforce to house to tackle poverty, no voice in the family, patriarchy, lack of education and family control, role as a sex-commodity, urge for a male child etc. have remained a poignant causes for population explosion/growth. The answer with specificity points towards women's empowerment which would cause a wane on this burgeoning problem.

Various movements in India have been taken by the protagonists to enhance the position of women in India. These movements have voiced against injustice in socio-economic issues like equal pay for equal work, recognition of work, sexual harassment in workplaces domestic violence etc. The achievements of these feminist movements are immense and their relevance has remained vibrant. But some fault lines there need to be analyzed. It is pointed out that these movements reflect the privileges and power dynamics that exist in larger society.

Some people accuse that these feminist movements have been hijacked by urban English-speaking middle/upper-class and upper-caste women. It is viewed that the benefits have not percolated down to poor and lower-caste women. This paradoxical situation has led to caste-specific feminist organizations and movements. Low levels of political awareness, ignorance, the patriarchal mindset of Indian society, and low levels of political efficacy have also inhibited poor and rural women without providing any fillip for advancement. Even the steps and enactments of government as the dowry prohibition act, child marriage (prohibition) Act, special marriage act, domestic violence etc. and various measures and enactments, have not percolated deep into poor women's lifestyles. Empowerment with education, skill development and inclusion-oriented welfare schemes would enhance the position of lower-strata women in society.

To conclude Sheryl Sandberg opined "We need women at all levels, including the top, to change the dynamics, reshape the conversation, to make sure women's voices are heard and heeded and not overlooked and ignored". Even J L Nehru told 'India to awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves.

Let us not only aim at empowerment, but total emancipation socially and from other bondages empowered women should take charge of social engineering erelong.

Will India ever become a football-playing nation?

The Asian Games 2023 have taught us once again that India is nowhere near global standards in football; can we please do something about it?

The country which boasts of being the champion in the first-ever Asian Games held at New Delhi in 1951, was thrown out of the Hangzhou event in the first round itself. It was after a series of political and business interventions that a second-rung football team was sent to China to participate in the event.

Forget about the reasons behind the indecisiveness in selecting a team to be sent to the major event in the Asian continent. Also, forget the fact that football is the most popular sport in the world.

What Hangzhou has proved is that India is light years behind other footballing nations, both in the



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

quality of the game and its administration. While other countries had selected their national squads in advance and trained them for months, the AIFF remained inactive till the eve of the Games, pointed out Rufus Dsouza, a nonagenarian coach based in Kochi.

Magan Singh Rajvi, former Indian captain who led the country in the 1974 Tehran Asian Games is a disappointed man. Speaking to The Pioneer from Bikaner. Magan Singh, rated as one of the all-time greats in India, expressed his anguish: "Is there any serious game of football happening in India? Where are the football teams that reigned supreme during the 1960s to 1980s?" asked Magan.

Despite humiliating defeats by China and Saudi Arabia, the Indian coach Igor Stimac was a contented man. He has been quoted as saying that the results were on expected lines and there was no need for any disappointment.

The run-up to the Asian Games reminded one of a comedy of errors. The clubs employing the members of the national squad refused to release the players. Sunil Chhetri, the 39-year-old captain was the spearhead of the Indian attack!

It is the age at which international players hand up their boots and here we are, depending on a man past his prime to save Indian football. Most countries sent their U-23 teams to the

Asian Games while India fielded Chhetri and Jingan (another burnt-out talent).

"The best thing we could have done is to skip the football events for the time being. Though the Asian Games is a serious sporting event, we are yet to understand the significance of the same," said Rufus.

He pointed out that what India needs today is desi coaches. "We won gold medals in the Delhi and Jakarta Asian Games with teams trained by Indian coaches. A coach should know the psyche of his players," said Rufus who is still active in Kochi's maidans.

Harjeender Singh from Punjab, who represented India in many international tournaments and the son of

legendary Inder Singh said that though there was a shortage of infrastructure in the country, India does not have players like Inder, Magan or Shyam Thapa. "These players had passion in them for the game while the youngsters consider the game as a means to get rich. Football is a serious profession and it needs dedication and devotion," said Harjeender Singh.

There were great expectations when corporates like Reliance came forward to resuscitate the game by launching a professional soccer league. "But that has done damage to football in India. Most of the foreigners playing in the Indian league are discards from their own countries.

India is struggling to beat countries like Nepal and Bangladesh," said Rufus.

There was a report recently that India may bid to host the quadrennial World Cup Gold Cup in Hyderabad and Chackola Cup in Thrissur (the trophy weighed 145 sovereigns) drew even international teams to India.

Magan, with the Rajput blood, is still optimistic. "Revive the tournaments and the teams. There will not be any dearth of talents. Tournaments like Rovers Cup in Bombay, Nizam Gold Cup in Hyderabad and Chackola Cup in Thrissur (the trophy weighed 145 sovereigns) drew even international teams to India.

Where are those tournaments?" asks Magan Singh. Veteran players are unanimous in their view that the AIFF has done nothing to save football in the country. The only people who have prospered through Indian football are the office bearers of the All India Football Federation and brokers who help them to import foreign players, according to Rufus. God save Indian Football.

INDIA, PAK ENTER SEMIS

JAISWAL'S 100 HELPS INDIA BEAT NEPAL BY 23 RUNS IN ASIAN GAMES 2023

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Yashasvi Jaiswal smashed a blazing hundred to lead India to Asian Games semifinals but cricketers from Nepal showed a lot of promise by putting up a fearless fight in their 23-run defeat here on Tuesday.

Jaiswal, Indian cricket's new pin-up boy, earned the distinction of being the youngest T20I centurion from the country en route his 49-ball-100 that took India to a healthy 202 for 4.

The men from the Himalayan nation made a match of it but lack of experience became their undoing as their innings ended at 179 for 9, ensuring a last four spot for Rituraj Gaikwad's men.

No praise would be enough for the Monty Desai-coached Nepalese side as the smaller ground dimensions helped them embarrass two Indian pacers Arshdeep Singh (2/43) and Avesh Khan (3/32), who gave away 75 runs in their 8 overs.

There is one piece of statistics that will certainly annoy head coach VVS Laxman. India, in all, hit 12 sixes but Nepal batsmen surpassed them with 14 maximums.



global cricket establishment will give them enough exposure to consistently challenge heavyweights like they did this day. Against better teams like Bangladesh or Pakistan, the Indian pacers, who bowled too full or too short will be in trouble keeping the ridiculously

short side boundaries into account. But nothing can take the credit away from 21-year-old Jaiswal, who enthralled the crowd with eight fours and seven sixes.

There was slog sweep off pacers and spinners, the pick-up pull behind square, the square cuts, the heave over cow corner and the deftly executed lap shot over keeper's head to reach to 99 before a single took him to the milestone.

Credit should also be given to Rinku Singh, who once again enjoyed his role as a finisher with 37 off 15 balls, including 20-odd in the final over which made the difference in the end.

PAK WIN

Pakistan also reached the semi-finals, crushing Hong Kong by 68 runs with experienced all-rounder Khushdil Shah taking 3-13.

Pakistan swept through at an overcast Zhejiang University of Technology Pingfeng Cricket Field, despite some early wobbles.

They struggled on an uneven pitch and slumped to 54-5 after being sent in, but a brilliant 41 from 16 balls by Aamer Jamal ensured they made a

respectable 160 all out. Hong Kong similarly collapsed, to 55-5, but they had none of Jamal's class to bail them out and were bowled for 92.

"It was a combined job by all of us," said Pakistan opener Omaid Yousuf.

Sri Lanka face Afghanistan and Bangladesh take on Malaysia in the other quarter-finals on Wednesday.



Rain washes out India's second warm-up match

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

India's second World Cup warm up match against Netherland was washed out due to incessant rain here on Tuesday.

The game was abandoned without a ball being bowled. The hosts' first warm up game against England also met with a similar fate in Guwahati last week.

India is thus the only team that heads to the World Cup without batting or bowling in the warm up matches.

India will open their campaign against Australia in Chennai on Sunday.



Chelsea stun Fulham with quickfire double

AP ■ LONDON

Goal-shy Chelsea finally found their cutting edge on Monday, striking twice in 82 seconds to earn a morale-boosting 2-0 win against Fulham as Mykhailo Mudryk finally got off the mark.

Mauricio Pochettino's injury-ravaged team travelled to the home of their near-neighbours just two points above the relegation zone and with only five goals to their name.

Wasted early opportunities hinted at familiar failings but Ukrainian winger Mudryk scored his first goal in a Chelsea shirt in the 18th minute and Armando Broja doubled the lead in the blink of an eye.

The win lifts Chelsea to mid-table and eases the pressure on beleaguered new manager Pochettino, whose team had failed to score in their previous three Premier League games.

The former Tottenham and Paris Saint-Germain boss had pleaded for ruthlessness in front of goal and his nerves were settled by his team's quickfire first-half double.

"It's important for us to build our confidence and trust in ourselves," Pochettino told Sky Sports.

"The performance was very good, I'm so happy for the players and in the end we got what we deserved."

Chelsea started brightly at Craven Cottage but failed to take advantage.

Albania forward Broja, making his first start since November 2022, blazed over from an offside position shortly after kick-off and the lively Mudryk also wasted a chance.

But the visitors got their reward in the 18th minute when a long ball from the back found Levi Colwill on the left.

Colwill passed to Mudryk, who controlled the ball on his chest before producing a composed finish for his first goal for the club since his big-money move from Shakhtar Donetsk in January.

Chelsea doubled their lead when Broja capitalised on a defensive mistake from Fulham centre-half Tim Ream, who gifted the ball to new signing Cole Palmer.

Chelsea, playing with zest, could have extended their lead further but Enzo Fernandez's strike flew narrowly wide.

The home side failed to muster a single shot on target in the first half, though Raul Jimenez went close with a header from Andreas Pereira's outswinging corner as half-time approached.

Mudryk did not appear for the second half, replaced by defender Ian Maatsen.

AP ■ LEIPZIG

RB Leipzig coach Marco Rose said last season's 7-0 thrashing by Manchester City was "history" as the two sides prepare to meet again in the Champions League in Germany on Wednesday.

City's rampant victory in their home leg of the last 16 tie, with Erling Haaland scoring five goals in 60 minutes, was one of the English side's key victories on the way to winning the Champions League for the first time last season.

"It wasn't part of the preparation for the game, because it's history," Rose said in Leipzig on Tuesday.

"Everything came together for them in that match and of course we were hugely dissatisfied with the size of the result.

"But we're in a new season and we're doing pretty well right now."

Leipzig have won seven of nine games in all competitions this season and come into the match fresh from a 2-2 home draw with German champions Bayern Munich.

Rose said his side could draw positives from the home leg against City last season, where Leipzig fought hard to draw 1-1.

"We know that we played very well

Leipzig eye revenge against City

at home and for that to happen again tomorrow, we have to run a lot and we have to suffer."

Rose said "yes" when asked if City were the best side in the world.

"But that doesn't help us and it doesn't help City," he added. "It's football and we will play 11 against 11."

"We know City's quality. We will need a top performance and a slice of luck."

City come into the match in a rare run of poor form, having lost two games in a row for the first time since January.

The English champions are also missing midfielders Kevin de Bruyne and Bernardo Silva.

Rose however praised City's squad depth, saying "even when de Bruyne and Bernardo Silva are missing, then in comes (Mateo) Kovacic, then in comes Phil Foden, who has developed really well."

Rose said he was looking forward to seeing Josko Gvardiol, who moved from Leipzig to City in the summer, calling the Croatian centre-back "a great player and a great guy."

The Leipzig coach confirmed wing-



back Benjamin Henrichs will miss the clash through injury, while Spanish international forward Dani Olmo is also ruled out as he continues his recovery from injury. Former Chelsea forward Timo Werner is however set to make a return from a back complaint.

10-YEAR DROUGHT

Once feared as a fortress of European football, Celtic are aiming to end a 10-year wait for a Champions League win at home when Lazio visit Parkhead on Wednesday.

Brendan Rodgers wasted no time on his return as the Hoops' manager in revealing his ambition is to finally make a mark on the Champions League.

In domestic football, Celtic remain in a class of their own having won 11 of the last 12 Scottish Premiership titles and four domestic trebles in the past six seasons.

But Rodgers was in charge during his first spell at the club last time the Hoops won a game in Europe's elite competition in 2017 away to Anderlecht.

After failing to qualify for the next four seasons, Celtic collected just two points from six games on their return to the Champions League last season under Ange Postecoglou despite some impressive performances.

Jawaharlal Nehru Hockey Tournament Society picks Yash Bharwani as president



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tournament, which unearthed talent of stalwarts like Zafar Iqbal, Ajit Pal Singh, Pargat Singh and even the current captain Manpreet Singh; has nominated Yash Bharwani, the grandson of the "Founding Father" of the Society, Inder Mohan Kapur, as its seventh president. Jawaharlal Nehru Hockey Tournament Society, was formed in 1964 in the fond memory of Pandit Nehru by Shri Inder Mohan Kapur Ji and other eminent citizens from across the country.

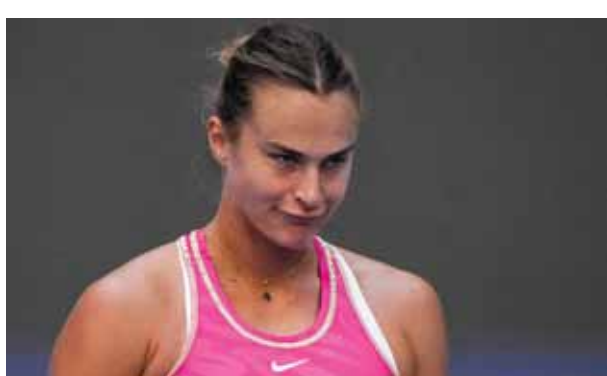
Sabalenka, Gauff dig deep to reach China Open third round

AP ■ BEIJING

World number one Aryna Sabalenka on Tuesday said her performances in "key moments" were crucial to surviving a major scare in the China Open second round, after she defeated unseeded Katie Boulter 7-5, 7-6 (7/2) in Beijing.

US Open champion Coco Gauff also had to dig deep to get the better of Croatia's Petra Martic in a rollercoaster tie that lasted over three hours.

Sabalenka saved seven break points at 5-5 and then forced the stubborn Briton, ranked 56th in



had the opportunity and I'm super glad that I didn't give her those sets easily." "I kept fighting, kept trying, and that's what made the difference," she said.

the world, into a rare backhand error to clinch the opening set.

The Belarusian notched another must-win break in the second set to again draw level at 5-5 before triumphing in a tie-break by slamming down an unreturned serve.

She will battle Italy's Jasmine Paolini in the next round for a place in the quarter-finals.

"I think what made the difference was that in the key moments I played a little bit better than her," Sabalenka said at a post-match news conference.

"I think it was all about those last games in each set. She

Martic was serving for the match against Gauff but the world number three fought back to take the game and went on to dominate the ensuing tie-break, winning 7-5, 5-7, 7-6 (7/2).

"Today was a mental victory. I was happy I was able to get through it," said Gauff, who will face Russia's Veronika Kudermetova in her next match.

"I was just telling myself to keep suffering, it will be over in a couple seconds," the 19-year-old said.

"I knew I could outlast her. I just had to be consistent, but also aggressive."

World number two Iga Swiatek eased past France's Varvara Gracheva 6-4, 6-1 to set up a date with fellow Pole Magda Linette.

Fourth-ranked Jessica Pegula bounced back from a set down to beat Russia's Anna Blinkova 6-7 (2/7), 6-2, 6-1.

And France's world number 10 Caroline Garcia suffered a second-set wobble before downing Kazakhstan's Yulia Putintseva 6-3, 3-6, 6-3.

The China Open is taking place for the first time since 2019 after Beijing ditched its isolationist zero-Covid policy.



Biles in complete control at gymnastic worlds

AP ■ ANTWERP

Simone Biles enjoyed a virtuoso sweep in qualifying at the gymnastics world championships on Monday, further burying the nightmare of her Tokyo Olympics.

The US superstar took top spot in the all-around, vault, beam and floor and appears certain to comfortably add to her 25 world medals made up of 19 gold, three silver and three bronze.

The only athlete to get the better of her on Monday was 16-year-old Qiu Qiyuan of China on the uneven bars.

In total, Biles has 58.865 points for a two-point lead over compatriot Shilese Jones (56.932) and Jessica Gadirova of Britain (56.766).

Brazil's Rebeca Andrade, the revelation of the Tokyo Olympics two years ago, took fourth place with 56.599 points.

Biles' only disappointment came on the uneven bars where she was fifth after being penalised for a fall.

"I don't know, it happens in gymnastics," she said. "You have to think quickly so as not to forget the sequences."

"I recovered well and that's the most important thing."

On Sunday, 26-year-old Biles made history by becoming the first female gymnast to execute a "Yurchenko double pike vault" now renamed "Biles II" during women's team qualifying. A four-time Olympic champion, Biles arrived in Japan for the 2021 Olympics as the huge favourite thanks to her four titles won five years earlier in Rio.

However, she broke down in full view of a global audience, withdrawing from most of the events.

She then explained that she was fighting against "twisties", a temporary mental block whereby gymnasts lose their sense of where they are in the air, with the risk of injury when they land.

She returned to action at the beginning of August and demonstrated that she had lost none of her incredible level.