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TEAM INDIA AIMS FOR CENTURY AT ASIAN GAMES

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

The ongoing push for India to secure a remarkable 100-medal haul at the 2023 Asian Games is gaining momentum. So far, India has secured an impressive tally of 86 medals. On Thursday, three additional gold medals were added to India's count.

Indian archers made their country proud. The women's combine emerged triumphant in an edge-of-the-seat thriller while the men's outfit secured the top prize without fuss as Indian compound archers swept all three gold medals on offer in team events, further bettering their best-ever show at the Asian Games, here on Thursday.

The women's compound team edged Chinese Taipei by the thinnest of margins, securing the gold medal win by just one point with Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Aditi Gopichand Swami and Parneet Kaur shooting 60 out of 60 in the final round of a heart-stopping final.

Having knocked out two-time defending champions South Korea, the Chinese Taipei trio of Chen Yi-Hsuan, Huang I-Jou and Wang Lu-Yun fought till the end but the top-seeded Indian team won 230-229.

The scores were locked 200-200 till the last set but the young Indian team that has two teenagers — Aditi and Parneet — remained ice-cool to find three more 10s in the final three arrows.

It put the pressure back on



19th Asian Games

their opponents who were to shoot last and needed to match with three 10s to force a shootoff. But Chinese Taipei started off with a nine that sealed the gold for India.

Having conquered the world less than two months back, it also completed India women's compound team's domination by becoming the Asian champions.

In the afternoon session, the men's trio of Abhishek Verma, Ojas Deotale and Prathamesh Jawkar downed South Koreans 235-230 to seal their sixth medal in archery.

India's second gold in archery also assured the country of at least five medals in archery at the ongoing Asian Games.

India's mixed team had won a gold on Wednesday.

For 27-year-old Jyothi this was also a double gold from this edition, having secured the top spot in the podium with Ojas Deotale in the compound mixed team event on Wednesday.

The Vijaywada archer is in line for a hat-trick of gold as she will fight for the Asian Games title, taking on South Korea's So Chaewon in the compound individual final on Saturday.

India have confirmed at least five medals in archery at the continental showpiece as



Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Aditi Gopichand and Parneet Kaur pose with their gold medal during the presentation ceremony of team compound archery event at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou in China on Thursday

PTI

Deotale and Abhishek Verma are assured of a top-two finish by making it an all-India men's compound individual final.

India's previous best show in archery at the Asian Games was in Incheon 2014 where they had claimed one gold, one silver and one bronze.

In squash, veterans Dipika Pallikal and Harinder Pal Singh

Sandhu survived some anxious moments to clinch the mixed doubles gold, but Saurav Ghosal settled for singles silver as Indian squash players recorded their best-ever performance at the Asian Games.

Dipika and Harinder eked out a 11-10 11-10 win over Malaysian duo of Aifa Binti Azman and Mohammad Syafiq

Bin Mohd Kamal in a tense 35 minute final to fetch India's second gold medal in squash at the ongoing event.

However, it was disappointment for India's top player Ghosal as he lost to Malaysia's Eain Yow Ng 11-9, 9-11, 5-11, 7-11 in a little over an hour. But that wouldn't take

sheen out of India's brilliant

outing in the squash competition in Hangzhou, where they bettered the country's effort in the Incheon Games 2014.

India had won a historic gold in the men's team event nine years ago, with two silver and a bronze to boot with.

However, in the ongoing Games, India have won two gold, a silver and a bronze.

"I don't always remember what happens on court. It's a blur for both of us. We only remember the last point. We are more than happy. We are very proud of the fact we are here and won gold," Dipika said after the win.

Both pairs were neck and neck in the opening game, with none of them able to hold on to the lead. Dipika kept fetching points with her fantastic forehand.

In wrestling, Indian teen sensation Antim Panghal humbled Tokyo Olympics medallist Bolortuya Bat-Ochir 3-1 to win a bronze medal but other Indian wrestlers struggled badly at the Asian Games here on Thursday.

The 19-year-old Antim bounced back after losing to two-time Japanese world champion Akari Fujinami in the quarterfinals in a superb manner as she did not let the Mongolian attack much in the women's 53kg bronze play-off.

Antim saved the day for the Indian contingent which badly needed a medal after Narinder Cheema (Greco-Roman 97kg), Naveen (Greco-Roman 130kg) and Pooja Gehlot (women's 50kg) were ousted.

Pooja was outplayed 2-9 in the bronze medal bout by Aktege Keunimjaeva, the Asian championship bronze winner.

A lot was expected from Mansi Ahlawat (women's 57kg) too but she ended up losing her bronze play-off 'by fall' to Uzbekistan's Laylokhon

Sobirova, who needed just 70 seconds to win the contest.

Antim had come to Hangzhou after winning a bronze at the world championships and she carried her good form into the prestigious event.

Her bronze is only the second wrestling medal of this edition.

She raced to a 3-0 lead after scoring her first point on the passivity of the Mongolian and later scored off a brilliant counter-attack.

Antim foiled a single-leg attack from the Bolortuya and later lost a point in the second period when she was put on 'clock'.

In badminton, HS Prannoy battled his way to the semifinals, becoming only the first Indian in 41 years to win a medal in men's singles at the Asian Games, but it was curtains for PV Sindhu in women's singles here on Thursday.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty then progressed to the last four, becoming the second Indian men's doubles pair to secure a medal after Leroy D'Sa and Pradeep Gandhe won a bronze in 1982.

Playing with a tapping on his lower back and a belt under his shirt, Prannoy battled severe back spasms to dish out a performance for the ages, outshining Malaysia's Lee Zii Jia 21-16 21-23 22-20 in the quarterfinals to assure India a second badminton medal at the ongoing Games. India had won a silver in men's team championships last Sunday.

US refuses to catch the tiger by the tail India to meet Canada on equal footing

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

The US embassy here on Thursday rejected reports that its ambassador Eric Garcetti alerted his team about possible impact of New Delhi's diplomatic spat with Ottawa on India-US relations.

The denial came after American media outlet *The Politico* reported that "Garcetti also has said the US may need to reduce its contacts with Indian officials for an undefined period of time." The report was titled "Why Biden's mum on India-Canada spat".

"The US embassy dismisses these reports. Ambassador Garcetti is working hard every day to deepen the partnership between the people and governments of the United States and India," a US embassy spokesperson said, when asked about the report.

"As his personal engage-

ment and public schedule demonstrates, Ambassador Garcetti and the US Mission to India are working every day to advance the important, strategic, and consequential partnership we have with India," the spokesperson said.

The ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations of the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June.

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.

On September 21, India asked Canada to downsize its diplomatic presence in the country as relations between

the two countries plunged to an all-time low following Ottawa's allegations against New Delhi. India also announced temporarily suspending the issuance of visas to Canadian citizens.

The Politico, quoting an unnamed official, said, "Garcetti has told his in-country team that, because of the diplomatic spat with Canada, relations between India and the US could get worse for a time."

The White House said on Tuesday that Canada's allegations regarding India's involvement in the killing of the separatist are "serious" and need to be investigated fully.

The Joe Biden administration has so far maintained that the Canadian government's allegations need to be probed. The matter had come up during a meeting between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and US Secretary of State

Antony Blinken during the former's trip to the US.

The issue was also discussed when Jaishankar and National Security Advisor (NSA) Jake Sullivan met, John Kirby, Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the National Security Council in the White House, had said.

"We will certainly leave it to those two countries to talk about their bilateral relationship. We've been clear, these allegations are serious, they need to be fully investigated and of course, as we've said before, we urge India to participate actively in that investigation," Kirby had said.

Earlier, *The Washington Post* had reported that Canadian officials had sought public condemnation of Nijjar's murder from its allies, including the US, ahead of the G20 Summit, but found them reluctant.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A mid diplomatic stand-off between India and Canada, the External Affairs Ministry on Thursday said it is seeking parity in Canada's diplomatic presence in New Delhi. Discussions on this matter are going on.

This reiteration comes in light of reports that New Delhi has asked Ottawa to withdraw nearly 40 of its diplomats from India, setting the deadline for October 10. India has also reportedly cautioned that diplomatic immunity will be withdrawn if the Canadian diplomats do not leave the country by the stipulated date.

"Our focus is on ensuring parity in Canada's diplomatic presence," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi emphasised. "We have sought parity in



Canada's diplomatic presence in India and discussions are ongoing," he reiterated.

Bagchi said Canada has higher diplomatic presence, and the two countries are discussing achieving parity. "On discussions on parity,

given the much higher presence of diplomats here and their interference in our internal matters, we have sought parity in our respective diplomatic presence. Discussions are ongoing to achieve this. Given that Canadian diplo-

matic presence is higher, we would assume that there would be a reduction," he said.

Two weeks ago, New Delhi asked Ottawa to downsize its diplomatic presence in India. 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 Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June.

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.

Reports including the one in *The Financial Times* also said Canada has 62 diplomats in India, while New Delhi has told them to reduce the headcount to 41 at their high commission.

BJP, Congress declare poster war MP SANJAY SINGH SENT TO 5 DAY ED CUSTODY

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

With the election season on the horizon, the rivalry between the Congress and the BJP has spilled over into the virtual world, where both parties are engaging in a poster war targeting each other on social media.

A day after the Congress posted a picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the caption "The Biggest Liar" and another calling him a "Jumla Boy," who was "going to hit the election rally soon," the ruling BJP at the Centre on Thursday shared a poster portraying former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi as a "new age Ravan," evoking strong criticism from the Opposition party, which termed it "unacceptable" and "downright dangerous."

In a sharp retort, the BJP shared the poster of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on social media

son Jairam Ramesh said it is intended to incite and provoke violence against the former Congress chief, whose father and grandmother were assassinated by forces that want to divide India.

Ramesh said, "It is one thing for the PM to give evidence daily of being a pathological liar and suffering from a narcissistic personality disorder. But for him to get his party to produce something this obnoxious is not just completely unacceptable but downright dangerous."

"We will not be intimidated," the Congress leader also asserted.

Indian Youth Congress president Srinivas B V posted another poster on X portraying Modi as "MODANAV."

"The new age MODANAV is here. He is Evil. Anti Democracy. Anti Constitution. Anti People. Anti Humanity. His only aim is to destroy Bharat and the idea of INDIA," he said on X along with the poster titled "Hindustan Khatre mein hai — MODANAV. A Bharat Jumlebaaj Party production. Directed by Param Mitra Adani."

As the battle lines between the two main parties get drawn



BJP shared the poster of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on social media

PTI

in the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, their leaders have intensified their attacks against each other.

The poster war between the two parties is likely to escalate further in the coming months as elections in five States and the general elections draw near. Earlier also, both the parties had launched cartoon strips against leaders of both the opposing parties on social media.

A day earlier, senior BJP leader and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa shared images of Rahul's visit to Golden Temple and compared it with action on Punjab unrest by former PM Indira Gandhi, saying, "while grandmother sprayed bullets, grandson is doing seva."

AICC general secretary KC Venugopal said in a statement, "No words are enough to condemn the shameful graphic on the BJP handle comparing Rahul to Ravan. Their nefarious intentions are clear; they want to murder him. He, who lost his grandmother and father to assassinations."

The Congress also reminded the withdrawal of SPG protection to the Gandhi family to score petty political points."

The Special Enforcement Directorate Court at Rouse Avenue on Thursday sent Rajya Sabha member and senior AAP leader Sanjay Singh to five days custody until October 10 in the case related to the Delhi excise policy scam.

During the hearing, the probe agency had sought ten days remand, stating it wanted to confront the AAP MP with the digital evidence, including evidence from his phone, against him in the case.

After the court order, Singh said, "False and baseless allegations. We are not scared. We will fight back."

While being brought to the courtroom, Singh said his arrest was "an act of injustice" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose party is "going to lose the next Lok Sabha elections."

"This is Modi's injustice. He will lose the election. He is losing the election," he told the media.

Later, when the court asked him whether he wanted to say

something, Singh claimed he is being treated unfairly.

The ED alleged that the money was delivered by Sarvesh, an employee of Dinesh Arora. "There is a direct link to the proceeds of crime," the ED counsel told the court.

"A total of ₹2 crore transactions are there in two tranches... Dinesh's C39 confirmed this... A total of 239 places were searched. The investigation has revealed that ₹2 crore cash was given. A total of ₹3 crore was given," the ED submitted.

Senior Advocate Mohit Mathur, appearing for Singh, opposed the ED's plea for 10 days remand. Mathur argued, "This case investigation keeps going and will never end. Dinesh, who is a star witness, was made an accused earlier by both agencies, and later he turned approver in the case. His stand is changing. When the statement was not favourable to the ED, the agency arrested him. Now he has turned approver. He changes his statement, and the ED arrests me (Singh) on that statement."

"There are separate agen-

das. Dinesh is in their hands for the last one and a half years. The statement was given earlier. Why is it being brought up now? Once you had the statement, you did not call me for an explanation. You want to humiliate me by arresting me (Singh)," Mathur said.

"I am not so unknown that he (Amit Arora) did not remember my name while giving earlier statements. Dinesh also did not remember my name. What happened suddenly that he gave all the statements against me? They are spreading lies, and this investigation is baseless. If I am guilty, give me the harshest punishment. All I want to say is that there cannot be a different law for me. You are sitting on the chair of justice," he said.

Singh is the third high-profile arrest of the AAP leader in the excise policy case. AAP communications in-charge Vijay Nair was arrested in September 2022. Then Deputy Chief Minister and AAP leader, Manish Sisodia was arrested in February 2023.

AAP gheraos Mumbai ED office to protest Sanjay arrest

by TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Unfazed by detention of several of their senior party leaders, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) workers staged a vehement protest in front of the office of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in south Mumbai against the "illegal" arrest of their party MP and leader Sanjay Singh in the national capital.

In a massive crackdown on the party's senior leadership in the city ahead of their protest in front of ED's office, the city police had earlier in the morning detained Mumbai AAP chief Preeti Sharma Menon,

working president Ruben Mascarenhas, vice president Plus Varghese and 15 other party leaders from their homes across the metropolis.

Undeterred by the detention of their party leaders, hundreds of AAP workers — led by party's Mumbai unit working president Dvijendra Tiwari — descended in front of the ED office in south Mumbai, carrying banners, posters and staged a noisy protest against the "illegal" "draconian" arrest of Singh. They raised vociferous slogans against the Narendra Modi government and demanded the release of their leader.

The protesting AAP work-

ers resisted attempts by the city police to quell them, prompting the law enforcement officials to detain more than 100 activists into their waiting van and take them away.

Apart from Tiwari, AAP's vice-presidents Sandeep Katke, Meenal Jain, and Mehmoed Deshmukh and joint secretaries Mahesh Chawda and Sandeep Mehta were part of Thursday's protest staged in front of the ED office.

Earlier, taking to "X" ahead of her detention earlier in the morning, Mumbai AAP chief Preeti Sharma Menon came down heavily on the Mumbai police for their "strong tactics" to prevent them staging a



protest against Singh's arrest in Delhi.

"The police have reached my home. They are not allowing me to leave for the protest. In 12 years of public life I have

never seen such a cowardly administration! @CPMumbaiPolice @mumbaipolice not handle a simple protest! Shame on @Dev_Fadnavis," Preeti wrote.

"So much police deployment outside my humble home! Looks like all criminals are on holiday and @mumbaipolice has no other work. Please go home guys," she stated.

Alleging that the AAP leaders' detention was aimed at prevention of the AAP workers from staging the protest, AAP's working president Ruben Mascarenhas wrote on "X": "This morning at 7.30 am @mumbaipolice came home and took me to the Juhu Police Station. Still here. No reason has been given. This is a deliberate attempt to not allow @AAPMumbai's protest against Sanjay Singh's arrest

outside the ED Office. Protest won't stop."

Later in the day, Mascarenhas said in a statement released to the media: "Sanjay Singh has been the voice of the masses and the marginalised in Parliament. He has dared to speak the truth and has held the Modi government accountable for its incompetence. He has been a thorn in the flesh of the Modi government and the powers that be, relentlessly exposing their misdeeds and treachery."

"Despite ED conducting so many raids, they have not been able to find even an iota of evidence, the BJP cannot defeat AAP politically, hence

these irrational, cooked-up and false charges. We are an honest party. We are not scared of the BJP's fear-mongering tactics," Mascarenhas said.

Charging that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was rattled with the prospect of his impending defeat in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Preeti said: "It is his desperation that is driving him to force the ED to target the Opposition. We are the Aam Aadmi Party. We have emerged from a people's movement and won't be cowed down no matter what Modi-Shah and the BJP resort to. We are fighting a good fight. We will prevail. Satyameva Jayate."

Maharashtra powerhouse of Indian economy: Fadnavis

by PNS ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Taiwan Expo 2023 was inaugurated by Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra Devendra Fadnavis at the Exhibition Centre in Mumbai's Goregaon area on Thursday. This exhibition will continue till October 7.

In his inaugural address, Fadnavis said, "On behalf of the Government of Maharashtra, I welcome you all to Mumbai which is known as the financial and entertainment capital of India. Taiwan Expo is one of the largest event organised by TAITRA (Taiwan External Trade Development Council)."

He further said, "I feel very proud that after organising two successful events in India's national Capital in 2018 and



2019, the exhibition is being organised for the first time this outside Delhi."

He thanked the organisers for choosing Mumbai as the venue for the event.

Fadnavis called Maharashtra the "powerhouse of the Indian economy".

He said, "Maharashtra contributes more than 15 per cent of India's GDP and 21 per

cent of India's total exports. Maharashtra contributes 29 per cent of India's FDI and 20 per cent of the country's total industrial production.

The three-day Expo themed on the concept of 'Explore Taiwan in India' offers an opportunity to showcase top of the line products from Taiwan brands to introduce them into the Indian market and secure networking opportunities with new and existing clients.

This year the expo will have 6 themes, 7 pavilions on display across key categories like Smart Manufacturing, Smart City, Smart Medical, Smart Agriculture, Smart Lifestyle and EV.

Fadnavis claimed, "I want Maharashtra to reach \$1 trillion GDP by 2028."

The Deputy Chief Minister

of Maharashtra believes that Maharashtra has as crucial role in India's growth.

Organised by Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA), Taiwan Expo is its flagship exhibition to fortify the ties between Taiwan and the ASEAN countries including India.

Since its inception in 2017, Taiwan Expo has emerged as a leading platform for Taiwanese businesses to explore new opportunities, exchange ideas, and forge partnerships in ASEAN, South Asia, and North America.

Thus, the Expo is credited to be the premier online sourcing hub in ASEAN countries and India.

This year the Expo is spread across a sprawling area of 3107 sqmts at the NESCO Exhibition centre housing

some of the best-in-class products from Taiwan. In addition to presenting smart manufacturing-related products such as FFKM/Perfluoro elastomer (Maxmod Polymer Co., Ltd) and Additive Manufacturing Service (Rayvatek INC.), as well as lifestyle products like Educational Learning Toys (Honeycomb Learning Corporation), another stand-out feature of the expo is smart medical.

Fadnavis said, "This expo is a great opportunity to come and partner with companies on cutting edge products so that we can make them in India and consume domestically as well as supply to the world. I also feel that this exhibition is the beginning of a long-standing relationship between TAITRA and my government."

Officer booked after Rohingya woman gets domicile certificate in Kishtwar

by MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A revelation that a Rohingya woman (an illegal immigrant from Myanmar), staying in Kishtwar for over a decade after getting married to a local resident, has now obtained a domicile certificate and is also in possession of an Aadhar card has rattled the Union Territory administration in Jammu and Kashmir.

According to a preliminary investigation done by the Kishtwar police, the domicile certificate was issued to Anwara Begum, a resident of Dachhan three years ago in the month of September 2020.

To further investigate the matter and ascertain more facts in the case the Kishtwar police have lodged an FIR against one

of the senior Revenue Department officers, a local facilitator, for issuing a fake domicile certificate in the name of a foreign national.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Kishtwar Khalil Poswal while briefing media persons about the ongoing investigation in the case said, "We have registered FIR No. 22/2023 under Sections 467, 468, 471, 120-B and 420 IPC at Police Station Dachhan". All three including the accused, the issuing authority, and the one who facilitated the same have been booked," he added.

SSP Khalil Poswal said he have rushed a police team to seize the relevant documents so that they can be examined by forensic experts before proceeding ahead. No arrest has

been made, he clarified.

According to SSP Kishtwar, some members of the Rohingya community have been staying in the Dachhan area of Kishtwar for a long time. The Rohingya woman in question has been living in the Dachhan area for over a decade now.

SSP Kishtwar maintained further action in the case would be taken only after verifying the documents and establishing the involvement of the government officials behind issuing these fake certificates.

SSP Kishtwar clarified, "Domiciles are only meant for citizens of India and the issued certificates are fake". Members of the Rohingya community have been staying in Jammu and Kashmir across different district headquarters.

High Court refuses immunity to Abhishek

by SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A Division Bench of the Calcutta High Court on Thursday refused to grant any immunity (from arrest) to Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee while severely admonishing the Enforcement Directorate for lax investigation into the recruitment scam.

"The Division Bench of Justice Soumen Sen and Uday Kumar strongly reprimanded the ED for failing to do anything worthwhile in the last 19 months and also fixed a time limit of December 31 by which the Agency will have to complete the investigation," advocate Vikram Sarkar said adding the Court fixed the time limit in a verbal order.

The Court however said that Banerjee who had earlier been directed by the ED to appear before it in October will not have to do so for the time being. Rather he will have to submit all the relevant documents to the ED by October 10 post which the latter will get a time to scrutinize it till October 12.

If there is any discrepancy in his documents then the ED



will summon the Diamond Harbour MP, the Court ordered directing the Agency to grill the TMC politician as long as it wanted to extract the truth.

When the ED told the Court that Banerjee was not cooperating in the investigation process, the "Court told the officials that they should be prepared with the documents and grill him as long as they want ... if required they can question him for 9 hours, 12 hours, 15 hours or even the subsequent days ... but they will have to speedily extract the truth so that the case is cracked by December 31," the advocate said.

During the argument when Banerjee's advocate Abhishek Many Singhvi prayed for a protective shield for Banerjee who is also the nephew of Chief

Minister Mamata Banerjee, the Court refused to do so.

ED raids Bengal Minister, civic authorities

by PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

After getting repeated raps on their knuckles for the job-protection investigation into the floppy-cash case the Enforcement Directorate officials on Thursday conducted multiple raids including in the houses of Bengal Food Minister Rathin Ghosh and municipal chairpersons of Kamarhati, and Barangar municipalities adjacent to Kolkata. The houses of a vice chairperson, a councillor, a retired IAS officer were also raided, sources said.

Raids were conducted for more than 14 hours in 12 locations in connection with the municipal services scam, officials said adding documents and digital evidence were collected from the locations.

NHRC issues notice to Maharashtra chief secretary over death of patients in Government hospitals in Nanded

by T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Taking suo motu cognisance of the news reports about the deaths of a large number of patients in two State-run hospitals in Nanded and Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar districts in Maharashtra in a span of 24 hours, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Thursday issued a notice to the State chief secretary, seeking a detailed report within four weeks on the incident and the status of infrastructure and man power in the two hospitals.

In a development that came a day after the Bombay High Court took a similar suo motu cognisance and scheduled a hearing in the matter on Friday, the NHRC took note of reports in the media that the patients had allegedly died in these hospitals "due to a lack of medical help and a shortage of essential medicines".

"The commission has observed that the contents of the media report, if true, amount to a violation of human rights relating to the life and health of the victims due to negligence by public authorities, which is a matter of concern,"

a statement put out by the NHRC.

Through its notice to the State Chief Secretary, the NHRC asked the Maharashtra government to inform it about the action taken against the public servants responsible for maintaining the two hospitals and also let it know about the status of the relief and rehabilitation provided to the aggrieved families.

"The commission would also like to know about the steps taken or proposed by the State Government to ensure that such unfortunate deaths do not recur in the future," a statement released by the NHRC said.

Meanwhile, the Maharashtra Congress on Thursday demanded that the families of 100-odd patients, including newly born babies — who died in the government hospitals of Nanded, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, and Nagpur — be paid a compensation of ₹10 lakh per affected family by the State Government.

A delegation of the State Congress, led by its president Nana Patole, met Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais and handed over a memorandum, also demanding that the Eknath Shinde Government be dismissed for "lack of basic medical services" in the Government-run hospitals.

Flying squad busts illegal de-addiction centre in Gurugram

by STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

A joint team of the chief minister's flying squad and the health department busted a drug de-addiction centre being run illegally in Gurugram area and arrested one of its operators. According to police, the accused charged ₹10,000 to ₹15,000 for a normal room, while ₹15,000 to ₹16,000 for a VIP room with facilities like AC room and LED screen TV. An FIR in this regard has been registered at Sector 5 Police Station, police said.

They said that 31 drug addicts were found at the centre, which was being run without a doctor and addicts were given medicines by the operators. On the basis of a tip-off, a joint raid was conducted Wednesday night at a drug de-addiction centre named 'Nai Umeed', which was being run from house number 23 in New Amanpura colony, said Inspector Harish Kumar of the CM's flying squad.

The drug addicts in the centre were being treated for liquor, smack, ganja, snuff, chit-ta, heroin injection and other contraband for the last three years without a doctor, he said. The team during the raid arrested one of the operators identi-



ified as Vinay Rathi, a resident of Jhajjar, Kumar said.

"During questioning, Vinay Rathi revealed that the drug de-addiction centre was being run for the last three years where medicines were also given to the addict patients without a doctor's advice," the inspector said. "Rathi revealed he runs this de-addiction centre along with Devendra Yadav and Naresh Gehlot," he added.

An FIR was registered against Rathi, Yadav, and Gehlot under sections 420 (cheating), 342 (wrongful confinement), 347 (confining for extortion), and 120-B (criminal conspiracy) of the IPC following a complaint filed by Deputy Civil Surgeon Keshav Sharma, police said.

All the patients were shifted to another drug de-addiction centre and Rathi was arrested, he added. "We are questioning Rathi and conducting raids to nab his other two accomplices," said Sub-Inspector Jajmal, the investigating officer.

HC allows holding of Ram Leela on Janakpuri ground

by STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Fresh air and healthy environment are the lifeline for survival but the significance of socio-cultural activities cannot be ignored or overlooked, the Delhi High Court on Thursday said while allowing the holding of Ram Leela on a ground in Janakpuri.

Addressing concerns over pollution, traffic congestion as well as serious damage to trees because of such events being organised in parks, a bench headed by Justice Suresh Kumar Kait said a mechanism has to be put in place to ensure these programmes are held in a regulated manner without causing any damage to the environment.

"While it needs no reiteration that fresh air, oxygen and healthy environment is the lifeline for survival of individuals, however, being social beings, socio-cultural activities are equally essential part for human co-existence," said the bench, also comprising Justice Neena Bansal Krishna, in an order.

CBI searches 4 Mumbai locations in connection with CBFC bribery

by RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Thursday conducted searches at four locations in Mumbai at the premises of three accused named in an FIR registered in connection with actor Vishal's allegations that he had to pay ₹6.5 lakh to get a certificate for the Hindi-dubbed version of his film "Mark Antony" from the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC).

In its FIR, the CBI has named unidentified officials of CBFC besides three private persons whose premises were searched during the day. The searches led to recovery of incriminating documents, CBI said. The agency has booked private persons — Merlin Menaga, Jeeja Ramdas and Rajan M — in the bribery case. Vishal said the bribe was demanded to issue the CBFC certificate for his film within 24 hours.

Churning in alliance politics in Kerala

by KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A churning process is on in Kerala's political skylines as minuscule parties with one or two members in the legislature assembly are reworking their future plans viz-a-viz the two main outfits, the CPI-M and the Congress.

The Lok Tantrik Janata Dal led by M V Shreyams Kumar who owns the second largest Malayalam daily Mathrubhumi and many coffee plantations, is disgusted with the CPI-M because of the latter's Big Brother attitude and denial of a Rajya Sabha seat to the former.

Shreyams Kumar is the son of late M P Veerendra Kumar former MP and a minister of State in the Deve Gowda government at the Centre, who shuttled between the Congress and the Marxist camps to suit the political convenience.

On Saturday, the LTJD

will merge with the RJD od Laloo Prasad Yadav at a function to be held at Kozhikode. Yadav who has been sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for his role in the multi crore fodder scam and who has been granted bail by the Supreme Court following his ailments, is travelling to Kozhikode along with his son Tejaswi Yadav, the deputy chief minister of Bihar as well as the heir apparent to preside over the merger.

Sources in LTJD told The Pioneer that a deal has been worked out between the RJD leadership and Shreyams Kumar to nominate the latter to the Rajya Sabha from Bihar. Since both Laloo Prasad Yadav and Shreyams Kumar are secularists to th core, there was no irritants to the merger process. The LTJD could continue to be in the CPI-M led LDF as the Marxists too are the constituents of the I.N.D.I.A front led by the Congress.

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क्रमांक: 233/यां.वि./23 भोपाल, दिनांक 04.10.2023

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KEY DATES

Tender Publication Date	: 05.10.2023
Sale/Downloading Tender Document	: 05.10.2023
Last Date for Submission	: 26.10.2023
Technical Bid Opening	: 26.10.2023
Financial Bid Opening	: 31.10.2023

M.P. Madhyam/112469/2023 **SECRETARY**

Sanjay arrest: BJP offers prayers, AAP protests

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital on Thursday witnessed protests and counter-protests over the arrest of Rajya Sabha MP and AAP leader Sanjay Singh in connection with a money laundering case linked to the now-scrapped excise policy.

AAP workers gathered at the BJP headquarters holding banners and clogging the entire stretch for hours, against the arrest, the Delhi BJP leaders flocked to Rajghat for a prayer meeting for the "liberation" of people from the "corrupt" AAP Government in the city.

AAP protesters raising slogans against the BJP, met with police barricades as they marched towards the BJP headquarters with banners, raising slogans against the party at helm at the Centre. Senior leaders Gopal Rai and Atishi Jarnail Singh, Priyanka Kakkar and Reena Gupta were among those present at the protest.

A scuffle broke out between AAP workers and the police after which some of them were detained. The entire area witnessed beefed up

security with barricades set up at several points across the road that leads up to the grand BJP office. Special Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Dendra Pathak said they have made adequate arrangements to contain the protesters.

"We have made proper arrangements and there are enough police personnel. We do not want law and order to deteriorate at any cost. We have been constantly communicating with the cadre (of AAP)," he said.

Earlier, addressing a press conference, senior AAP leader and Delhi Cabinet minister Atishi claimed that over 500 officers of the ED and CBI conducted raids at various places linked to the AAP leaders in the last 15 months but "haven't found a single evidence" against them.

"They raided Manish Sisodia's residence, offices and several other places but they couldn't find evidence of corruption of even a single penny. And now, Sanjay Singh has been targeted," she said.

"The ED officers raided every inch of Sanjay Singh's residence but couldn't find anything. They arrested him

because he constantly raised issues of Centre's corruption," she added.

Atishi further said if there is any evidence against their leader, the Centre "should make it public". "I want to challenge the BJP that if they found any evidence against Sanjay Singh, they should make it public or they should quit politics."

"They can send their officers anywhere where Sanjay Singh visited and I can vouch that they will not find anything against him," she claimed. She further charged that the Centre is "trying to silence" Sanjay Singh by arresting him.

"We all know that whenever someone raises their voice against the government, there will be attempts to silence them. Since they couldn't silence him, they arrested him. The BJP should know that AAP is not going to get scared of their arrest threats," she said.

Rai who was also present during the press conference said, "We went to Sanjay Singh's residence and his family told us that the ED didn't find anything against him, yet he was arrested. Until evening, the ED kept reiterating that it



was just a part of the investigation process. But suddenly there were instructions from the higher authorities to arrest him.

"The Centre is misusing ED and CBI by taking action against those who dare to speak up against rising inflation, poverty, and unemployment in the country. Even if the Central Government arrests all the leaders of the AAP, we won't bow down. We've been raising our voice for the country, its constitution and democracy and will continue to do so," he said. AAP

leader and MLA Dilip Pandey called the ED and CBI "campaigners" roped in by the BJP ahead of the general election.

AAP leader Saurabh Bharadwaj alleged that more opposition leaders will be "targeted and arrested" in the future. "BJP can understand that they will be defeated in the upcoming elections and hence, they are getting opposition leaders arrested. Many other opposition leaders will be arrested in future also," Bharadwaj alleged.

While BJP MPs, MLAs along with other party leaders held a prayer meeting at Mahatma Gandhi's memorial Rajghat on Thursday for "liberation" of people from the "corrupt" AAP Government in the city.

After the prayer meeting, Bidhuri said that the entire party of Arvind Kejriwal is based on the foundation of corruption and now the pillars of this building have started falling one by one.

He said Manish Sisodia and now Sanjay Singh are under investigation in the liquor scam and very soon Arvind Kejriwal will also be under investigation. Bidhuri said that Kejriwal has now

become synonymous with corruption, the fall of his government is certain soon.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said the struggle for liberation of the people from "corrupt" Arvind Kejriwal government will continue, alleging that the chief minister was the "kingpin" of the alleged liquor scam in Delhi.

"Mahatma Gandhi used to say alcohol destroys both the body and the soul, Sachdeva said. "Kejriwal has not only destroyed the soul but also the entire Aam Aadmi Party," he said, hitting out at the AAP National Convener and the Delhi Chief Minister.

BJP MP Harshvardhan said, "AAP leaders visited this place (Rajghat) a lot. However, we are now witnessing that they are the ones who are crushing the ethics of politics,"

BJP MP Parvesh Sahib Singh, said the "liquor scam was unearthed" with the "blessings of Gandhi...who always opposed alcohol". "The day is not far when the mastermind of liquor policy Arvind Kejriwal will also go to jail," he claimed.

Spokesperson Shehzad Poonawala and MP Parvesh

Verma also alleged during a press conference at the BJP's national headquarters that Kejriwal is the "kingpin" behind the "scam" and his role will soon be investigated.

"Doesn't Kejriwal have faith in the judiciary of the country that his party is protesting and spending such huge amount of money to save the corrupt?" Verma asked. He also claimed that Kejriwal has spent ₹60 crore on "big lawyers" to "save" Singh and Sisodia, both accused in the case. Kejriwal and his entire party are trying to defend Singh, who was caught in the "liquor scam", the BJP leaders said.

"AAP leaders are nervous after Singh's arrest and are saying absurd things. Arvind Kejriwal, who calls himself an IRS (Indian Revenue Service) officer, is the actual mastermind in the liquor scam and he is also going to be under investigation soon," they said. Alleging that Kejriwal and his party always play the victim card, Verma said they are now saying that the BJP is scared because of the elections.

"These things will not help Kejriwal and the AAP when ED asks questions to Sanjay Singh," he said.

SC observes lapses in liquor probe against Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Observing series of lapses in investigation, the Supreme Court on Thursday sought to know from the CBI and the ED whether there was any evidence of bribery which could implicate former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in the Delhi Excise policy scam.

At one point the bench observed these kind of probes would collapse the case in trial stage during cross examination.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and SVN Bhatti said that merely because lobby groups or pressure groups had called for a certain policy shift, would not by itself imply that corruption or a crime has taken place unless there is an element of bribery involved.

"We understand there is a policy change and everybody wants a change that will be beneficial for them. That will be there. If we say special groups are discriminatory ... without money consideration, it will not make out an offence ... If we go to that extent, there will be no pressure groups or even vested interests when a policy decision is taken then ... Some pressure

and conflict will always be there. Of course, bribes cannot be accepted," the bench observed, questioning the probe agencies.

The Court was hearing bail pleas filed by Sisodia, who is in judicial custody in connection with the Delhi excise policy scam case. The bench also queried whether there was any indication that to connect the proceeds of the alleged money laundering activity with Sisodia.

"How will you establish money laundering by Sisodia factually and legally? ... He may be aware it may be used, as per your case, but he never came in actual physical possession," said the Judges, expressing displeasure over the arguments of the agencies, opposing bail to Sisodia.

"Question is, is he not directly or indirectly involved in illegal activity or process? ... When you make a policy that triggers bribes which acts as proceeds of crimes," replied Additional Solicitor General SV Raju. "Generation of money is not an offence under Section 3 (of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act/ PMLA)," the apex court pointed out. Arguments in the matter will



continue next Wednesday.

The scam involves allegations that Delhi Government officials had connived to grant liquor licenses to certain traders in exchange for bribes. The accused officials are alleged to have tweaked the excise policy to benefit certain liquor sellers. Sisodia's counsel, Senior Advocate Dr AM Singhvi observed that the query was widely publicised in newspaper headlines.

"Yesterday, your Lordships put a query about links with me. Several newspaper headlines say, 'why is AAP not made a party?' ... Today morning all the channels are carrying that ED wants to make AAP a party ... A chain starts ... Now they are making AAP accused

who had paid substantial sums as bribes. He added that the exchequer lost revenue after the policy was set at 12%.

"Earlier it was that 5% (duty) was minimum and 12% was maximum. No one will keep it more than 5, therefore to make it certain they fixed it at 12% to benefit some. That is the criminal mischief. Therefore the offence," he added. The ASG also asserted that there was incriminating evidence against Sisodia in WhatsApp messages and emails.

However, the Bench referring to some of these emails and said that advocating for a certain policy and expressing support for it did not necessarily equate to wrongdoing. ASG Raju countered that the Court that the accused had communicated via the Signal app and therefore, their messages could not be traced. The Court inquired whether there was evidence of the accused discussing bribery and if so, whether such discussions would be admissible.

"Have you seen them (co-accused Vijay Nair or Sisodia) discussing this? Will it be

admissible? Isn't the statement (by an approver) hearsay? It is an inference but has to be based on evidence. In cross examination this will fall flat in two minutes," the Court remarked. The Court also questioned whether the central agencies' case against Sisodia was entirely hinged only on statements by approvers.

"How do you establish kickbacks were given? Is it entirely on the basis of approvers' statements?" the Court said. "Indospirits (a liquor distributor, whose MD has been arrested in the case) was earlier not eligible for liquor license. Manish Sisodia came and removed all obstacles, that is his role, all complaints were made to be taken back after threatening. Kindly look," the ASG replied.

He added that the plan of the accused persons was to give the 'South Group' (a liquor group) a monopoly over wholesale liquor sale in Delhi. Three wholesalers were allowed to corner the market, he added. "A wholesale retailer was pressured to walk out without any show cause notice," the ASG argued. The hearing will continue next week, on Wednesday.

Cases filed against AAP leaders false, waste of time, asserts Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said all the cases filed against his party leaders are "false", asserting that probing these cases is a waste of time of the Centre and its agencies.

Answering a question over Supreme Court's observations on the bail application of former deputy CM Manish Sisodia in the excise policy case, Kejriwal said, "The way the court asked questions, it felt that they (agencies) have in a way lodged wrong cases against us."

The top court Thursday said it was only asking a "legal question" from the Enforcement Directorate about Aam Aadmi Party not being made an accused in the Delhi excise policy case despite being an alleged beneficiary.

Kejriwal said so many cases were lodged by the agencies but nothing came out after



their investigation.

"All cases are false. They (agencies) keep investigating but nothing comes out of the probe. It's a waste of time. The way the Supreme Court was asking questions today (in connection with Manish Sisodia case) shows that it was a false case," Kejriwal told reporters on the sidelines of a programme here.

He said the probes into fake cases waste time of everyone including the government and its agencies. "All should work for the progress of the country. Framing anyone in fake cases will not help the country to progress," he said.

7 teachers lose job for getting selection on forged documents

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena ordered the termination of the seven Trained Graduate Teacher (TGT) and Post Graduate Teacher (PGT) teachers appointed at the Delhi Tamil Education Association in 2022 allegedly on forged documents.

The Lt Governor also approved a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry into their appointments following the recommendations of the Directorate of Vigilance (DoV). The DoV found that these appointments were made in collusion with the officials of the Directorate of Education and the school management.

Saxena has also asked for a scrutiny of records of recruitment at Government-aided schools over the last 10 years and constituted a committee to study the appointment process in these schools, the statement said.

The action by the LG came over recommendation of the Delhi government's Directorate of Vigilance that found an alleged "collusion" between the Education Department and the school management in the said appointments, it said.

No immediate reaction was available from the Education Department and the school management concerned.

While terminating the seven TGT and PGT teachers, the LG approved recommendation of the vigilance department for a CBI probe into their appointment at the Delhi



Government-aided school allegedly through use of forged documents, it said.

"The LG agreed with the proposal of the DoV, which found a prima facie collusion between the officials of Directorate of Education and the Delhi Tamil Education Association (DTEA), where 51 candidates were appointed on various posts in the year 2022.

"However, it was found that 7 selected teachers for TGT and PGT posts had submitted fake experience certificates," read the statement.

The forged experience certificate was crucial in securing the job as each year of experience gave one extra mark to the candidate, it stated.

As per the terms and conditions of Education Department, the school management was required to verify all the certificates of the selected candidates.

"While the certificates needed to be verified by seeking and obtaining appointment letters, details of payments made along with bank details, copy of attendance register of the school showing their attendance, none of these criteria was fulfilled by the school management," it alleged.

Court grants Dhawan divorce from wife

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A family court in Delhi on Wednesday granted divorce to cricketer Shikhar Dhawan on the ground of mental cruelty by his estranged wife Aesha Dhawan. Aesha did not contest the case after "a reasonable stage" hence, the allegations raised by Dhawan was accepted as unopposed and unchallenged.

Judge Harish Kumar while noting that the marriage was "dead long ago" and parties have not been living as husband and wife since August, 2020 said, "Respondent's intentional decision to leave this matter uncontested also show her desire that court should pass decree of divorce even at the cost of holding her guilty of



matrimonial offense as she knows that no harm could be caused to her even if she is held to have treated the petitioner with cruelty because she has already obtained sufficient favourable orders from the Court in Australia."

Dhawan alleged that respondent wife had assured to live with him in India, however due to her commitment to her former husband she stayed

in Australia with her two children from her previous marriage and her son with Dhawan.

The court noted, "... it stands proved that respondent backtracked from her assurance of setting up matrimonial home in India after marriage and thus made the petitioner suffer a long distance marriage and suffer immense agony and anguish of living separately from his own son for years."

Other allegations of Dhawan like compelling him to make her co-owner of three properties that he had bought in Australia were also accepted by the Court as Aesha did not contest it.

Since petitioner is a reputed International Cricketer and has been pride of the nation, subject to petitioner approaching the Union Government of India, it is requested to take up the issue of visitation/custody of the minor son with its counterpart in Australia to help him have regular visitation or chatting with his own son or his permanent custody," the court ordered.

As per Dhawan's plea, the wife had initially said she would live with him in India. However, she failed to do so owing to a commitment to her ex-husband

with whom she has two daughters. The wife had committed to her ex-husband not to leave Australia where she presently lives with her two daughters and a son from Dhawan.

He (Dhawan) for no fault of his own had been through immense agony and anguish of living separately from his own son for years.

Even though the wife denied the allegation, submitting that though she genuinely wanted to live in India with him, however due to her commitment towards her daughters from her previous marriage requiring her to stay in Australia, she could not come to live in India and that he was well aware of her commitment, yet she did not choose to contest the claim," the judge noted.

LG orders release of salaries for Social Welfare Homes contractual employees

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a major relief to 281 contractual workers of Delhi Government-run Social Welfare Homes who have been facing financial hardship due to non-payment of wages for over five months, Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has ordered release of their wages.

These contractual staff were working in these homes, with Saxena giving nod to the proposal for release of wages for the period from 01.04.2023 to 31.03.2024. The LG noted that the wages of these workers were due for payment since April 2023. The disbursement of wages to these contrac-

tual staff was stuck as some of them have challenged in Central Administrative Tribunal and Delhi High Court the proposal of the Social Welfare Department to change the nature of employment from contractual to outsourced basis," Raj Niwas said in a statement.

"However, considering the fact that the disposal of appeals filed by the Department to vacate the status quo orders, may take some more time and financial hardship of these workers would escalate further, the LG agreed to the proposal which was endorsed by the Chief Secretary for release of wages w.e.f. 01.04.2023 to 31.03.2024," it said.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

17 Nurses (GNM), 34 Nurses (ANM), 01 Cook, 05 Kitchen Helper, 01 LDC and 02 Peons working in these homes, with Saxena giving nod to the proposal for release of wages for the period from 01.04.2023 to 31.03.2024. The LG noted that the wages of these workers were due for payment since April 2023. The disbursement of wages to these contrac-



Metro announces expansion of WhatsApp ticketing system

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Metro on Thursday announced the expansion of its WhatsApp-based ticketing system to all lines including Gurugram Rapid Metro service.

In an official statement, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) said, "DMRC today announced the expansion of its innovative WhatsApp-based ticketing system. After a successful launch on the Airport Express Line in June, DMRC has now extended this cutting-edge service to cover all lines in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR), including the Gurugram Rapid Metro in collaboration with Meta and their authorized partner Pelocal Fintech Pvt. Ltd."

"This user-friendly WhatsApp chatbot is available in both English and Hindi, catering to a wide range of metro riders... With the introduction of this WhatsApp-based ticketing system, metro travellers now have the convenience of purchasing tickets with just a single click, from the comfort of their homes or workplaces," it added.

Since its introduction on the Airport Express Line in June, passengers have been experiencing the convenience of this service. Passengers can now simply send a message with the text 'Hi' to +91 9650855800 on WhatsApp or scan the QR code to effortlessly purchase metro tickets using their smartphones across the whole network.

Adopt ruthless approach to destroy terror ecosystem: Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday exhorted the security agencies to dismantle its entire ecosystem and must adopt such a ruthless approach that a new terrorist organisation cannot be formed.

Inaugurating a two-day anti-terror conference organized by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) here, the Home Minister said the Central and State agencies have succeeded in firmly curbing all forms of terrorism in the country in the last 9 years.

"Model Anti-terrorism Structure" should be established under the purview of NIA, the hierarchy, structure, and SoPs of investigation of all anti-terrorism agencies in all the States should be made uniform for better coordination between Central and State agencies, Shah, adding, the NIA and the Intelligence Bureau (IB) to take initiative in this direction.

Noting that the task of



NIA, Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) and Special Task Forces (STFs) should not be limited to investigation but they should also think out of the box and take innovative measures to counter the terrorism.

Shah said that the fight against terrorism requires collaboration from the global level to the grassroots, involving various States within the country, as well as international cooperation.

He said that the number of terrorist incidents in the year 2001 was 6,000, which the

government has now reduced to 900 in 2022.

He lauded the NIA for achieving more than 94 percent conviction rate and said more work is needed in this direction. He also asked all the States to take steps to increase the conviction rate.

He also stressed that all the agencies of the Center and the State should make multidimensional and Artificial Intelligence-based use of the database, only then will we be successful in the fight against terrorism. "The database

should be used for investigation, prosecution, prevention and action and every police station as well as young police officers to make maximum use of the database," he said.

Referring to the recent operations against drug cartels, Shah said that with the cooperation of the Central and State Governments, major successes have been achieved in the fight against drugs.

"These achievements include Operation Samudragupta, conducted this year under the leadership of Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), during which narcotics worth more than Rs 12,000 crore were seized simultaneously.

Apart from this, 10 lakh kilograms of drugs have also been disposed of," he said.

The agencies participating in the conference should make five actionable points in every session of the two-day conference and send them to the Union Home Ministry for further action.

China's assertiveness more evident with its rise: CDS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Given China's assertiveness with its rise, India will have to take this aspect into account in its overall "strategic calculus," Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan said here on Thursday.

Delving into disruptions in global geopolitical order, he also underlined the need for India to continue maintaining "strategic autonomy" in its approach and that the country move forward from its approach of "non-alignment" to an era of being a "Vishwamitra" — a friend to the world.

Making these assertions in the fifth General KV Krishna Rao memorial lecture, General Chauhan also referred to India's "major dispute" on its northern borders with China and suggested that New Delhi will have to play a strategic autonomy card.



"The strategic autonomy may be relevant to exploit opportunities rather than to take care of your threats. That's where the future should lie. We should be thinking about opportunities more," he said.

"This all what I said comes with a little bit of a caveat because of the northern neighbour. In this strategic calculus, India will have to take into account the emergence of China as a major power," the CDS said.

"China's assertiveness is more evident with its rise. India has a major dispute on its northern borders with China and will have to play a strategic autonomy card..." he added.

The Chief of Defence Staff also summarised India's journey of being non-aligned to that of exercising strategic autonomy.

"If I were to summarize the journey of India from non-alignment to exercising of strategic autonomy, it can

be based on what I can say is three S.

First is securing India. Next is self-reliance. And lastly, shaping the environment to India's advantage and benefit," he said.

General Chauhan also elaborated on economic aspects of global geopolitics and that the global balance of power can be shifted by economic alignment and even issues like morality, righteousness and convergence of global interests.

"In India's famous epic Mahabharata, Lord Krishna shifted the balance of power towards the Pandavas. His military might went to the Kauravas but it was only his righteousness and sage advice which shifted the balance of power," he said.

"And ultimately the Pandavas emerged victorious in that particular war. We as a nation have utilised the G20 platform to leverage soft power to play a dominating role," he said.

Congress CWC meet to firm up poll strategy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress' top decision making body CWC will meet on Monday to deliberate on the current political situation, caste census and further firm up the strategy for the upcoming Assembly elections in five States.

The party is seeking to retain power in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, while hoping to wrest power from the BJP in Madhya Pradesh, BRS in Telangana and the Mizo National Front (MNF) in Mizoram.

While the meeting is likely to have a discussion on the caste census as the party has made a strong pitch for it and has raised the demand for giving rights on the basis of population with emphasis on other backward classes (OBCs), sources said it is likely to discuss and condemn the action by probing agencies like ED, IT, CBI on members of India bloc including the recent cases of AAP leader Sanjay Singh and TMC and DMK leaders.

Congress top leadership will have to take a call on extending support to him and others being targeted by the government.



The meeting of the top decision making body of the Congress comes just over three weeks after the first meeting of the reconstituted Congress Working Committee (CWC) was held in Hyderabad on September 16 to evolve a strategy for the assembly polls in five states and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Chief ministers of Karnataka, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Himachal Pradesh will also attend the meeting.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had on August 20 reconstituted the CWC, retaining the old guard and giving space to the young in the 84-member body.

This will be the first meeting of the CWC in the national capital. The CWC has 39 regular members, 32 permanent invitees and 13 special invitees, including 15 women and several new faces.

Minister Vaishnaw inaugurates Nokia's 6G Lab at Bengaluru

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Railway and Telecom Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Thursday inaugurated Nokia's 6G Lab facility at Bengaluru established by Finnish telecom gear maker Nokia.

"The inauguration of the Nokia 6G research lab in Bengaluru today is another step towards PM Narendra Modi's vision of making India an innovation hub. Interesting use cases coming out of this lab will be related to transportation safety, health care and education which will be another big contribution to the entire Digital India suite," Vaishnaw said in a statement.

The first-of-its-kind project aims to accelerate the development of fundamental technologies and innovative use cases underpinned by 6G technology that will address the future needs of both industry and society.

Last month, India's vision to have ubiquitous coverage under 6G technology was accepted by UN body ITU's Study Group in its meeting held in Geneva -- a move that is expected to reduce the cost of deployment of the next-gen



eration technology.

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) decides on the development of international mobile telecommunication standards after coordination with its member countries, technology companies and other stakeholders. India has already secured more than 200 patents on 6G technology through Industry and academia collaboration with the support of the Department of Telecom.

"Nokia is honoured to contribute towards the realisation of the Indian government's 'Bharat 6G vision. We look forward to collaborating with key stakeholders to help India become a major player in 6G technology development and adoption, and take its place in

the global arena as a leading developer and supplier of advanced telecom technologies and solutions," Nokia Chief Strategy and Technology Officer Nishant Batra said.

Nokia's 6G lab will function as a platform for collaboration among industry stakeholders and facilitate the testing of innovative solutions while establishing their potential for commercialisation.

The lab includes a setup to research 'Network as a Sensor' technology that enables the network to sense objects, people and movement without the need for onboard sensors. In the 6G era, 'Network as a Sensor' has been identified as a key enabling technology that supports the vision of bringing the digital and physical worlds together, the statement said.

SC reserves verdict on 1998 judgement granting immunity to lawmakers from prosecution

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A seven-judge bench of the Supreme Court on Thursday reserved its verdict on reconsideration of its 1998 judgment which had held that MPs and MLAs enjoy immunity from prosecution for taking bribe to make a speech or vote in legislature.

The constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud reserved the verdict after hearing a battery of senior lawyers including Attorney General R Venkataramani and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta.

The larger bench is reconsidering the 1998 verdict delivered in the JMM bribery case by a five-judge bench by which the MPs and MLAs were granted immunity from prosecution for taking bribe to make a speech or vote in legislature.

The apex court is revisiting the judgement 25 years after the JMM bribery scandal rocked the country. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, while arguing the matter, urged the court to not go into the immunity aspect under Article 105 of the Constitution.

"The offence of bribery is complete when a bribe is given



and accepted by the lawmaker. It can be tackled under the Prevention of Corruption Act," the law officer said. "Neither the majority nor minority (judgement of 1998) examined the issue from this perspective.

The short question, on which present reference is based, is whether the offence of bribery is complete outside the House. If it is, this court does not need to go into the question of immunity," the law officer said.

On Wednesday, the court said it will examine whether the immunity granted to lawmakers from prosecution for taking bribes to make a speech or vote in Parliament and state legislatures extends to them even if criminality is attached to their actions. Article 105(2) stipulates that no member of Parliament shall

be liable to any proceedings in court in respect of anything said or any vote cast in Parliament or any committee thereof. A similar provision exists for MLAs under Article 194(2).

A five-judge constitution bench had in its majority verdict delivered in the PV Narasimha Rao versus CBI case had held in 1998 that parliamentarians have immunity against criminal prosecution for any speech made and vote cast inside the House under Article 105(2) and Article 194(2) of the Constitution.

The Rao Government, which was in a minority, had survived a no-confidence vote with the help of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) Lok Sabha MPs who had accepted bribes to back his dispensation.

EXPERIMENTAL STOPPAGE OF TRAINS

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that Railways have decided to provide stoppages to the following trains on the stations shown against each on experimental basis as under:-

Train No. & Name	Station	Timings		Date (From Originating Station)
		Arr.	Dep.	
19305 Dr. Ambedkar Nagar-Kamakhyia Jn. Express	New Mal Jn.	04:42	04:44	From 12.10.2023
19306 Kamakhyia Jn.-Dr. Ambedkar Nagar Express	New Mal Jn.	12:15	12:17	From 08.10.2023
15621 Kamakhyia Jn.-Anand Vihar (T) Express	New Mal Jn.	11:55	11:57	From 12.10.2023
15622 Anand Vihar (T)-Kamakhyia Jn. Express	New Mal Jn.	07:10	07:12	From 06.10.2023

For any kind of information, passengers are advised to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Court allows NewsClick founder to get FIR copy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi court on Thursday allowed the applications of NewsClick founder Prabir Purkayastha and human resources head Amit Chakravarty, arrested in a case lodged under anti-terror law UAPA over allegations that the news portal received money to spread pro-China propaganda, seeking a copy of the FIR.

Additional Sessions Judge Hardeep Kaur directed the police to provide the duo a copy of the FIR. A detailed order is awaited.

During the proceedings, the counsel for Chakravarty also sought in writing the



grounds for his arrest, asserting that it was a constitutional safeguard for the accused. The advocate cited some judgments of the Supreme Court and the Delhi High Court to claim that though the offences alleged against his client under the Unlawful Activities

(Prevention) Act (UAPA) were "serious", there were no statutory grounds for the prosecution to deny him a copy of the FIR.

Purkayastha's advocate, appearing through video-conferencing, argued it was the accused's right to get a copy of

the FIR. Special Public Prosecutor Atul Shrivastava opposed the applications. He cited a Supreme Court judgement to say an accused has to first approach the police commissioner, who would then form a committee to consider the request.

He said the accused have to follow the "step-by-step procedure" prescribed by the apex court. The application filed by the accused were "premature" and they cannot "directly jump before the court", Shrivastava added. "We have already provided the grounds for arrest and the reasons for further remand. We have already complied with the provisions," he said.

Citing the remand paper, the SPP said the accused undermined the unity and territorial integrity of the country, besides engaging in a discussion regarding a map of India without Kashmir and showing Arunachal Pradesh as a disputed area. They received Rs 115 crore in the guise of foreign funding, he said. "We had duly informed this court (the grounds for arrest) when we sought police custody and the accused were allowed to talk to their family members and advocate," he said. Purkayastha and Chakravarty were arrested by the Special Cell of the Delhi Police on Tuesday. Police have sealed NewsClick's office in Delhi.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority

Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, G.B. Nagar (U.P.)
Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firm for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

A) Fresh Tender Work:

Sl. No.	Job No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (In Lacs)
1.	18/DGM(E&M)/Sr.M. (E/M)-I/2023-24	Restoration Maintenance of 16 mtr./30 mtr. High mast light in sector-82, 91, 92, 93, 93A, 93B, 104, 105, 108, 110 & Village Gejha Tilpabad & Hazipur Noida.	94.83

The above tenders can be uploaded by dated **19.10.2023 up to 5.00 PM**. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated **20.10.2023 at 11.00 AM**.

B) Re-Tender Work:

Sl. No.	Job No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (In Lacs)
1.	13/DGM(E&M)/Sr.M. (E/M)-II/2023-24	Augmentation of Street Light Installation in Parks & Internal Roads of Sector-104, Noida.	60.24
2.	23/DGM(E&M)/S.M. (E/M)-III/2023-24	Renovation of Barat Ghar, Panchyat Ghar in Village- Barola, Hosiarpur, Sorkha, Sector-49, 50, 51, 71, 72, 119 & 122 Noida.	80.89

The above tenders can be uploaded by dated **12.10.2023 up to 5.00 PM**. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated **13.10.2023 at 11.00 AM**.

Office, Sector-39
Dy. General Manager (E&M)
NOIDA

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

esomeprazole used for acid reflux treatment linked to drug reactions: IPC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC), through its recently drug safety alert for September has cautioned the doctors that Eesomeprazole, used for the treatment of Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), can be linked with a drug reactions (ADRs) named Hyperprolactinaemia.

Following this, it has asked the healthcare professionals to diligently monitor the potential occurrence of ADR in case prescribing the said drug.

This came after a preliminary analysis of ADRs from the Pharmacovigilance



Programme of India (PVPI) database.

esomeprazole is a proton pump inhibitor used to treat GERD, reduce the risk of NSAID-associated gastric ulcers, eradicate H. pylori, and treat conditions causing gastric acid hypersecretion.

The alert noted that

gastric and duodenal ulcers, Zollinger-Ellison syndrome. Hyperprolactinemia is marked by abnormally high levels of the hormone prolactin (which stimulates breast milk production during and after pregnancy) in the blood.

Further, the safety alert added, "If such reaction is encountered, please report to the NCC-PVPI IPC by filling out Suspected Adverse Drug Reactions Reporting Form for Consumers (http://www.ipc.gov.in) through Android Mobile App "ADR PVPI App" and PvPI toll free helpline No. 1800-180-3024.

1.36 crore school students participate in Veer Gatha Project

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 1.36 crore school students from all 36 States and UTs participated in the Third edition of the Veer Gatha Project. The students sent poems, paintings, essays, videos, etc. to honour the acts of bravery and sacrifice of the officers/personnel of the Armed Forces.

Project Veer Gatha was instituted under Gallantry Awards Portal (GAP) in 2021 with the aim to disseminate the details of acts of bravery of the Gallantry Awardees and the life stories of these brave hearts among the students so as to raise the spirit of patriotism and instill amongst them values of civic consciousness.

Mahila Sammelan to be held at assembly level: State BJP chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is busy in preparing for next year's Lok Sabha elections, will make its inroads among the women voters by making half the population aware of the features of the Nari Shakti Vandan Act passed on women's reservation. For this, the party will organise big conferences in all 403 assemblies of Uttar Pradesh, informed state party president Bhopendra Singh Chaudhary while addressing a meeting of Mahila Morcha (Kashi Region) at party's regional office in Rohaniya here on Wednesday.



State BJP chief Bhopendra Singh Chaudhary being welcomed at Mahila Morcha meeting in Varanasi on Wednesday.

"The BJP always encouraged women as it is the first party which has given a stake in the organisation by ensuring 33 per cent reservation for women. With the Nari Shakti Vandan Act, women will get an opportunity to lead and they will also be able to play their role in nation building," he said, adding that by enacting the Act, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken another step towards the empowerment of women as this is a decision which will give women power their rights in the true sense and it will increase the representation of women from assemblies to Lok Sabha.

"This Act is a reflection of the new India being built under the leadership of the PM," he said, and instructed the in-charges of all the 71 assemblies under Kashi region to organise big conferences. Addressing

the conference, BJP state vice president, MLC and state in-charge of Mahila Morcha Vijay Bahadur Pathak said that the conferences to be held at the assembly level in 71 assemblies of Kashi region will be held between October 8 and October 31. "The dates for these conferences to be held in three phases have been fixed. According to him, the first phase will be held between 8th to 14th October, the second between 17th to 21st October and third between 26th to 31st October.

Pathak further said that the state leadership has decided to organise Nari Shakti Vandan Yatra at the assembly conferences as well as at the booth level. Through this yatra, everyone has to do door-to-door public relations at the booth level and make people aware of this historic decision taken by

the PM. Regional president (Kashi) Dilip Patel, who was presiding over the meeting, said that in these proposed conferences, we have to tell that BJP has always given priority to the uplift and empowerment of women. The meeting was jointly conducted by regional general secretary Ashok Chaurasia and Mahila Morcha state general secretary Kritika Agrawal, while the vote of thanks was given by regional chief of Mahila Morcha Namrata Chaurasia. MP Keshari Devi Patel, national vice president and Rajya Sabha MP Seema Dwivedi, state general secretary Govind Narayan Shukla, Rajya Sabha MP Darshana Singh, Anamika Chaudhary, Shankar Giri, Meena Choubey, Sushil Tripathi and others were also present.

Meanwhile, addressing another meeting at the same

venue, state BJP chief said that 'Anushuchit (Scheduled) Mahasammelan' will be organised in all the six organisational areas of the state under the auspices of BJP's Anushuchit Morcha. The Kashi regional unit of this front organisation will organise its Mahasammelan on October 27 in which 2,000 people from each assembly falling under Kashi region will participate.

"The BJP is committed to the development of Scheduled Caste people. Under the leadership of the PM, the central government has worked for the welfare and uplift of the SC through its many schemes in the last nine years," he said, adding that today the maximum number of MPs, MLAs and other public representatives from the SC in the entire country belong to the BJP.

3 arrested with illegal firecrackers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Pratapgarh police arrested three people during a checking drive near Raniganj area and seized illegal firecrackers weighing 62 kg from their possession. The arrested persons were identified as Manoj Kumar Jaiswal, Chagglal Jaiswal and Ramesh Jaiswal of Kaithola Lalganj.

An FIR under section 5 and 9 (K) of the Explosive Act was registered against them at the Lalganj police station. The police said a team of Lalganj

police was carrying out checking near Raniganj road and intercepted three men carrying illegal crackers. They were taking the illegal fire crackers for sale. The police are interrogating them for storing huge quantity of firecrackers.

Meanwhile, police have also arrested three notorious burglars including Dilip Kumar Gaur alias Deepak, Abhishek Maurya and Umesh Kumar soni, of Murgi Farm colony, Maurya Nagar and Achalpur respectively and seized 160 gram gold ornaments worth lakhs, Rs 4,000 cash and other

valuables from their possession. The police said a joint team of SWAT and Kotwali police received a tip off about an inter-district burglar's gang roaming around Meera Bhawan road, cordoned the area and nabbed them.

INSPECTED: ADO Panchayat Vivek Mishra inspected the primary school Sirawal and found two assistant teachers absent. Thereafter, he inspected the upper primary school Sirawal where two teachers were found absent. The ADO sent the report to the higher authorities. He exam-

ined the quality of development works and asked the official concerned to complete the incomplete work without delay. The ADO inspected the Piri and Unchadih Goshala and reviewed the situation. He warned the pradhans and secretaries to implement all the schemes as per the intention of the government.

He directed to get the road, water and electricity system improved without delay. The ADO said the salary of teachers found absent during the inspection of schools has been stopped.

60-year-old trader shot at

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A 60-year-old trader identified as Maqbool Ahmed was allegedly shot at by his neighbour with a licensed weapon for refusing to sell cigarette in Maqrauda village, Tilai bazar locality, under Mauaima police station. The police also arrested Ankush Patel of Tilai Bazar and seized his licensed SBBL gun. The police said on the said night Ankush Patel reached the shop of Maqbool in an inebriated

state and asked for a cigarette. When Maqbool said the shop was closed, the accused left and returned after 15 minutes armed with his licensed gun and started arguing and abusing the shopkeeper. He started firing and one bullet injured the trader on his leg. A team of Mauaima police rushed to the spot and arrested Patel.

MISHAP: Over a dozen people sustained injuries when a roadways bus driver hit a Bolero late on Wednesday night. On getting information

the police reached the spot and sent the injured to a hospital for treatment.

The bus collided head-on with the Bolero coming from Banda towards Prayagraj on National Highway 35, Jasra Nai Bazar, at 9 pm. As a result over a dozen people travelling in the Bolero were injured. The police admitted the injured to the hospital.

Station in-charge Ghurpur Sanjeev Kumar Choubey said the injured people were coming back from Gaya Dham in

Bihar after 'pind daan'. Gulab Singh (70), Pooa Bai, Ramkali (65), Mamta (34), Jaganlal (70) and Mittu Lal (65) were injured. Driver Uttam got trapped in Bolero. The people somehow took him out. All the injured were sent to the Community Health Centre Jasra for treatment by an ambulance where doctors, after first aid, referred the driver Uttam Das and Poonabai to district hospital. Information about the accident was given to the families of the injured.

Unnecessary platelet transfusion may prove fatal, says CMO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said that the lack of platelets is not the cause of death of dengue victims and unnecessary platelet transfusion may worsen the patient's health. "Platelet deficiency is not the cause of death in dengue patients," he instructed the private doctors, nursing home operators and government sector doctors.

"As per international standards, unless a patient's platelet count is less than 10,000 and there is no active bleeding, he/she does not require platelet transfusion. Platelet transfusion is not the primary treatment for dengue," he said, adding that in fact, platelet transfusion does more harm than good to the patient if it is used in a patient whose platelet count is more than 10,000. According to Dr Chaudhary, the primary cause of death in dengue patients is capillary leakage, which caus-

es blood loss in the intravascular compartment and results in multi-organ failure. "In case of plasma leakage from the intravascular to the extravascular compartment, the patient should be transfused with fluids in the amount of 20 ml per kg body weight per hour and the same process should be continued until the difference between the upper and lower blood pressure exceeds 40 mmHg, or the patient urinates in sufficient quantity," he said, adding that this is all that is needed to treat the patient; unnecessary platelet transfusions can worsen the patient's health.

While treating dengue patients, the CMO said that the physicians should remember the 'Formula of 20' that is increase in pulse rate of more than 20, fall of BP of more than 20, difference between lower and upper BP of less than 20 and more than 20. "If the presence of bleeding spots appears on the arm after the tourniquet

test, this condition suggests a high-risk condition, and the person needs immediate medical attention," he said.

He said that dengue fever is a mosquito-borne disease. It is caused by any one of four types of dengue virus, which is spread by the bite of an infected female Aedes aegypti mosquito. "Common symptoms of dengue include high fever, runny nose, mild skin rash, cough and swelling behind the eyes and joint pain. However, some people may develop red and white mottled rashes followed by loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, etc. Patients suffering from dengue should seek medical advice, rest and drink plenty of fluids. Paracetamol can be taken to reduce fever and ease joint pain. However, aspirin or ibuprofen should not be taken as they may increase the risk of bleeding," he said.

Meanwhile, the CMO held a meeting with Nodal Officer Dr SS Kanojia, ACOM Dr AK

Maurya and District Malaria Officer Sharad Chand Pandey and informed them that in view of the possible spread of dengue and in relation to the unnecessary demand for platelets by some doctors and the atmosphere of panic created among the patients' families, all private hospitals should be instructed that whenever they send the demand for platelets to the blood bank, the current status of the patient should be included along with it. "Send enclosing forms related to clinical condition and current platelet count. Along with this, all the in-charges of Government Blood Banks/Private Blood Banks/IMA have been asked to ensure giving platelets to serious patients on priority basis," he instructed. Dr Chaudhary said that as at present the number of fever patients is increasing in the district, arrangements for their treatment and advice should be ensured.

MiG 21's farewell to be memorable

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The air show scheduled to be held over the Sangam area of the city on October 8 to commemorate the 91st anniversary of the Indian Air Force (IAF) will bid adieu to the ace fighter of the country — the MiG 21 Bison.

The IAF too has made suitable arrangements to make the farewell of MiG 21 a memorable moment. "The MiG 21 Bison will be flying for the last time in any air show and as such this ace fighter has played a pivotal role in several battles, right from its induction in 1963. As such, this will be a memorable and emotional moment for IAF and we will make sure that this fighter is given an extraordinary farewell which will be remembered in

years to come", said Defence PRO, Gp Capt Samir Gangakhedkar.

The blue horizon over the holy Sangam of Prayagraj echoed with the thundering sound of fighters and choppers of the IAF.

The IAF carried out an impressive practice session from the vast Sangam area to the Parade ground and all the roads leading to Sangam amid a large number of onlookers. The session was nothing short of the actual air show scheduled to be held on October 8 to commemorate the IAF's 91st anniversary.

As a number of fighters, aircraft and choppers flew past the President Viewpoint of the fort, a large number of onlookers, including those who had arrived to perform rituals dur-

ing Pitra Paksha or those who had gathered at the Parade ground for different purposes, all eyes were in the sky applauding the might of the IAF as its fighters and aircraft flew past.

As it was practice for the air show, quite a number of locals had already arrived at the vast Sangam area.

The practice started with the paratroopers of the Akash Ganga team of the IAF which landed precisely at the marked area just in front of the President Viewpoint of the fort.

The onlookers clapped and took videos of the paratroopers as they landed one after another, especially the last formation wherein three paratroopers sailed down intact as one, only to separate barely a

few feet from the touch down. The practice started with the formation of Chetak and Dhruv choppers followed by the two variants of Mi-17 choppers and the Apache.

This was followed by manoeuvres by the fighters of IAF, including Tejas, SU-30, C-130 aircraft, Mirage 2000 and Rafale. Vintage aircraft including the Harvard trainer aircraft and Tiger Moth too entertained the onlookers.

To conclude the practice session, the team of Saarang choppers and Surya Kiran presented scintillating manoeuvres. "These fighters and choppers will continue to do their practice sessions everyday which will give local populace an idea of might of IAF," said Gangakhedkar.

Sketch book exhibition held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The sketch book exhibition was organised at the Faculty of Visual Arts, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Thursday. The exhibition was inaugurated by the Dean, Faculty of Visual Arts, Dr Uttama, by paying floral tributes to Mahamana and lighting the lamp. Dr Deepti Prakash Mohanty and Dr Hirajal Prajapati (former Dean of faculty) were also present as special guests.

On this occasion, Dr Mrigendra Singh, Dr Manish Arora, Dr Brahmwaroop, Dr Shanti Swaroop Sinha, Dr Jasminder Kaur, Dr Suresh Jangid, Dr Mahesh Singh, Dr Ashish Gupta, Dr Lalit Soni, Dr Rajeev Mandal and others also shared their views. A total of 39 art students of fourth year BFA of the Painting Department participated in the exhibition.

UPRTOU to start new course for study of religious texts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The UP Rajarshi Tandon Open University (UPRTOU), Prayagraj, has decided to start a new course for the study of religious texts and rituals in view of the increasing demand for professionals for religious rituals for various events associated with Hindu traditions. The lone open university of the state has started three courses, including diploma in rituals from this session. The other two courses are diploma and certificate programmes in public health and community nutrition and disaster management. Window for taking admission in all these courses is open and interested students can apply till October 20. In recent years, interest has increased in Sanskrit subjects in the open university. Last year, around 8,000 students were enrolled in

Sanskrit subjects. When the university administration conducted a survey of students' interest in starting new courses, most of them suggested starting courses related to rituals-priesthood and astrology-Vastu. On the basis of this survey, the humanities stream of the university decided to start a diploma course imparting knowledge of rituals in Hindu traditions. This course will consist of two semesters. The rituals included are swastivachan, nitya karma, naimittika karma, sanskar karma, yagya vigyan, pragjanan sanskar, janmottar, sanskar anna prashan, mundan, karnavedha, upanayan, vedarambh, samavartan, marriage sanskar, vanaprastha, sayas and funeral. It covers points like anatomy and vascular elements. Apart from this, management diploma courses have been started. Recently, an MoU was signed with the Institute of

Engineers (India). A course has been designed in disaster management too. The curriculum of this course has been prepared by taking lessons from disasters like Uttarkashi. Moreover, since Kumbh Mela will be held in 2025, the university believes that this will be a great opportunity for students of this course to have first-hand training and such religious events will help in preparing better professionals. Apart from this, a diploma course on public health and community nutrition has been started in the health stream.

The admission in-charge of the university Prof JP Yadav said along with this a simple Sanskrit teacher awareness programme has also been introduced. These courses have been started keeping in mind the educational upgrading and skill development of learners. The last date for admission in these courses is October 20.

RED North visits NTPC Vindhyachal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Regional Executive Director (North) Praveen Saxena paid a visit to the NTPC Vindhyachal project, the largest power plant in the country. This visit was marked by a warm welcome extended to the RED by E Satya Phani Kumar, the Head of Project (Vindhyachal), Rajesh Bharadwaj, the General Manager (Operations and Maintenance) and other senior officials. The RED was accompanied by the Chairperson of Uttara Mahila Mandal Neelana Saxena.



RED (North) Praveen Saxena seeing control room during his visit to NTPC Vindhyachal on Wednesday.

During his visit, Saxena conducted a comprehensive inspection of various crucial areas within the NTPC Vindhyachal. He focused his attention on reviewing the Stage-5 Control Room, the C&M Area, and the FGD Area (Flue Gas Desulfurization). This inspection was carried out in the company of E Satya Phani Kumar and Rajesh Bharadwaj, in addition to other senior officials.

After the inspection, a significant development took place as a MoU was formally signed under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative. This MoU represents a collaboration between NTPC and the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), Ahmedabad. The primary objective of this collaboration is to empower women

self-help groups (SHGs) within the Vindhyachal areas. The memorandum outlines a specific focus on continuous livelihood generation through the implementation of the Spice Production Scheme. In addition, 10 girls from the Government Higher Secondary School in Waidhan were presented with bicycles.

During his visit, the RED (North) took the opportunity to express his appreciation and admiration for the dedicated employees and workforce of the Vindhyachal. This visit underscores NTPC's commitment to sustainable development and community empowerment, showcasing the organi-

sation's efforts in promoting gender equality and supporting local communities through meaningful CSR initiatives.

MGKV TO START SKILL-BASED COURSES: Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth (MGKV) is going to start some skill-based diploma and certificate courses soon. In the meeting of heads of the departments and faculty deans chaired by Vice-Chancellor Prof Anand Kumar at the university here on Thursday, it was decided that keeping in mind the need of the region, certificate and diploma courses should be started in about 10 subjects in the university.

These certificate and diploma courses will be started in the subjects like sewing-embroidery, food and nutrition, catering and hospitality, psychotherapy, leadership, business management, yoga and naturopathy, textile and others. The V-C asked all the departments and faculties to prepare and submit the syllabus of such courses within a week so that the process of admission to these courses can be started as soon as possible.

The university has also received proposals from many colleges regarding these subjects. This information was given by the Registrar Dr Sunita Pandit in the meeting.

DM's emphasis on awareness activities to keep Ganga clean

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

District Magistrate Priyanka Niranjani while presiding over the meeting of Zila Ganga Samiti at the Collectorate on Wednesday stressed on activities to make people aware about keeping Ganga as clean as possible. In the meeting the issues related to Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural), Jeevan Dhara Module, Arth Ganga Mission and Ganga Gram Sanstuti were discussed. The DM directed the officials concerned to continue the ongoing schemes and make the meeting as discussed in the meeting. National president Jeevan Dhara Namami Gange Foundation Hari Om Sharma said a special plan should be made in all 134 villages of the district located on the bank of Ganga. He said proper manage-

ment of solid waste disposal is the need of the hour and proper drainage system should be there to keep the Ganga basin clean. Along with providing sports facilities a Ganga 'chabutara' (platform) should be constructed in each village for Ganga Arati. The meeting was attended by Chief Development Officer (CDO) Srilaxmi VS, DFO/convener of the committee, Additional District Magistrate (ADM/Namami Gange) Devendra Pratap Singh, DPRO, agriculture officer and others.

COORDINATION MEETING: Lalaganj Circle Officer (CO) Manjari Rao while presiding over the coordination meeting of police personnel deployed on the state borders of UP and MP said in view of the assembly elections in MP surveillance will be

done by a joint team comprising UP and MP police till the end of elections. In the meeting lists containing details of villages located on the state border were exchanged. The CO asked the officials concerned to ensure strict compliance of model code of conduct in the border area. The meeting was attended by SO Hanumana of MP and SOs Halia and Dramondganj of Mirzapur.

ARRESTED: The Rajgarh police on Wednesday arrested two accused in connection with the case lodged by Raj Kumar Maurya of Chitvishram on September 29 against one named and two unknown persons alleging that they demanded jewellery from him and threatened that if their demand was not fulfilled, then he will be murdered. After

registering the case the police started the investigation in which the names of the unknown persons came to light. The police arrested Ramkesh of Khamhawa Janti under Chunar police station and Muneem of Uttar Deori village under Lalaganj police station. The police sent the accused to jail.

Meanwhile the Jigna police on Wednesday arrested an accused in connection with a named FIR lodged by a person alleging that his minor daughter had been enticed away. Station Officer (SO) Ravi Kant Mishra handed over the investigation to SSI Kamal Tiwari. On being tipped off by an informer the IO succeeded in nabbing the accused within few hours. After completing the legal formalities the police sent the accused to jail.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

New twist

The India-Canada row escalates amid US endorsement of Nijjar killing allegations

In recent weeks, global diplomatic relations have seen a shake-up following the growing rift between the India and Canada Governments. The heart of the conflict lies in Canada's allegations of an 'Indian hand' in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a prominent pro-Khalistan Canadian national and a named terrorist by India for his involvement in several violent crimes. The spat is harming the interests of both countries but Canadian PM Justin Trudeau is not letting go because his political survival currently depends on maligning India's name. Meanwhile, there has been a new turn in the case with the US stating that Canada's allegations are "serious," adding fuel to the fiery debate. State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said, "We continue to be deeply concerned about the allegations referenced by Prime Minister Trudeau." He added, "It is critical that Canada's investigation proceeds and perpetrators be brought to justice; we also have publicly and privately urged the Indian Government to cooperate in the Canadian investigation." Nijjar was killed in British Columbia, Canada, by unidentified gunmen which Canada claims were Indian agents. Its intelligence agencies claim that there is credible evidence of Indian agencies' involvement in the murder, though it is yet to be shared with India.



The US statement has caught many by surprise, as it had previously maintained a neutral stance on the matter. This shift in the US position has raised eyebrows and intensified the dispute. The Indian Government has reiterated that it is not its policy to indulge in such acts and that it had no role in Nijjar's killing. The reason for the latest statement is best

known to the US Administration but it certainly is doing no good in resolving the deadlock between two friendly countries, both staunch US supporters. The US has of late shifted its weight in favour of India, ostensibly to counter Chinese influence in the Asia Pacific, and gone ahead with several technical and strategic bilateral understandings. If it goes on pointing the finger at India without any proof, that would result in strained relations and the US design of circumventing China in the region would suffer. Nijjar's killing, though tragic and unfortunate, should not be reason for any diplomatic faux pas. India and Canada should amicably resolve the issue together and cooperate in the ongoing investigation, to which the Indian side has assured full support. The deepening rift between India and Canada has broader implications for international relations, too. Canadian insistence on providing haven to terrorists in the name of supporting freedom and liberty could have far-reaching consequences for that country itself. Moreover, its act has already affected the Indian diaspora in a big way as it faces threats and slurs from the emboldened Khalistanis. Where Trudeau wants to go with anti-India posturing to salvage his falling ratings is his call, but the ramifications are fraught with grave danger for both countries.

PICTALK



Fighter jets fly over Sangam area during a rehearsal ahead of the upcoming 91st Air Force Day in Prayagraj

India emerges as a voice of Global South



ANWAR SADAT

India has been airing the concerns of the Global South vociferously; S Jaishankar's address at the 78th Session of UNGA was a case in point

India has tried to use consistently the forum of the United Nations not only in pursuing its foreign policy goals effectively but also in projecting itself as the advocate of the Global South. India's leadership quality was demonstrated in the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment which made it possible for the Stockholm Declaration to embody several principles that protect the interests of the global south. The legacy of Stockholm carries even today when India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar raised the issue of climate change, mobilising resources for sustainable development goals and reforming multilateral development banks at the 78th session of the UN on 29 September 2023.

This has to be seen in the context of the New Delhi Declaration of G20. The declaration set the direction of future negotiations on important economic issues including climate financing which has for the first time put a \$5.9 trillion figure to green financing requirements for developing countries, reforms in multilateral development banks, international taxation and sustainable development. Although this new green financing requirement does not generate legal obligations for the developed north, it amounts to underlining very clearly that in the context of urgency of restricting global average temperature below 1.5 degrees as compared to industrial level, financial needs will have to enhance over and above 100 billion dollar mark. The requirement of mobilising 100 billion dollars per year by 2020 is the obligation on the part of the developed north.

India as an Advocate in the Context of Climate Change. One agenda item that India has used to position itself as the advocate of the global south is the issue of climate change. The latter is not only a serious environmental challenge but is also a serious economic and developmental concern, which also directly impinges upon realizing the goals of sustainable development. India's contribution is least in the creation of climate change but it



is placed to bear the brunt likewise of many developing countries more. India used its coalitional reach of the global south that the developed countries are historically responsible for climate change and their per capita emissions of greenhouse gases are very high as compared to developing countries. In addition, the developed north is financially and technologically capable of playing a lead role in dealing with the challenge of climate change.

India's arguments relating to climate change galvanized adequate support of the global south in enshrining a regime of differentiation in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The idea of differentiation expressed through the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR) has been held responsible for warding off pressure by the developed north that the developing countries should also bear greenhouse gas mitigation obligations. The formulation of the principle of CBDR is being interpreted as an Indian formula that corresponds between the northern advocates of common responsibilities and southern proponents of a main responsibility of the developed north. Although the regime of differentiation has changed as it is reflected in the Paris Agree-



S JAISHANKAR TOUCHED UPON LIFESTYLE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN HIS SPEECH AT THE UN, WHICH IS NOT RHETORIC BUT IS GROUNDED IN A REASONED ARGUMENT

ment on Climate Change 2015, it still guides many aspects of climate change and the environment, especially the transfer of finance and technology from the developed north to the developing south.

Mr Jaishankar touched upon lifestyle for the environment in his speech at the UN, which is not rhetoric but is grounded in a reasoned argument. This is an affirmation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's introduction of the mission of "LiFE (Lifestyle for the Environment)" at the Conference of the Parties meeting of the UNFCCC. The lifestyle for the environment is aimed at engaging individuals in mitigating the adverse effects of climate change. In other words, it is also about developing long-term environment-friendly habits. India's lifestyle for environment argument is aimed at curbing and underlining the overconsumption lifestyle more found in the North than in the South. This argument is very close to the argument developed by noted environmentalists Anil Agarwal and Sunita Narain in their research titled Global Warming in an Unequal World. They argued in their work, which constitutes a centrepiece of the argument taken by the global south quite often during climate change negotiations, that there is a need to distinguish

between "survival" emissions of developing countries and "luxury" emissions in developed countries.

The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) shows that lower capita GHG emissions in India are not due to poverty alone, but also to more sustainable lifestyles than in developed countries. For example, CO2 emissions from the agricultural sector from the field to the table are about 0.1 tons CO2/million calories in India against 1.7-2.2 tons in developed countries, inter alia due to a less meat-based diet. CO2 emissions from transportation per passenger kilometre are 16 grams in India against 118 and 193 grams in the European Union (EU) and the US respectively.

This is an era where agriculture systems worldwide are in search of sustainable cropping to deal with existing issues of malnutrition, food insecurity, resource depletion, climate-resilient crops, and environmental problems associated with agriculture, millet is a new tool for India which fits in well with India's efforts in strengthening its narrative of lifestyle for environment.

(The author is a senior Assistant Professor in International Environmental Law at the Indian Society of International Law, New Delhi; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

India's spectacular performance



The will to be progressive helped the Indian Juggernaut roll on and cross the platinum jubilee (the 75 magic figure). Till now, in

Asiad-2023 (at Hangzhou), India has won 76 medals (16 gold, 28 silver, 32 bronze), the largest ever in an ASIAD outing, ranking fourth out of 45 participating nations. (The 2018 Jakarta record of 70 medals is now a thing of the past). Indians have often proved that where there is a will, there is a way.

Every Indian lip and heart are murmuring, "How many more?" For that, we must wait until the final day (8th Oct 2023). In any field, it has become a habit for India to expertly swim against the tide to achieve victory, despite many obstacles such as funding shortages, lack of access to the latest scientific methods and equipment, and unpredictable weather.

PV Madhu Nivriti | Secunderabad

of External Affairs (MEA). S. Jaishankar, our Minister of Foreign Affairs, has proved beyond doubt that he is the most inefficient Foreign Minister Free India has ever seen.

When the ruling BJP dispensation has gone out of the way to make Pragya Singh Thakur, an accused in the 2008 Malegaon bombings, an MP and lawmaker of the nation, and when criminals convicted in the Bilkis Bano rape and murder case were given premature release, our Independence Day by the BJP-led Gujarat government, it doesn't sound right to accuse the Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of protecting terrorists when he has protested against the murders of his citizens on his own soil. Instead of branding those who speak the truth as anti-Indians, it is time for the Modi-led government to introspect on international matters and make more thoughtful decisions.

Tharcus S Fernando | Chennai

UNITY OVER DIVISION

Sir—No kudos are enough for the author Arundhati Roy for appealing to the people to sink their differences and defeat the merchants of hatred because there is no other option. Else, even the last traces of secularism, democracy, and all ethos of the

Constitution are bound to be crushed beyond recognition.

However, I humbly differ with Roy when she asserts that the saffron ecosystem "makes everyone fight against one another" by playing caste (and communal) games. It must be noted that neither communalism nor casteism can be injected into society unless society itself is casteist and communally-driven in the first place. Perhaps it would not be out of context if some personal experiences are invoked. In my hostel/college life or in office days, I have come across many Muslim batchmates, hostel seniors/juniors, and colleagues. Among the Hindu acquaintances, many are affiliated with various caste groups.

If the general Indian society reforms itself by transcending narrow barriers of caste and religion and views all citizens as fellow Indians and human beings, all the games of caste and religion will be emphatically defeated, rather exterminated from the soil of India, even if the saffronites play such games the "best".

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Putting AI to work in business environment

Generative AI is being trained for commercial use like automated customer support, financial forecasting and fraud detection



MANISH GUPTA

For enterprises, generative AI holds massive potential, making CIOs the linchpin of customer experience. Powering GenAI's potential requires purpose-built approaches to mitigate the inherent risks of its adoption. Generative AI (GenAI), the basis for tools like OpenAI ChatGPT, Google Bard and Meta LLaMa, is a new AI technology that has quickly moved front and centre into the global limelight.

GenAI for Enterprise: Today, an estimated 60% of IT leaders are looking to implement GenAI. At the same time, concerns exist. Most notably, for about 71% of IT leaders, angst about security creates a barrier to adoption, mandating that approaches, infrastructure, data strategies and security be appropriately aligned. According to the Dell Technologies 2023 Innovation Index report, 59% of Indian businesses are currently investing or exploring the feasibility of investing in AI, Machine Learning and advanced analytics to advance innovation. Finding the right, fit-for-use GenAI model for enterprises is the key to mit-



igating its risks, dispelling concerns and ushering in GenAI's mainstream adoption in the enterprise world.

Purpose-built GenAI: To enable that revolution, the way enterprises use GenAI will likely differ from general-purpose Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT. Instead, enterprises are likely to use GenAI models that are trained and tuned to solve specific problems; for instance, to enable automated customer support, financial forecasting and fraud detection. Although LLMs such as ChatGPT can be used for enterprise applications, the accuracy of their results will not match that of a purpose-built model created to meet a specific need.

OTHER MAJOR BENEFITS

Data security: AI's unique capability is handling and analyzing huge datasets with unprecedented speed and efficiency. Simply put, if

AI is a rocket ship, data is the fuel. Enterprises can tune their LLMs with customer purchase history, support or telesales logs, health records, financial records and other data sources. Consequently, securely handling this data will become even more important than it is today. Additionally, some industries, such as healthcare and finance, must comply with stringent regulations regarding data privacy and security.

Time to market: Most enterprises will need to update their GenAI models regularly, which is easier to do with purpose-built GenAI models. The time required to train general-purpose LLMs can take months. That's because massive amounts of data are required for training, eclipsing deployment speed and time to market, the very benefits GenAI enables. Reducing time-to-model and facilitating faster data-to-decisions can improve business efficiency.

Performance: Purpose-built models also provide performance benefits over general-purpose models. Specifically, enterprises using third-party general-purpose

LLMs may not be able to optimize performance and reduce the latency of their GenAI workloads. This is problematic for applications that require real-time processing, a key attribute of GenAI adoption.

Cost: The smaller amounts of training data needed for purpose-built GenAI models also translate into cost savings. As a result, purpose-built LLMs often cost far less to train and re-train compared to general-purpose LLMs like ChatGPT.

According to the Dell Technologies 2023 Innovation Index report, India has the highest number of businesses (37%) using AI-based optimisation software to automate processes. For enterprises, in India and across the globe, GenAI holds the profound potential to automate complex processes, improve customer interactions and unlock new possibilities with better machine intelligence — and CIOs are the key to moving it forward.

(The writer is Vice President, Infrastructure Solutions Group, Dell Technologies India; views expressed are personal)

MICROPLASTICS IN CLOUD WATER

Sir — It is a well-known fact that plastics that were once considered a boon have turned out to be a bane. From the Earth's crust to the ocean's depths, their presence is ubiquitous. However, the latest study that took cloud water samples from Mount Fuji, Japan's highest peak, and Mount Oyama outside Tokyo last year has arrived at disturbing revelations. This must serve as an eye-opener that has the potential to spur mankind into immediate action. According to the latest report published in the Journal of Environmental Chemistry Letters, about nine varieties of microplastics, including polyethylene, polypropylene, and polycarbonate, have been found in the cloud water samples. Plastic particles less than 5 mm in diameter, referred to as microplastics, are slowly but steadily finding their way into our food chain. This is the first study to detect airborne microplastics in the free troposphere.

The U.N.E.P. states that at least 430 million tons of plastic are produced every year, and two-thirds of it ends up as waste, choking the air we breathe and disturbing even our oceans, biosphere, and lithosphere. The presence of 7 to 13 pieces of microplastics, measuring seven to 94 micrometers, in a liter of cloud water suggests that rainwater might also contain plastic. Scientists opine that if plastic air pollution is not addressed proactively, AMP (airborne microplastics) might trigger climate change and ecological risks. Their harmful nature has come to light, which can be detrimental to our health and can even poison everything that we eat and drink.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Naimital

DIPLOMACY INTROSPECTION NEEDED

Sir—Government should retrospect and also introspect! It is really unfortunate that we have miserably failed in handling many sensitive issues concerning our neighboring and friendly nations like Canada. Our diplomacy, no doubt, has taken a beating mainly due to the haphazard and undiplomatic manner in which the issues have been handled by our Ministry

FIRST COLUMN

IMEC: THE MODERN SILK ROUTE

India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor is India's answer to China's BRI



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Participants in IMEC (India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor) are expected to meet next month to decide on the architectural framework for the historical infrastructure network physically and digitally connecting many countries. The IMEC was born during the G20 leaders summit in New Delhi in September and the ambitious targets it has set for itself make it one of the most powerful eco-political tools to counter the growing influence of China.

The MoU reads "Pursuant to this, the Governments of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the European Union, the Republic of India, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the French Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Italian Republic, and the United States of America (the "Participants") commit to work together to establish the India - Middle East - Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). The IMEC is expected to stimulate economic development through enhanced connectivity."

As conceived by the participating countries, it aims to create 2 corridors, linking India to the Middle East in the Arabian Gulf and further connecting the Gulf to Europe. The aim is to develop a railway network to facilitate the seamless transmission of goods and services across, India, Israel, UAE, Saudi Arabia and finally Europe. This ambitious infrastructure project was blessed by America which is increasingly using multi-lateral bodies such as the QUAD (a grouping of India, Japan, the US and Australia) and I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE and the US) to maintain its influence on the shifting sands of geopolitics. It is worth mentioning that all four I2U2 nations are participants in the IMEC. These four nations are meeting at regular intervals to cooperate on key areas of secure supply chains, countering terrorism and solutions to climate change.



The white house fact sheet released post the launch of IMEC read "The United States and our partners intend to link both continents to commercial hubs and facilitate the development and export of clean energy; lay undersea cables and link energy grids and telecommunication lines to expand reliable access to electricity; enable innovation of advanced clean energy technology; and connect communities to secure and stable Internet. Across the corridor, we envision driving existing trade and manufacturing and strengthening food security and supply chains." The white house also committed to increasing investments in regional investment initiatives such as the IMEC.

The IMEC is a direct challenge to the China-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which is being actively deployed by the dragon as a geo-strategic tool to increase its influence in global affairs. Crafted like IMEC, China, BRI has managed to bring in nearly 150 countries and about 25 international organisations as signatories to the infrastructure investment it pushes. In a decade of its existence, the BRI has managed to give China access to strategic ports and transnational road and rail networks, which have increasingly started to threaten the national sovereignty of many nations including India.

The opaque investment conditions under BRI have also arm-twisted many nations to surrender their strategic infrastructure assets to China. India has been at the forefront of opposing the BRI scheme over national security concerns, as China is actively constructing an economic corridor with Pakistan, over India-claimed territories. The China-Pakistan economic corridor could also be dialled up for military use in case of escalations with India. The IMEC is India's opportunity to have a robust say in regional infrastructure connectivity and retain its edge over China. Chinese state-run media has criticised the IMEC terming it as the Modern Spice route, created by the US. Chinese foreign policy experts have lectured IMEC participants to not compete with BRI and that any regional connectivity initiative should have a China presence. These sparks are expected to become fireballs in a few months' time when the IMEC participants lay the paperwork for this regional transnational rail, ports and digital and energy connectivity.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Rationalise taxes on fertilisers

The cost of making fertilisers available to farmers by itself is substantially higher than the price the Govt wants them to pay, ideally, it should not levy any tax



UTTAM GUPTA



In its report laid in Parliament on August 9, 2023, the Standing Committee on Chemicals and Fertilizers has recommended that the Union Government should propose to the GST Council to reduce tax rates on fertilizers from the current 5 per cent. Initially, fertilizers were placed under the 12 per cent slab. However, following representation made by various states, the tax rate was reduced to 5 per cent. Now, the Committee wants this to be reduced further.

It has also asked the Government to "consider favourably the proposal to lower GST on raw materials in the interest of fertilizer manufacturing companies and ultimately farmers". Currently, raw materials (RMs) such as sulphuric acid and ammonia used in the production of fertilizers, attract GST at a much higher rate of 18 per cent against 5 per cent levied on fertilizers (albeit finished product).

The issue of further reducing GST on fertilizers was placed before the GST council in its 45th and 47th meetings in September 2021/June 2022, but it didn't recommend any reduction. Whether or not the GST Council will accede to the recommendation of the Standing Committee now, one can only wait and watch. Meanwhile, it is important to highlight three major flaws in the taxation of fertilizers.

First, given the critical role of fertilizers in ensuring food security, the Government controls their maximum retail price (MRP) at a low level, unrelated to the cost of production and distribution and reimburses the excess of the cost over MRP as a subsidy to the manufacturers. In the case of urea, the MRP is just about one-tenth of the cost whereas, in the case of non-urea fertilizers, the price is nearly one-third.

When, an overwhelming share of the cost (9/10th in the case of urea and 2/3rd in the case of non-urea fertilizers) is borne by the Government - using taxpayers' money - just to make fertilizers affordable to the farmers, it makes no sense to levy tax on those very products namely fertilizers and RMs used in their production. The taxes have the effect of increasing the cost

of supplying fertilizers which has to be reimbursed as an 'additional' subsidy to the manufacturers.

It is a typical case of taking from one hand and giving back from the other. There is no justification whatsoever for levying any tax on fertilizers or RMs used for making them.

The second flaw has to do with taxing two major components of the fertilizer supply chain under two different regimes; one under GST and the other under the pre-GST regime. All finished fertilizers such as urea, dia-ammonium phosphate (DAP), muriate-of-potash (MOP) and so on are taxed under GST currently attracting a tax rate of 5 per cent. Most of the RMs used in the production of fertilizers are also covered under GST attracting a tax rate of 18 per cent on sulphuric acid and ammonia and 12 per cent on phosphoric acid.

However, natural gas (NG) which is used for the manufacture of all domestic urea (small quantities are used for making ammonia which in turn, is used for making non-urea fertilizers) is taxed under the pre-GST dispensation. Taxation of electricity, a utility intrinsic to the process of manufacturing fertilizers is also outside GST. This results in a much higher cost of these two major inputs than the cost if they were to be brought under GST.

At present, NG attracts 'nil' central excise duty (CED) on supplies to fertilizer plants and value-added tax (VAT) varying from a high of 24.5 per cent in Andhra Pradesh (AP) to a low of 5 per cent in Rajasthan. Then, there are other local taxes; for instance, the Gujarat government collects the "purchase tax" on that portion of inputs consumed for making urea that is sold outside the State. This leads to a cascading effect on the price of NG in three ways.

First, being outside GST, gas

companies viz. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), Oil India Limited (OIL) and so on, can't claim credit for the taxes paid on their purchase of inputs, consumables and equipment leading to higher prices. Second, the delivered price at the factory gate increases due to the levy of VAT, the impact being the highest in AP where the tax rate is 24.5 per cent. Third, the price further increases due to local levies.

Electricity too is outside GST. Further, its generation and distribution are exempt from the levy of Central VAT (CENVAT) and VAT. This results in a situation whereby power companies don't get any credit for taxes paid on inputs viz. equipment, stores and so on, used in its generation and distribution. This results in a higher cost of electricity.

Further, under the Constitution, entry 53 in the State list of the Seventh Schedule empowers States to impose a tax (or electricity duty) on the sale and consumption of electricity, except when it is consumed by the Union Government or the Railways. For electricity duty, electricity companies don't get any offset. This further exacerbates the cost of power supplied to fertilizer plants.

To put it briefly, whereas, taxation of finished fertilizer products and some inputs/RMs used in their making under GST is intended to lower the cost of making fertilizers available to farmers, taxing other major inputs viz. NG and power under the pre-GST regime militates against this objective.

The third flaw has to do with high taxes paid on inputs used in the manufacture of fertilizers as against the tax liability on the output (read: finished fertilizers) being much lower. This isn't just because of the much lower GST rate but also due to lower MRP. For instance, in the case of urea apart from a tax rate of

5 per cent, the MRP is a mere 1/10th of the cost of supply. This results in an 'unabsorbed' input tax credit (ITC) as the output tax falls far short of input tax and there is no provision in the law whereby manufacturers can claim it. Hence, the Centre has to compensate fertilizer manufacturers for unabsorbed ITC using its fertilizer subsidy budget.

To conclude, considering that the cost of making fertilizers available to farmers (sans taxes) by itself is substantially higher than the price the Union Government wants them to pay, ideally it shouldn't levy any tax. Even if it wants to levy, all components in the supply chain have to be under GST and fertilizers and all inputs/RMs should be in the lowest tax slab of 5 per cent.

While the tax rate on fertilizers is already 5 per cent (the Committee's recommendation to lower it further to say 1 per cent or 2 per cent would unnecessarily complicate an already unwieldy GST regime with multiple slabs), this will require lowering the tax rate on ammonia, sulphuric acid and phosphoric acid from their current high of 18 per cent/12 per cent to 5 per cent. The same rate should apply to NG and power after bringing them under GST.

As for the third flaw, the recommendation of the Committee to keep the tax rate on RMs lower than on fertilizers alone won't help. This is because the artificially low MRP has no linkage with the cost that results in low output tax liability vis-à-vis the value of tax paid on inputs in turn, resulting in unabsorbed ITC. To address this, the government should give subsidies directly to the farmers under the direct benefit transfer (DBT) mechanism and let manufacturers charge full cost-based or market-determined prices from the farmers.



NATURAL GAS WHICH IS USED FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF ALL DOMESTIC UREA IS TAXED UNDER THE PRE-GST DISPENSATION

(The writer is a policy analyst; views expressed are personal)

Philippines fights TB, one barangay at a time

Tuberculosis is rampant and underreported in the Philippines; now early detection by latest portable testing kits is helping its eradication

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has," said the famous anthropologist, Margaret Mead. Bearing testimony to this, a small group of people in the Bantayan Municipality of Cebu, Philippines, has changed the lives of many people affected by tuberculosis. TB, despite being curable, continues to be the deadliest diseases in high TB burden countries.

Carrying innovative new diagnostic tools for TB in plastic tubs, they went from islet to islet on pump boats, braving inclement weather, to screen and diagnose people with TB. This resulted in a tremendous increase in TB case finding upfront: a 316%



SHOBHA SHUKLA



BOBBY RAMAKANT

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rise in new TB case detection, and a 1292% rise in screening of those with presumptive TB. Imagine the difference it can make in the Philippines' fight to end TB if such interventions can be scaled up and become a norm. As per the latest Global TB Report 2022 of the World Health Organization (WHO), out of the estimated 741,000 people with TB in the Philippines, only 321,600 were notified to the national programme, and over 60,000 lives were lost due to TB.

As of now, only 43 out of every 100 people with TB are reached by the TB services in the Philippines, and only 65% of those reached, get a WHO-recommended molecular test diagnosis, while the rest get a smear microscopy (which underperforms in TB diagno-

sis), or get treated without any bacteriological confirmation. As early and accurate TB diagnosis is the gateway to the TB care pathway (and breaking the chain of infection transmission), the Philippines has a two-fold task: firstly, it must ensure that it is reaching out to all those with TB (and not just 43/100), and- secondly, it must use WHO recommended molecular tests to diagnose TB timely and correctly. This paradigm shift in TB diagnostics is a critical entry point, not only to the full spectrum of TB care cascade but also towards ending TB in the country.

When the WHO recommended point-of-care, decentralised, laboratory and battery-operated molecular test Truenat (made by Molbio Diagnostics), along with the

ultra-portable and battery-operated x-ray made by Fujifilm, was deployed in Bantayan islets, new TB case notifications, as well as treatment success rate, increased manifold. Using the latest and state-of-the-art diagnostic tools in the Philippines was made possible in 2022 by introducing the New Tools Project (iNTP) of the Stop TB Partnership and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which has helped in the rollout of a package of latest innovations in diagnostics, treatments, and digital health technologies to strengthen TB care in high burden countries. Bantayan is the largest municipality of Bantayan Island and it has 25 barangays (small townships) and one district hospital which

is understaffed and under-supplied. These areas are also marked as geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDA). Most of the people here are fisherfolk or farmers and their income is Pesos 300-350 (USD 6-7) a day.

"During September to October 2022, we were able to screen 1774 people with presumptive TB by bringing these tools right to their doorstep. Most of them cannot afford to travel to the mainland for diagnosis or treatment. So we brought TB point-of-care testing to their doorsteps and saw a very high increase in case detection as well as in treatment success rate," said Dr. Tinsay. "As TB diagnostic technology was brought to the people (and not the other way round), people were more

open to getting tested for TB." When Dr Samantha Tinsay began the introduction of these new innovative diagnostic tools in September 2022, extreme climate events- such as typhoons and storms- compounded the challenge. But it was sheer determination on her and her team's part to hop on a pump boat and brave the storms and typhoons to go from islet to islet find and treat TB. On 29 October 2022, Tropical Storm Nalgae, locally known as Paeng, hit the Philippines. On that fateful day, Dr Samantha Tinsay and her team were en route to one of the islets with the diagnostics tools in tow. "We did not know that a storm signal had been raised, and that nobody should be travelling. We were working and could not have

stopped as patients were already waiting at the clinic," said the spirited Dr Tinsay.

Because of the introduction of new tools, TB case detection went up from 110 in 2021 to 458 in 2022. The number of people who got tested for TB also went up from 180 people in 2021, to 2506 people in 2022, an astronomical increase of 1292%. "These new innovative TB diagnostic tools are very crucial in the fight against TB, especially for people living in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDA). These tools can really help eradicate TB. Bringing these tools to the people in a country like the Philippines where TB is very rampant, will help end TB, one Barangay at a time," rightly said Dr Tinsay.

'Ex-Pak PM masterminded May 9 violence to remove Army chief'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan masterminded the May 9 violence and planned the attacks on sensitive military installations with an aim to remove Army Chief General Asim Munir, his close aide Usman Dar has said.

Dar, regarded as one of Khan's trusted aides, had reportedly gone underground after unrest broke out in Pakistan following the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party chief's arrest by paramilitary Rangers on May 9, The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

Dozens of military and state buildings, including the Army headquarters in Rawalpindi and the ISI building in Faisalabad, were torched and vandalised by many PTI activists during the unprecedented violence that broke out after Khan's arrest.

Dar, who served as the

head of the PTI's Tiger Force, an organisation comprising young volunteers, reemerged on Wednesday and levelled serious allegations against Khan on a TV programme.

Dar claimed that the planning to target sensitive installations in the May 9 violence was done in a meeting chaired by Khan, and instructions to attack these were passed in case of the former premier's arrest.

"[At the meetings at Khan's Lahore residence— Zaman Park] it was discussed that we should attack state institutions if needed in order to put pressure on them," Dar said during the interview.

Dar said that the purpose of the May 9 violence was to exert pressure on the military and remove Gen Munir from his position. He added that May 9 was merely a date, and the conspiracy against the military had been brewing for a long period, the report said.

Khan, who turned 71 on Thursday, is currently jailed in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail in the cipher case for allegedly violating the Official Secrets Act by disclosing a cable sent by the country's embassy in Washington last year in March. He has since remained behind bars on judicial remand, which has been extended until October 10.

Dar also alleged that the long march of October 2022 led by Khan to force the government to announce a date for early general elections was organised to prevent General Munir's appointment as the army chief.

Dar, who announced his decision to quit the PTI party and politics during the interview, said that a narrative was built in the party that the arrest of the party chairman should be thwarted at all costs. Subsequently, party workers swarmed at Khan's residence to

prevent his arrest.

Pointing out that there were two camps in the party, one of which called for adopting a reconciliatory approach towards state institutions and the other in favour of taking the state institution head-on, Dar said that the former premier was inclined towards the latter's narrative.

"Imran Khan presided over a meeting where the planning and implementation of the events of May 9 took place, and he endorsed an anti-state narrative," Dar was quoted as saying by Samaa TV.

Khan's Special Assistant on Youth Affairs added that the PTI chief was himself responsible for the situation of the PTI party, which, he said, "is in the state of disintegration".

He also blamed the PTI chief for using the party workers as "a human shield to avoid facing arrest," according to the report.

Khan meets Qureshi in Adiala jail

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan met his senior party colleague and former foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in the Adiala jail during a hearing in connection with the cipher case, a media report said on Thursday.

The chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, who turned 71 today, has been lodged in the Adiala jail in Rawalpindi since September 26 when he was brought from Attock prison in Punjab province, a day after the Islamabad High Court ordered authorities to relocate him to the high-security jail.

The Express Tribune newspaper said, the Khan-Qureshi meeting was the first between the two jailed leaders and described the "peculiar arrangement" during which a net separated the courtroom from Khan and the former foreign minister.

On September 30, Pakistan's top investigation agency, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) submitted a charge sheet against Khan and Qureshi to a special court established under the Official Secrets Act.

Khan and Qureshi's judicial remand in the same case (cipher) was extended till October 10. Khan was arrested after a case was filed against him for allegedly violating the Official Secrets Act by disclosing a secret diplomatic cable (cipher) sent by the



country's embassy in Washington last year in March.

"The lawyers representing PTI had a brief conversation with the party chairman through the net," the report said and further described, quoting sources, that Khan "appeared to be in a normal state" during the hearing, which lasted for approximately an hour.

The report further quoted the sources that revealed that the prosecution had requested an in-camera hearing and an early trial.

Special Court Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain also mentioned that copies of the challan, or charge sheet, would be provided to the accused during the upcoming hearing of the cipher case in the jail," it said. However, the hearing was adjourned till October 9 upon the lawyers' request.

Imran turns 71

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's former prime minister and cricket legend Imran Khan turned 71 on Thursday while incarcerated in a high-security jail in Rawalpindi in a case related to the violation of the country's secret laws.

Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party observed the day by having small gatherings in different cities across the country. In one of its posts on X, PTI shared a picture of a group of supporters celebrating the former premier's birthday at Lahore's Liberty Chowk. "Birthday wish for Chairman Imran Khan at Liberty Chowk, Lahore!" it wrote. A hashtag #HappyBirthdayImranKhan was also trending on X. Google joined the celebration with a special doodle on the occasion, while the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) also wished the cricketer-turned-politician by sharing stats of his achievements in cricket. "3,807 runs and 362 wickets in 88 Tests; 3,709 runs and 182 wickets in 175 ODIs; 1992 @cricketworldcup winning captain; Member of the PCB Hall of Fame...Happy birthday to Imran Khan!," the PCB tweeted. Khan was born on October 5, 1952, in Lahore where he studied and played cricket before joining the national team earning a cult-like following across the cricketing world.

TOSHA KHANA CASE

Imran approaches Pak court seeking suspension of trial court's verdict

Islamabad (PTI): Imran Khan on Thursday approached the Islamabad High Court (IHC) seeking suspension of the trial court's verdict in the Toshakhana corruption case more than a month after it suspended the jailed former prime minister's three-year sentence for concealing details of state gifts.

Khan, who turned 71 on Thursday, was arrested on August 5, 2023, and shifted to Attock jail after Additional District and Sessions Judge Humayun Dilwar sentenced him to three years in prison in the Toshakhana (national treasury gifts) graft case. The court had found the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief guilty of "corrupt practices".

The Supreme Court later acknowledged "procedural defects" in Khan's conviction by the trial court.

On August 28, the IHC suspended Khan's sentence in the Toshakhana case but the PTI chief was not released because he was arrested in the cipher case for allegedly violating the Official Secrets Act by disclosing a cable sent by Pakistan's embassy in Washington last year in March. He has since remained behind bars on judicial remand, which has been extended until October 10.

On September 26, Khan was shifted to Adiala jail in Rawalpindi from Attock jail in Punjab province following the directives issued by the IHC. Last weekend, the police ramped up security in the vicinity of the Adiala jail by deploying elite commandos and setting up additional security pickets to ensure foolproof measures. Khan, through senior lawyer Latif Khosa, on Thursday moved the IHC against the Toshakhana verdict under section 561-A (saving of the inherent power of high court) of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The petition's title stated that it sought "rectification of the order dated August 28 to the extent of suspending the operation of the impugned order along with the sentence as verbally prayed by the learned counsel for the petitioner before this honourable court at the time of arguments".

'China seeks to control Pak media'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

China has developed a web of international operations to have a say over media narratives and seeks to gain significant control over the Pakistani media, an official US report has said. In addition to working closely with Russia in the information space, China has attempted to enlist other close partners to counter unfavourable narratives, the State Department said in a report released here last week. Prominent among them is Pakistan, it said.

"With Pakistan, Beijing has sought to deepen cooperation on 'combating disinformation', including under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Media Forum," said the report. Beijing and Islamabad use the Media Forum to address what they view as propaganda and "malicious disinformation" and have launched initiatives like the "CPEC Rapid Response Information Network" and, most recently, pledged to launch the China-Pakistan Media Corridor (CPMC), it said.

According to the State Department report in 2021, China sought to negotiate significant control over Pakistani media as part of the China-Pakistan Media Corridor, including establishing a jointly operated "nerve center" to monitor and shape Pakistan's information environment. The scope of the proposal, which does not appear Islamabad seriously entertained, and the fact that the mechanisms it detailed appeared to disproportionately benefit Beijing is notable as an explicit example of Beijing's ambition to assume direct con-

trol over a close partner's domestic information environment, it said.

China's draft concept paper called for China and Pakistan governments to establish a "nerve center" to monitor Pakistan's information environment by streamlining inputs from think tanks, opinion leaders, CPEC study centres, media organisations, PRC companies, and even local Confucius Institutes.

"The proposed nerve centre would have relied on "three mechanisms" and "two platforms" to carry out this mission. The mechanisms would have provided means to convert important reports into Urdu products to sway popular opinion; provide PRC Embassy reports directly to Pakistan's official press release system; and monitor and respond to public criticism about the PRC," said the State Department.

The two proposed platforms called for the creation of a joint PRC-Pakistan authoritative system for "dispelling rumours" and a news feed application to promote approved news to the local market, it said. In its report, the State Department alleged that China spends billions of dollars annually on foreign information manipulation efforts. Beijing uses false or biased information to promote positive views of China and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). At the same time, China suppresses critical information that contradicts its desired narratives on issues such as Taiwan, its human rights practices, the South China Sea, its domestic economy, and international economic engagement, it said.

'Crackdown on illegal immigrants not aimed at any nationality'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A day after the ruling Taliban in Afghanistan slammed Pakistan's decision to expel its undocumented nationals and termed it "unacceptable", Islamabad on Thursday clarified that its ongoing operation against illegal immigrants was not targeted against people of any particular nationality. On Tuesday, Pakistan's caretaker government set November 1 as the deadline for thousands of undocumented immigrants, including Afghan nationals, to leave the country or risk imprisonment and deportation as it intensified its crackdown against those involved in militancy and smuggling.

Reacting to the development, the ruling Taliban in Afghanistan on Wednesday said Pakistan's decision is "unacceptable." "The Pakistani side should reconsider its plan. Afghan refugees are not involved in Pakistan's security



problems. As long as they leave Pakistan voluntarily, that country should tolerate them," Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said.

Replying to a question at the Foreign Office's weekly briefing here, spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said the ongoing action envisages repatriation of individuals who have either remained in Pakistan beyond their visa or do not possess "valid" documents to stay

Japan lifts tsunami advisory issued after earthquake

Tokyo (AP): Japan issued a tsunami advisory Thursday after a strong earthquake struck near its outlying islands in the Pacific Ocean, but lifted it about two hours later. No damage was reported. The advisory, the second-lowest of a four-stage warning system, asked people on islands in the Izu chain, which stretches south from the Tokyo region, to stay away from the coast and river mouths.

The US Geological Survey said a series of offshore earthquakes hit the area on Thursday morning. The strongest measured magnitude 6.1 and was located at a depth of 10 kilometers (6 miles), it said.

The quake was not felt on the islands or in the Tokyo region, but the Japan Meteorological Agency warned that a tsunami as high as 1 meter (3.2 feet) could hit the coasts of the islands.

Drone attacks in Syria kill officers, civilians

AP ■ BEIRUT

A drone attack Thursday struck a packed graduating ceremony for military officers in the Syrian city of Homs, killing an unspecified number of civilians and military personnel and wounding dozens of others, Syrian state television reported. Syria's military said in a statement that drones laden with explosives targeted the ceremony as it came to an end. They accused insurgents "backed by known international forces" for the attack, and said that some of the wounded were in critical condition, including women and children. They didn't specify the number of casualties and didn't accuse anyone in particular of carrying out the deadly strike. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

However, Britain-based opposition war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that seven officers were killed, and another 20

were wounded. They added that among the personnel at the ceremony was Syria's defence minister.

The Syrian military in its statement said "that it will respond with full force and decisiveness to these terrorist organisations wherever they exist".

Early Thursday, the Syrian government shelled a village in the rebel-held northwestern part of the country, killing at least five civilians, activists and emergency workers said.

The shelling, which comes amid a rise in strikes in the rebel-held enclave in recent days, hit a family house on the outskirts of the village of Kafr Nouran in western Aleppo province, according to opposition-held northwestern Syria's civil defence organisation known as the White Helmets.

The dead included an older woman and three of her daughters and her son, according to the Observatory. Nine others from the family were wounded, it said.

Philippine boats breach Chinese coast guard blockade in faceoff

AP ■ MANILA

Two Philippine supply boats breached a Chinese coast guard blockade in the South China Sea on Wednesday in a recurring confrontation near a disputed shoal some fear could spark a larger security crisis that could draw in the United States.

Two Philippine coast guard ships escorted the smaller supply boats, but it wasn't immediately clear whether the ships were blocked by the Chinese coast guard from coming closer to the Second Thomas Shoal, where a small contingent of Filipino marines has stood guard for years aboard a long-marooned but still actively commissioned warship, the BRP Sierra Madre.

China also claims the shoal and has surrounded it with its coast guard ships and militia vessels to prevent the Philippines from delivering construction materials that Beijing fears could be used to reinforce the Sierra Madre and turn it into a permanent territorial outpost.

"Despite attempts by a significant number of China coast guard and Chinese maritime militia vessels to block, harass, and interfere with the routine rotation and resupply mission," the two Philippine boats managed to deliver provisions to the Filipino forces at the shoal, a Philippine government body overseeing the disputed waters said in a statement late Wednesday. "The Philippines' resupply missions and maintenance of BRP Sierra Madre are part of regular operations in line with domestic and international law and ensures safety and well-being of our stationed personnel," the inter-agency body said.

It didn't provide other details of the Chinese coast guard's actions, which it has condemned in the past as dangerous maneuvers that have nearly caused collisions, and violated international safety regulations at sea.



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Saud: Nepal wants to develop cordial ties with all countries

AP ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal wants to develop cordial and friendly relations not only with India and China but also with all other countries in the world, including the US, on the basis of mutual benefits, Foreign Minister Narayan Prakash Saud has said. Saud, who accompanied Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' during his just concluded visit to China, told PTI in an interview that the two sides have agreed to re-activate the joint border committee formed long ago to resolve the boundary issues.

"Some people say that the (Nepal) government is tilted towards China, others say that we are tilted towards India, and some others even say that we are tilted towards the US. Basically, Nepal wants to develop cordial and friendly relations not only with the two big neighbours but also with all other countries in the world including the USA," Saud said while responding to a series of questions.

"We want to develop relations with other countries on the basis of mutual benefits. For example, we have relations with India in diverse areas such as trade, transit, economy, culture and so on. In the same manner, China being one of our important neighbours we also do have the same kind of relations with it," he said.

Prachanda, who politically distanced from the pro-China Communist Party of Nepal (UML) headed by KP Oli after becoming Prime Minister in December last year, made his maiden visit to China last month after visiting India and the US, a trip aimed at maintaining a balance in ties with both the neighbours - China and India. The 68-year-old Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Centre (CPN-MC) leader visited India in June as his first foreign trip after assuming office for the third time.

'Nepal aiming at facilitating 1 billion Hindu pilgrims to Kailash Mansarovar'



Kathmandu (PTI): Banking on the shortest route for Hindu pilgrims to reach Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet, Nepal plans to tap 1 billion travellers to the holy site once the agreement with China is in place, Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Prakash Saud said on Thursday.

Situated in the Ngari prefecture of the Tibet Autonomous Region, the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage is considered the most sacred by Hindus across the world. The two natural sacrosanct places are also revered by Buddhists, Jains and Tibet's indigenous Bonpa faith.

Saud's ambitious plan assumes significance as scores of Indian Hindus from across the world prefer to go for the revered Kailash Mansarovar Yatra via Nepal. In fact, even Indians who want to save time and escape the arduous trek through the Indian terrain, prefer to go via Nepal through private operators. That translates into a rich foreign exchange for the Nepal government.

Post the COVID-19 pandemic-induced lockdowns, China opened the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage this year.

Norwegian Jon Fosse wins Nobel Prize in literature

AP ■ STOCKHOLM

Jon Fosse, a master of spare Nordic prose in a sprawling body of work ranging from plays to novels and children's books, won the Nobel Prize in literature on Thursday for writing that gives "voice to the unsayable".

Fosse's work, rooted in his Norwegian background, "focuses on human insecurity and anxiety," Anders Olsson, chair of the Nobel literature committee, told The Associated Press. "The basic choices you make in life, very elemental stuff".

One of his country's most-performed dramatists, Fosse said he had "cautiously prepared" himself for a decade to receive the news that he had won. "I was surprised when



they called, yet at the same time not," the 64-year-old told Norwegian public broadcaster NRK. "It was a great joy for me to get the phone call".

The author of 40 plays as well as novels, short stories, children's books, poetry and essays, Fosse was honoured "for his innovative plays and

prose, which give voice to the unsayable," according to the Swedish Academy, which awards the prize.

Fosse has cited the bleak, enigmatic work of Irish writer Samuel Beckett — the 1969 Nobel literature laureate — as an influence on his minimalist style. Fosse has also taught writing — one of his students was best-selling Norwegian novelist Karl Ove Knausgaard — and consulted on a Norwegian translation of the Bible. "He tends to write in a fairly sparse style," said Guy Puzey, senior lecturer in Scandinavian Studies at the University of Edinburgh. "There's a lot of repetition of quite simple expressions, which then take on a lot deeper meaning and make you ponder what lies in between the lines."

While Fosse is the fourth

Norwegian writer to get the literature prize, he is the first in nearly a century and the first who writes in Nynorsk, one of the two official written standards. It is used by just 10% of the country's 5.4 million people, according to the Language Council of Norway, but completely understandable to users of the other written form, Bokmaal. Still, Bokmaal is "the language of power, it's the language of urban centers, of the press," according to Puzey. Nynorsk, by contrast, is used mainly by people in rural western Norway.

"So it's a really big day for a minority language," he said.

Norway culture minister, Lubna Jaffery, told news agency NTB that it was "a historic day for the Nynorsk language and Nynorsk literature" and noted that "it has been 95 years since

the last time a Norwegian author received the Nobel Prize for literature".

Bjornstjerne Bjornson received the prize in 1903, Knut Hamsun was awarded it in 1920 and Sigrid Undset in 1928.

In recognition of his contribution to Norwegian culture, in 2011 Fosse was granted use of an honorary residence in the grounds of the Royal Palace.

The literature prize has long faced criticism that it is too focused on European and North American writers, as well as too male-dominated.

Last year, French author Annie Ernaux won the prize for what the prize-giving Swedish Academy called "the courage and clinical acuity" of books rooted in her small-town background. She was just the 17th woman among the 119 Nobel

literature laureates. In 2018, the award was postponed after sex abuse allegations rocked the Swedish Academy and sparked an exodus of members. The academy revamped itself but faced more criticism for giving the 2019 award to Austria's Peter Handke, who has been called an apologist for Serbian war crimes.

His first novel, "Red, Black," was published in 1983, and his debut play, "Someone is Going to Come," in 1992.

His work "A New Name: Septology VI-VII" — described by Olsson as Fosse's magnum opus — was a finalist for the International Booker Prize in 2022. His other major prose works include "Melancholy," "Morning and Evening," whose two parts depict a birth and a death; "Wakefulness;" and "Olav's Dreams."

Russian strike on Ukrainian cafe kills 49

Zelensky urges stronger Western support

AP ■ KYIV

At least 49 civilians were killed Thursday in a Russian rocket strike on a village store in eastern Ukraine, one of the deadliest attacks in recent months that came as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky attended a summit of around 50 European leaders in Spain to drum up support from the country's allies.

Zelensky denounced the attack on the store and cafe in the village of Hroza as a "demonstrably brutal Russian crime" and "a completely deliberate act of terrorism."

He urged Western allies to help strengthen Ukraine's air defences, saying that "Russian terror must be stopped."

"Russia needs this and similar terrorist attacks for only one thing: to make its genocidal aggression the new norm for the whole world," he said. "Now we are talking with European leaders, in particular, about strengthening our air defence, strengthening our soldiers, giving our country protection from terror. And we will respond to the terrorists."

alleviate the damage, but there have been concerns that Russia will again ramp up its strikes on power facilities as winter draws nearer.

Zelensky noted the Granada summit will also focus on "joint work for global food security and protection of freedom of navigation" in the Black Sea, where the Russian military has targeted Ukrainian ports after Moscow's withdrawal from a UN-sponsored grain deal designed to ensure safe grain exports from the invaded country's ports.

The UK Foreign Office cited intelligence suggesting that Russia may lay sea mines in the approach to Ukrainian ports to target civilian shipping and blame it on Ukraine. "Russia almost certainly wants to avoid openly sinking civilian ships, instead falsely laying blame on Ukraine for any attacks against civilian vessels in the Black Sea," it said, adding that the UK was working with Ukraine to help improve the safety of shipping.

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In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Office, emergency workers search the victims of a Russian rocket attack that killed at least 49 people in the village of Hroza near Kharkiv, Ukraine on October 5

Massachusetts shooting: Baby delivered after mother hit by gunfire

Holyoke (Massachusetts) (AP): A shooting claimed the life of a baby that was delivered after its mother was one of several people hit by gunfire during a fight on a downtown street in the western Massachusetts city of Holyoke, authorities said.

The pregnant woman was shot on Wednesday afternoon while seated on a public bus and taken to a hospital in critical condition, the Hampden District Attorney's Office said. "The infant, who was delivered, and needed life-saving medical services, tragically passed away," it added.

Police responded to the shooting at 12.38 pm and said it appeared three male suspects were involved in an altercation before gunshots were fired.

All involved suspects were believed to have been identified, taken to hospitals, and are in custody, according to the District Attorney's Office. No further information was immediately given on their conditions. The names of the woman shot and of the people involved in the shooting haven't been released. State police spokesperson Dave Procopio said earlier that the shooting stemmed from "an altercation among people on the street."

Pioneer Valley Transit Authority spokesperson Brandy Pelletier confirmed that one of the agency's buses was on its route when it was involved in a shooting incident but said there would be no further comment on the active investigation.

The Massachusetts State Police Detective Unit assigned to the Hampden District Attorney's Office and the Holyoke Police Department are investigating.

Police said they received a 911 call about the shooting near the intersection of Sargeant and Maple streets, as well as notifications from ShotSpotter.

Nearly 50 European leaders stress on support for Ukraine

AP ■ GRANADA

Almost 50 European leaders Aused a summit in the southern Spanish city of Granada on Thursday to stress they stand by Ukraine at a time when Western resolve appears somewhat weakened.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that besides maintaining such unity, more military aid to get through the winter was just as essential.

Despite the political, economic and military support, the desperate struggle to rid Ukraine territory of invading Russian forces has ground to a stalemate, and Zelensky insisted that it was no time for wavering in the face of Russian President Vladimir Putin. And especially now that questions about continued support are growing in the United States too.

"Europe must be strong" despite what happens in other places around the globe, Zelensky said, calling for more air defence systems, artillery shells, long-range missiles and drones.

He said that victory or defeat in Ukraine would determine Europe's fate.

Zelensky flew in early in the morning to the third meeting of the European Political Community forum, which was

formed in the wake of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 that drastically reset the continent's political agenda and fundamentally undermined long-held beliefs on peace and stability on the continent.

Support from Europe has become all the more important after US Congress hastily sent President Joe Biden legislation over the weekend that kept the federal government funded, but left off billions in funding for Ukraine's war effort that the White House had vigorously backed.

Biden called other world powers on Tuesday to coordinate on Ukraine in a deliberate show of US support at a time when the future of its aid is questioned by an important faction of Republicans who want to cut off money to Kyiv.

"The main challenge that we have that is to save unity in Europe," Zelensky said.

Last weekend's election in Slovakia, where pro-Russia candidate Robert Fico was the big winner, and Hungary's continued recalcitrance to fully back Ukraine have cast increasing shadows on Europe's commitment. That counts especially for the European Union where many decisions on Ukraine need unanimity among the bloc's 27 members.

Ramaswamy slams Zelensky

Washington (PTI): Republican presidential aspirant Vivek Ramaswamy has slammed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky for seeking additional funds from the US to hold polls in the war-torn country.

The 38-year-old biotech entrepreneur also asserted that he is on his way to becoming the party's nominee for the 2024 presidential elections. In an interview with Fox News, Ramaswamy defended his statement that he would cut aid to Ukraine if elected as the US president.

"I have a problem with appeasement too, but I want to be very clear. We have to level with the American people here. Just because Putin is an evil dictator — and he is — does not mean that Ukraine is good," he said.

"This (Ukraine) is a country that has banned 11 opposition parties. This is a country that has consolidated all media into one state media arm, whose president just last week was praising a Nazi in his own ranks, has threatened the United States not to hold its own normal elections this year unless it gets more funding," Ramaswamy said.

Now polling third and fourth in major national polls, Ramaswamy said he is on his way to becoming the Republican Party's presidential nominee. "Six months ago, even five months ago, most people across this country didn't know who I was. Now we're already polling in

third in national averages in many cases," he said.

"I think we are on our way to the nomination. But, to me, this isn't about me. It isn't about Trump. It's about putting

America first. I think that message is resonating across the country. It will take someone of a different generation to reach the next generation," said the Indian-American leader.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that my client Anita Devi is in process to avail loan against her Entire Ground Floor (without roof/terrace rights) Part of Property No. 3-A, area measuring 87 Sq. Yds. part of Khaska No. 350, situated in the Lal Dera of Village Pitam Pura, Ballia having acquired the same vide sale deed dated 24/10/2005 (document No. 32486) whereas she has lost the following original documents pertaining to the said property although they have also lodged a complaint in lieu of that on dated 3/10/23 with the concerned Police station 1. Original Relinquishment Deed dated 22-09-2005 executed by 11 Mr. Naresh Kumar 2/ Mr. Vijender Singh, 3/ Mr. Bobby Banerjee 4/ Mrs. Sumita in favour of Mr. Surender Singh S/o Late Ram Chander in favour of rohtash (Document No. 30081) All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, family arrangement, maintenance, bequest, partnership, possession, lease, sublease, tenancy, license, lien, charge, pledge, easement or otherwise whatsoever, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 7 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of each person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned.

Kanad Kant Gupta (Advocate)
Unit No. FF-2, First Floor, Mahalaxmi Metro Tower Sec-4, Vashi, GZ, U.P., Mob. 9810635351

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all that my client, SHRI SANJEEV KUMAR AGRAWAL alias SHRI SANJEEV AGRAWAL S/O LATE SHRI R.K. AGRAWAL alias RAJ KUMAR AGRAWAL R/O FLAT NO.-26, GHARONDA APARTMENTS, SRESHTHA VIHAR, DELHI-110092, is the allottee/owner of FLAT NO. D-26, GHARONDA CGHS LTD., known as GHARONDA APARTMENTS, PLOT NO.2, SRESHTHA VIHAR, DELHI-110092. The original documents i.e. Original SHARE CERTIFICATE of the above said property have been lost or mispced by my client and is not traceable inspite of his best efforts. An F.I.R./W.C.R to this effect has been lodged in the Police Station, Crime Branch, Delhi (LR No. 675494/2023 dated 05.10.2023). Any person(s) claiming any rights, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above Address/Phone No. 954012891, within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to this property, can personally inform or write to Deputy Director (Group Housing) or Director (Group Housing), Vias Sadan, New Delhi.

Naveen Aggarwal (Advocate)
Ch.No. M-7, Near SBI, Western Wing, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi-54

MIS MY HOME COLLECTIONS PVT. LTD.
B-205A, PHASE - 2, NOIDA GAUTAM BUDDHA NAGAR UTTAR PRADESH - 201305

BIDDING NO. 2023-24/015/STOCKS
The Competent Authority invites E-bids for disposal of stock of Fire, Smoke & water Affected Quilt & comfortor, pillow & plant & machinery as salvage which has been damaged due to Fire i.e. (Fire, Smoke & water) affected on 'As is where is basis'. The interested bidders are advised to visit the www.justauction.in. The details of the E-bidding including list of items, approximate quantity available for disposal and its pictures are display on website.

Contact Person: Mr. Sunil Pandey of Mis My Home Collections Pvt. Ltd., Contact No. 9560844355.
Anita Jha (Surveyor office) Contact No. 7011489391.

Inspection of Fire smoke affected damaged Quilt & comfortor, pillow & plant & machinery can be done from 06/10/2023 to 16/10/2023 between 10.00 AM TO 5.00 PM. E-bidding will be conducted on 17/10/2023 at 03.00 PM to 04.00 P.M. hours. To place your bid, <https://shorturl.at/IC088>

No manual offers will be accepted against E-bidding.
Director
Mis My Home Collections Pvt. Ltd.

PUBLIC NOTICE
IT MAY BE KNOWN TO EVERYBODY THAT MY CLIENT SH. MANISH JAISWAL, S/O SH. G.S. JAISWAL, R/O C-58, GF, RAMPRASTHA, GHAZIABAD (UP) IS INTENDING TO PURCHASE A BUILT UP PROPERTY MEASURING 100 SQ. YDS PLOT NO. B-32/6, SL. NO. 2052, WARD NO. 87, FORMING PART OF KHASRA NO. 532/5 ETC. SITUATED AT VILL. JHILMIL TAHRIPUR, IN THE ABAD OF DILSHAD GARDEN, LLLAQA SHAHDARA, FROM SH. DEEPAK GUPTA S/O SH. SAT PAL GUPTA, R/O H. No. 251-252-255, POCKET D-16, SECTOR-3, ROHINI, DELHI - 110085, SH. SHRI NIWAS BANSAL, S/O. SH. T.R. BANSAL, R/O. H. NO. C-323, YOJNA VIHAR, DELHI - 110092, SH. RAJESH GUPTA, S/O. SH. VIJAY GUPTA, R/O. H. NO. 27/92, GALI NO. 7, VISHWAS NAGAR, SHAHDARA, DELHI - 110032 AND SH. VINOD KUMAR GUPTA, S/O. SH. M.L. GUPTA, R/O. H. NO. 1382, DDA JANTA FLATS, GTE ENCLAVE, NANDA NAGRI, SHAHDARA, DELHI - 110093, WHOSE/EVER HAS ANY CLAIM IN THE ABOVE PROPERTY, IS HEREBY REQUESTED TO CONTACT THE UNDERSIGNED WITHIN 15 DAYS OF THIS PUBLICATION, FAILING WHICH IT WILL BE PRESUMED THAT NO ONE HAS ANY CLAIM IN THE PROPERTY UNDER SALE. (V.K. SHARMA) ADVOCATE 102, Shivpuri, Delhi - 110051 M: 981116149

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is for notice of the general public that a political party is proposed to be registered by the name of Rashtriya Jan Karmath Party. The office of the party is located at 2nd, F-10, Nehru Nagar, Near Ganesh Hospital, Ghaziabad-201001. This party has submitted application to the Election Commission of India, New Delhi for its registration as a Political Party under Section 29A of the Representation of People Act, 1951. Names/address of the office-bearers of the Party are as follows:
President/Chairman: Ansul Gupta
2nd, F-10, Nehru Nagar, Ghaziabad-201001
General Secretary: Rajesh Kumar Sain
216, Ram Nagar, Turab Nagar, Ghaziabad, 201001
Treasurer: Priya Gupta
2nd, F-10, Nehru Nagar, Ghaziabad-201001
If anyone has any objection to the registration of Rashtriya Jan Karmath Party, they may send their Objection with reasons thereof, to the Secretary (Political Party) Election Commission of India, Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001 within 30 days of the publication of this notice.

IMPORTANT NOTICE
It is notified for the information of passenger that Train No. 14087/14088 Delhi Jn.-Jaisalmer-Delhi Jn. Runicha Express will also be provided stoppage at Nawa City station as per following schedule, besides the stoppages already notified in Public Notice published in various newspapers on 05.10.2023:-

Train No. 14087/14088 Delhi Jn.-Jaisalmer-Delhi Jn. Runicha Express Train (Daily)			
TRAIN NO. 14087	ARR.	DEP.	TRAIN NO. 14088
	16:03	16:05	04:00
		Nawa City	04:02

For detailed information regarding stoppages and timings of above trains, please call RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit enquiry website: www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

RailMadad Helpline No. **139** Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in Download Railmadad App

308/2023

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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Biden admn waives 26 federal laws to allow border wall construction

Texas (AP): The Biden administration announced they waived 26 federal laws in South Texas to allow border wall construction, marking the administration's first use of a sweeping executive power employed often during the Trump presidency.

The Department of Homeland Security posted the announcement on the US Federal Registry with few details outlining the construction in Starr County, Texas, which is part of a busy Border Patrol sector seeing "high illegal entry."

According to government data, about 2,45,000 illegal entries have been recorded in this region during the current

fiscal year. "There is presently an acute and immediate need to construct physical barriers and roads in the vicinity of the border of the United States in order to prevent unlawful entries into the United States in the project areas," Alejandro Mayorkas, the DHS secretary, stated in the notice.

The Clean Air Act, Safe Drinking Water Act and Endangered Species Act were some of the federal laws waived by DHS to make way for construction that will use funds from a congressional appropriation in 2019 for border wall construction. The waivers avoid time-consuming reviews and lawsuits challeng-

ing violations of environmental laws. Starr County's hilly ranchlands, sitting between Zapata and McAllen, Texas, are home to about 65,000 residents sparsely populating about 3,108 square km that form part of the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

Although no maps were provided in the announcement, a previous map shared during the gathering of public comments shows the piecemeal construction will add up to an additional 20 miles to the existing border barrier system in the area. Starr County Judge Eloy Vera said it will start south of the Falcon Dam and go past Salineño, Texas.

B'desh gets first uranium consignment for Russian-built nuclear power plant

Dhaka (PTI): Bangladesh Thursday received the first consignment of uranium for its only nuclear plant being built with Russian assistance, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina saying that the country will use nuclear power for peaceful purposes.

The development comes amid the Ukraine war, which has led to sanctions from the Western countries on several Russian companies. The sanctions delayed the project, which is expected to help the country's growing economy.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister

Hasina - both via video links - joined the ceremony where the uranium fuel for the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (RNPP) was handed over to Bangladesh authorities.

Rosatom's chief Aleksey Likhachev handed over the fuel to Bangladesh's Science and Technology Minister Yeafesh Osman at the ceremony in the northern Pabna district. "Today is a day of pride and joy for the people of Bangladesh," Hasina said.

"Bangladesh will turn into a smart country in future, and the nuclear power plant is another step towards building

that Smart Bangladesh," she said. "We will use nuclear power to protect peace," she added. Once NPP starts production, Bangladesh will become the 33rd nuclear power-producing country in the world, Hasina's ruling Awami League party said in a post on X. Putin congratulated Bangladesh for its nuclear "graduation," calling Dhaka Russia's "tested friend."

"The flagship project meets interests of both countries and promotes further deepening of mutually beneficial cooperation," Putin said, adding that he kept an eye on the implementation of the project.

AXIS BANK LTD. PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION OF PLEDGED ASSETS BEING GOLD ORNAMENTS

THE BORROWERS, IN SPECIFIC AND THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT PUBLIC AUCTION OF THE GOLD ORNAMENTS PLEDGE IN THE BELOW ACCOUNTS IS PROPOSED TO BE CONDUCTED BY THE AXIS BANK AT THE BELOW MENTIONED BRANCH. THE BELOW MENTIONED BORROWERS HAVE AVAILED THE CREDIT FACILITY FROM THE AXIS BANK LIMITED AGAINST THE PLEDGE OF GOLD ORNAMENTS ("GOLD LOAN FACILITY") IN FAVOUR OF THE BANK TOWARDS THE SECURITY. THE DEMAND NOTICES WERE ISSUED TO THE BORROWERS/GUARANTORS CALLING UP THE BORROWERS/GUARANTORS TO PAY THEIR OUTSTANDING AMOUNT TOWARDS THE GOLD LOAN FACILITY AVAILED. AS THE BORROWERS/GUARANTORS HAVE FAILED TO REPLY THE OUTSTANDING LOAN AMOUNT, THE BANK IS CONSTRAINED TO INVOKE THE PLEDGE AND PROPOSED TO CONDUCT AN E-AUCTION SALE OF PLEDGED GOLD ORNAMENTS MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED IN SCHEDULE OF PROPERTY HEREBY ON 16.10.2023 AT 12.30 PM TO 3.30 PM ON "AS IN WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS", "WHATSOEVER THERE IS" AND "NO RECURSE BASIS".

DETAILS OF BORROWERS AND OUTSTANDING AMOUNT

SR. NO.	CUSTOMER NAME	LOAN A/C NO.	AMOUNT OUTSTANDING	DATE OF RECALL NOTICE	GROSS WEIGHT	NET WEIGHT
B.O.: ASHOK VIHAR, NEW DELHI [DL]						
1	PANKAJ KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX587	30,226.42	30-05-2023	9.30	8.70
2	PANKAJ KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX3350	106,630.05	30-05-2023	35.10	33.70
3	SUNIL KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX7661	111,179.20	08-02-2023	60.30	57.50
4	JITENDER KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX3905	444,289.13	30-05-2023	139.90	131.55
5	URMILA .	XXXXXXXXXXXX0033	2,415,444.31	30-05-2023	1,185.30	1,105.75
B.O.: BALI NAGAR, NEW DELHI [DL]						
6	RASHMI TANEJA	XXXXXXXXXXXX7347	357,280.36	08-02-2023	157.10	141.50
B.O.: DARYAGANJ, DELHI [DL]						
7	GULAB SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX5531	39,159.00	27-06-2023	13.40	13.15
8	UPENDRA SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX8135	41,921.00	28-02-2023	13.00	12.60
9	RAHUL KUMAR SHARMA	XXXXXXXXXXXX2550	198,739.00	28-02-2023	148.00	143.90
10	KAVITA GUPTA	XXXXXXXXXXXX3441	304,309.00	03-09-2022	117.20	104.30
B.O.: JYOTI NAGAR DEL DL						
11	MUSKAN	XXXXXXXXXXXX7106	62,593.00	28-08-2023	44.80	43.20
12	DEV KUMAR GUPTA	XXXXXXXXXXXX4891	102,605.66	08-03-2023	31.20	29.80
13	VINIT BHATI	XXXXXXXXXXXX9579	103,603.00	30-05-2023	30.70	29.40
14	GOVIND KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX9713	117,872.56	28-02-2023	38.10	36.40
15	SANJEEV KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX2411	135,587.00	30-05-2023	46.20	44.40
16	ANUJ KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX8071	139,241.34	08-02-2023	50.20	37.70
17	ANUJ .	XXXXXXXXXXXX7545	227,907.00	30-05-2023	65.60	63.10
B.O.: KALKAJA, NEW DELHI [DL]						
18	SUMIT BIDHURI	XXXXXXXXXXXX8542	412,375.24	28-08-2023	353.20	330.40
19	PAWAN KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX0323	69,119.00	28-02-2023	23.70	22.34
B.O.: KISHANGANJ OD DL						
20	AMIT SETTHEE	XXXXXXXXXXXX7980	1,624,845.00	30-05-2023	525.30	509.00
B.O.: LAJPAT NAGAR, NEW DELHI [DL]						
21	SANDEEP KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX6084	233,212.89	25-08-2023	70.40	66.40
B.O.: MALVIYA NAGAR, NEW DELHI [DL]						
22	GUDIA DEVI	XXXXXXXXXXXX1438	90,151.00	08-02-2023	31.40	27.20
B.O.: MAYUR VIHAR, NEW DELHI [DL]						
23	SUNNY KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX4045	56,790.24	25-08-2023	23.40	22.43
24	SANJAY SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX7825	62,928.00	28-08-2023	37.40	36.32
25	RAVINDER KUMAR CHAUHAN	XXXXXXXXXXXX4407	509,233.00	07-01-2023	150.20	147.06
B.O.: NANGLOI DEL DL						
26	ABDUL NOOR P	XXXXXXXXXXXX3663	52,423.00	30-05-2023	13.20	13.00
B.O.: NEW FRIENDS COLONY, NEW DELHI						
27	SACHIN GUPTA	XXXXXXXXXXXX6135	67,723.24	03-09-2022	19.00	18.40
B.O.: ROHINI, DELHI [DL]						
28	JAGJIT KAUR	XXXXXXXXXXXX5632	45,240.00	25-08-2023	33.00	31.20
29	BOBI	XXXXXXXXXXXX0498	54,584.00	25-08-2023	35.60	34.00
30	MUKESH KUMAR MANDAL	XXXXXXXXXXXX0943	75,160.00	27-06-2023	24.60	22.90
31	RESHMA KUMARI	XXXXXXXXXXXX1570	185,533.00	30-05-2023	55.30	52.90
32	SARABJEET KAUR	XXXXXXXXXXXX6879	214,823.00	05-09-2022	144.20	137.70
33	RITU .	XXXXXXXXXXXX5205	284,534.00	30-05-2023	78.90	76.00
B.O.: SECTOR-24,ROHINI,NEW DELHI [DL]						
34	RESHMA KUMARI	XXXXXXXXXXXX5524	262,702.00	30-05-2023	74.70	71.80
B.O.: SHALIMAR BAGH, DELHI [DL]						
35	NAGENDRA KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX5979	111,551.00	18-07-2023	31.10	29.55
B.O.: TILAK NAGAR, DELHI [DL]						
36	PAWAN KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX0683	150,890.10	25-08-2023	53.60	50.50
B.O.: UTTAM NAGAR, NEW DELHI [DL]						
37	MANAS KUMAR PARIDA	XXXXXXXXXXXX2417	372,064.00	22-07-2022	106.40	102.30
B.O.: VIKASPURI, NEW DELHI [DL]						
38	MANOJ KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX5335	26,365.68	27-06-2023	8.50	8.10
39	SWETA SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX3584	26,961.78	18-07-2023	11.40	10.70
B.O.: DLF, GURGAON [HR]						
40	SAIF ALI	XXXXXXXXXXXX2187	53,796.00	25		

Markets rebound after 2-day slump, L&T top boost

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices rebounded sharply on Thursday after sliding for the past two sessions, propelled by bargain hunting in capital goods, banking, and IT stocks amid a sharp correction in global crude prices.

An encouraging PMI data further bolstered sentiment, even as relentless foreign capital outflows trimmed gains, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 405.53 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at 65,631.57. During the day, it rallied 527.16 points or 0.80 per cent to 65,753.20.

Nifty advanced 109.65 points or 0.56 per cent to end at 19,545.75.

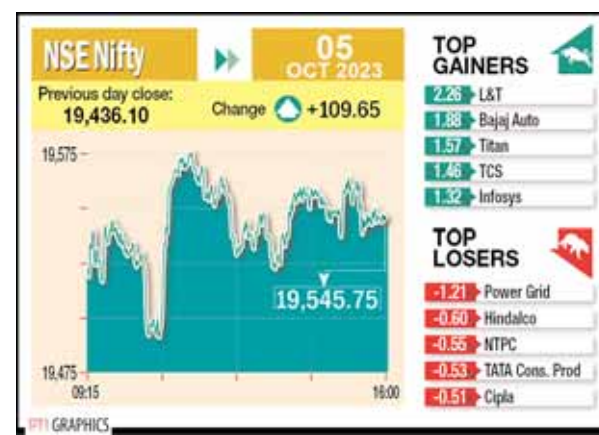
"The positive signal from the PMI data and the correc-

tion in the crude price boosted the market sentiment. While regarding RBI policy, positively, the market expects the interest rate to be hold-on as external demand outlook indicates muted trend fearing disinflationary trend in the future," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Larsen & Toubro was the biggest gainer in the Sensex pack, rising 2.35 per cent, followed by Titan, Tata Consultancy Services, Maruti, Mahindra & Mahindra, Infosys, ICICI Bank and Asian Paints.

In contrast, Power Grid, Nestle, NTPC, HCL Technologies and Bajaj Finance were among the laggards.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.59 per cent and the



midcap index dipped 0.03 per cent.

Among the indices, capital goods jumped 1.31 per cent, services climbed 1.03 per cent, IT (0.98 per cent), industrials (0.95 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.93 per

cent), tech (0.83 per cent) and auto (0.81 per cent).

FMCG, telecommunication, utilities and metal were the laggards.

"Global markets steadied on Thursday rebounding from previous losses after a strong

lead from Wall Street. A plunge in oil prices and softer U.S. Labour data late on Wednesday helped bring US Treasury yields back down from 16-year highs," Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities,

said. In Asian markets, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled in the green, while Seoul ended lower. Trading was closed in Shanghai for a holiday.

European markets were trading on a mixed note. The US markets ended in positive

territory on Wednesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.89 per cent to USD 85.05 a barrel.

"Recovery in global markets followed by a sharp drop in international crude oil prices and steady trend in US bond yields triggered a relief rally in domestic shares after two sessions of losses. Buying in IT, banking, auto and capital goods stocks led the upsurge, whereas selective profit-taking in metals, and power stocks trimmed gains of key benchmark indices.

"Despite the rebound, uncertainty over more rate hikes going ahead coupled with slackening demand and recessionary fears would mean that markets are likely to witness strong bouts of intra-day volatility with a slightly negative bias in the near to medium term," Shrikant Chouhan,

Head of Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,424.02 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

"Though the market bounced back today, uncertainty persists, which would keep the Nifty range bound. Investors would watch out for US weekly jobless claims that would be released late today.

Also, the release of US non-farm payroll data, along with the RBI policy outcome tomorrow would be key events to watch out for," Khemka said.

The BSE benchmark declined 286.06 points or 0.44 per cent to settle at 65,226.04 on Wednesday. Nifty slipped 92.65 points or 0.47 per cent to end at 19,436.10.

RBI expected to retain benchmark rate: Experts

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The RBI is expected to retain the benchmark rate of 6.5 per cent in its latest bi-monthly monetary policy review, amid inflation concerns and other global factors, experts said.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das-headed Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) started its three-day meeting on Wednesday, and the policy review will be announced on Friday morning.

"I think that between the last MPC meeting in August and this time, inflation has gone up, growth remains strong while global factors have turned a little adverse in the sense that the US Federal Reserve is still aggressive in its stance, which has led to hardening of yields. In this situation, the central bank is expected to maintain a status quo on policy rates in the ensuing policy," Crisil Chief Economist D Joshi told PTI.

He said the RBI would focus more on inflation given that growth is strong right now, adding oil price movements need to be watched carefully, too.

"We believe that the interest rates will be on the higher side, which essentially means that we will not see any rate cut this fiscal year," Joshi said.

The Reserve Bank has been mandated by the central government to ensure the Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation remains at 4 per cent, with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

Retail inflation jumped to a 15-month high of 7.44 per cent in July, as prices of vegetables and other food items spiked, according to official data.



Chief Economist of Bandhan Bank, Siddhartha Sanyal, said, "The global macro-economic backdrop remains complicated with uncertainties around growth. This will prompt the MPC to stay watchful, with a likely guidance of rates to remain higher for longer.

"Nevertheless, softening in prices of agro commodities since August has offered the MPC some breathing space, which will allow it to refrain from any rate action at the moment."

Founder and Director of CreditWise Capital Aalesh Avlani also said there will likely be no change in the policy rates on Friday.

The RBI started increasing the policy rate in May 2022 in tranches, in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war and took it to 6.5 per cent in February this year. Since then, it has kept the rate unchanged in the last three successive bi-monthly monetary policy reviews.

Vice-Chairman and MD of Titagarh Rail Systems, Umesh Chowdhury, added: "The government's policies and capital spending have certainly fuelled infrastructure growth. There are a lot of opportunities for the manufacturing sector, which means the private sector would have to incur capital expenditure. For that, the interest rate regime would continue to play a very important role."

Amplus inks initial pact with Microsoft to enhance RE remote monitoring solution

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Clean energy solution provider Amplus on Thursday said it has entered into an initial pact with Microsoft to enhance and market its renewable energy remote monitoring solution.

The two companies signed a long-term Renewable Energy Agreement last year for a 100 MW solar power project in Rajasthan, the company said in a statement.

Amplus is collaborating with Microsoft through a

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance and market Amplus' innovative Renewable Energy Remote Monitoring Solution, it stated.

According to the statement, the strategic collaboration promises to usher in a transformative era in RE plant performance monitoring on the proposed future energy platform supported by Generative AI.

"This collaboration marks a pivotal moment for both Amplus and the renewable energy industry. As part of this new



collaboration, we are eager to harness the power of Generative AI and Large Language Models to set new standards for the co-development of the proposed future energy platform," Sharad Pungalia, MD & CEO of Amplus, stated.

Amplus is a member of clean energy solutions provider Gentari. "At Gentari, we welcome industry-level collaborations where we can combine complementary strengths to unlock greater synergies. This collaboration with Microsoft is aligned with our commitment to

invest in the capabilities and technologies required to develop and deploy leading-edge innovations that will put clean energy into action," Gentari Chief Executive Officer Sushil Purohit said.

"This new collaboration reflects our commitment to help Amplus accelerate its digital transformation and the overall renewable energy sector by harnessing the power of the cloud and technologies like Generative AI and machine learning," Microsoft Malaysia Managing Director K Raman said.

Coffee Day Enterprises total default at ₹433.91 crore in Jul-Sep quarter

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Coffee Day Enterprises Ltd (CDEL) on Thursday reported a total default on payments of loans' principal and interest amount of Rs 433.91 crore for the September 2023 quarter.

This is lower than the June quarter when CDEL had reported a total default of Rs 440.25 crore.

Its "total financial indebtedness of listed entity, including short term and long term debt", is Rs 433.91 crore in the July-September quarter, the company said in a disclosure to bourses on Thursday.

According to CDEL, its total outstanding amount is Rs 189.14 crore from loans or revolving facilities like cash credit from banks or financial institutions.

Of this, CDEL defaulted on Rs 183.36 crore principal amount and an interest payment of Rs 5.78 crore as of date.



The company's total outstanding from unlisted debt securities, such as NCDs and NCRPS, is Rs 244.77 crore. Of this, the total amount of default as of date is Rs 200 crore along with an interest of Rs 44.77 crore, the company noted.

"Due to default in repayment of interest and principal to the lenders, the lenders have sent 'loan recall' notices to the company as well as ini-

tiated legal disputes. In view of the loan recall notices, legal disputes and pending one-time settlement with the lenders, the company has not recognised interest from April 2021," it added.

Earlier in August, the NCLAT had stayed insolvency proceedings against its subsidiary Coffee Day Global Ltd (CDGL), which owns and operates the popular Cafe Coffee Day chain.

On September 13, 2023, CDGL reached a settlement with its financial creditor IndusInd Bank, following which the NCLAT has set aside an insolvency process against it.

CDEL is trying to pair its debts through asset resolutions and has significantly scaled it down from the time when the trouble started after the death of founder Chairman V G Siddhartha in July 2019. In March 2020, it announced repaying Rs 1,644 crore to 13 lenders after concluding a deal with Blackstone Group to sell its technology business park.

Earlier this year, capital markets regulator SEBI had also levied a penalty of Rs 26 crore on CDEL for failing to stop the diversion of Rs 3,535 crore from the company's subsidiaries.

The company is trying to recover the amount legally from Mysore Amalgamated Coffee Estates Ltd (MACEL).

Rupee pares initial gains, settles 3 paise lower at 83.27 per \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee pared initial gains and settled 3 paise lower at 83.27 against the US dollar on Thursday, following a recovery in the American currency.

Forex traders said the rupee consolidated in a narrow range as investors preferred to stay on the sidelines ahead of the Reserve Bank of India's rate decision.

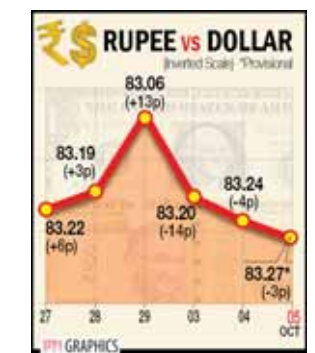
At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 83.21 against the greenback and touched an intra-day low of 83.30 and a high of 83.16.

It finally settled at 83.27, down 3 paise over its previous close of 83.24.

"The Indian rupee erased opening gains following recovery in the greenback but ended almost steady ahead of the US weekly jobless data and the RBI's rate decision," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

Parmar said the rupee was well supported by lower crude oil prices, the central bank's dollar supply and recovery in the domestic equity markets.

"Spot USDINR is expected to trade between 83.10 to 83.35 with the trend remain-



ing sideways to bullish," he said.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.01 per cent lower at 106.79.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures dipped 0.97 per cent to USD 84.98 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 405.53 points, or 0.62 per cent, higher at 65,631.57, while the broader NSE Nifty advanced 109.65 points, or 0.56 per cent, to 19,545.75.

Foreign institutional investors remained net sellers in the capital market on Wednesday, offloading shares worth Rs 4,424.02 crore, as per stock exchange data.

Gold declines ₹150, silver climbs ₹300

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price declined Rs 150 to Rs 57,350 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid a fall in the yellow metal prices globally, according to

HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at Rs 57,500 per 10 grams.

However, silver climbed Rs 300 to Rs 71,300 per kg. "Gold traded negative on

Thursday, with spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets trading at Rs 57,350/10 grams, down by Rs 150 against its previous close," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said.



In the international markets, gold was down at USD 1,820 per ounce, while silver was trading higher at USD 21.15 per ounce. Comex gold prices consolidated their lowest level since March amid

mixed cues, Gandhi said.

Meanwhile, in futures trade, the December contract of gold fell Rs 7 to Rs 56,714 per 10 grams. Also, December contract of silver jumped Rs 387 to Rs 67,272 per kg on the MCX.

BUSINESS BRIEF

NATION CELEBRATES SHASTRI BIRTH ANNIVERSARY
NEW DELHI: The nation celebrated on 2nd October 2023, the 119th birth anniversary of the late Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. The occasion was marked by various programmes held in the capital beginning with bhajans at his Samadhi at Vijay Ghat organised by the Government of NCT of Delhi.

WIDEST ARRAY OF SOLAR SOLUTIONS LAUNCHED GREATER NOIDA: India's leading solar tech start-up, Loom Solar under its initiative Mission-Zero Emission launched a series of innovative and India first solar solutions today at REI Expo 2023.

L&T SHARES CLIMB OVER 2 PER CENT
NEW DELHI: Shares of Larsen & Toubro (L&T) climbed over 2 per cent on Thursday after the company bagged several 'large' projects under its various business units.

Future Consumer Ltd defaults on ₹369.59 crore loan repayment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Future Consumer Ltd (FCL) has defaulted on the payment of Rs 369.59 crore towards principal and interest on loans from banks, financial institutions and unlisted debt securities in the September quarter.

FCL, the FMCG arm of the debt-ridden Future Group, had defaulted on Rs 253.95 crore loans and revolving facilities like cash credit from banks and financial institutions as on September 30, a filing said on Thursday.

The default amount for unlisted debt securities such as Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs) and Non-Convertible Redeemable Preferential Shares (NCRPS) is Rs 115.64 crore for the quarter, as per the regulatory disclosure.

FCL's total financial liabilities

is Rs 468.12 crore, including short-term and long-term debts. This includes Rs 266.80 crore debt from banks and financial institutions and Rs 201.32 crore from NCDs and NCRPS, the filing added.

However, FCL added it is "is planning/working for asset monetization and debt reduction over the period in this year". FCL, part of the Kishore Biyani-led Future Group, is in the business of manufacturing, branding, and distributing FMCG food and processed food products.

It was part of the 19 group companies operating in retail, wholesale, logistics and warehousing segments, which were supposed to be transferred to Reliance Retail under a Rs 24,713 crore deal announced in August 2020, which was called off in April 2022.

'Cyber insurance gains momentum in India'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The cyber insurance market in India is expected to grow by 27-30 per cent in the coming years, a Deloitte report said forecasting cyber insurance gaining momentum.

The report indicates that the current Indian cyber insurance market is valued at USD 50-60 million, maintaining a steady 27-30 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in the past three years.

"This growth is expected to continue for the next 3-5 years, driven by an increased awareness of the need for cyber insurance," the report "Cyber Insurance in India" said.

It identifies industries heavily involved in digitisation, such as IT, pharma, and manufacturing, as well as those integrated with broader economic sectors like supply chain, retail, critical industries, and finance, to be the prime targets of cybercriminals.

"These sectors are typically early adopters of cyber insurance," it said. The report included a survey of several Chief Information Security



Officers (CISO), with 70 per cent of respondents expressing willingness to increase spending on securing their digital infrastructure over the next three years.

"Notably, willingness was most prominent among mid-sized firms. Conversely, certain leading companies in the consumer sector overseeing substantial consumer databases exhibited a cautious approach when expanding their digital infrastructure budgets," Deloitte said in a statement.

However, they expressed an interest in boosting their insurance coverage. "About 60 per cent of respondents wanted to increase insurance coverage without wanting to invest much in improving their digital infrastructure security," it said. The survey suggests that the cyber insurance market will experience modest growth in the short term, expecting exponential acceleration with momentum.

In India, the cyber insurance

market trajectory will be influenced by three key factors - the pace at which firms achieve digital maturity, government initiatives to digitise and enforce stringent cyber laws, and the evolving landscape with non-traditional players including technology giants and MNCs entering the cyber insurance domain, intensifying competition.

Debashish Banerjee, Partner and Insurance sector leader, Deloitte India, said, "It is crucial to shift the perception that cyber insurance isn't merely an expense; it is a strategic investment. The dynamic cyber insurance market caters to rising demand to counter cybercrime losses. In this era of rapid digitisation, businesses must see proper coverage of cyber insurance as indispensable."

"As organisations embrace the digital realm, they must prepare to tackle surging cyber threats. The boards and CEOs of organisations need to elevate their cybersecurity knowledge, acknowledging that cyber risks are now central to comprehensive risk management," he added.

NEWCASTLE HUMILIATE PSG

AP ■ NEWCASTLE
Newcastle enjoyed a dream return to the Champions League at St James' Park as Paris Saint-Germain were humbled in a 4-1 victory for the Magpies on Wednesday.
Miguel Almiron, Dan Burn, Sean Longstaff and Fabian Schar scored the goals as Newcastle made their first home game in Europe's elite competition for 20 years a night to remember.
"We hope this gives us the belief we need to be successful in the competition," said Newcastle boss Eddie Howe.
"It's only by doing that you can prove it to yourselves."
Howe's men move to the top of what is considered the toughest Champions League group in this season's draw.
Newcastle have four points from their opening two Group F games, one more than PSG, while Borussia Dortmund and AC Milan picked up their first point in a 0-0 draw in Germany.
The first ever clash between the clubs pitted the sporting interests of Saudi Arabia and Qatar head-to-head.
A Saudi takeover two years ago has transformed Newcastle's fortunes in similar fashion to how the influx of cash from the Middle East has made PSG the



dominant force of French football over the past decade.
PSG boss Luis Enrique warned before the game that Newcastle were the side no one wanted from the fourth pot of seeds and the Premier League side showed why.
Despite being acutely aware of Newcastle's threat, Luis Enrique boldly stuck with a star-studded front four featuring Kylian Mbappe, Ousmane Dembele, Goncalo Ramos and Randal Kolo Muani.
"These games are tough for coaches," said the former Spain boss, who defended his team selection.
"Honestly, I think the score-

line is unfair, even if I have to congratulate Newcastle, who played very well. But I think 4-1 is harsh."
Once the home side, roared on by a raucous 52,000 fans, got their claws into the visitors, they did not let go.
MILAN DRAW
AC Milan were held to a second successive goalless draw in the Champions League at Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday to slip to third in Group F. Stefano Pioli's Italian side, semi-finalists last season, created the better chances but failed to convert them, just as in their opening 0-0 draw with Newcastle at the San Siro.
"I'm disappointed," Milan winger Rafael Leao told Prime Video.
"We can't be happy with this draw, we missed too many chances and in the Champions League that's unforgivable."
Dortmund drop to the bottom of the early standings, one point behind Milan and three adrift of early leaders Newcastle after their 4-1 victory over second-placed Paris Saint-Germain.
The Germans are also yet to score in the competition this term after losing 2-0 to PSG at the Parc des Princes.



Barca secure important 1-0 win against Porto

AP ■ PORTO
Ferran Torres's strike earned Barcelona a tense 1-0 win at Porto in the Champions League on Wednesday, which coach Xavi Hernandez said "got rid of ghosts" the club had from previous years.
Barcelona have been eliminated in the opening stage in the past two editions but this hard-fought triumph on the road puts them in a strong position as Group H leaders to avoid a third consecutive strike-out.
Xavi said the trip to the north of Portugal would be the hardest group game and his team had to dig deep, surviving a penalty which was cancelled after a VAR review and an offside goal in the gripping final stages. Barca midfielder Gavi was sent off in stoppage time for a second yellow card as the Catalans clung on desperately to secure victory.
"We lacked a lot of calm, a lot of patience (but) this is Europe, it's Porto, it's away from home, everything is hard, very hard," Xavi told reporters, after his 100th game as Barca coach. "If we talk about negatives there are a lot, but if we talk about positives there are a lot too."
"We came from having 'ghosts', but now we've got rid of them. We were able to win away from home against a historic team."



Alvarez & Doku help Man City beat Leipzig

AP ■ LEIPZIG
Julian Alvarez and Jeremy Doku came off the bench to grab late goals and push Manchester City to a 3-1 victory at RB Leipzig in the Champions League on Wednesday.
Facing Leipzig in the competition for the third straight year, City dominated from the start, Phil Foden slamming in the opener after some impressive lead-up play from teenage wing-back Rico Lewis.
Clearly outclassed in the first half, Leipzig struck back immediately after half-time, Lois Openda scoring after a sweeping counter attack to equalise.
But with Leipzig focused on talisman Erling Haaland, who scored five in 60 minutes the last time these sides met, it was the Norwegian's understudy who scored the crucial goal, curling in City's second just five minutes after being introduced.
Doku sealed the win with a goal in injury time.
City forward Foden praised Alvarez's "magical" goal, telling TNT sports "he's someone we look to for the big goals."
"He came on and changed the



game. He's a really important player for us."
City boss Pep Guardiola praised his "perfect" side, saying "we took the game with a lot of passes and when a team is able to do this, very nice things are going to happen to you."
"We played a fantastic game in all departments."
City came into the game after two losses in a row for the first time since January.
Guardiola told the post-match press conference the victory put his team's recent struggles "in perspective".

Pedro strikes late to lift Lazio

AP ■ GLASGOW
Lazio kick-started their Champions League campaign with a last-gasp 2-1 win against Celtic as Pedro netted in the final seconds of Wednesday's clash in Glasgow.
Maurizio Sarri's side arrived at Parkhead under a cloud after a wretched run in Serie A.
But Lazio banished the gloom in the most dramatic fashion when Pedro headed home with just moments left to stun raucous Parkhead into silence.
Celtic took the lead through Japan striker Kyogo Furuhashi's first Champions League goal.
However, the Scottish champions' hopes of winning on home soil in the Champions League group stage for the first time in 10 years were dashed.
Matias Vecino headed Lazio's equaliser before the interval and former Chelsea winger Pedro produced the late plot twist.
"We had a great first half, then we had a period of being under pressure, but this time we showed more character to stay in the game. When that happens, usually you are rewarded," Sarri said.
"I told the lads before the match that we were nearly there, not to listen to what anyone else says.
"We are close to being competitive. I hope this result can give us a positive reaction, some confidence and belief."

Atletico produce another comeback to beat Feyenoord

AP ■ MADRID
Alvaro Morata hit a brace as Atletico Madrid twice came from behind to beat Feyenoord 3-2 and move top of Champions League Group E on Wednesday.
Spanish striker Morata has excelled this season, becoming a key figure for Diego Simeone's side in attack, alongside Antoine Griezmann, who netted Atletico's other goal.
The Rojiblancos were inconsistent but moments of quality from Morata and Griezmann proved the



difference in an end-to-end clash at the Metropolitano.
"They all have great teams, this is the Champions League, you have to suffer to win," Morata told Movistar.
"We pressed for it, we knew how to suffer and took three very important points."
The forward said he was delighted by the atmosphere Atletico fans created.
"If we continue like this, with the fans giving everything to us, it will be difficult for anyone to beat us," he added.

Fluminense stun Internacional to reach Copa Libertadores final

AP ■ PORTO ALEGRE
German Cano scored a late winner as Fluminense staged a dramatic fightback to beat Internacional 2-1 and reach the final of the Copa Libertadores on Wednesday. Cano — the two-goal hero of the first leg — swept home an 87th-minute strike just six minutes after John Kennedy's equaliser as Fluminense completed a 4-3 aggregate victory in the all-Brazilian clash.
Fluminense will face either Argentina's Boca Juniors or another Brazilian club, Palmeiras, in the November 4 final at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro. Fluminense have never won the Copa Libertadores and for long periods of Wednesday's second leg in Porto Alegre it looked as if their frustrating record of disappointment was set to continue.
Internacional dominated the early exchanges and were handed a dream start when Gabriel



Mercado headed home Alan Patrick's corner to put the home side 1-0 up, 3-2 ahead on aggregate, after just 10 minutes.
Substitute John Kennedy sprang the offside trap to dink in a superb equaliser to silence the home crowd in the 81st minute.
Six minutes later, Fluminense snatched a second, when Arias crossed low from the right. Kennedy helped the ball on with a sublime flick into the path of Cano who made no mistake with an emphatic finish into the bottom corner.

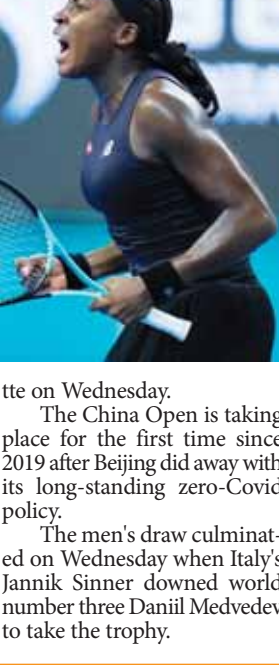
Alcaraz 'feels ready' for Shanghai

AP ■ SHANGHAI
Shanghai Masters top seed Carlos Alcaraz on Thursday said he was ready for the tournament and would change what he did wrong in Beijing, where he crashed out of the China Open this week.
The world number two said he had been "out of my mind" during his semi-final match against Jannik Sinner in the Chinese capital, which the Italian won 7-6 (7/4), 6-1.
Asked on Thursday how he would avoid cracking under pressure again in Shanghai, where he is the favourite in Novak Djokovic's absence, the 20-year-old said he had to "do my homework."
"I have just one day to practise and then the tournament is going to start, but... I feel ready, and I'll change what I did wrong in Beijing," he told reporters at a press conference.
Sinner went on to claim the China Open title, and could well end up facing Alcaraz again in Shanghai.
"I wasn't surprised at all," the Spaniard said of Sinner's win. "I know the capacity of Jannik. I know his level. He's one of the best in the world right now and he can beat anyone."
It is Alcaraz's first time at the Shanghai Masters, with the event called off for the last three years because of the Covid-19 pandemic.
Alcaraz beat top-rated Djokovic in a memorable Wimbledon final in July and is looking to close the gap on the Serbian at the top of the rankings with strong performances in China.



Gauff in China Open quarters

AP ■ BEIJING
US Open champion Coco Gauff shook off an indifferent first-set performance to glide into the women's quarter-finals of the China Open with victory over Russia's Veronika Kudermetova in Beijing on Thursday.
The world number three triumphed 7-6 (7/5), 6-2 to set up a quarter-final tie with either Greece's Maria Sakkari or homegrown talent Wang Xinyu.
Sakkari and Wang go head-to-head later on Thursday, as does world number one Aryna Sabalenka who faces Jasmine Paolini of Italy.
Earlier, world number 10 Caroline Garcia progressed to the quarter-finals with a 6-3, 6-2 defeat of Ukraine's Anhelina Kalinina.
Garcia will play second-ranked Iga Swiatek in the next round after the Pole swatted aside compatriot Magda Line-



MLS: Chicago Fire beat Messi-less Miami 4-1

AP ■ MIAMI
Missing Lionel Messi again, Inter Miami's hopes of squeezing into the MLS playoffs suffered a body blow on Wednesday with a 4-1 defeat to Chicago Fire.
The defeat leaves Miami next to bottom of the Eastern Conference and five points off the last playoff spot with just three games remaining and their destiny no longer in their own hands.
Wednesday's action saw five teams in the Western Conference, including defending champions Los Angeles FC, earn places in the playoffs alongside top seed St. Louis City.
The prospect of seeing the Argentine World Cup winner Messi in action drew a record home crowd of 62,124 to Soldier Field in Chicago but with no Messi, it was Chicago's own diminutive number 10 who put on the show.
Swiss former Liverpool and Bayern Munich playmaker Xherdan Shaqiri scored twice with his compatriot Maren Haile-Selassie also grabbing a brace. Chicago's win strengthens their chances of making the post-season for the first time since 2017, moving them up to eighth place.
"It's beautiful to see Soldier Field packed full for soccer game and I hope they're going to come more and more because we showed today how good we are and the team spirit is here," said Shaqiri.
"We needed that win obviously and every game now is a final... It was a perfect night for us," added the 31-year-old.

Biles wins 20th world title

AP ■ ANTWERP
Simone Biles claimed her 20th world title as she continued her return from a two-year break to lead the United States to a seventh straight women's team gold at the world gymnastics championships in Antwerp on Wednesday.
The USA extended their domination going back to 2011, in the absence of Russia, the last team to beat them in a major competition. "It's crazy, we still pulled it out, I'm really proud of the team," said Biles.
"It's the seventh title in a row for the United States. For some girls, it's their first World Championship, I'm excited to share that with them."
The Americans scored 167.729 points to take gold ahead of Brazil (165.530) with Olympic hosts France winning bronze (164.064).
"She's the leader, having someone so inspiring and so encouraging... Team USA came together and we did what we needed to do tonight," said Biles' teammate Shilese Jones. The team victory gives Biles her 26th world medal and a record-extending 20th world title. And she could extend that tally as she is still in the running for five other podiums in Antwerp.



Europe, Africa and South America all to host games in 2030 World Cup

AP ■ LAUSANNE
Morocco, Portugal and Spain will be joint hosts for the 2030 World Cup but games will also be played in Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay as the footballing showpiece celebrates its centenary, FIFA announced on Wednesday.
FIFA said in a statement that the matches in South America — one each in Montevideo, Buenos Aires and Asuncion — were part of the celebration to mark 100 years since the first World Cup in Uruguay.
The announcement puts an end to competition between two major bids, one led by Spain and Portugal and the other from Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Paraguay. "In a divided world, FIFA and football are uniting," said FIFA President Gianni Infantino.
"The FIFA Council, representing the entire world of football, unanimously agreed to celebrate the centenary of the FIFA World Cup, whose first edition was played in Uruguay in 1930, in the most appropriate way."
World football's governing body said the hosts must still be officially rubber-stamped by the FIFA Congress next year.
FIFA said Spain, Portugal and Morocco would all qualify automatically for the competition. Morocco, which was last week named as host for the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations, will become the second African country to host the World Cup after South Africa in 2010.



NZ STUNS CHAMPIONS ENG Pak face Netherlands in opener



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Unbeaten centurions Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra produced their own version of bruising 'Bazball' as New Zealand hammered defending champions England by nine wickets in the World Cup opener here on Thursday.

After England posted a below par 282 for 9 largely due to Joe Root's pragmatic 77, New Zealand romped to 283 for 1 in just 36.2 overs, courtesy buccaneering hundreds by Conway (152 off 121 balls) and Ravindra (123 off 96 balls).

While New Zealand, who regularly punch above their weight in the ICC events, put the rest of the teams on notice with that brutal onslaught, England

will have to do more than one boardroom session to regain some confidence.

Kiwis would thank Conway and Ravindra for that, who creamed a record-breaking 273 off 211 balls during their stunning unbroken second wicket alliance.

For the record, this was the fourth highest stand for any wicket in the World Cup.

The 23-year-old Ravindra, who became the third youngest batter to score a hundred on World Cup debut, and Conway produced a masterclass of cricketing shots all around to ground to leave England gasping for breath.

To drive in a bit of perspective to Ravindra's innings, he stands behind Virat Kohli (22

years) and Andy Flower (23 years, 301 days) in that list of young century makers.

The trophy holders simply could not muster any response to the assault by the Kiwis pair which began as early as in the second over.

Ravindra brought up his maiden century in his 13th ODI and first in the World Cup, whereas Conway's ton was his fifth in the format, first in the World Cup and second against England.

Having batted only once at the No. 3 position in his fledgling career, Ravindra matched Conway in strokes all around the ground, displaying the authority of a top-drawer player.

Ravindra's outstanding 123 (11x4s, 5x6s) may as well have

given New Zealand a happy headache since his runs came at the position usually occupied by regular captain Kane Williamson, who is recuperating from his surgery.

Having amassed 672 runs for IPL 2023 winners Chennai Super Kings, Conway went about his job as if the field here was like his backyard.

The Black Caps opener generally preferred to score his runs through the floor, and he played just two aerial shots during the duration of his innings, which gave a semblance of hope to England to make another breakthrough.

England might have hoped for a better outcome when left-arm pacer Sam Curran (1/47) had Kiwi opener Will Young

caught down the leg for a first-ball duck in the second over.

But after that early success, what transpired was completely demoralising for England, as Ravindra and Conway maintained a strike rate of 125 without a fuss.

Of course, the pitch eased up a bit more, compared to the gripper that it was during the England innings.

Neither Adil Rashid's leg-spin nor Mark Wood's express pace — who was hit for 38 runs in his first three overs — could come to England's rescue.

Earlier, New Zealand made regular inroads to keep England's long batting line-up in check and restrict the defending champions to a moderate 282 for nine.

New Zealand spinners exploited the hot and humid conditions in the afternoon perfectly to be on top against England's free-flowing and aggressive batting approach, while producing a collective bowling performance.

With his part-time spin, Glenn Phillips delivered an unexpected but successful spell of 3-0-17-2 accounting for Joe Root (77) and Moeen Ali (11).

Mitchell Santner's 2 for 37 and pacer Matt Henry's 3 for 48 were the other key performances that helped New Zealand keep England under 300 on a surface that offered a good amount of turn and grip in the first session.

The first runs of the 2023 World Cup came off a six when Jonny Bairstow (33 off 35 balls, 4x4s, 1x6s) cleared the backward square ropes with a flick off the pads on the second ball of the tournament from Trent Boult.

A boundary followed soon as England collected 12 runs off the first over to make their intentions clear, but soon the New Zealand bowlers applied breaks on the Three Lions' innings from which they never really recovered.

Pakistan would be desperate to plug the gaping holes and hope their star players regain form when they open their World Cup campaign against a free spirited Netherlands here on Friday.

Following a pre-mature Asia Cup exit and defeats in the two warm-up games, Pakistan definitely need to raise their game to go deep in the ODI show-piece.

The problems begin from the top with the opening combination not looking the most threatening in the competition. Imam-ul-Haq averages an impressive 50 in ODIs but on flatter decks in India, he needs to better his strike rate of 82 by a few notches.

Imam is expected to start against Netherlands but the team will need to choose between the destructive but out-of-form Fakhar Zaman and Abdullah Shafique who doesn't have the experience of world events.

The big positive for the unpredictable team is that its number three and four, skipper Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan, are in sublime touch.

Iftikhar Ahmed too has been getting the runs but it remains to be seen if Salman Agha also gets accommodated in the middle-order.

If the warm-ups are an indication, the game on Friday is expected to be another high-scoring affair with bowlers having no margin for error. Getting used to the varied conditions in India will be another challenge for Babar and his players, who don't get to play in the IPL like the players of other teams.

In the absence of injured Naseem Shah, the Pakistan bowlers were at the receiving end in the couple of warm-ups against New Zealand and Australia.

Pakistan vice-captain Shadab Khan has been struggling since Asia Cup and goes into the



opener under pressure. Fellow leg-spinner Usama Mir is breathing down his neck and there is a possibility that both may start against the Netherlands as Pakistan search for wickets in the middle overs.

The seasoned Hasan Ali has big shoes to fill in Naseem's absence as he will open the bowling alongside Shaheen Afridi.

Haris Rauf, who leaked 97 runs in nine overs against Australia, too need to be at his best if Pakistan are to advance in the competition.

Of late, Pakistan have left a lot to be desired in the fielding department and will be looking to correct that.

Netherlands, the only associate team in the competition, cannot be taken lightly and it's only better for Pakistan to face them early in the competition before taking on the bigger teams.

Netherlands, playing their

first ODI World Cup since 2011, go into the competition a bit short on game time. Both their warm-ups were hit by rain and they last played an ODI in the Qualifiers in July when they finished ahead of West Indies and another full-member Ireland.

Wesley Barresi, the only one in the current lot who played in 2011, has come out of retirement for his last dance. Former South African left-arm spinner Roelof van der Merwe, 38, is another key member of the squad.

The team which is packed with semi-professionals will rely on Andhra-born Teja Nidamanuru for runs in the middle-order.

All-rounder Bas de Leede, whose father Tim has also featured in World Cups, is the x-factor player for Netherlands.

Scott Edwards will captain the side. Having come this far, Netherlands have nothing to lose and Pakistan will be wary of that.

OTHER SPORTS

Stimac's contract extended until 2026

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior national team head coach Igor Stimac's contract has been extended until 2026, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) announced on Thursday, rewarding him for overseeing three title triumphs this year.

As per the contract, the Croat will automatically get an extension by another two years if India qualify for the third round of FIFA World Cup Qualifiers.

Former India stopper Mahesh Gawli, the assistant coach of the senior men's team, was appointed as the head coach of the men's U-23 team.

Stimac, a member of the Croatia side that finished third at the 1998 FIFA World Cup in France, took charge of the Blue Tigers in 2019 and has won four major titles with the side, including two SAFF Championships.

"The federation, the members have decided to extend the contract of our national team, Igor Stimac, until the 2026 World Cup Qualifiers. We have agreed to this, agreed to continue as one team," AIFF secretary general Shaji Prabhakaran said during a virtual interaction.

Stimac was seated beside Prabhakaran and Gawli as the top AIFF official made the announcement.

Most recently, Stimac guided the Indian men's team to the round of 16 at the Asian Games in Hangzhou, China. It is the



first time in 13 years that the team has progressed thus far in the continental showpiece.

"We are seeking to ensure stability in the national team. What we have experienced in the last few months, winning back-to-back tournaments, the performance on the pitch, even in the Kings Cup match against Iraq was great. We can only progress, we can only improve

from here. The process cannot be halted in between," Prabhakaran said. Stimac was last week offered a fresh deal of two more years as head coach of the senior team with the AIFF president Kalyan Chaubey proposing the contract extension.

Meanwhile the AIFF said the I-League is set to start from October 28 and the fixtures will be released soon.

Prannoy battles his way to Asian Games medal, Sindhu bows out

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Valiant HS Prannoy battled his way to the semifinals, becoming only the first Indian in 41 years to win a badminton medal in men's singles at the Asian Games but it was curtains for PV Sindhu in women's singles here on Thursday.

Playing with a taping on his lower back and a belt under his shirt, Prannoy battled severe back spasms to dish out a performance for the ages, outshining Malaysia's Lee Zii Jia 21-16, 21-23, 22-20 in the quarterfinals to assure India a second badminton medal at the ongoing Games.

India had won a silver in

men's team championships last Sunday.

"I think it was a really tough one out there. I think Lee is always a tough opponent. It was a very physical match today for me," Prannoy said after the match.

"I'm not at all in a condition where I could say I'm 80 per cent right. But I think to pull off something like this, I would give a lot of credit to myself. I think the will to fight was always there. So I think that paid off."

After fighting his way through a marathon 78 minute contest, the 31-year-old from Kerala fell on the court in disbelief. He then removed his shirt, fist-pumped and ran into



the arms of chief coach Pullela Gopichand. Prannoy thus ended India's long wait for a men's singles medal at the Asian Games

with Syed Modi winning the first — a bronze — at the 1982 edition in New Delhi.

The world championships

bronze medalist was ruled out of team championships final due to the back injury as India went down 2-3 to China to settle for a silver.

"It is affecting me. But that's how sport is. You can't be 100 per cent every day. But you have to learn to pull off matches even when you're 60 or 70 per cent. I think today was one of those days when I had to do that," he said.

While it was ecstasy for Prannoy, Sindhu had to endure the pain of returning without a medal for the first time in nine years after she lost 16-21, 12-21 to world No.5 Chinese He Bingjiao in 47 minutes to bow out of the competition.

Antim wins bronze on tough day for Indian wrestlers

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Tween sensation Antim Panghal humbled Tokyo Olympics medalist Bolortuya Bat-Ochir 3-1 to win a bronze medal but other Indian wrestlers struggled badly at the Asian Games here on Thursday.

The 19-year-old Antim bounced back after losing to two-time Japanese world champion Akari Fujinami in the quarterfinals in a superb manner as she did not let the

Mongolian attack much in the women's 53kg bronze play-off.

Antim saved the day for the Indian contingent which badly needed a medal after Narinder Cheema (Greco-Roman 97kg), Naveen (Greco Roman 130kg) and Pooja Gehlot (women's 50kg) were ousted.

Pooja was outplayed 2-9 in the bronze medal bout by Aktenge Keunimjaeva, the Asian championship bronze winner.

A lot was expected from Mansi Ahlawat (women's 57kg)

too but she ended up losing her bronze play-off by fall to Uzbekistan's Laylokhon Sobirova, who needed just 70 seconds to win the contest.

Antim had come to Hangzhou after winning a bronze at the world championships and she carried her good form into the prestigious event.

Her bronze is only the second wrestling medal of this edition.

In other match-ups,

Cheema lost his quarterfinal 1-3 to South Korea's Lee Seyoel 1-3, while Mansi was defeated 2-5 by Japan's Sakurai Tsugumi in the last-eight round.

Greco-Roman grappler Naveen, too, lost his quarterfinal contest 0-3 to 25-year-old Chinese Meng Lingzhe.

Bajrang Punia (65kg), who was widely criticised for accepting a direct entry into the Asian Games and the supremely talented Aman Sehrawat (56kg), will be in action on Friday.

Indian climbers progress to semis

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

The Indian climbers started their campaign in boulder and lead events on a positive note as all four advanced to the semifinals of the Asian Games here on Thursday.

In the men's qualification match, Aman Verma finished eighth with a combined score of 118.8 (64.8 in boulder and 54 in lead) and advanced to the last four. Bharath Stephen Kamath Pereira followed suit after finish-

ing 13th with a combined score of 97.8 (69.7 in boulder and 28.1 in lead).

In the women's event, Saniya Farooque Shaikh, who finished 17th with a score of 51.4 (44.3 in boulder, 7.1 in lead) and Shivani Charak who finished 18th with a score of 45.9 (39.8 in boulder, 6.1 in lead) entered the semifinals.

The men and women will play their semifinal clashes on Friday and Saturday, respectively.



India's gold medal dream in women's hockey ends in agony

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Favourites India endured a forgettable 0-4 drubbing at the hands of China in the women's hockey semifinals, a result that not only pushed the team out of the gold medal race but also denied it a direct entry to the Paris Olympics.

Last edition's silver medalist India, the highest-ranked team in the tournament at world number seven, was no match to world number China, who were the bronze medalist in 2018 in Jakarta.

Jiaqi Zhong (25th minute), Meirong Zou (40th), Meiyu Liang (55th) and Bingfeng Gu (60th) scored the goals for China.

"Definitely not the result we were looking for today. I'm quite disappointed with the performance of my team," skipper Savita said.

"We knew that China is a good team, but our team is quite good too. Maybe it wasn't our day today, as we were not able to execute the plans we had made for this game. We gave it away.