

OPINION 6

MYANMAR: REPRESSION CONTINUES UNABATED

WORLD 9

POLICE ON HIGH ALERT AHEAD OF SHARIF'S ARRIVAL IN LAHORE

MONEY 10

SENSEX, NIFTY DECLINE FOR 3RD DAY

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INDIAN SPINNERS DO EXCEPTIONAL JOB: GILL
12 SPORT

India: Canada Parity as per Vienna pact

Trudeau says India's actions contrary to international law

PNS/ AGENCIES ■ TORONTO/ NEW DELHI

Amid the ongoing diplomatic standoff between the two countries, on Friday, India rejected Canada's attempt to portray that the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations was violated in seeking diplomatic parity, as Canada withdrew 41 of its diplomats from here. Canada also issued a travel advisory for its citizens in India, asking them "to exercise a high degree of caution due to the threat of terrorist attacks throughout the country".

Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Friday that India's decision to revoke the diplomatic immunity of 41 Canadian diplomats is a violation of the Vienna Convention and it should worry all countries in the world, hours after New Delhi rejected Ottawa's attempt to portray the implementation of parity as a violation of international norms. Speaking at a press conference in Brampton, Ontario, he said the Indian Government was making it "unbelievably difficult" for life as usual to continue for millions of people in India and in Canada following the decision. "And, they're doing it by contravening a very basic principle of diplomacy...The government of India decided to unilaterally revoke the diplomatic immunity of 40

Canadian diplomats in India. This is a violation of the Vienna Convention. Governing diplomacy. This is them choosing to contravene a very fundamental principle of international law and diplomacy," he said. India's sharp reaction came hours after Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly announced that the country had withdrawn 41 diplomats and their family members from India, following a threat to strip them of their diplomatic immunity by Friday. "I can confirm that India has formally conveyed its plan to unilaterally remove diplomatic immunities for all but 21 Canadian diplomats and dependents in Delhi by tomorrow, October 20," Joly said in Ottawa late on Thursday. Brushing aside her contention, the External Affairs Ministry said in New Delhi: "We have seen the Statement by the Government of Canada on October 19 regarding Canadian diplomatic presence in India. The state of our bilateral relations, the much higher number of Canadian diplomats in India and their continued interference in our internal affairs warrant parity in mutual diplomatic presence in New Delhi and Ottawa. We have been engaged with the Canadian side on this over the last month in order to work out the details and modalities of its implementation."



The External Affairs Ministry added, "Our actions in implementing this parity are fully consistent with Article 11.1 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, which states the following: 'In the absence of specific agreement as to the size of the mission, the receiving State may require that the size of a mission be kept within limits considered by it to be reasonable and normal, having regard to circumstances and conditions in the receiving State and to the needs of the particular mission.'" The Ministry said, "We reject any attempt to portray the implementation of parity as a violation of international norms."

Tension flared between India and Canada last month following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations of the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar on June 18 in British Columbia. India had designated Nijjar as a terrorist in 2020. New Delhi rejected the allegations as "absurd" and

"motivated". Earlier on Friday, Canada also paused all in-person services at the consulates in Mumbai, Chandigarh, and Bengaluru and urged its citizens in these three cities to exercise caution. All Canadians in India have been asked to contact the High Commission in New Delhi in case they need assistance. The Canadian updated advisory added, "In the context of recent developments in Canada and India, there are calls for protests and some negative sentiment towards Canada in traditional media and on social media. Demonstrations, including anti-Canada protests, could occur and Canadians may be subjected to intimidation or harassment. In Delhi and the National Capital Region, you should keep a low profile with strangers, and not share your personal information with them."

The advisory also said, "Exercise a high degree of caution in and around Bengaluru, Chandigarh, and Mumbai. Consular services in-person are temporarily unavailable in

those cities or surrounding areas. Petty crime, such as pickpocketing and purse snatching, is common. Criminals may target foreigners, especially in major cities and tourist areas." The last few weeks saw both the countries expelling senior diplomats. Last month, India advised its citizens living in Canada and those contemplating travelling there to exercise "utmost caution" given growing anti-India activities and "politically-condoned" hate crimes in the North American country. As regards withdrawing its diplomats from India, Joly said in their "unreasonable" request for diplomatic parity, India would only allow 21 diplomats and their families to maintain their diplomatic status, putting the others at risk of having their protections stripped arbitrarily, leaving them vulnerable to reprisal or arrest. "This means 41 Canadian diplomats and their 42 dependents were in danger of having immunity stripped on an arbitrary date, and this would put their personal safety at risk," she said at a news conference in Ottawa. "The safety of Canadians and of our diplomats is always my top concern. Given the implications of India's actions on the safety of our diplomats, we have facilitated their safe departure from India," Joly said. "This means that our diplomats and their families have now left."

Last month, India asked Canada to downsize its diplomatic staff in the country,

arguing that there should be parity in strength and rank equivalence in the mutual diplomatic presence. The size of Canadian diplomatic staff in India is larger than what New Delhi has in Canada. Calling India's action "contrary to international law and in violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations", Joly accused India of escalating the bilateral tensions, but Canada will not be reciprocating. "There is a fundamental principle of diplomacy, and this is a two-way street. It only works if every country abides by the rules," she said. "A unilateral revocation of diplomatic privileges and immunities is contrary to international law," Joly said. "Threatening to do so is unreasonable and escalatory. If we allow the norm of diplomatic immunity to be broken, no diplomats anywhere... would be safe." "So for this reason, we will not reciprocate," she added. "Let me be clear, Canada will continue to defend international law, which applies to all nations and will continue to engage with India. Now more than ever, we need diplomats on the ground, and we need to talk to one another," Joly said. Joly announced the development "on the situation with India" alongside Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Minister Marc Miller, who announced the shrinking of Canada's footprint to one-third of what it was, will impact the level of service delivery Canada will be able to provide in India.

Mahua lawyer quits after HC appalled at mediation attempt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday said it is "appalled" to know that TMC MP Mahua Moitra's counsel contacted and tried to mediate between her and the advocate against whom she has sought restraint orders to prevent him from circulating any defamatory content against her. "I am really appalled. You are a person who is expected to maintain the highest professional standard. If you have been in contact with defendant no. 2 (advocate Jai Anant Dehadrai)... Justice Sachin Datta told senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, who was representing Moitra in the suit she has filed for permanent injunction and damages against BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, Dehadrai and a battery of media organisations. The public expression of displeasure by the judge prompted Sankaranarayanan to withdraw himself from the case. Moitra, one of the most vocal members of the Lok Sabha and a strong critic of the Modi Government, is in the eye of a raging political firestorm over allegations by Dubey that she took bribes from businessman Darshan Hiranandani to ask questions targeting industrialist Gautam Adani and his group. The court was informed by Dehadrai, who appeared in person, that he was contacted

by Sankaranarayanan over the phone on Thursday for withdrawing his complaint to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against the Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader over the alleged she accepted from Hiranandani. Moitra has filed a plea seeking to restrain Nishikant Dubey, Dehadrai, several social media platforms and media houses from posting or circulating any alleged fake and defamatory content against her. During the brief hearing, Dehadrai said, "There is something very disturbing. There is a very serious conflict of interest. He (Sankaranarayanan) had a 30-minute call with me. He asked me to withdraw the CBI complaint in exchange for the dog (which Dehadrai was alleged to have stolen from Moitra). He can't appear in the matter, I have the recording." Responding to the claim, Sankaranarayanan said Dehadrai has instructed him in the past in some cases and that is why he approached him. He also said he told his client, Moitra, that Dehadrai was a member of the Bar and he had earlier assisted him in a case so let him speak to the latter to which she agreed. The judge said, "You tried to play the role of a mediator. Are you then eligible to still appear in this matter? It is something that you need to answer yourself. It is your call."

Pakistan demolished



Australia's David Warner celebrates his century during the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 match against Pakistan at M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru on Friday. Thanks to openers Warner (124-ball 163 runs) and Mitchell Marsh (121 runs off 108), Australia scored an imposing 367 runs for 9 wickets and then bundled out Pakistan for 305 in 45.3 overs

Namo Bharat defines journey of New India, says Modi

STAFF REPORTER ■ SAHIBABAD/NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday that the Namu Bharat train symbolises the journey of a "New India" and its new resolutions. He flagged off the Namu Bharat train on a 17-km stretch of the Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) in Sahibabad. The Prime Minister mentioned that the 80-km stretch between Delhi and Meerut is "just the beginning". "Namu Bharat systems will be implemented in many parts of the country, generating employment opportunities," he added. Highlighting that the crew of the Namu Bharat train comprises women, he said, "This is the symbol of growing women empowerment in India."

The Namu Bharat trains will start chugging from October 21. Modi stated that the entire 82-kilometre stretch of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS will be completed within the next year and a half. He expressed confidence that he will be present to inaugurate it. "Four years ago, I laid the foundation stone of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut regional corridor project. Today, the services of Namu Bharat trains have started on the stretch

from Sahibabad to Duhai Depot. I had said earlier too and I say it today as well that we inaugurate the projects which we start," he said. "I will be there at your service when this Delhi-Meerut stretch is completed after a year or a year and a half," Modi said. The Prime Minister also launched virtually two stretches of the east-west corridor of the Bengaluru Metro. The function was attended by Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and parliamentarians from western Uttar Pradesh. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar joined the function virtually. "This is a historic moment as India's first rapid rail service — Namu Bharat train — has been flagged off," said Modi, adding that the modern train service will define the journey of a "New India" and its new resolutions. The present decade will witness the transformation of railway services in the country, he said and listed initiatives such as the Namu Bharat and the Vande Bharat train services, and upgrading of railway stations under the Amrit Bharat initiative. Modi said the "trinity of Amrit Bharat, Vande Bharat and Namu Bharat" will become a



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with metro staff at Regional Rapid Train Namu Bharat in Sahibabad in Uttar Pradesh on Friday

symbol of modern railways by the end of this decade. "I am not in the habit of small dreams and walking slowly. I want to give a guarantee to the young generation of today that by the end of this decade, Indian trains will be second to none in the world," the Prime Minister said. He noted that the drivers as well as support staff of the newly inaugurated Namu Bharat train are women. "Namu Bharat is a symbol of the strengthening women

power in the country," Modi said. The Prime Minister said the Namu Bharat train provides a "glimpse of India of the future and exemplifies the transformation of the nation with growing economic muscle". Modi said the Government has drawn up a roadmap for the development of the space sector and that day was not far when an Indian will travel to the Moon on our own spacecraft. The Prime Minister said India's

Gaganyaan will soon ferry Indian astronauts to space and the country also plans to establish its own space station. "We have drawn a strong roadmap till 2040 for the space sector...That day is not far when we will land an Indian on the Moon on our own spacecraft," Modi said. Modi recalled that India's Moon mission Chandrayaan-3 had recently placed the country's tricolour on the lunar surface. He said India of the 21st cen-

tury was writing new chapters of progress and the landing of Chandrayaan on the Moon had left the world awestruck. "With the impeccable hosting of the G20 Summit, today's India has become the centre of attraction and curiosity for the world which finds new opportunities to connect. Today's India wins more than 100 medals in the Asian Games. "Today's India launches 5G on its strength and takes it to all corners of the country. Today's India does the highest digital transactions in the world. Namu Bharat trains that were flagged off today are also made in India," the Prime Minister said. On Friday, Modi inaugurated the 17-km priority section of the RRTS corridor between Sahibabad and Duhai Depot that has five stations — Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, Guldhar, Duhai and Duhai Depot. The segment from Duhai to Duhai Depot is a spur from the main corridor. The entire 82.15 km Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS is targeted to be operational by June 2025. "This 80-km Delhi-Meerut stretch is just the beginning. The first phase will see many areas of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan being connected with Namu Bharat trains soon," he said.

Gaganyaan readies for pioneering human space flight

PTI ■ SRIHARIKOTA (ANDHRA PRADESH)

The launch of a single-stage liquid rocket on Saturday will signal ISRO's journey towards its ambitious human space flight programme, Gaganyaan, when the first crew module test to ensure the safety of astronauts will be conducted by the space agency here. ISRO aims to send humans into space on a Low Earth Orbit of 400 km for a three-day Gaganyaan mission and bring them safely back to earth. Unlike other missions by the Bengaluru-headquartered space agency, ISRO would attempt a successful launch of its Test Vehicle (TV-D1), a single-stage liquid rocket,

scheduled to lift off from the first launch pad at this spaceport at 8 am on October 21. The Test Vehicle mission with this Crew Module is a significant milestone for the overall Gaganyaan programme as a nearly complete system is integrated for a flight test. The success of this test flight would set the stage for the remaining qualification tests and unmanned missions, leading to the first Gaganyaan programme with Indian astronauts, which is expected to take shape in 2025. The Crew Module System is a habitable space with an Earth-like environment in space for the crew. It is of double-walled construction consisting of a pressurised metallic "inner structure" and an unpressurised "external structure" with "thermal protection systems".

It houses the crew interfaces, life support system, avionics, and deceleration systems. It is also designed for re-entry to ensure the safety of the crew during the descent till touchdown. The Crew Module underwent various testing at ISRO centres before it was integrated into the launch complex in Sriharikota, located about 135 km east of Chennai. The entire test flight sequence on Saturday is expected to be brief as the Test Vehicle Abort Mission (TV-D1) will launch the Crew Escape Systems and Crew Module at an altitude of 17 km which are expected to make a safe touchdown in the sea, about 10 kms from the



Sand sculpture of Goddess Durga with message Prayer for Success of Gaganyaan, created by the sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik at Puri Beach on Friday

eastern coast of Sriharikota. They would be later retrieved by the Navy from the Bay of Bengal. The TV-D1 vehicle

uses a modified VIKAS engine with a Crew Module and Crew Escape System mounted at its fore end.

The vehicle is 34.9 metres tall and has a lift-off weight of 44 tonnes. The structure of the TV-D1 flight is a single-walled unpressurised aluminium structure with a simulated thermal protection system. The Test Vehicle D1 mission aims for an in-flight abort demonstration of Crew Escape System with the newly developed Test Vehicle followed by Crew Module separation and safe recovery. Mission objectives include flight demonstration and evaluation of test vehicles, crew escape systems, Crew Module characteristics, and deceleration systems demonstration at higher altitude and its recovery. Through this campaign, scientists aim to ensure the safety of the crew who would be actual-

ly sent in the Crew Module on an LVM-3 rocket on the Gaganyaan mission. Scientists have also lined up a series of tests with the beginning of the TV-D1 flight programme on Saturday. ISRO chairman S Somanath had recently said similar kinds of abort missions would be conducted much before the human space flight programme. The prerequisites for the Gaganyaan mission include the development of many critical technologies, including human-rated launch vehicles for carrying the crew safely into space, a life support system to provide an earth-like environment to crew in space, and crew emergency escape provision.

The rocket to be launched in space would be a human-rated LVM-3 — a vehicle which would carry the Orbital Module to an intended Low Earth Orbit of 400 km on the Gaganyaan mission. However, for the Test Vehicle Abort Mission 1 (TV-D1), the Crew Module is an unpressurised version and it has the overall size and weight of actual Crew Module on the Gaganyaan mission. The Crew Module has all the systems for deceleration and recovery, a set of parachutes among many others. In the first test flight on Saturday, the Crew Module would capture the flight data for evaluation of the performance of various systems onboard to serve the scientists.

Plans drafted to clean Mumbai air

IN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In several major preventive measures announced to bring down severe air pollution levels in Mumbai, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Friday evening made it mandatory for builders and developers to set up 35 feet high iron sheet enclosures on all 6,000-odd construction sites across the metropolis and wrap the entire building under construction with green cloth, jute sheet or tarpaulin. Taking serious cognizance of the fact that on Tuesday, Mumbai's overall Air Quality Index touched 191, worse than that of Delhi's 84 and on Wednesday, the levels of inhalable Particulate Matter PM 10 crossed that of the national capital, the BMC announced several to arrest the increasing the air pollution levels in the country's commercial capital. In an effort to supplement its efforts, the BMC also announced that on October 23, it would come out with Standard Operative Procedures (SOPs) /guidelines for ensuring better quality of air in Mumbai. Apart from making it mandatory for builders and develop-



Its 35-foot high iron sheet enclosures atop the construction and wrapping the under-construction structures with green cloth, jute sheet and tarpaulin, the BMC also made provision of sprinkler systems and anti-smog guns within 30

days on all construction sites mandatory and decided to operate anti-smog guns on 50 to 60 major roads in the metropolis. In another measure, the BMC announced that it would requisition experts to check pol-

lution caused by major refineries — Tata Power Plant and Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers Limited (RCF). In a statement issued here in the evening, BMC Commissioner I S Chahal directed all the stakeholders to

ensure that the pollution caused by dust due to nearly 6000 construction sites all over Mumbai is monitored by the concerned agencies and all remedial and preventive measures shall be taken as discussed during the meeting. Among other things, Chahal said that the Government and the private agencies would be treated at par and any violations shall be dealt with by issuing stop-work notices at the site itself. "We will issue SOPs/guidelines for ensuring better air quality on Monday," Chahal said. The Municipal Commissioner directed the stakeholders to comply with remedial measures in various fields including building constructions, transportation of vehicles, and industrial activity. Spelling out measures announced for the construction industry, Chahal said: "Any construction site having area of one acre or above shall compulsorily have an iron sheet enclosure of 35 feet high on all sides. For area less than one acre construction site, the iron sheet enclosure shall be of 25 feet height"

Unique Bengal: Worshipping Muslim girl in Kanya Pujan

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

This year too Durga Pujas have come back to hammer home the age old adage: What Bengal thinks today the rest of India thinks tomorrow. In what could work as a clement balm to soothe a communally polarised atmosphere, organisers of northern Kolkata Durga Puja club have decided to walk off the beaten track. This, by worshipping a Muslim girl as "Kumari" during the Maha Navami day Kanya puja. The idea breaks the tradition but is not new in itself. Rather it is an encore of what Swami Vivekananda did in 1998 by worshipping the daughter of a Muslim boatman as "Kumari" at the famous Kheer Bhavani Temple when he was travelling Kashmir. This year around the Mritika Club of New Town has selected Nafisa, a girl, as their Kumari who will be worshipped as Mother Goddess human form on the Maha Navami Day. "We have chosen Nafisa whose mother works in the house of one of us ...there is no better way to acknowledge divinity in



a person ... a divinity that manifests itself through the "Kumari," says one of the organisers. "We are inspired by Swami ji ... who has often been narrowly misinterpreted as a Hindu icon. No. Not really! He was an incarnation of one of the Saptarshis (seven sages or stars in the sky): a saint born with the elements of Rudra. Inspired by his master Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, himself born with the attributes of Lord Rama and Krishna, Swami ji was a champion of Sarva Dharma Samanwaya (unity of religions) ... imagine the kind of wisdom, power, knowledge, guts and intellect a person born in an obscurantist age needed to break the hard-line traditions by worshipping

a Muslim girl," an organizer of the Mritika Club women's committee said. "If Swami ji could worship a Muslim girl more than a century ago, why can't we do it now?" says Pratham Mukherjee, secretary of the Mritika Club. Although Muslim families and youth of many parts of Bengal especially Kolkata's minority dominated areas have been participating enthusiastically in Durga Pujas, this will be the first time that a girl from the community is being worshipped as a living goddess. Muslim priest Haji Ilyas at Alimuddin Street hailed the effort: "In this time of provocations such affection ... such efforts for communal amity should be appreciated."

Kerala HC quashes Govt show cause notice served on VC

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Friday quashed the show-cause notice issued by the Kerala Government to Prof Ciza Thomas, former principal Government Engineering College, Thiruvananthapuram for taking over the additional charge of the vice-chancellor of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Technological University without the permission of the Government. Prof Thomas has assumed charges of the vice chancellor of the university under orders of Governor Arif Mohammed Khan following the Supreme Court verdict unseating the then vice chancellor Rajashree's appointment as null and void. The Governor, who is the chancellor of the University had appointed Prof Thomas as she was the most eligible person to hold the post. Though Prof Thomas had sought the permission of the CPI-M led Kerala Government to relieve her from the post of principal, Government Engineering College, Thiruvananthapuram, the latter sat over her plea till her retirement on 23 March 2023. The State Government had approached the High Court challenging the appointment of Prof Thomas as Vice Chancellor. But the High Court had ruled that the appointment was in line with the guidelines issued by the University Grants Commission and hence the plea by the Government was not tenable. According to Prof Thomas, the Kerala Government started harassing her from the day she joined as v c of the technical university. She was served a show-cause notice by the Government for taking up the post of VC without prior



approval by the Government. She approached the Kerala Administrative Tribunal questioning the propriety behind the show cause notice. Though the KAT dismissed the show cause notice it gave permission to the Government for going ahead with disciplinary proceedings against her. It was this order which she challenged in the High Court and a bench consisting of Justices Mohammed Mushtaq and Sobha Annamma Eappen. The appointment of vice-chancellors and faculties in the Universities in the State have become a bone of contention between the Governor and the CPI-M led Government. The Government has given a go by to academic and professional qualifications of persons to be appointed as vice-chancellors and faculty members. All vice-chancellors appointed by the Government face uncertainty as the apex court has already declared the appointment of at least three V C s as null and void. The Kerala Government has sent a Bill removing the Governor from the post of Chancellor of Universities in the State for the approval of the Governor. Friday's verdict by the Division Bench quashing the show cause notice on Prof Thomas is a setback to the Kerala Government, according to R S Sasi Kumar, Save University Forum, an organization of academicians in the state fighting to save the universities in the State from political interference and nepotism.

Governor Arif all set to don role of Gurunathan

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Kerala will wake up to a new morning on Tuesday as Governor Arif Mohammed Khan is all set to don the role of Gurunathan for more than 50 tiny tots. The Governor, a scholar of repute will initiate these children (all aged three) to the world of letters and knowledge on Vijayadashami Day, an auspicious day to mark Vidyarambham (beginning of one's education). This is the first time in the history of South India the Raj Bhavan is becoming a temple of learning and the Governor himself coming forward to initiate the children to the world of learning. Though Navaratri festivities are not as popular as Onam in Kerala, Vijayadashami and Vidyarambham days are celebrated with gaiety. The students make full use of the two days as they get a break from studies. "Books are kept for Pooja and reading and writing are not allowed during



these days. "Books are take off the sanctum sanctorum of the temples on Vidyarambham day and students resume their studies," says Subramanian Namboodiri, a traditional priest of Lord Krishna Temple at Chelamattam, known more as Dakshina Kashi. Men of letters and scholars initiate the infants to the world of education in this centuries old tradition. Governor arif Mohammed Khan is the first Muslim to perform this Pooja. What adds to the uniqueness of the event is the fact that Muslims refuse to light the traditional lamp (Kuthuvilakku). There

was an instance in the recent past when noted musician Yesudas walked out of event following the refusal of Muslim League leader and then minister P K Kunhalikutty to light up the traditional lamp during a public function. The Muslims consider lighting the lamp (Kuthuvilakku) as un-Islamic. In Brihadaranyakopanishad , Janaka reportedly asked Saint Yaagnavalkya about the force that provides light to the universe after sunset. "It is words, words enlighten the world. Vaage Vaasya Jyothi. This is what Yaagnavalkya told Janaka," said Vedic scholar Unnikrishnan Panicker reacting to the decision of the Governor to initiate children to the world of letters. "Being the First Citizen of the State and a scholar of reputation, he is launching a revolution," said Panicker. On Tuesday morning, the Governor will use his gold ring with which he would write Hari Sree Ganapathaye

Namah on the tongue of the children and make them write the same on a platter filled with rice, flowers and other auspicious pooja materials. "This is the new India and tge Governor is ushering in Bharath and reviving a tradition. Though some Churches across Kerala observe Vidyarambham, it is yet to get the acceptability and respect it deserve," said Kevin Peter, President, Christian Alliance and Association for Social Action (CASA). The importance of Vidyarambham could be understood by the list of persons who don the role of Guru for initiating children to the world of letters. M T Vasudevan Nair, poet Sreekumaran Thampi, are some of the prominent men of letters chosen to perform Akshara Deeksha. Elsewhere in the State, fathers as well as grand fathers perform this custom, an event which is as memorable and important in the life of a child.

Delhi Electricity Reforms Bill to raise retirement age fails to get President's approval

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Electricity Reforms (Amendment) Bill 2022 passed by the Delhi Assembly, which sought to raise the retirement age of Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) members and chairman from 65 years to 70, has been denied approval by the President. The tenure of the chairman and the members of DERC is five years or attaining the age of 65, whichever is earlier. "The Bill was not approved by the president and returned back," Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel said. No immediate comment was available from the president's office on the issue. When asked about it, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said he was not apprised of the matter. "I will get it checked," Kejriwal said in a press conference.

UP tops Ayushman Bharat beneficiaries list among States

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Having issued four crore Ayushman cards, Uttar Pradesh has topped the list of states with the highest number of beneficiaries under the Centre's health insurance scheme Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri - Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY). Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh stand at number two and three positions with 3.69 crore and 2.04 crore Ayushman cards, respectively. Overall, a total 26 crore Ayushman cards were issued across the country, the Union Health Ministry said in a statement. The Ministry further said in the statement 49 per cent

Ayushman cards are held by female beneficiaries. The AB PM-JAY has successfully catered to 5.7 crore hospital admissions costing more than Rs 70,000 crore, the statement added. The flagship scheme being implemented by the National Health Authority (NHA) provides a health cover of Rs 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation to 12 crore beneficiary families. Ayushman card generation is the "most fundamental activity" under the AB PM-JAY and concerted efforts are being continuously made to ensure every beneficiary under the scheme has an Ayushman card, the ministry said.

Tap opportunity with holistic healthcare approach, Ayush industry told

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Stating that integrating traditional medicine in main healthcare can bridge access gaps for millions of people across the globe, Union Minister Sarbanda Sonowal on Friday exhorted the Indian Ayush industry to tap the opportunity with holistic healthcare approach. The Union Ayush Minister was speaking at an event organized by the All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), an apex ayurveda institute situated at Sarita Vihar in the national



capital. He also unveiled the statue of Ayurveda legend Padma Vibhushan Vaidya

B?ihaspati Dev Triguna at the newly christened "Vaidya B?ihaspati Dev Triguna Auditorium" at the premises of the AIIA which celebrated its sixth foundation day on Friday. It had recently obtained A++ accreditation in the very first National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) assessment. Sonowal also noted that the Union Housing Ministry has allotted 12 Acres land for expansion of a 200-bedded hospital which has successfully treated over 15 lakh patients in the five years since its inception.

Seven held for cheating 2,100 people across country of ₹4 crore on selling goods online

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested seven persons who allegedly cheated more than 2,100 people across the country of more than Rs 4 crore on the pretext of selling goods online. The accused had been operating the racket for the last two years. "These seven people are directly linked with more than 2,100 complaints and 67 FIRs across the country registered against them till now," said Rohit Meena, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Shahdara district). On October 7, Vijay Pahwa filed a complaint that he was cheated by a person he had contacted after getting his number from a website to buy an electric scooter online. "Pahwa paid a sum of Rs 1.15 lakh to them. Later the accused stopped responding to him and the complainant understood that he was duped. Following a written complaint, the cyber police of Shahdara lodged an FIR and started the investigation," said the DCP. Cyber teams collected various details and a raid was conducted at Jain Nagar, Karala. Four persons identified as



Mohammad Raja (26), Vikas (28), Mohammad Suhail Ansari (26), and Ankit Yadav (26) were arrested, the police said in a statement. The four used to create fake websites of popular companies which were "sold" to fraudsters at high rates to cheat people, the police alleged. "Interrogation of these accused led us to more raids and further three men were arrested - Bihar Paswan (22) Ajeet Kumar Paswan (23), and Kanhaiya Kumar Mahto (19) - from Bihar. We came to know that Ajeet and Bihar were calling agents' while Kanhaiya used to settle cheated amounts

by withdrawing it through ATMs," DCP Rohit Meena said. The agents' who used to call complainants and trap them into buying products online, the police said. The police said that the accused had cheated more than 2,100 people of more than Rs 4 crore. "Some of the accused are still at large and will be arrested soon," the DCP said, adding further investigation is on. The police recovered 11 mobile phones, more than 100 SIM cards issued on fake identifications, three laptops, four chequebooks and five ATM cards.

Panel has taken decision to desal 300 shops sealed in 2018: Mayor

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Mayor Shelly Oberoi on Friday claimed that a court-appointed panel has "taken a decision to desal" over 300 shops which were sealed in 2018 for alleged violation of norms. In a press conference, she described the move as a "Diwali gift" for the affected traders. In 2018, 392 shops were sealed at the instance of a Supreme Court-appointed monitoring committee, she said. These garment shops were located in Lajpat Nagar-IV area and were sealed for carrying out "commercial activity in a residential area", the mayor said. Now, after years of their struggle, the "monitoring committee has taken a decision to desal" these shops, she told reporters, and said the move was "praiseworthy". A senior official of the MCD, when contacted, also said the decision to "desal" these shops was taken by the monitoring committee. Mayor Oberoi also told reporters that these traders will have to



submit an undertaking and a few other documents to start the process. "A supplementary lease deed which is executed by the L&DO, will have to be submitted, as also penalties and misuse charges to be paid to L&DO, besides conversion and parking charges, if due," Oberoi said. "One more certificate on structural stability will have to be submitted to the MCD. After all these formalities are done, only then shops will be desal," she told reporters. Meanwhile Delhi BJP

Spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor has said that the traders of Delhi's Amar Colony who have been fighting a long legal battle to get their shops desal are today extremely grateful towards the Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri for giving them a big legal relief. "Even after a decision of Union Urban Development Ministry the legal process of obtaining Supplementary Lease Deed & payment of penalty charges to ensure desal could have easily taken another 18 to 24 months," Kapoor added.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS
CHANGE OF NAME
I, Mithlesh Verma alias Mithlesh alias Mithlesh Kumari D/o Kharait Lal Suri W/o Shyam Raghur Verma R/o 199, Hargovind Enclave Delhi-110092 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Mithlesh Verma.
PD(184)C
PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that my client Nihaluddin is in process to purchase the Plot land area measuring 140 sq. yards pertaining to Kharsa No. 611 (3-00) & 613mm (0-07) Revenue Estate of Village Devi Sangam Vihar, New Delhi (availing loan from Primal Capital & Housing Finance Limited) from Basanti Devi, who acquired the said property vide Relinquishment Deed dated 17.03.2017 (doc. No. 1300) executed by Sh. Vishal Singh and Smt. Yukti Sangeetha (degal heirs of Late Ajeet Singh (recorded owner)).
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 such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned.
Kamal Kant Gupta (Advocate)
Unit No. FF-2, First floor, Mahaluzmi Metro Tower Sec-4, Vaishali, Gzb., U.P., Mob. 9810063351

App-based premium buses for NCR soon

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a move to encourage the middle and upper-middle class to use the public transport system, the Arvind Kejriwal Government is bringing an app based premium bus service to commute anywhere in the national Capital region along the lines of private cab aggregators.

Once implemented, the scheme would enable people to book a reserved seat on a bus through a mobile app. Addressing a press conference, the chief minister said the scheme will be notified following Delhi Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena's approval. The scheme is mainly for passengers willing to pay a premium for a convenient, comfortable, high-quality and efficient public transport service, which the bus operators would need to ensure.



and CCTV facilities, making travel very comfortable.

"When the metro started in Delhi, many people stopped using two wheelers and started using the metro.

"But when metro trains started getting crowded, they again went back to using their own vehicles. People from the lower middle class and economy class travel in buses but with this scheme, people from the upper middle class will also opt for public transport," said Kejriwal adding that these environment-friendly buses will be equipped with Wi-Fi, GPS,

of 25 buses. From January 1, 2025, the entire bus fleet should be electric," he added.

Kejriwal said the routes for these buses will be decided based on the demand and the aggregators will just have to inform the Transport Department about them.

"The fares will be dynamic and not less than the peak fare of DTC air-conditioned buses. These buses will not compete with DTC buses," he said. The chief minister said these buses will also help reduce pollution and traffic congestion.

The Chief Minister mentioned that ever since coming to power in Delhi in 2015, it has been his government's endeavour to introduce the Premium Bus Aggregator Scheme with the goal of reducing traffic and air pollution. After a long struggle of 8 years, it is likely to become a reality soon. Elaborating the scheme, Kejriwal said, "Since Delhi Metro became operational, Delhiites switched to the metro for transportation, discarding their personal vehicles. Gradually, the Delhi Metro became crowded, so people

had to switch to their vehicle. We have increased the number of DTC buses in the city, and as per our survey, the DTC buses aren't very crowded. In these buses, mostly people belonging to the lower middle and lower economic class travel."

"All these luxury buses would be equipped with the facilities of AC, minimum 9 seats, Wi-Fi, GPS, CCTV, and standing won't be permitted. Seats can only be booked digitally; individuals can book their seats on the App just like airline seats. Only digital booking will be accepted, and the facility of 'on-the-bus booking' will not be there. These buses won't stop frequently, passengers will be picked up from their desired location," he said.

According to the scheme, a licence holder shall ensure that no premium bus shall be engaged or acquired with a registration date beyond three years from the date of notification of the scheme.

"Subsequently, induction of any new premium bus, the prevailing emission norms, BS-VI must be compliant, either air-conditioned CNG or electric buses. After January 1, 2025 the induction of only electric buses shall be allowed. No CNG-operated bus even if having BS-VI compliance shall be allowed to be inducted under this scheme," the draft of the scheme said.

announced in April 2020 that all vehicles sold in India must comply with Bharat Stage-VI (BS-VI) emission standards. "In effect, November 1, 2023 bulk of bus services from any city / town in the States of Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to Delhi shall be only with EV/ CNG/ BS-VI Diesel buses. Operation of only EV/ CNG/ BS-VI Diesel buses in the entire NCR is also expected to be in effect from 01.07.2024," the CAQM said. "Further, Transport Department/ Traffic Police Department of Delhi government and all the NCR States have been accordingly directed to ensure strict compliance through regular monitoring of the field level implementation, including for bus services being operated by State PSUs and private entities etc," it added.

Bharat Stage emission standards set legal limits on the amount of air pollutants, such as carbon monoxide and particulate matter, that vehicles in India can emit. These standards focus on improving emission control, fuel efficiency, and engine design. As vehicle manufacturers provide vehicles that meet these new norms, oil companies supply fuel that adheres to BS-VI standards, known as the world's cleanest fuel.

The Commission has held a series of meetings with the NCR States for developing detailed action plans for shifting to cleaner bus services in NCR, focusing that bus services in the entire NCR to be targeted for EVs in the long-term (within 5 years), through EVs / CNG buses in the medium-term (within 3 years) and in the interim through EVs / CNG/ BS-VI diesel buses. Experts said that while the transition to a cleaner transport option is a good move, it needs to be a quick one to be effective.

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It is a step towards DTC privatisation, alleges BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP on Friday expressed concerns over the recent public transport policy by the AAP led Delhi Government pertaining to the proposal of Premium Aggregated Bus Service in the national Capital which is a step towards privatisation of Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC).

Former Delhi BJP President and party's MLA Vijender Gupta said the current policies have been formulated with malafide intentions, favouring private bus operators at the cost of the state's primary public transport service, the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC). Drawing attention to his efforts back in 2016, Gupta in a statement said that he had lodged a complaint due to the fact that the policy was introduced without the requisite enabling provisions in the Motor Vehicles Act.

"The zeal with which the Kejriwal Government is pushing for the rollout of this policy suggests possible vested interests," Gupta charged. Elaborating on the current

state of affairs of DTC, Gupta lamented the neglect it has suffered over the years, with the fleet largely comprising buses that are over 15 years old and in a deteriorating condition, rendering them unfit for daily operations.

He compared this with the luxury premium buses being promoted, which, are not meant to cater to the needs of the common man in Delhi.

"This is underscored by the ₹ 2500 crore annual loss borne by DTC", he said.

Gupta also emphasised that during his tenure as the leader of the opposition in 2016, he had raised concerns about irregularities favouring a particular aggregator.

This policy, he said, was subsequently retracted due to fears of repercussions for its wrongdoings.

Drawing a parallel, Gupta pointed out the AAP Government's approach to the liquor policy, which was similarly withdrawn after irregularities were exposed.

"We've observed this pattern before: introduce a policy and backtrack when potential malpractices emerge," he commented.

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva said that the announcement of Premium Aggregated Bus Service is a proof of Arvind Kejriwal's misintention to privatise the public services and it stands established that the Chief Minister has wilfully failed destroyed Delhi Transport Corporation. Sachdeva said ever since coming to power in 2015 Arvind Kejriwal has been trying to privatise the public transport system of Delhi.

In 2016 itself Kejriwal Government had brought the Premium Aggregated Bus Service proposal which was tailor made to suit a Gurgaon based aggregator.

The matter was then strongly opposed by Delhi BJP as no terms & condition of the proposal were cleared.

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Only electric, CNG, BS-VI diesel buses to ply between Delhi-NCR from Nov 1

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) on Friday announced that starting November 1, only electric, CNG and BS VI-compliant diesel buses will be allowed to operate between Delhi and cities and towns in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan falling within the National Capital Region (NCR).

The curbs aim to reduce air pollution during the period when air quality is typically at its worst due to calm pre-winter weather and farm fires. The commission has set dead-

lines of June 2026 and June 2028 for states to transition their bus fleets to electric and CNG power.

"An Advisory dated 19.07.2023 was also issued by the Commission with the prime objective to ensure that with effect from 01.11.2023, all buses originating from NCR areas in the respective states and travelling to Delhi are either electric vehicles, or CNG or BS-VI Diesel," the CAQM said on Friday.

Uttar Pradesh has planned to procure more than 1650 new BS-VI diesel buses in 2023-24. Haryana has plans to procure 1,313 new BS VI diesel buses in

2023 which will replace the old BS-III and BS-IV buses. These older buses will be relocated to non-NCR bus depots. Likewise, the Rajasthan State Road Transport Corporation plans to procure 590 buses this year to transform its current fleet while UP plans to induct 955 new BS VI buses in 3-4 years.

To this end, the central air quality panel has issued directives to the governments of Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh to implement a comprehensive plan aimed at enhancing the efficiency and environmental friendliness of inter-city and inter-state bus services serving Delhi and other cities/towns in

region, with the ultimate goal of transitioning to electric vehicles. In an effort to reduce pollution levels, the Centre had

announced in April 2020 that all vehicles sold in India must comply with Bharat Stage-VI (BS-VI) emission standards. "In effect, November 1, 2023 bulk of bus services from any city / town in the States of Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to Delhi shall be only with EV/ CNG/ BS-VI Diesel buses. Operation of only EV/ CNG/ BS-VI Diesel buses in the entire NCR is also expected to be in effect from 01.07.2024," the CAQM said. "Further, Transport Department/ Traffic Police Department of Delhi government and all the NCR States have been accordingly directed to ensure strict compliance through regular monitoring of the field level implementation, including for bus services being operated by State PSUs and private entities etc," it added.

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Navy gets guided missile destroyer to Imphal

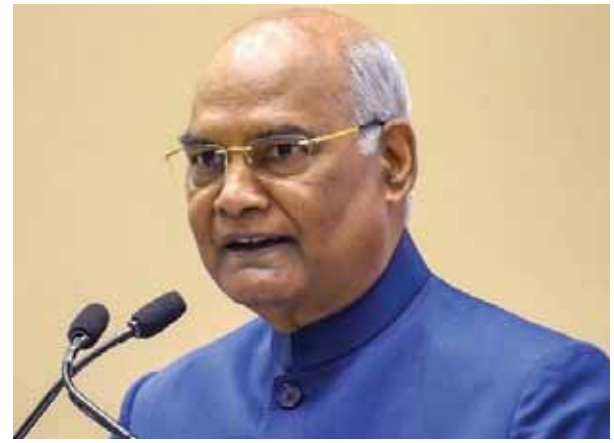
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Stealth guided missile destroyer ship 'Imphal' built by the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai was delivered to the Indian Navy on Friday, Navy officials said here. The ship was delivered four months ahead of contractual time. Giving details, officials said Yard 12706 (Imphal), the third Project 15B stealth guided missile destroyer is a follow-on of the Kolkata class (Project 15A) destroyers commissioned in the last decade. Imphal follows in the wake of her predecessors Indian Naval Ships Visakhapatnam and Mormugao commissioned in the past two years. Designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau (WDB), this ship is a hallmark of indigenous shipbuilding and is amongst the most techno-



logically advanced warships in the world. Being a guided missile destroyer with a displacement of 7,400 tons and an overall length of 164 meters, Imphal is a potent and versatile platform equipped with state-of-the-art weapons and sensors, including surface-to-air missiles, anti-ship missiles and torpedoes. Powered by a Combined Gas and Gas (COGAG) propulsion set, comprising four gas turbines, she is capable of achieving speeds in excess of 30 knots (56 km/h). The ship boasts of a high indigenous content of approximately 75% that includes Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missiles (BEL, Bangalore), BrahMos Surface-to-Surface Missiles (BrahMos Aerospace, New Delhi), Indigenous Torpedo Tube Launchers (Larsen & Toubro, Mumbai), Anti-Submarine Indigenous Rocket Launchers (Larsen & Toubro, Mumbai) and 76mm

Super Rapid Gun Mount (BHEL, Haridwar) Imphal's keel was laid on 19 May, 2017 and the ship was launched into water on 20 April, 2019. The ship had sailed out for her maiden sea trials on 28 April, 2023, and, ever since, has undergone a comprehensive schedule of trials in harbour and at sea, leading up to its delivery within a record time-frame of only six months. The time taken to build Imphal and for her trials is the shortest for any indigenous destroyer. The delivery of Imphal is an affirmation of the impetus being given by the Government of India and the Indian Navy towards 'AatmaNirbharBharat'. The induction of the destroyer, is a tribute to the collaborative efforts of large number of stake holders and would enhance the maritime prowess of the country in the Indian Ocean Region.



Kovind to share next week roadmap on One Nation, One Election

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The high-level committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind to explore viability of 'one nation one election' has called a meeting with the Law Commission next week to share its earlier recommendations and roadmap on holding simultaneous polls in the country. Sources said the Kovind panel has invited the Law Commission on October 25 to seek its views on how simultaneous polls can be held in the country. The high-level panel, which had in its first meeting recently decided to seek views of political parties, has now written to them to elicit their views on holding sustainable simultaneous polls in the country. In a communication to the parties, it has sought an interaction with them on a "mutually agreed date", sources said citing the letter. They said parties have also been given an option to send their views in writing in the next three months. Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi-headed law panel is working on a formula to synchronise all assembly polls by extending or reducing the tenure so that these elections can be held along with Lok Sabha polls 2029 onwards.

The law panel is devising a mechanism to ensure a common electoral roll for Lok Sabha, assemblies and local bodies to reduce cost and use of manpower for undertaking an almost identical exercise which is carried out now by the Election Commission and various state election commissions. For synchronising various assembly polls to ensure both state and Lok Sabha elections are held together from 2029 onwards, the Commission may suggest reducing or enhancing the tenure of legislative assemblies. A mechanism is being devised to ensure that once Lok Sabha and assembly polls are synchronised, voters go to the polling booth only once to cast their ballot for both the elections. The sources said since assembly and parliamentary polls are held in phases, the Commission is working out modalities to see that voters do not go to polling stations more than once to cast their ballot for the two polls. The Commission, they said, is of the view that assembly and parliamentary polls can be held together and it is only working out modalities for the smooth conduct of the gigantic democratic exercise.

Product QR codes to help visually impaired take call

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

There's good news for the visually impaired persons in the country. The country's top food regulator, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued an advisory to the Food Business Operators to ensure the QR codes on product labels that encompass comprehensive details about the product, including nutritional information, allergens, manufacturing date, best before/ expiry/use by date, allergen warning, and contact information for customer inquiries. A food QR Code is one that shares detailed information about a food product, helping the visually impaired people to make informed decisions before purchasing. "It is pertinent to note that the inclusion of a QR code for the accessibility of information does not replace or negate the requirement to provide mandatory information on the product label, as prescribed by relevant regulations," FSSAI advisory said. However, the food regulator's move has come amid a legal case filed in the Delhi High Court in May this year. Besides food products, the public interest litigation (PIL) in the court has sought QR codes on all medicinal products to make them accessible to visually impaired persons. A bench comprising Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Subramonium Prasad had issued a notice to the Centre, FSSAI, and Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) on a petition by The Kapila and Nirmal Hingorani



Foundation as well as Dr Smriti Singh and Shobhan Singh, both of whom are visually impaired. Lawyer Aman Hingorani, representing the petitioners, had asserted that a smartphone can scan QR codes containing the requisite information about the product and convert it to speech format. The plea said that employing QR codes would increase the efficacy of medical care for visually impaired patients by reducing medication errors, incorrect dosages, unintended drug interactions and side effects. It can also combat the growing menace of counterfeit and substandard medicine. "The visually impaired persons have the constitutional and fundamental right to equality and the right to lead their lives with dignity and there remains huge scope for utilising the capabilities of smartphones and QR codes to help them identify products and access relevant product information," said the plea. The petition has urged directions to the Centre to secure effective access for visually impaired persons to medicines, food, cosmetics and other consumer products by taking comprehensive measures to affix QR codes on such products.

145 doctors convicted under PC-PNDT Act suspended by State Medical Councils: Ministry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

According to the data available from the Union Health Ministry, in the past 8 years, reported cases under the PC-PNDT Act have surged from 2048 in March 2015 to 3563 in July 2023 while licences of 145 convicted doctors have been suspended by their respective State Medical Councils. The convictions have also seen a substantial increase from 271 to 713 during the said period, as per the data shared at the 29th meeting of the Central Supervisory Board (CSB) held recently here under the chairmanship of Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya. The primary concern discussed at the meeting was the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and



Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) in the country, indicative of the ongoing battle against sex-based discrimination leading to sex selection/ determination followed by pre-birth elimination. Citing the latest Sample Registration Survey (SRS) report of 2020, Mandaviya said that the data reveals a commendable three-point improvement from 904 in 2017-19 to

907 in 2018-20. "Importantly, 12 out of 22 surveyed states have demonstrated improvement, underlining the combined efforts of the states in implementing the Pre-conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 (PC&PNDT Act) and the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme," he stated. Further, he informed that the latest SRS report indicated that the gender gap has witnessed a two-point decrease in 2020 compared to a five-point gap in 2015. He said "ten states have effectively reversed the gender

gap, positively impacting female survival rates". Mandaviya also emphasized on the challenges posed by modern technologies, such as IVF procedures, the non-invasive prenatal test (NIPT), and compact diagnostic equipment, which facilitate sex selection under the pretext of family balancing. "These technologies, despite their positive medical applications, could be misused and exacerbate gender imbalances," he stated. At the same time the Minister also urged that the PDNT Act should not be used to harass innocent doctors by anyone. Haryana, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu were hailed for their innovative strategies, including sting operations and informer schemes, to combat gender-biased sex selection.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday accused the Government of involving defence and related agencies in propagation of its schemes, alleging that the Centre is using the Army for its political agenda and weakening it. Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters, Congress' Ex-Servicemen Department chief Col (retd) Rohit Chaudhry said this step of the government is an "abuse of power" and is illegal. "In a bid to promote its politics, the (Narendra) Modi government has handed over posters of government schemes to the Army. The Defense Department has issued a circular, under which 822 selfie points related to the schemes of Modi government will be set up in the country. Instructions have been given to the security agencies of the country to set up these," Chaudhry claimed. "Will our country's soldiers now campaign for the BJP and PM Modi. Have we lowered the stature of the Army so

Congress accuses Centre of using Army for political agenda

much? The soldiers who stand at the border of the country in very difficult conditions, will now promote the schemes of Modi government?" he said. The Army, Air Force and Navy have not displayed this order on their website which means they consider it illegal, Chaudhry said. "People who come under the Army Act, Navy Act, Air Force Act are prohibited from campaigning for any kind of political party...Modi government is insulting our soldiers. Both Army and soldiers are the heritage of the country. They are not the personal property of any political party," Chaudhry said. The government is attacking the Army



and weakening it, he alleged. Earlier this week, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had accused the government of using the Army "politically" for elections and claimed the ruling party has hurt its dignity by "capitalising on the popularity of soldiers".

The party also took a swipe at the government over the changes in the new licensing norms to import IT hardware products such as laptops, saying it was yet another example of the Modi government's 'First Act, Subsequently Think' approach. The opposition party's dig came after the government tweaked the licensing norms to import IT hardware products like laptops and computers and put in place an online authorisation system for importers of these goods. After taking into account the concerns of stakeholders of the sector, some "tweaking" in the policy was made and an end-to-end online system was launched for importers, an official said

on Thursday. "Yet another example of Modi Govt's FAST (First Act, Subsequently Think) approach: On August 3, 2023 mandatory licensing system was announced for imports of electronic goods like laptops & tablets. Expectedly, the announcement was widely and rightly criticized," Congress chief spokesperson Jairam Ramesh said. "On August 4, 2023 the government deferred the licensing system by introducing a three-month-long transition period. On August 13, 2023, complete withdrawal of laptop import restrictions announced. So this is the cycle. Announced then, Defer then, Withdraw (sic)," Ramesh said.

Office of the Superintending Engineer
1st Circle, Public Works Department, Almora
Phone/Fax: 05962-230295 Email: sepwdalm@rediffmail.com

Letter No. : 4690(I)/Nivida-01/2023-24 Dated : 18/10/2023

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (E-Tendering)
Short Term E-TENDER NOTICE

The superintending Engineer, 1st Circle, PWD Almora invites tender through E-Tendering (Two Bid System) on behalf of Honourable Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available from dated 23/10/2023 & onwards on website <http://www.uktenders.gov.in>

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Cost of Tender Form	Earnest Money (Rupee in lakh)	Validity of Tender	Time of Completion	Contractor's Category of Registration for tendering
1	PD PWD Ranikhet Reconstruction work (Improvement work) of Lakherkote kalika motor road in Sult Constituency, District Almora, Under CM Ghosna No- 248/2021. (Length 4.70 Km)	₹ 5000.00 + 18% GST	₹ 4.90 Lac	120 Days	15 Months (including With Raining Season and Winter Season)	Class "B" & Higher in Road work in Central Govt./ Any state Govt./ Any Govt. Undertaking
2	CD PWD Almora Improvement of Kheti- Dhuragaon-Seraghat Motor Road in Jageshwar Constituency District Almora Under State Sector.	₹ 5000.00 + 18% GST	₹ 5.28 Lac	120 Days	15 Months (including With Raining Season and Winter Season)	-Do-
3	CD PWD Almora Improvement of Bartoli Banthok Motor Road in Jageshwar Constituency District Almora Under State Sector.	₹ 5000.00 + 18% GST	₹ 5.32 Lac	120 Days	15 Months (including With Raining Season and Winter Season)	-Do-
4	PD PWD Bageshwar One time maintenance work of Kafaligair-Kholsi to Neugaon motor road handed over road from PMGSY in Distt. Bageshwar.	₹ 5000.00 + 18% GST	₹ 5.95 Lac	60 Days	05 Months (including With Raining Season and Winter Season)	-Do-

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Satto W/o Mr. Sohan Lal is recorded owner of residential plot no. 86 & 87, measuring 200.00 sq. yds. out of khasra no. 136, situated at village Surajpur, Jangraha, Tehsil & Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. vide Sale Deed dated 17.10.2013 duly Registered as doc. No. 25751, SRO-Greater Noida and same to be finance & mortgage by Vastu Housing Finance Corporation Ltd. That Original Sale Deed dated 05.09.2006 executed by Mr. Nishith Bhatti in favour of Mrs. Dhanvanti Vaidoc. No. 11153-SRO-Greater Noida have been lost and not available and an FIR has lodged on dated 18.09.2023 with LR No. 20230000621576, Uttar Pradesh Police for loss of document. If any Person having any type of claim/right/interest over the said property may inform in writing at the address mentioned below, about his objections within 07 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien, Charge, disputes etc. Lucern Legal LLP B-93B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank, Sector 2 Noida, UP-201301, Contact # 0120-4269379

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform the Public at large that Smt. Sharan Kaur Nanda (W/o Late Sh. Anand Kaur) is the Title Holder in possession of 'Entire First Floor of Freehold Built Up Residential Property Bearing Plot No. C-203, Sarodhaya Jodhpur, New Delhi above measuring 492.00 sq. yards with equally shared Parking Space under S115, One Servant Quarter in Still Area and 1/3rd of the 23rd portion of waste basement, hereinafter referred to as 'Schedule Property' vide Partition Deed dated 22.11.2012, duly registered as Regn. No. 2277, Book No. 1, Vol. No. 117, pp. 22-32 or 22.11.2012 in the Office of the Sub Registrar, RA, Hazrat Nizamuddin, New Delhi. That original documents i.e. (i) Partition Deed dated 22.11.2012, (ii) Death Certificate of Sh. A.S. Nanda, (iii) Letter for Conversion dated 02.02.2001, (iv) Substitution Letter of Smt. Sharan Kaur Nanda, (v) Death Certificate of Sh. Merar Singh Nanda, (vi) Relinquishment Deed dated 24.03.12, (vii) Permission of National Monuments Authority dated 17.01.2012, (viii) Sanction for Construction Letter dated 30.04.2012, (ix) Death Certificate of Bhatnagar Singh Nanda, (x) Death Certificate of Smt. Pushpa Nanda, (xi) Relinquishment Deed dated 09.04.2012, (xii) Partition Deed (Counter Copies registered as Regn. No. 2278, Regn. No. 2279 and Regn. No. 2280) and (xiv) Mutation Letter for the Schedule Property, have been lost/ misplaced and are untraceable as on date, in lieu of which information Report dated 05.10.23 bearing LR No. 973818/2023 has been filed with Delhi Police. This notice is thus issued to the Public at large, i.e. any Person(s), Society(s), Authority(ies), Society(ies), Organisation(s), Financial Institution(s), Banks), HUFs etc. having any knowledge, custody or possession of, or any claim(s) or interest(s) in, the Schedule Property, if raised or received, shall be treated as null & void and as waived, and the Title Holder shall proceed to sell the Schedule Property, as is presently intended. (Para 15 of the Schedule Property, as is presently intended.) Office Address: 27, Basement, Shreshtha Vihar, Delhi-52 Chamber Address: 365, Saket, New Delhi-110017. Cont. No. - 89522185

9 days Naval exercise Milan to begin in February

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India will host a mega nine-day naval exercise in February next year where 50 countries are likely to participate. Navies from the US, Japan, Australia, France, Bangladesh, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia are among the nations in the 'Milan' exercise to be conducted off Visakhapatnam from February 19 to 27, officials said on Friday. The upcoming exercise will be the biggest multilateral military wargame to be hosted by India ever and it will feature large-force manoeuvres, advanced air defence operations, anti-submarine warfare and anti-surface drills, they said. It is learnt that all key participating nations will send their platforms and personnel for the wargame that will take place in the Arabian Sea. The drills would also feature in sub-surface and air domains. The Milan is a biennial multilateral naval exercise which was initiated by the Indian Navy in 1995. Originally conceived in consonance with India's 'Look East Policy', the exercise expanded in ensuing years with New Delhi's 'Act East Policy' and Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative. In 2022, 39 countries participated in Milan exercise. "The Milan 2024 is likely to witness the largest-ever participation to date with invites being extended to over 50 countries," Indian Navy spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said.



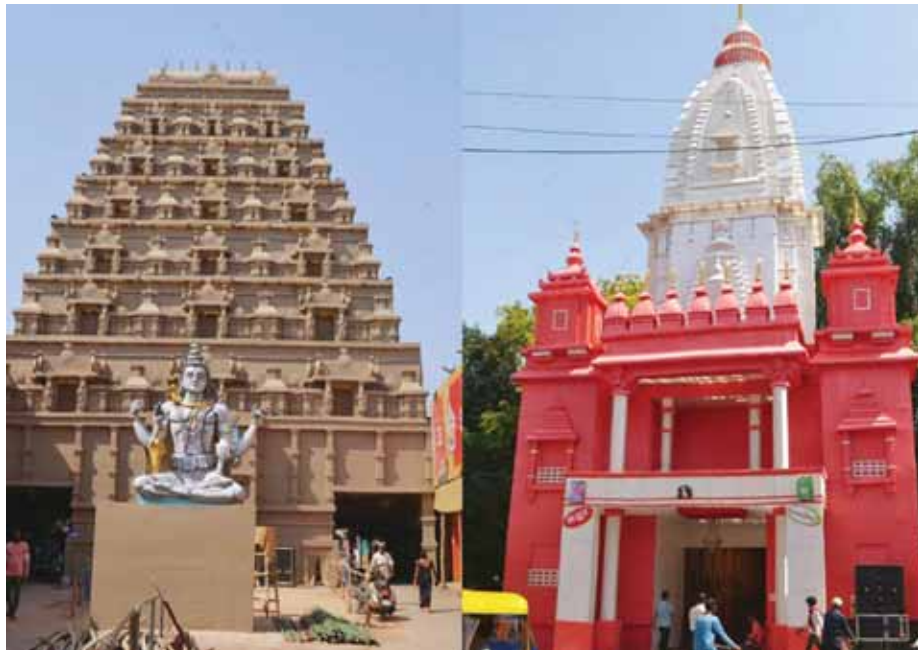
He said it will be an action packed exercise featuring a wide-range of activities. The harbour phase of Milan will consist of maritime seminars, exhibition and city parade. "Maritime patrol aircraft and submarines of friendly foreign countries would participate in the sea phase along with Indian Navy units," Commander Madhwal said. "They will involve large-force manoeuvres, advanced air defence operations, anti-submarine warfare and anti-surface warfare operations," he said. "The run-up to Milan is concomitant to India's G20 Presidency and the conduct of the exercise would yet again realise the 'G20 theme Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is one family)," the Navy spokesperson said. A mid-planning conference on Milan was hosted by the Eastern Naval Command on October 17 with participating friendly foreign navies. In the virtual conference, representatives of invited countries were briefed on events planned during the harbour phase and sea phase.

Durga Puja fervour grips Kashi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

With the installation of idols of Goddess Durga at some leading puja pandals including at Hathua Market, Machaudhari, Nai Sarak (Sanatan Dharm Inter College) and some others on the auspicious occasion of Sasthi here on Friday, the Durga Puja fervour has gripped Kashi and it will reach its peak on Saptami when the 'pran pratistha' (installation) of idols will be done at all the rest of the pandals in the city, which is popularly known as 'Mini Kolkata'. The festival will be at its peak on the occasion of Ashtami and Navmi.

Durga Puja has already started with the installation of idols on the first day of Shardiya Navratra at five places on the very first day of Navratra and they are Sarvajani Durgotsav Samiti at Townhall, Maa Durga Pujanotsav Samiti at Daranagar, Maa Durga Puja Navayuk Samiti at Navapura, Sarda Mandir at Ghai Ghat and



The Durga Puja pandals of Hathua Market (left) and Machaudhari (right) in Varanasi.

SB Durgotsav Samiti at Sudia. Machaudhari's pandal has been given a shape of Vishwanath

Temple of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) while Hathua Market's idol of a

famous temple of Karnataka. In the district as many as 601 Durga Puja pandals are

being made in the 28 police stations but out of them 250-odd pandals are in the city areas. The district administration and Police department have made all arrangements to ensure peaceful conduct of the festival. Besides, the Fire Brigade department has also issued necessary fire safety guidelines to the puja pandals in order to avoid any untoward incident. It is expected that by Tuesday evening, the rush of the visitors will increase in many areas like Lahurabir, Maidagin, Chowk, Godowlia, Luxa, Sonarpura, Bhelupur, Pandeypur, Shivpur, Bhojubar and other places where many big pandals would be set up. These areas have already been glittered with attractive lighting arrangements. Meanwhile, according to a notification from Banaras Hindu University (BHU), the OPD of Sir Sunderlal Hospital (SSH) will remain closed on October 23 and November 13 due to the festivals of Dussehra and Diwali respectively.

CRS conducts safety inspection

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS), North East Circle, Manoj Arora conducted a safety inspection on Bhatni-Peokol Halt under the Bhatni-Aunrihar doubling project in Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) on Friday in order to upgrade passenger facilities and expand the infrastructure for operational ease. He was accompanied by Chief Administrative Officer (Construction) SC Srivastava, Divisional Railway Manager (Varanasi) Vineet Kumar Srivastava and many other senior officers. CRS Manoj Arora started his inspection from km 2.55 from Bhatni railway station with the motor trolley and measured the track fittings, ballast levelling, liner and standard distance of signal posts from the track. After this, he conducted safety tests of curve number 2 and minor bridge number 4 and checked all the parameters in depth. After this, he inspected the major bridge number 5 situated at km No 3.68 and 3x12 apart from checking the composite girder and foundation. Then, he also measured curve numbers 3 and 4 and checked the indent. After this, the CRS checked the RCC box of minor



CRS Manoj Arora conducting a safety inspection in Varanasi Division of NER on Friday.

bridge number 6 and 7 and then inspected the point and crossing of turn out number 207B, 202A and 202B at Peokol Halt station. During this he also checked gauge testing and the safety system. At the end of the inspection, he conducted a safety inspection of the level crossing gate number 4 located at km 5.7 and tested the safety knowledge of the gate man. Arora checked all the safety parameters like line fittings, installation of signals, cushioning of ballast, standard condition of overhead line and bridges and culverts. The other officers who were also present were Chief Project Manager (CPM) of Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL) Kamal Kumar Talreja, Additional Divisional Railway Manager (ADRM/Infra) Roshan Lal Yadav, Chief Signal and Telecommunication Engineer (Construction) Neelabh Mahesh, Chief Signal Engineer (CSE) Gyan Prakash Shivnarayan, Chief Engineer (Construction) Panna Lal, Chief Engineer (Construction) Ashutosh Mishra, Senior Divisional Engineer-III Anuj Verma, Senior Divisional Operations Manager (SDOM) AP Singh, Senior Divisional Safety Officer (SDSO) Balendra Paul, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (Traction) RN Singh, Senior Divisional Signal and Telecommunication Engineer Rajat Priya and some other NER and RVNL officers and employees.

Proposal approved for creation of Centre of Ageing at IMS-BHU

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

There is a wave of happiness at Institute of Medical Science, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU) to know that the Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for creation of National Centre of Ageing (NCA) under National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE) at IMS-BHU. The same was communicated by a letter by Union Health Minister to Rajya Sabha MP Seema Dwivedi who has supported the proposal of creation of NCA at BHU.

Nodal officer of NPHCE and founder Head of Geriatrics Department, IMS-BHU, Prof

Anup Singh said that it is a matter of great pride and satisfaction to get this centre for IMS. He thanked the prime minister, union health minister and MP Seema Dwivedi and BHU administration for the same. He added that it's the vision of the PM to strengthen geriatric healthcare facilities for the elderly and to make them 'atmirbhar' for health needs. The Ayushman Bharat scheme will further strengthen it. Prof Singh said that as the geriatric population is increasing so better health services are the challenges in future. "From life expectancy of 32 years in 1947 it has now increased to 70

years in 2021. It's estimated that elderly population will double by 2050. The central government has acknowledged this and started various programmes dedicated to elderly. The NPHCE is one of them and IMS-BHU was designated as a regional geriatric centre and Prof Anup Singh is its nodal officer in BHU. Under leadership of Prof Anup Singh, the Department of Geriatric Medicine was created in 2018 and within one year MD Geriatric course was started. The department has shown exponential growth in all areas of patient care, research and academics. "Acknowledging our efforts to develop geriatric

facility at IMS-BHU and need of a one point care facility for geriatric patients, the Union Health Minister approved our pending proposal of upgradation of Regional Geriatric Centre to 200-bed NCA under NPHCE," he said.

According to him, as per operational guidelines of NPHCE, the NCA will be a multi-storey building with OPD of multidisciplinary geriatric sub-specialties apart from special clinics like arthritis clinic, memory clinic etc, provision of elective surgery with modular operation theatre, separate diagnostic and radiological facility, rehabilitation services and day care and

intensive care and private ward. Besides, the centre will help in capacity building and human resources development in field of geriatrics, post graduate MD geriatric seats will be increased from 3 to 15 with the increase in seats of senior residents and consultants and research in the field of geriatric and making guidelines for treatment specific for elderly.

"To develop a better healthcare system for elderly is the focus area of the PM and the creation of such a one point care facility for making the elderly self-reliant will be a boon for geriatric patients of UP and adjoining states," Prof Singh said.

Rally against gender discrimination

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Under the aegis of Lok Samiti and Asha Trust, hundreds of girls took out an awareness rally against gender discrimination in Upwar village under Sewapuri block here on Friday. Apart from girls, a large number of village women also participated in the rally. During the procession, the participants were raising slogans appealing to the people that no one should be insulted and boys and girls should be treated equally. They were also carrying placards in their hands raising their voice against female feticide, child marriage and demanding education to the girls. Later, Balika Mahotsav (girls' festival) was organised in the village. The programme was inaugurated by gram pradhan Ramesh Seth, Lok Samiti convenor Nandlal Master and the women of the participating groups by lighting the lamp.

On the occasion, the girls performed various cultural programmes on gender discrimination and boy-girl inequality. Students from many nearby villages participated in the event and expressed their views against violence against women. Nandlal Master said

our society is still discriminating between girls and boys and due to which girls are killed in the womb itself, as a result the number of girls is decreasing day by day. "There are only 902 girls against 1,000 boys at the age of six years in UP and an average of two and a half lakh daughters are going missing in the state every year, which is a matter of concern," he added. Kishori Sangathan coordinator Soni said that under this campaign, the girls of the organisation have launched a public awareness campaign in every village. A group of girls is being formed to end dowry, child marriage, female foeticide and violence against women prevalent in the society.

Gram pradhan Ramesh Seth said we will have to raise our voice against all kinds of discrimination against women. The programme was conducted by Asha Maurya while Pushpa welcomed the participants. The function was presided over by Rajkumari while the vote of thanks was proposed by Sheela. The event was also attended by Anita, Sheela, Rambachan, Shivkumar, Shyamundar Master, Saroj, Sunita, Naaz, Kareena, Jyoti, Savitri, Geeta, Aanchal, Sanu, Palak, Muskaan, Tanya, Nikita, Archana etc.

MMDP kits given to patients

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Under the National Filariasis Eradication Programme (NFEP), a Morbidity Management and Disability Prevention (MMDP) camp and testing campaign was conducted in cooperation with the Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR) at Chilibila village panchayat building of Badagaon Primary Health Centre (PHC) here on Thursday. The programme was organised under the direction of Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary. The doctors of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and their team also examined the patients and their families to study the previously identified lymphoedema filariasis (swelling in the arms, legs and breasts) patients.

The patients suffering from lymphatic filariasis (LF) were given MMDP kits for the care of the affected organs. Dr Amit Kumar Singh, in-charge of the Filaria Control Unit at Lal Bahadur Shastri (LBS) Hospital, Ramnagar, trained the patients on the use of MMDP kit. According to him, this disease not only makes the person disabled but also has a negative impact on the mental condition of the patient. "Symptoms of this disease are not visible in the beginning and



are seen after five to 10 years. To prevent this use a mosquito net while sleeping. Carrier mosquitoes can be avoided by maintaining cleanliness in and around the house and eliminating waterlogging," he said. Dr Amit said that there is no fear of infection in the parts affected by filariasis, mainly by maintaining cleanliness of the feet and by doing regular exercise and yoga, the swelling also reduces. "If carelessness is taken towards this, the organs start getting damaged and the problem increases," he said, adding that the necessary medicines should also be taken to stop it from increasing. He said that those who have swelling in their hands and feet or are affected by filariasis, there is leakage of water from their organs. In this situation, cleanliness of their affected body parts is very important. Therefore MMDP kit is being provided. This kit

includes one tub, mug, bucket, towel, soap, anti-fungal cream etc. The members of the Filaria Patient Support Group (PSG) network are sensitising the community about filariasis. Along with this, the myths related to the disease are also being dispelled. Shivani, Trupti and Sunil, a team from the Biochemistry Department of BHU, took blood samples of filariasis patients and their family members, previously identified by the Health department. A survey was also conducted in the nearby area. This study will help in understanding lymphatic filariasis in depth, so that treatment of this disease can be found. On the occasion gram pradhan Sabhajit Saroj, Vikramaditya from IAD Filaria Centre located at Government Ayurvedic College (Chowkaghat), SLT Parshuram Giri, insect collector KP Singh, representatives of CFAR and others were also present.

Weavers selected for Sant Kabir Handloom Award

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The selection of Sant Kabir State Handloom Award for the year 2023-24 was done under the chairmanship of District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam in the presence of the selection committee members, including representatives of Joint Director (Industries), Regional Manager (UPICA), Deputy Director (Bunkar Sewa Kendra) and two nominated weaver representative members. The meeting was held at the Rifle Club here on Thursday in which samples of saree dress materials, carpet etc from Varanasi, Chandauli, Mirzapur and Bhadohi districts were presented. The sample saree of Lakshmi of Varanasi district was given the first prize by the selection committee for its excellent hand weaving using Rangkat design. The sample dari of Rukhsar Begum of Mirzapur was given the second prize for using hunting design while the sample dupatta/stole (Kaduva border dupatta) of Mangala Prasad Maurya of Varanasi was selected for third prize at the regional level. The first regional award



DM S Rajalingam seeing sarees presented for regional level Sant Kabir State Award in Varanasi

winner will be awarded ₹20,000 cash while the second prize winner will get ₹15,000 cash and the third prize winner ₹10,000 cash apart from shields, certificates and 'angavastram'. Arun Kumar Kuril, Assistant Commissioner (Handloom and Textile Industries) said the selected samples will be sent to the Commissioner and Director (Handloom and Textile Industries), UP, Kanpur for selection for the State Handloom Award. The weavers who receive state level awards will be given a cash amount of ₹1,00,000 for first place, ₹50,000 for the second and ₹25,000 for the third apart from shields, certificates and angavastram. Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal, Regional Manager (UPICA) Sanjay Gupta and others were also present.

Hindalco distributes seeds, pesticide spray machines

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Hindalco Rural Development department (Renukoot in Sonbhadra district) distributed improved quality vegetable seeds and pesticide spray machines with the aim of economically empowering the progressive farmers of the Kisan Club. During the programme organised at Aditya Birla Rural Technology Park, Mayorpur, in the presence of the chief guest and Hindalco Cluster Head N Nagesh and special guest and Cluster Human Resources (HR) Head Jasbir Singh, crop production training was given to 376 farmers of Kisan Club of Mayorpur, Babhni and Duddhi blocks of Duddhi tehsils. With an aim to increase the income of farmers, improved varieties of seeds of onion, gram, pea, tomato, cauliflower, chilli, brinjal, cabbage, radish, spinach, coriander and pesticide spray machines were distributed. In his address, Nagesh inspired the farmers to adopt more and more organic farming. Jasbir Singh emphasised on the use of new and modern technologies. Abhijeet, Head of Hindalco Rural



Hindalco Cluster Head N Nagesh distributing a pesticide spray machine to a farmer at Renukoot in Sonbhadra district.

Development Department, while encouraging the present farmers to get the soil of their fields tested at the Soil Testing Centre located at Aditya Birla Rural Technology Park, said that by testing the quality of the soil, farmers can get the benefit of higher production at lower

cost. Ankit Dubey, agricultural expert of Aditya Birla Rural Technology Park, gave information to the farmers about preparation of farming for vegetable production, seed purification and protection of crops from pests. The programme was conducted by Rajesh Singh.

The anti-corruption team nabbed a gram panchayat official red-handed while accepting a bribe of ₹10,000 from a gram pradhan. Gram panchayat official Lavlesh Pandey had demanded the bribe from the gram pradhan of Bhati Rajaipur of Nawabganj Uday Singh to forward the file for payment under MGNREGA. On receiving the complaint the anti-corruption team asked the gram pradhan to call the officer at Civil Lines and pay him ₹10,000 in cash.

Gram panchayat official nabbed accepting bribe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The pradhan gave a call to him and asked him to reach Eklavya crossing in Civil Lines where he will hand over ₹10,000 in cash. The officer reached the spot and accepted the bribe of ₹10,000. The team of anti-corruption unit nabbed the gram panchayat official of Shringverpur and was taken to the Civil Lines police station. A formal FIR was lodged against him and the officer was arrested. The gram pradhan had submitted the papers regarding payment under MGNREGA for forwarding but the officer sat on the file and demanded ₹10,000 to move the file to higher officials. The pradhan contacted the anti-corruption unit on October 16. The anti-corruption unit sought permission for trapping the official and after getting the green signal, the plan to trap him was made and executed on Thursday evening.

MAHAKUMBH: From fixing routes to colour coding of e-rickshaws and autos, authorities of regional transport office (RTO) are mulling ways to streamline the traffic before the Mahakumbh 2025. For this a joint meeting of the divisional

transport department, municipal corporation and traffic Police of Prayagraj Commissionerate will be convened soon. The office-bearers of auto and e-rickshaw unions will also participate. Officials said in the first phase, routes of e-rickshaws and autos, which includes making some routes one-way, will be decided in Leader Road, Hewett Road, Rambagh, Bairahna, Tinkonia, Alopiabagh, Daraganj, Sobhatiyabagh, Kamla Nehru Road, Mahatma Gandhi Marg, Nawab Yusuf Road, Kotwali, Bahadurganj, Kydganj, Goughat, Stanley Road, Teliarganj, Katra and Allapur areas. After this, routes will be decided in outer areas of the city like Naini, Jhansi and Paphamau. They said the idea of colour coding of e-rickshaws and autos has been mooted by

several intellectuals of the city. For this, stickers as per colour code will be pasted on the back and front of e-rickshaws and autos. Apart from this, only registered e-rickshaws will be allowed to ply. The names and addresses of the drivers will be written on the vehicle. Their distance will be fixed at two to three kilometers only. Stoppages will also be made at various places for e-rickshaws for which sign boards will be installed at every intersection. ARTO (Administration) Rajiv Chaturvedi said: "Action will be taken against those e-rickshaws who do not permanently close the opening on the right side of their vehicle. Also, e-rickshaws will not be allowed to carry goods and those found violating rules will be challaned and the vehicle seized."



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Gimmer of Hope

Finally, some humanitarian aid is reaching Gaza as Israel relents under world pressure

For more than ten days after the Israel-Hamas conflict started, its residents have endured the ravages of violence, scarcity of medicines, and inadequate access to basic necessities like water and food. Finally, some humanitarian aid begins to flow into Gaza, offering some relief to the residents of Gaza who desperately need it. After the categorical announcement by Prime Minister Netanyahu that no aid would be allowed inside Gaza, the situation had become very precarious. Now, after world pressure, mostly from the US and the West and some tough talking by the UN, aid is now reaching the residents of Gaza though it is still a trickle. With limited access to clean water, electricity, education, and healthcare, the people of Gaza have been trapped in an unending cycle of despair. It may be a while before a cease-fire can be enforced, but the recent influx of humanitarian aid signifies a positive shift in the international community's approach to this crisis. Various countries, including India, non-governmental organizations, and the United Nations have stepped up their efforts to alleviate the suffering of the people in Gaza.

The dastardly attack on Al-Ahil Hospital has indeed jolted the conscience of the world community. Indeed, it is the medical aid that is most needed in this hour and that is what is hard to get. The only cancer hospital in Gaza is going to shut down anytime now as it is running out of fuel and medical supplies. Now that WHO trucks are ready with supplies that may come as much-needed succour. The WHO has termed it as "a drop in the ocean of need," but it could be an icebreaker. The World Health Organization (WHO) has stated that five trucks loaded with medical supplies are ready to

enter Gaza through the border between Gaza and Egypt. This is a direct fallout of Biden's visit to Tel Aviv. Following what he described as "frank" discussions with the leaders of Israel and Egypt, US President Joe Biden revealed an agreement to permit aid to enter Gaza. Israel gave its consent to this arrangement while continuing its military operation. This anticipated aid delivery will be the first since Israel's declaration of a "complete blockade" on the besieged Gaza Strip, home to 2.3 million people. This blockade involved the interruption of electricity supplies and the cessation of food and fuel flows in response to a surprise attack by Hamas on Israeli territory on October 7, resulting in the reported death of at least 1,400 people. The United Nations has issued a warning regarding the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, where over half of the population is living in abject poverty due to a 16-year blockade enforced by Israel. It is imperative that the momentum continues, and that diplomatic efforts are redoubled to address the political issues at the core of the conflict. In the face of ongoing adversity, this glimmer of hope may be the catalyst that brings some solace to the besieged people of Gaza and gives a chance to the world community to confront the reality of Gaza and strive for a peaceful future for its residents.

PICTALK



A large boat carry Buddha images during the pagoda festival tours across the Inlay Lake, in Myanmar

Mental health in a changing tech landscape

Keeping up with rapidly changing world can feel daunting to many. Helping people in their work can translate to a healthier business

Advancements in technology have touched our lives in every way possible, making them more convenient, safe and open to a world of possibilities. However the technology landscape continues to evolve at blinding speeds. Especially in a world that's always on and digitally connected to everything everywhere, one cannot deny that sometimes, things might feel a little overwhelming. This becomes more complex for tech professionals who might feel the need to learn, unlearn, adapt and upskill quickly and constantly. All this while being bombarded with information and news through social media and other countless apps on our phones. While I type this, I've already received seven notifications on my phone. Ah, the irony! At such times a strong focus on one's personal wellbeing becomes super critical. Mental health specifically is an area that needs attention and is something we need to talk about more often and more openly. Given many of us spend the good part of our day in our workplaces, it



becomes all the more important for organizations to step in and help their employees on their wellbeing journeys, in a manner that is supportive and inclusive. Here are a few ways in which organizations can help build a workplace that prioritizes the wellbeing of its people: Driving change top down: This starts with putting people first in everything an organization does and has to be driven top down. When the leadership sets the tone and speaks freely about topics and experiences about mental health, it helps create an environment where employees feel safe, supported and understood. Thoughtful policies and practices: Programs and policies need to be implemented with an aim to enable psychological safety, work-life balance and flexibility options that suit the diverse needs of people. Employees should be able to

disconnect when they need to, and focus on their health. A holistic approach to wellness: Our well-being has many facets and focusing on mental health only might be just a battle partially won. It is important to approach wellness holistically and address the mental, physical, social and financial aspects of wellness. A healthy body, a supportive social circle and financial security enhance our overall well-being. This should be a prime consideration while designing employee policies and practices. Access to mental health services: For many who struggle with mental health, finding the right professional to talk to may become a challenge. Providing and promoting easy access to good mental health services such as counselling makes it simple and hassle-free for employees to find and seek support, enabling them to take that precious first step in their mental health journeys. For example, at Mastercard, we offer free counselling services for employees and their dependents, including a confidential 24/7 emergency hot-

Myanmar: Repression continues unabated

The Junta feels emboldened as the world's gaze shifts to Gaza; it continues with its savage war against its own people and persecuting its political opponents



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Events in Myanmar have gone under the radar of global discourse with the latter's attention focused on the developments in West Asia—Hamas' terrorist attack on Israel and the latter's gruesome retaliatory strikes on civilians in Gaza—and the war in Ukraine. This is unfortunate. With the pressure of global disapprobation weakening with the shifting focus, the ruling junta continues with its savage war against its own people, persecuting its political opponents, and unleashing horrendous violence.

According to a report datelined May 11, 2023, in the website The Irrawaddy, the Junta continues to crush all political opposition, having dissolved at least 40 political parties including the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Members of the NLD, their families and supporters have been regularly attacked and killed since the coup on February 1, 2021, which prevented the NLD, which had swept the elections to the national parliament held on November 8, 2020, from forming government. At least 1,235 NLD members have been detained, 26 have died during interrogation or in detention, and 63 others have been killed unlawfully, according to a statement released by the NLD on March 29, 2023. Not just this. The United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights reported, on June 28, 2023, that at least 3,452 people had been killed by the military and its allies since the coup.

According to the United National High Commissioner for Refugees' Operational Data Portal, the total number of internally displaced persons was 1,975,000 as last updated on October 9, 2023. The figure includes people fleeing the junta's attacks on villages and towns, air strike and persecution, those with arrest warrants in their names, young protestors and their parents hounded by the police, civilians providing financial support to the NUG, and civil servants involved in the civil disobedience movement and so on. Understandably, repression of this magnitude and savagery has spawned armed resistance. Some



leaders of the NUG, activists and representatives of several insurgent ethnic organisations and minor parties, formed a National Unity Government (NUG) on April 16, 2021. In May 2021, NUG announced the formation of its armed wing, the People's Defence Force (PDF). In an article in The Irrawaddy datelined November 24, 2022, Banyar Aung put the PDF's strength at 65,000. It has been attacking the Sit-Tat with increasing frequency and success. According to a report in The Irrawaddy, datelined October 18, 2023, it killed at least 28 Junta troops in incidents reported from Sagaing, Magwe, Mandalay, Bago and Tanintharyi regions in four preceding days. The Sit-Tat is also worried by drone strikes by the resistance forces. One of these, targeting the Myawaddy District Administration Department office in Karen State's Myawaddy Town killed five junta officials, including a district administrator and military battalion commander. Eleven policemen, including a superintendent, were injured. Not surprisingly, a brief released on September 5, 2022, by the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar, a group of international experts supporting the country's struggle

A SPECIAL TARGET HAS BEEN THE SAGAING REGION IN NORTH-WESTERN PART MYANMAR, BORDERING INDIA. IT IS A REBEL STRONGHOLD WHERE THE MILITARY'S GROUND FORCES HAVE HAD DIFFICULTY GAINING TERRITORY

for democracy, said that the junta had stable control over only 72 out of the country's 330 townships, constituting only 17 per cent of Myanmar's land area." The NUG and ethnic resistance organisations effectively controlled over 52 per cent of Myanmar's territory and 23 per cent was contested. Driven on the backfoot on the ground, the junta has increasingly resorted to air-strikes. Haley Willis and Weiyi Cai stated in a report in The New York Times of July 31, 2023, that there were nearly twice as many military airstrikes reported in April, May and June as in the first three months of the year. The maximum number of strikes in any month this year, 40, were in June. The average of 30 airstrikes per month up to now this year, has been the highest for any year of the conflict so far. The report quotes Anthony Davis, an analyst for the Janes group of military publications and an expert on the Myanmar military, as saying that the military's strategy was to punish the civilian population for any perceived support to the opposition. A special target has been the Sagaing Region in north-western part Myanmar, bordering India. It is a rebel stronghold where the mili-

tary's ground forces have had difficulty gaining territory. The worst airstrike since the coup on February 1, 2021, occurred in Pazigy Village in the southern part of the region on April 11, 2023. The target of bombing and strafing by military jets and helicopters, was a gathering to celebrate the local resistance movements opening of an administrative office there. At least 170 persons, most of them civilians and at least 30 of them children, were killed. The military hardware for such attacks by the Sit-Tat, including military aircraft, comes from China, Russia and even some south-east Asian countries. Russia, according to its state news agency RIA, signed a contract in September, 2022, for the delivery of six Su-30SME fighter jets, to Myanmar. Two of these arrived last month. Since Russia and China are unlikely to stop delivering combat supplies, the only way to stop the aerial attacks is to deny aviation fuel supplies to Myanmar. Unfortunately, Western countries swearing by democracy, are hardly doing anything effective to stanch the flow. (The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SR CITIZEN RAILWAY CONCESSION

Sir—Senior citizens used to enjoy a discount on railway ticket fares until the year 2020. The administration provided a 60 percent discount on tickets for senior citizens aged 60 and above and a 50 percent discount for women aged 58 and above. This discount was applicable on all trains across the railway network. However, in March 2020, Indian Railways discontinued this discount citing the reason as the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been quite some time since the end of the pandemic, but the railways have yet to address this issue. In response, the Union Railway Minister, in a reply to the Rajya Sabha, assured that the concession would be reinstated soon, but there has been no concrete timeline provided. Mr. Danve, the Minister of State for Railways, hails from Maharashtra, where there are 28 Lok Sabha members from the BJP. If all of them unite in requesting the railway minister, it is likely that the concession will be reinstated. It is worth noting that due to the absence of this discount, the Railways missed out on a significant amount of revenue, totaling Rs. 1491 crore in 2017-2018 and Rs. 1636 crore in 2019-20. Indian Railways, with its substantial revenue, discontinued the senior citizen concession, ostensibly to increase income. This raises the question of why the central government appears to be indifferent to the concerns of senior citizens, especially when other countries, including many in Europe, provide numerous benefits and discounts to their elderly citizens. Shantaram Wagh | Pune

A LASTING SOLUTION IS REQUIRED

Sir—Though the dastardly attack of the Hamas militants on Israel is highly condemnable, there can be no second opinion that the tearing haste with which the US, many European nations, and also India extended their unconditional support to Israel in this issue without looking into the ramifications of such one-sided support to them only emboldened the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to order

SC DECLINES SAME SEX MARRIAGES



India's Supreme Court unanimously declined to legalize same-sex marriage, shifting the responsibility back to Parliament. They asserted that granting LGBTQ+ people the right to marry is a legislative prerogative beyond the court's purview. The long-anticipated judgment left members and supporters of India's LGBTQ+ community disheartened, many of whom had gathered outside the court in anticipation. In a matter of hours, their hopes were dashed. While Tuesday's decision was

disappointing, the New Delhi court did accept the government's proposal to establish a special panel to investigate the provision of social and legal benefits to same-sex couples. This committee will examine measures addressing the genuine concerns of cohabiting same-sex couples in their daily lives, such as joint banking, insurance, pensions, property rights, and school admissions for children. The most disheartening aspect is the absence of specific timelines. Being reliant on a government committee without predefined dates feels like an endless wait," noted gay rights activist Sharif Rangnekar. India's Supreme Court acknowledged transgender individuals as a third gender in 2014, but Rangnekar highlighted the considerable time it took for state governments across India to enforce the court's ruling. The top court deliberated on over 20 petitions from same-sex couples and activists during proceedings held in April and May, which were broadcast live and garnered widespread attention throughout India. Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

attacks of the most severe order to annihilate the Hamas militants, un mindful of the devastation his moves were to cause innocent Palestinians and their leaders, who were in no way associated with the attack of Hamas on Israel. The latest calamity that has befallen the innocent people in Gaza is the massive blast at their al-Ahi hospital in Gaza City, where the severely injured who were fighting for their lives were being treated, and many have taken refuge there for their safety, which has resulted in the deaths of more than 500 Palestinians, including many children. It is nothin short of a genocide. Tharcus S. Fernando | Virugambakkam

THE IMPORTANCE OF COOKING

Sir—Cooking is an important part of family life. At least good knowledge of cooking for the husband can keep the family on a sound path. If both husband and wife are dependent on hotels for the rest of their lives, then hell is better than the family.

The Kerala High Court has held that "not knowing cooking and seeking assistance from your husband's employer is not cruelty" If the employer plays a mediatory role in patching up the broken relationship, there is nothing wrong with it. The problem cannot be solved unless the wife makes up her mind to learn to cook and keep the family happy. The employer will not come and cook to solve the cooking problem of the wife. An employer is not a court. Unless both husband and wife bury the hatchet, even courts cannot unite a family that is lying in a state of disrepair. Courts cannot keep the family united. Courts can only order the payment of maintenance from husband to wife in the event of a breakdown of marriage, even if the initiative comes from the wife for separation. K V Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

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FIRST COLUMN

HARNESSING BREATH FOR HEALTH

By controlling the breath, we can influence our autonomic nervous system



SWAMI CHARANASHRIT

Pranayama, an integral part of yoga, is a practice that focuses on breath control. The word "pranayama" is derived from two Sanskrit words: "prana," meaning life force or energy, and "ayama," meaning control or expansion. This ancient practice has been passed down through generations and is believed to offer numerous physical, mental, and spiritual benefits. Beyond its long-standing tradition, modern science has begun to explore the physiological and psychological mechanisms behind pranayama.

The Physiology of Breath

Before we explore pranayama, it's crucial to understand the fundamental mechanics of breathing. Our breath is regulated by the respiratory center located in the brainstem. This center monitors the levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood and adjusts our breathing rate and depth accordingly. In a resting state, our body typically breathes shallowly and relatively fast. However, by consciously engaging in pranayama, we can manipulate our breathing pattern to achieve specific effects.

Pranayama and the Autonomic Nervous System

The autonomic nervous system (ANS) regulates involuntary bodily functions such as heart rate, digestion, and respiratory rate. It is divided into two branches: the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS). The SNS is responsible for the "fight or flight" response, increasing heart rate and alertness, while the PNS induces the "rest and digest" state, promoting relaxation.



Pranayama practices directly influence the ANS. Slowing down and deepening the breath, as seen in techniques like "diaphragmatic breathing" and "nadi shodhana" (alternate nostril breathing), stimulates the PNS. This results in reduced heart rate, decreased blood pressure, and a sense of calm. The conscious manipulation of breath is a powerful tool for managing stress and anxiety.

Oxygen Saturation and Pranayama

Pranayama techniques can also affect oxygen saturation in the blood. By taking slow, deep breaths, you release more carbon dioxide (CO₂), which can lead to a mild respiratory alkalosis. Alkalosis can enhance cognitive function and induce a sense of calm. This is especially relevant when practicing "Bhastrika" (bellows breath), where rapid breaths lead to increased CO₂ elimination.

Balancing pH Levels

Pranayama can also influence the pH levels in the body. When you take slow, deep breaths, you release more carbon dioxide (CO₂), which can lead to a mild respiratory alkalosis. Alkalosis can enhance cognitive function and induce a sense of calm. This is especially relevant when practicing "Bhastrika" (bellows breath), where rapid breaths lead to increased CO₂ elimination.

Mental and Emotional Benefits

The science behind pranayama isn't limited to just the physical aspects. Numerous studies have explored the effects of pranayama on mental health and emotional well-being. Deep breathing techniques have been found to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression by promoting relaxation and reducing the release of stress hormones like cortisol. The rhythmic and focused nature of pranayama practices also help improve concentration and mindfulness.

Regulating Heart Rate Variability

Heart rate variability (HRV) is a measure of the variation in time between successive heartbeats. Higher HRV is associated with a healthier cardiovascular system and improved resilience to stress. Regular pranayama practice has been shown to increase HRV, indicating a more adaptive and resilient autonomic nervous system. Improved HRV can reduce the risk of heart disease and enhance overall well-being.

(The writer is a spiritual coach; views are personal)

Rethink rationale for food subsidy

Most of its actions in implementing the food subsidy scheme are out of sync with the changing times and lead to leakages and corruption



UTTAM GUPTA



The NITI Aayog has invited bids for a Central Coordinating Agency that can study the effectiveness of its National Food Security Subsidy scheme. The Agency will hold the mandate to suggest ways to better the scheme. It will also suggest whether, and how, the scheme can be rationalised or closed. However, the government's move to continue the supply of free food grains under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) beyond the current FY gives the contrary signal. In fact, most of its actions in implementing the food subsidy scheme are out of sync with the thought process of the Think Tank.

Under the NFSA, the Centre directs the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other state agencies to procure food from the farmer at MSP (minimum support price) and organise its distribution to around 820 million people through a network of fair price shops (FPS) at the subsidised price (call it 'issue price') of Rs 2/3/1 per kg for wheat, rice, and coarse cereals respectively.

There are two types of beneficiaries. As part of the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), the poorest of the poor households get 35 kg of food grains per family (@ 7 kg per person in a family of five) each month. The number of families under AAY is 24 million, and the persons getting 7 kg cereals per month @ Rs 2/3/1 per kg are 120 million. The rest 700 million persons are eligible to receive five kg of cereals per month at the same price.

The excess of MSP paid to farmers and handling and distribution costs (HDC) over the issue price is reimbursed as a subsidy to the FCI and other state agencies. The money comes from the Union Budget's allocation for 'food subsidy'. The expenditure incurred by the Centre during the last four years under this head was 2020-21: Rs 529,000 crore; 2021-22: Rs 372,000 crore; 2022-23: Rs 287,000 crore; 2023-24: Rs 197,000 crore (budget estimate).

This adds up to a total of Rs 1385,000 crore. It includes Rs 390,000 crore spent on running the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY). Launched in



THE RIDICULOUSLY LOW PRICE AT WHICH FOOD IS AVAILABLE IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN IS AN OPEN INVITATION TO DUBIOUS OPERATORS TO SIPHON OFF AND SELL IN THE OPEN MARKET

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

April 2020 to deal with the unprecedented situation triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, PMGKAY provided 5 kg of rice or wheat per person per month for "free" via the FPS, as well as 1 kg of pulses per family per month to around 164 million families covered under NFSA.

Run for three months initially, the scheme got six extensions till December 31, 2022. On December 23, 2022, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Minister Piyush Goyal announced the merger of the free part of PMGKAY with the regular food security schemes under NFSA. Pursuant to this, food is available to beneficiaries under the NFSA for free from January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023.

There are several loopholes in the running of the food subsidy scheme. First, fundamentally, subsidised food is meant for the poor. The number of poor isn't more than 15-20 per cent of India's population. Yet, the number of beneficiaries under NFSA at 820 million works out to nearly 59 per cent of the population. Even as per the Shanta Kumar Committee (2015), the people eligible for subsidised food under NFSA shouldn't be more than 40 per cent.

Second, during the last five years, the number of people below the poverty line has declined by 135 million. This should have led to a corresponding reduction in beneficiaries under the NFSA. That hasn't happened. Far from that, the number could go up by nearly 100 million if one were to go by the Supreme Court directive to take into account the population during 2021 instead of the present coverage based on 2011 Census estimates.

Third, are the beneficiaries so poor that they can pay only Rs 2/3/1 per kg for food which is a fraction of the

cost of making it available (in the case of wheat, it is 1/15th)? Even the Shanta Kumar Committee wanted the non-AAY families to pay 50 per cent of the MSP. Fourth, the current issue price was specified in the NFSA legislation. The law enacted in 2013 froze these rates for three years. Since 2016, there has been no legal bar on increasing the price. Yet, the government hasn't bothered to increase despite a substantial increase in MSP.

Fifth, the ridiculously low price at which food is available in the supply chain is an open invitation to dubious operators to siphon off and sell in the open market raking in a moolah. This can't be prevented even if the administration is alert. Sixth, the initial idea under the Scheme was that FCI et al would buy only the quantity needed for meeting beneficiaries' requirements under NFSA plus maintain some 'strategic' buffer to meet emergency situations. It was never meant to be an 'open-ended' procurement which it has become today. This has led to stocking problems, high costs, unsustainable rise in subsidies etc. The open-ended purchase has made India's position at WTO embarrassing as the system entails subsidy support to farmers in excess of the 10 per cent threshold for developing countries.

As for the PMGKAY, it made sense during FY 2020-21, when economic activity got a big jolt due to Covid resulting in 'negative' growth in GDP by 6.6 per cent. However, its continuation during 2021-22 and 2022-23 when the economy rebounded with GDP registering growth of 8.7 percent and 7.2 percent respectively was unjustified. Discontinuation of PMGKAY from January 1, 2023, was the right move. However, the concomitant decision to provide free food grains under regular NFSA was unjustified.

The reasoning given by Piyush Goyal that this was "to shield the masses from shocks to the system at a time the economy was recovering in the aftermath of Covid crisis" doesn't cut the ice. This is because on top of two consecutive years of good growth, during the current FY, it is expected to register an impressive 6.3 per cent. Now, the government has given an indication that the free food scheme will continue not just till the end of the current FY but also beyond. This too is untenable.

The way to go is: to disband the existing system of subsidizing the price and give subsidies directly to the beneficiary under DBT. Under DBT, the state agencies need not buy, store and deliver food to the beneficiary; instead the latter buys from the market paying the full price say, Rs 30 per kg of wheat (of this, Rs 28 comes from the government as subsidy and Rs 2 from her pocket).

This will address all maladies afflicting the system. With DBT in place, the government can easily prioritize and underserving persons won't get subsidies. There won't be any misuse or leakage as subsidized food doesn't enter the supply chain. It will also save on costs currently incurred on handling of grains by the agencies. All consumers will benefit from increased supplies and competition in the market. Finally, India won't face any problems at WTO as the system doesn't involve any subsidy to the farmers.

Unfortunately, this is a far cry. We don't even see baby steps such as deleting undeserving from the list of beneficiaries or small increases in price etc. The root cause lies in the 'political climate' wherein the ruling party can't dare withdraw benefits already enjoyed by the beneficiaries; in fact, it is compelled to give more.

The worst human tragedy in the making as Israel pounds Gaza

Israel makes no bones about its intention of flattening Gaza and massacring its civilians

It's becoming clearer by the day that the war declared by Israel on Gaza is meant to be against the civilians rather than Hamas. The number of bombs dropped on the people so far is proof of its intention of wiping out Palestinians from Gaza. All these attacks are in the name of defeating Hamas and are actually all about removing any sort of resistance to Israel's occupation. It is a continuation of Israel's policy of confiscating land without care for the people. Thus, it is yet another attempt to make Israel, 'a Jews only' state. This war is nothing, but a continuation of the same policy practised by the Israelis against the Palestinians for decades.



WAIEL AWWAD

(The writer is a South Asia-based senior foreign journalist and an expert on West Asia; views expressed are personal)

Targeting civilians is a crime against humanity, yet it has been a core part of Israel's actions. In fact, during the first Nakba (catastrophe) in 1948, thousands of Palestinians were killed, countless villages were burned, and women were raped and tortured. The survivors brought with them the horror stories that they had to endure at the hands of Israeli militants. They were spared on purpose to instil fear among other Palestinians to desist from defying the dictates of Israel. A large Palestinian population was expelled and lives as refugees in neighbouring countries. The people of Gaza are a mix of refugees, who fled from other parts of Palestine, who have survived



the onslaught of the Armed Jews Group and who have been living under deprived conditions with the natives for the last 56 years. Gaza's residents have been living in an 'open prison' since 1967

even though Israel has claimed to have withdrawn from the Gaza Strip in 2007. In fact, the entirety of Gaza is besieged from land, air, and sea by Israeli occupational forces to this present

day. Making no bones about his intentions, the National security minister of Israel, Itamar Ben Gvir, stated: "The only thing that needs to enter Gaza are hundreds of tonnes of explosives from the Air Force, not an ounce of humanitarian aid." The rocket attack on the Al-Ahli hospital in Gaza City killing hundreds of Palestinians is a case in point. Israel is clearly moving ahead with its plan to vacate Gaza by instilling fear among the residents who are already at their wit's end; deprived of food, water, electricity and medical aid they have nowhere to go, just waiting for the inevitable. Thus, we are witnessing a genocide unfolding in real time. This policy will fail and it will not make

Israel safer nor bring peace to the region but the Palestinians would have to pay a heavy price for no fault of theirs. The highest number of fatalities in this massacre have been women and children. You do not have to watch the news and stare at the television to see dead bodies scattered all over the place. Hospitals, colleges, schools, markets, convoys, nothing is safe from the bombs that are being dropped, in fact, it is as clear as day, to see that they are purposefully being targeted. The latest weaponry is being used and tested on Palestinians and will be ready for sale; the massacre of Palestinians would be proof of the quality and help Israel's arms industry.

As Guru Nanak Ji once said, "We are all human before we belong to any religion." You do not need to be a Muslim to condemn and call for an end to this carnage. Let us be brave and human enough to condemn this massacre and trampling of human rights. Though the US has now shown some sensitivity towards the people of Gaza and brokered a deal with Israel and Egypt to deliver medical aid along with other necessary supplies, it is too little too late. Nevertheless, the US has done the right thing and the world must follow. The world community should come forward and condemn Israel in one voice else we would be witnessing the biggest crime against humanity.

Protesters in several countries demonstrate over airstrikes

AP ■ BAGHDAD

Thousands of people in Muslim countries and beyond held demonstrations Friday in solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, calling for an end to Israel's blockade and airstrikes in the wake of a brutal incursion into southern Israel by fighters from the Hamas militant group that rules Gaza. Demonstrators gathered in Iraq at the country's border crossing with Jordan; in locations across Egypt; in Turkey's capital Ankara and its most populous city of Istanbul; and in Indonesia, Malaysia and South Korea. A Tuesday night explosion at a Gaza City hospital tending to wounded Palestinians and residents seeking shelter was a prominent theme in some of the demonstrations.

EGYPT
Thousands of Egyptians demonstrated in cities and towns across the North African country, in an expression of

solidarity with Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip. In a rare move, the Egyptian government approved and even helped organise 27 locations for protesters to gather on Friday. Since coming to power in 2013, Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi's government has outlawed large public protests. Hundreds gathered in the courtyard of the Al-Azhar Mosque, the Sunni Muslim world's foremost religious institution, in central Cairo.

TURKIYE

In Turkiye, where the government has declared three days of mourning in solidarity with the victims of a blast at a Gaza hospital, thousands of people staged protests outside mosques following Friday prayers in Istanbul and in the capital, Ankara. In Istanbul, protesters affiliated with Islamic groups waved Turkish and Palestinian flags, held up placards and chanted slogans denouncing Israel's actions in Gaza. "Stop the genocide!" and "Murderer Israel get out of

ISRAEL-GAZA WAR



Protesters chant slogans during a demonstration in solidarity with the Palestinian people in Gaza, near the U.S. Embassy in Aukar, a northern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon, Wednesday. AP/PTI

Palestine" some of the placards read.

IRAQ

Hundreds of Iraqi protesters gathered at the western Trebil border crossing near

Jordan in a demonstration organized by the Coordination Framework, an alliance of Iran-backed Shia political groups and militias in Iraq. The pro-Iran coalition also called for a protest in Baghdad

near the main gate of the highly fortified international zone, where the US Embassy is located, to condemn its endorsement of Israel in the ongoing war with Hamas.

MALAYSIA

Some 1,000 Muslims marched along a busy thoroughfare in Kuala Lumpur after Friday prayers, slamming Israel as a bully and calling for an end to the killing in Gaza. Waving Palestinian flags, the protesters gathered outside the US Embassy that was under heavy security to protest America's support for Israel.

INDONESIA

In Indonesia's capital, demonstrators marched from several mosques to the heavily guarded US Embassy in Jakarta to denounce American support for Israel and demand similar protests also took place in front of the United Nations mission, a few kilometres (miles) from the embassy, and in the compound of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Israelis can now travel to US for 90 days without visa

Washington (AP): As the Israel-Hamas war intensifies, the United States Thursday launched a visa waiver programme allowing Israelis wishing to visit the United States for 90 days or less to come without applying for a visa.

The US announced on September 27 that it was admitting Israel into the visa waiver programme, adding the country to a select group of 40 mostly European and Asian countries whose citizens can travel to the US for three months without visas. At the time, the US said Israelis could start travelling to America without visas as of November 30. In a news release, the Department of Homeland Security said the program was operational as of Thursday.

US issues caution for Americans travelling overseas

Washington (PTI): Amid the Israel-Gaza war, increasing anti-US protests and potential terrorist attacks, the United States has issued a worldwide caution for Americans travelling overseas. The US State Department on Thursday issued a 'worldwide caution' alert as Middle East tensions soar.

"Due to increased tensions in various locations around the world, the potential for terrorist attacks, demonstrations or violent actions against US citizens and interests, the Department of State advises US citizens overseas to exercise increased caution," the travel advisory said.

"US citizens should stay alert in locations frequented by tourists," the advisory said.

The advisory also urged US citizens to enrol in the 'Smart Traveler Enrollment Programme' so that they can receive information and alerts and can be easily located in an emergency overseas.

The latest conflict has been triggered by the unprecedented attacks against Israel by Hamas militants on October 7. Israel has launched a massive counter-offensive in Gaza to avenge the attacks.

More than 1,400 people have been killed in Israel, including children, and more than 4,500 people have been injured, Israeli officials said.

At least 3,400 people have been killed in Gaza and more than 12,000 have been injured, according to the Palestinian Health Authority.

UK PM travels to Egypt for crisis talks

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will travel to Egypt on Friday as part of his Middle East tour for crisis talks to prevent the Israel-Gaza conflict spilling over across the region. His talks with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi follow "productive" discussions with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Saudi Arabia on Thursday.

I had an important and productive meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. We agreed on coordinated action to prevent further escalation in the region, provide vital humanitarian aid in Gaza and support stability, both now and in the long-term," tweeted Sunak after the meeting.

Sunak "encouraged the Crown Prince to use Saudi's leadership in the region to



support stability, both now and in the long-term," Downing Street said.

His stop at Riyadh followed a visit to Israel for talks with President Isaac Herzog and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during which he addressed a joint press conference with the

latter to reiterate that the UK stands with Israel in its "darkest hour".

"In all these conversations the Prime Minister has stressed the imperative of avoiding regional escalation and preventing the further unnecessary loss of civilian life," said Downing Street.

Sunak termed Hamas as "pure evil" and also pushed Israeli leaders for progress in allowing humanitarian aid into Gaza, amid warnings of a humanitarian disaster.

The British Prime Minister is on a two-day visit to the Middle East since Thursday in an effort to prevent escalation of the conflict. It visit comes directly after US President Joe Biden's visit as world leaders step up efforts to prevent the conflict escalating across the wider region.

Biden said Israel had

been "badly victimised" and had a right to strike back against Hamas but also cautioned Israelis against being "consumed" by anger, urging them not to repeat the "mistakes" made by an "enraged" United States after the 9/11 attacks in 2001.

Sunak has declined to back Opposition calls from the Scottish National Party and some Labour MPs for a ceasefire to protect civilians, insisting Israel has a right to "act against terrorism".

UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly told MPs on Wednesday that calls for ceasefires were "all well and good," but he had seen no evidence that one would be respected by Hamas.

The minister is also on a diplomatic trip of his own, meeting his Egyptian counterpart and is also due to visit Turkey and Qatar.

Sunak's Tories suffer huge losses in two by-elections

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's governing Conservative Party suffered huge losses in two by-elections on Friday, losing to the Opposition Labour Party, which overturned a sizeable Tory majority in the seats of Mid Bedfordshire and Tamworth in England.

While Sunak is touring the Middle East for crisis talks over the Israel-Gaza conflict, Labour leader Keir Starmer declared that his party was "redrawing the political map."

Labour made history in Mid Bedfordshire by overcoming a 24,664 Tory majority to win the seat for the first time and pulled off a 23.9 per cent swing to Labour from the Tories in

Tamworth. "Winning in these Tory strongholds shows that people overwhelmingly want change and they're ready to put their faith in our changed Labour Party to deliver it," said Starmer.

By-elections ahead of a general election year are seen as reflective of the mood of the electorate and the governing Tories will be shaken up by the results.

The historic results mark the second-highest-ever by-election swing to Labour. With the Tories also trailing in the nationwide opinion polls, the results will be a welcome boost to Labour ahead of an expected general election in 2024.

Conservative Party chairman Greg Hands said the results were "disappointing" but blamed the out-

come on Tory voters not voting.

"Clearly for us, I think it is right that a number of our voters are unhappy with the government."

We clearly have a job to do to win them back," he told the BBC.

Former Cabinet minister and Boris Johnson loyalist Nadine Dorries prolonged resignation in Mid Bedfordshire is believed to have caused much damage in the eastern England seat.

In Tamworth in the West Midlands, MP Chris Pincher resigned after being found to have drunkenly misbehaved.

Greg Hands admitted that "fury" locally among voters about the background to the by-elections was partially to blame for the Tory defeats.

China sends envoy to Middle East

Beijing (AP): China has sent an envoy to the Middle East to push for a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas in the latest sign of its ambition to play a larger role in the region.

Envoy Zhai Jun's first meetings included one in Qatar with a Russian counterpart on Thursday as the two countries stake out a position at odds with the American approach. The two sides confirmed their "unwavering focus on closely coordinating efforts for the political settlement of this and other crises in the Middle East and North Africa region," Russia's Foreign Ministry said, according to the country's Tass state news agency. China, which sees the US as too pro-Israel, has said it opposes attacks on civilians but has not condemned the initial Hamas attack that started the latest war. Instead, it has called for an immediate cease-fire to protect civilians as Israel bombards Gaza before a possible ground invasion.

"We believe that when dealing with hot-spot issues in the international community, major powers should be objective and impartial," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Friday.

Analysts say that China wants to position itself as a mediator and exert its influence in the region as the US shifts its global attention elsewhere. But the latest Gaza war has drawn the US back in, with President Joe Biden visiting Israel this week. Zhai held meetings in Qatar with Mikhail Bogdanov, the Russian president's special representative for the Middle East and Africa, and with Qatar's minister of state for foreign affairs, Mohammed Abdulaziz al-Khulaifi, Mao said. She added that Zhai would travel to other Mideast countries but did not give any details on which ones or when.

Stampede in Kenya kills 6, 100 hurt

Nairobi: A stampede in Kenya during celebrations to mark an annual public holiday killed at least six people on Friday and injured 100 others, authorities said. The stampede happened when thousands of people

struggled to get inside Kericho stadium in western Kenya at dawn, police said.

The stadium was the venue for this year's Mashujaa Day, which means Heroes' Day in Swahili.

US military shoots down missiles as it faces growing threats in Middle East

AP ■ WASHINGTON

With tensions spiking in the Middle East, US forces in the region are facing increasing threats, as a Navy warship shot down missiles appearing to head toward Israel Thursday and American bases in Iraq and Syria were repeatedly targeted by drone attacks. The USS Carney, a Navy destroyer in the northern Red Sea, intercepted three land attack cruise missiles and several drones that were launched by Houthi forces in Yemen. The action by the Carney potentially represented the first shots by the US military in the defense of Israel in this conflict.

Brig Gen Pat Ryder, Pentagon press secretary, told reporters the missiles were "potentially" headed toward Israel but said the US hasn't finished its assessment of what they were targeting. A US official

said they don't believe the missiles — which were shot down over the water — were aimed at the US warship. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations that had not yet been announced.

But an array of other drone attacks over the past three days did target US bases, including one in southern Syria on Thursday that caused minor injuries. The rash of violence comes in the wake of an explosion at a Gaza hospital that killed hundreds of people, triggering protests in a number of Muslim nations. The Israeli military has relentlessly attacked Gaza in retaliation for the devastating Hamas rampage in southern Israel almost two weeks ago, but Israel has denied responsibility for the al-Ahli hospital blast and the US has said its intelligence assessment found that Tel Aviv was not to blame. In recent days,

however, a number of militant groups across the region — from Hezbollah to the Houthis — have expressed support for the Palestinians and threatened Israel. Since Tuesday, militants have launched at least four drone attacks on US military installations in Iraq and Syria where US troops train local defense forces and support the mission to counter the Islamic State group. The attacks fuel escalating worries in the US and the West that the war in Israel could expand into a larger regional conflict. "That's exactly what we are trying to prevent," Ryder said. The most recent drone attack was Thursday at al-Asad Air Base in western Iraq. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq posted a statement claiming responsibility for the attack, saying they had fired a salvo of rockets at the base and "they hit their targets directly and precisely."

Nepalese face hard time due to sugar shortage

Kathmandu (PTI): The Nepalese people are having a hard time celebrating Vijaya Dashami and Diwali this year as the country is hit by a shortage of sugar because of low production and India's export ban ahead of the festive season.

Nepal's annual demand for sugar stands at 300,000 metric tonnes and the domestic production is just 120,000 metric tonnes. This year, India banned the export of sugar and rice to fulfill its domestic demand. However, it recently eased the export of non-basmati rice to Nepal providing a big relief to the country. Welcoming India's decision to ease the export of rice to Nepal on Wednesday, Senior Vice President of the Federation of Nepalese Industries and Commerce (FNCCI), Anjan Shrestha, has requested India to do a favour

for Nepal by easing its export of sugar too. "Grateful to @piyushgoyal for easing rice import from Nepal, a lifeline for our food security," said in a tweet, thanking India's Minister of Commerce & Industry, Consumer Affairs & Food & Public Distribution and Textiles. "Urgently appeal to ease the import of sugar from Nepal too," he wrote, adding, "People are enduring hardship during festivals without it. Please consider their plight."

On July 20, the Indian government banned exports of non-basmati white rice to boost domestic supply and keep retail prices under check during the upcoming festive season. There also have been reports about growing incidents of smuggling of sugar from India to Nepal following the government of India's deci-

SOUTH INDIAN Bank Regional Office – Delhi

The South Indian Bank Ltd, Regional Office - Delhi at 3rd floor, Plot No. 21, 21/1, Pusa Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi Pin code: 110005
Phone No: 011-42331664, 45128661, 7982865660
Email: qc1008@sib.co.in; ro1008@sib.co.in

RO- DEL/CRD/SAR/23/2023-24 Date: 18.10.2023

APPENDIX- IV-A
(See proviso to rule 8 (6))
Tender Cum Auction Sale notice for sale of immovable properties
A/c: M/s. Sanco Industries Limited
Branch: Karol Bagh

Tender Cum Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the South Indian Bank Ltd, Branch- Karol Bagh (Secured Creditor), the possession of which has been taken on 29.01.2019 by the Authorised Officer of The South Indian Bank Limited, Regional Office - Delhi at 3rd Floor, Plot No 21 & 21/1, Near Karol Bagh Metro Station, Pusa Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi - 110 005 (Secured Creditor), will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" (with respect to the lie, nature and physical status of the secured asset(s)) on 09.11.2023 at 12:00 Noon at The South Indian Bank Ltd, New Delhi Regional Office at Plot No 20 & 21/1, Near Karol Bagh Metro Station, Opposite to Metro Pillar no 98, Pusa Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi - 110 005 for recovery of an amount of Rs. 21,23,27,367.00 (Rupees Twenty One Crore Twenty Three Lakhs Twenty Seven Thousand Three Hundred and Sixty Seven) as on 17.10.2023 due to The South Indian Bank Limited, Branch Karol Bagh (Secured Creditor), along with further interests, costs & expenses from Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)

(1) M/s. Sanco Industries Limited with office address at D-16, Suraj Mal Vihar, Delhi-110092 also at Village Satiwala, Tehsil Paonta Sahib, Himachal Pradesh - 173025 and the guarantors, (2) Mr. Sanjay Gupta son of Om Prakash Gupta (In the capacity as Director and as Karia of M/s. Sanjay Gupta HUF), (3) Mrs. Rita Gupta wife of Sanjay Gupta (In the capacity as Director and as Coparcener of M/s. Sanjay Gupta HUF) (4) Mr. Sidhant Gupta son of Sanjay Gupta (In the capacity as Director and as Coparcener of M/s. Sanjay Gupta HUF), (5) Mrs. Mansi Gupta daughter of Sanjay Gupta (In individual capacity and as Coparcener of M/s. Sanjay Gupta HUF), (6) Mr. Om Prakash Gupta Son of Babu Ram (7) Mrs. Shakuntala Gupta Wife of Om Prakash Gupta all residing at C-56, Surajmal Vihar, New Delhi-110092, and (8) Mrs. Shashi Garg Wife of Pawan Kumar Garg residing at B-256, Suraj Mal Vihar, Delhi-110092. The reserve price for property will be Rs. 3,60,00,000.00 (Rupees Three Crores Sixty Lakhs Only), and the earnest money deposit will be Rs. 36,00,000.00 (Rupees Thirty Six Lakhs Only).

Property Details

Name of Property Owner	Mrs. Shashi Garg
Description of property	All that part and parcel of entire Freehold Second Floor Property measuring 2206 Sq. Ft. (with complete Terrace Rights and with further construction rights upto last storey, with common entrance, passage and stair-case) along with 40% Undivided, Indivisible And Impartible Ownership Rights in the land underneath measuring 492 Sq. Yards with all fittings, fixtures, connections, structure standing thereon comprised in Property No D-819, New Friends Colony, New Delhi with all rights in other common facilities and amenities provided therein, in the name of Mrs. Shashi Garg more particularly described under Sale Deed No. 7762 dated 04/09/2003 of Sub Registrar-V New Delhi bounded on North by Plot No. 818, South by Plot No. 820, East by Road 80 Ft. Wide, and West by Service Lane 15 Ft. Wide.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in South Indian Bank Ltd, (Secured Creditor) website i.e. www.southindianbank.com
Date : 21.10.2023 Sd/-
Place : New Delhi AUTHORISED OFFICER

Space getting crowded with satellites

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Melbourne Reports this week suggest a near-collision between an Australian satellite and a suspected Chinese military satellite. Meanwhile, earlier this month, the US government issued the first ever space junk fine. The Federal Communications Commission handed a US\$150,000 penalty to the DISH Network, a publicly traded company providing satellite TV services.

It came as a surprise to many in the space industry, as the fine didn't relate to any recent debris — it was issued for a communications satellite that has been in space for more than 21 years. It was EchoStar-7, which failed to meet the orbit requirements outlined in a previously agreed debris mitigation plan.

The EchoStar-7 fine might be a US first, but it probably won't be the last. We are entering an unprecedented era of space use and can expect the number of active satellites in space to increase by 700% by

the end of the decade. As our local space gets more crowded, keeping an eye on tens of thousands of satellites and bits of space junk will only become more important. So researchers have a new field for this: space domain awareness.

THREE TYPES OF ORBIT, PLUS JUNK

Humans have been launching satellites into space since 1957 and in the past 66 years have become rather good at it. There are currently more than 8,700 active satellites in various orbits around Earth. Satellites tend to be in three main orbits, and understanding these is key to understanding the complex nature of space debris.

The most common orbit for satellites is low Earth orbit, with at least 5,900 active satellites. Objects in low Earth orbit tend to reside up to 1,000km above Earth's surface and are constantly on the move. The International Space Station is an example of a low Earth orbit object, travelling around Earth

16 times every day. Higher up is the medium Earth orbit, where satellites sit between 10,000 and 20,000km above Earth. It's not a particularly busy place, but is home to some of the most important satellites ever launched — they provide us with the global positioning system or GPS.

Finally, we have very high altitude satellites in geosynchronous orbit. In this orbit, satellites are upwards of 35,000km above Earth, in orbits that match the rate of Earth's rotation. One special type of this orbit is a geostationary Earth orbit. It lies on the same plane as Earth's equator, making the satellites appear stationary from the ground.

As you can tell, Earth's surrounds are buzzing with satellite activity. It only gets more chaotic when we factor in space junk, defined as disused artificial debris in orbit around Earth. Space junk can range from entire satellites that are no longer in use or working, down to millimetre-wide bits of spacecraft and launch vehicles left in orbit. Latest estimates

suggest there are more than 130 million pieces of space debris, with only 35,000 of those large enough (greater than 10cm) to be routinely tracked from the ground.

HOW DO WE TRACK THEM ALL?

This is where space domain awareness comes in. It is the field of detecting, tracking and monitoring objects in Earth's orbit, including active satellites and space debris.

We do much of this with ground-based tracking, either through radar or optical systems like telescopes. While radar can easily track objects in low Earth orbit, higher up we need optical sensors. Objects in medium Earth orbit and geostationary orbit can be tracked using sunlight reflected towards Earth. For reliable and continuous space domain awareness, we need multiple sensors contributing to this around the globe. Below you can see what high-altitude satellites can look like to telescopes on Earth, appearing to stay still as the stars move by.

Giorgia Meloni announces separation from partner

Rome (AP): Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni announced Friday that she is separating from her partner and the father of her young daughter after nearly a decade together.

In a statement posted on social media, Meloni said her relationship with Andrea Giambrodo had ended. She said their paths had diverged "for some time." The announcement came after Giambrodo, an on-air television personality, was caught on audio seemingly making lewd remarks to colleagues.

An Italian satirical news programme, Striscia la Notizia, aired two nights' worth of programming on Giambrodo this week, using backstage clips and audio. Striscia is a prime-time programme of the Mediaset broadcaster of the late Silvio Berlusconi, whose Forza Italia party is a junior partner in Meloni's government.

This week marks the first anniversary of Meloni's government, Italy's first headed by a



woman and first hard-right-led administration since the end of World War II.

Meloni, who was raised by a single mother after her father abandoned the family, and Giambrodo share 7-year-old Ginevra. Meloni had previously described Giambrodo as a "fantastic" and very present father who complemented her in caring for their daughter. In her 2021 memoir "I am Giorgia," she said Giambrodo wouldn't balk if she was working and he had to step in, though she complained that he was messier than she.

Police on high alert ahead of Sharif's arrival in Lahore



PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan's security agencies have warned the Punjab government of a potential threat to former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's life upon his arrival here on Saturday to address a major rally, four years after he went to the UK on "medical grounds".

Nawaz, who is returning to the country after ending his four-year self-imposed exile in London has arrived in Dubai from Jeddah in Saudi Arabia and will travel to Pakistan in a chartered plane on Saturday.

He is scheduled to address a mass rally organised by his Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party at the Minar-e-Pakistan in Lahore on Saturday evening.

The Punjab Home Department on Friday said that the 73-year-old supreme leader of the PML-N is "facing threat" during his participation at the Minar-e-Pakistan rally on Saturday. The department said a couple of threat alerts have been reported by the security agencies after which the Punjab police has been put on high alert. A senior home department official said that they held a high-level meeting and took the Punjab police into confidence to make coordinated efforts to ensure security for the three-time former prime minister, the Dawn newspaper reported.

Meanwhile, Shehbaz Sharif, Nawaz's younger brother and PML-N president has asked party leaders to accord a "historic reception" to his elder brother.

PML-N Deputy Secretary General Attaullah Tarar said that the three-time former prime minister will land in

Pak SC to hear petitions against trial of civilians in military courts on Oct 23

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Supreme Court will take up about a dozen petitions filed by jailed former prime minister Imran Khan and several others on October 23, challenging the trial of civilians in military courts, it emerged on Friday.

A five-member bench led by Justice Ijazul Ahsan and including Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi and Justice Ayesha Malik will hear the pleas against the announcement by the government that those involved in attacks on military installations on May 9 would be tried under military laws.

The pleas were filed by former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Khan, the Supreme Court Bar Association, eminent lawyer Aitzaz Ahsan, former chief justice Jawwad S Khawaja, members of the civil society and others.

The Supreme Court has announced that the hearing of the petitions will be held on October 23. Pakistan saw unprecedented nationwide anti-government protests following the arrest of Khan by paramilitary Rangers in a corruption case on May 9. Khan, 71, was later released on bail.

Dozens of military installations and government buildings, including the military headquarters in Rawalpindi, were damaged or ravelled during the riots. Over 100 vehicles of police and other security agencies were set on fire.

After the May 9 violence, the police backed by the military launched a crackdown on the PTI and arrested 10,000 party workers, including women. Over 100 have been handed over to the military for their trial under the Army Act. The PTI contests that its members were not involved in the attacks, but the government and military reject the claims and say they have "irrefutable evidence" of their involve-

ment. According to the army, 102 accused have been handed over to the military authorities for trial. The government during the hearing had assured the court that their trial had not started yet.

The last time a six-judge SC bench heard the case was on August 3 but a new bench was set up as the previous one was formed by the former chief justice Umar Ata Bandial. The previous bench had postponed further proceedings for an indefinite period.

The case is deemed as an important one as it will settle the issue of trial of civilians by the military courts. The Supreme Court on Oct 23 will also take four pleas for hearing that seek the holding of general elections within the constitutional timeframe of 90 days from the dissolution of the National Assembly on August 9. The three-member bench that will hear the pleas is led by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa and includes Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Aminuddin Khan.

Islamabad as he has secured protective bail in Al-Azizia and Avenfield cases from the Islamabad High Court.

After meeting the legal requirement, the elder Sharif will leave for Lahore and address a rally at Minar-e-Pakistan. The PML-N has reportedly hired the services of two small planes to shower rose petals in Lahore for three-and-a-half hours (between 3 pm and 6.30 pm) on the arrival of Nawaz Sharif.

In a desperate bid to motivate the workers to go to Lahore on Nawaz's homecoming, a senior PML-N leader has told the workers that they will go to heaven if they attend the Minar-e-Pakistan rally.

According to the permission granted by the Lahore district administration, the PML-N has to adhere to some 39 conditions, including ensuring all requisite precautionary measures in and around the venue for the safety of participants and the general public.

"No speeches against con-

stitutional offices/armed forces/judiciary shall be uttered," the district administration of Lahore said last week while granting permission to the party to hold a rally at the Minar-e-Pakistan. The PML-N is hoping that the presence of Nawaz in the country will benefit the party ahead of the general election in January.

"In his address, Nawaz Sharif will give a road map to pull the country out of the economic mess," Hamza Shehbaz, the nephew of Nawaz Sharif, said last week. Nawaz had left for London in the middle of his seven-year jail term in the Al-Azizia corruption case on "medical grounds" in November 2019 after a higher court granted him bail for four weeks.

A medical report on his health submitted to the Lahore High Court earlier this month said Sharif still had "some residual ailments" which would require "frequent follow-up investigations" in

London and Pakistan.

He was declared a proclaimed offender in Al-Azizia and Avenfield corruption cases for his continuous absence from the proceedings on appeals against the sentences.

There has been a talk among the political circles that Nawaz Sharif is returning to the country at the right time as his arch-rival Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan is in jail and there is a perfect equation of his party with the military led by Army chief Gen Asim Munir.

PTI leader and former federal minister Moonis Elahi said on X: "Today the one who was calling someone else (Imran Khan) ladla (favourite) has now become ladla. Nawaz Sharif, a proclaimed offender and a convict, has got permission to roam around in the country...but let me tell you neither offering of motorbikes nor paradise pass will help them as the people have rejected him and his party."

SL, IMF agree on disbursement of 2nd tranche of bailout package

Colombo (PTI): Sri Lanka and the IMF have reached a crucial staff-level agreement to release the second tranche of about USD 330 million out of the USD 2.9 billion bailout package which will help in the cash-strapped country's economic recovery.

The International Monetary Fund in March this year approved a 48-month, USD 2.9 billion extended arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) to support Sri Lanka's economic policies and reforms. The IMF mission that visited Sri Lanka for the first review of the global lender-supported Extended Fund Facility programme for the country noted that despite early signs of stabilisation, full economic recovery is not yet assured.

"Sri Lanka will have access to SDR 254 million (about US\$330 million) in financing once the review is approved by IMF Management and IMF Executive Board," the IMF said in a release on Thursday. The release of the second tranche at the conclusion of the first review of the facility approved in March is subject to approval by the IMF executive board in the period ahead, it said.

The IMF however said despite showing early signs of stabilisation the "full economic recovery is not yet assured".

It stressed, "Sri Lanka's external position has weakened as a result of prolonged debt restructuring discussions and reserve accumulation has slowed in recent months".

It said Sri Lanka needed to "increase revenues and signal better governance by adopting needed tax measures". The IMF has urged for agreement with creditors for debt treatment. It said that delays in debt restructuring risk worsening the economic outlook for the country.

"We urge all official creditors to move forward and agree on an appropriate debt treatment in line with financing assurances they provided", the statement said. The IMF has noted that "inflation is down from a peak of 70 per cent in September 2022 to 1.3 per cent in September 2023, gross international reserves increased by 1.5 bn dollars during March-June this year, and shortages of essentials have eased".

Ukraine, Russia assess resources as war heads toward another winter

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he spoke with President Joe Biden about future US support for Ukraine, and Russian President Vladimir Putin visited a military base near the invaded nation's border as the warring countries prepared for the winter and next year's combat operations.

Almost 20 months of war have sapped both sides' military resources. The fighting is likely to settle into positional and attritional warfare during the approaching wintry weather, analysts say, with little change along the more than 1,000-kilometre (600-mile) front line.

Zelenskyy said late Thursday he spoke to Biden by phone about "a significant support package" for Ukraine. Western help has been crucial for Ukraine's war effort.

The US president is expected to ask Congress on Friday for billions of dollars in military assistance for both Ukraine and Israel. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the latest US pledges to back Ukraine would bear no fruit in the war.

"Mr Biden hasn't mentioned that all those efforts to deter Russia have proven inefficient," Peskov said. "They will remain inefficient in the future."

Zelenskyy also spoke Friday with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who "reasserted (Germany's) sustained and steadfast solidarity with Ukraine," according to the German government.

Putin visited late Thursday the headquarters of Russia's Southern Military District, which is located less than 100



kilometres (60 miles) from Ukraine's southeastern border.

He was briefed on the war by the chief of the General Staff, Valery Gerasimov, the Kremlin said. With the scale of the Western aid Kyiv can expect going forward uncertain, and after a five-month-long Ukrainian counteroffensive that sapped Russia's reserves but apparently only dented its front-line defences, both countries are scrambling to replenish their stockpiles for 2024.

Ukraine has been expending ammunition at a rate of more than 200,000 rounds per month, according to Jack Watling, a senior research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute think tank in London.

"Sufficient ammunition to sustain this rate of fire is not going to be forthcoming as NATO stockpiles deplete, and production rates for ammunition remain too low to meet this level of demand," Watling wrote in an assessment published late Thursday.

Meanwhile, Russian production "has turned a corner," he said. Moscow's domestic ammunition production is growing quickly, at more than 100 long-range missiles a month compared with 40 a month a year ago, for example, according to Watling.

Also, Russia is reported to be receiving supplies from Iran, North Korea and other countries. Though the counteroffensive has not made dramatic progress against Russia's formidable defences, it has suppressed gains by the Kremlin's forces. If Ukraine can keep up the pressure, it would further stretch Russia's already strained manpower resources, according to the Institute for the Study of War.

The think tank based in Washington said in its latest assessment that "Russian forces largely lack high-quality reserves and are struggling to generate, train and soundly deploy reserves to effectively plug holes in the front line and pursue offensive operations."

Indian man wins jackpot in UAE, to get monthly ₹5.5 lakh for 25 years

Dubai (PTI): Magesh Kumar Natarajan, an Indian project manager, on Friday became the first winner outside the UAE of a new raffle draw that will earn him more than Rs 5.5 lakh every month for the next 25 years, dramatically changing his fortunes.

Natarajan, 49, won the FAST5 Grand Prize of Emirates Draw. The win ensures he will get Dh 25,000 (5.6 lakh) a month for 25 years. The project

manager in Ambur, Tamil Nadu is the first global grand prize winner and the first winner outside the UAE.

"I faced a lot of challenges in my life and during my studies. Many people from society helped me to complete my education. It's my time to give back to society. I will ensure that my contribution to society reaches needy people," he told PTI. Natarajan has spent most of his life in Ambur, Tamil

Nadu. It was his four-year work assignment in Saudi Arabia from 2019 to earlier this year that set the stage for a remarkable twist of fate. His travels through Dubai exposed him to the city's popular draws. This kindled his interest, leading him to discover Emirates Draw. It was only when officials from the Emirates Draw made the life-changing call that Magesh genuinely believed that he won.



South Korean Army armored vehicles cross a floating bridge on the Namhan River during a joint river-crossing drill between South Korea and the United States in Yeosu, South Korea, on Friday

Main suspect in killing of Haitian president held after 2 years

Port-Au-Prince (AP): A former justice official considered one of the main suspects in the killing of Haitian President Jovenel Moise in 2021 was arrested on Thursday in Haiti's capital after being on the run for more than two years, police said. Joseph Badio once worked for Haiti's Ministry of Justice and at the government's anti-corruption unit until he was fired for alleged ethics violations weeks before the assassination. Badio was arrested in the neighbourhood of Petion Vile in Port-au-Prince, National Police spokesman Garry Desrosiers said. Moise was shot 12 times at his private home in July 7, 2021, sending Haiti into a political crisis.

Nepal's candidate hopes to get India's support during WHO regional director election

Dr Shambhu Acharya, Nepal's nominee for the post of the World Health Organisation regional director, on Thursday sought India's backing against his Bangladeshi rival and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's daughter Saima Wazed, saying he would support "Bharat" to promote its global health agenda beyond the region.

"I see a great opportunity right now to win, though nobody knows the outcome," Acharya, who is Nepal's official candidate for the Regional Director for WHO, South East Asia, told PTI in an interview.

When asked about his chances of winning, he said that when one participates in an election, he or she hopes to win. "I am a public health leader known within the region and

beyond. And I am a public health leader, that has been proven from my track record in terms of what I can bring in, what I can achieve as a leader and how I can foster partnership with the member states and with the different partners," he said.

He hoped that he would receive support from India during the election for the coveted post. "India is one of the 11 member countries in the region. Bharat certainly is a very important country because of its economic development and technological advancement and because it can support many countries and also Bharat being the G20 president and leading the global health agenda can contribute substantially," he said. "If I am elected regional director, we can also support Bharat to promote their global health agenda beyond the

region," he said. "I sincerely hope that Bharat will see my capability, competency and my profile as well as my association with Bharat as a student and a public health professional and this makes me hopeful that I would get a vote from Bharat," he added.

He said South Asia has an enormous opportunity to really improve health and the region is economically growing, it has young talents, technological advancement and also pioneered in producing cheap local generic medicines and vaccines. "We can find low cost innovative solutions, which can help improve health services particularly, where we haven't really taken low cost solutions and technology."

He said he has worked for many years in WHO across three levels and represented WHO in UN and other agen-

cies. "I have seen that this region has made substantial progress in health and I guess where we would need more stride would be on improving the population health connecting education with health," he added.

"We need to improve the health system so that we can ensure each and every citizen of this region has access to basic health services if and when we fall sick regardless of whether the citizen is poor or rich," he said. He said he would promote traditional medicines, because many countries in this part of the world have traditional medicines and other areas like Yoga and Meditation. Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Sewa Lamsal said that Nepal has been campaigning in favour of Dr. Acharya, who is a qualified and experienced candi-

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot
BFU-23/21
VACANCIES
Online applications are invited w.e.f 25/10/2023 to 15/11/2023 from eligible candidates through University website i.e www.bfhu.ac.in for the recruitment of 16 Block Extension Educator under Deptt. of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of Punjab. For eligibility, terms & conditions & other information visit university website i.e www.bfhu.ac.in.
Sd/- Registrar
nil/12/166/2023/29079 Dated CHD - 10/20/2023

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all that I, Ajay Goyal S/o Sh.Chhanna Mal Goyal R/o H.No.129, Chandu Park, Gali No.3, Krishna Nagar, Delhi-110051 owner of DDA LIG Flat No. 55-A, Pocket A-3, Kalkaji Extension, New Delhi-110019. The original documents i.e. Possession Certificate and Allotment Letter of the above flat have been lost. An FIR to this effect has been lodged in P.S. Crime Branch vide S.O.No.430/2014 LR No.1042846/2023 dated 19.10.2023. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone No.9899704200 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objections with respect to this property can personally inform or write to Dy. Director (LAB) H or Director (H)-JH-II, D Block, 3rd Floor, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi.

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot
Sadiq Road, Faridkot - 151203 Ph. 01639-256232, 256236
E-TENDER NOTICE
E-tender is invited for the procurement of following Equipment (with pre bid meeting) for department of Nuclear Medicine, GGSMSCH, Faridkot upto 28.11.2023.
• PET-CT, SPECT-CT with Dual Head Gamma Camera
Note: Please refer tender document for pre-bid meeting.
E-tenders are invited for the procurement of following Equipment (with pre bid meeting) for department of Radio-diagnosis, GGSMSCH, Faridkot upto 28.11.2023.
• TELA MRI Machine, High Resolution Ultrasound Machine with Color Doppler, DR (Digital Radiograph System 800mA), High End Mammography Machine and DEXA Scan.
Note: Please refer tender document for pre-bid meeting.
Terms and conditions can be downloaded from http://eproc.punjab.gov.in. The tenders will be accepted in E-Tender mode only. Bidder can also download tender notification and document from the University website i.e www.bfhu.ac.in
Registrar
nil/12/169/2023/29083 Dated CHD - 10/20/2023

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APPOINTMENTS
The Punjab State Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation Limited (Milked Punjab) invites applications/resumes for appointment of 02(Two) posts of Field Sales Supervisor on contract basis initially for period of one year (which could be extended further as per requirement):-
Qualification: Graduate with 5 years experience of Packaged product Sales. Candidates having Post Graduate Diploma in Marketing and Sales Management will be preferred.
Salary for the above post is negotiable. Interested eligible candidates may send their resumes by post-to-mail. The last date of receipt of the resumes is 15.11.2023. Milked Punjab reserves the right to evaluate the resumes and call selected number of candidates for personality interview.
For further detailed information & updates, may please visit our website http://www.verka.coop/career.
Deputy General Manager (HR)
THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCER'S FEDERATION LIMITED
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VACANCIES
Online applications are invited w.e.f 25/10/2023 to 15/11/2023 from eligible candidates through University website i.e www.bfhu.ac.in for the recruitment of 160 Medical Laboratory Technician Grade-02 under Deptt. of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of Punjab. For eligibility, terms & conditions & other information visit university website i.e www.bfhu.ac.in.
Sd/- Registrar
nil/12/168/2023/29082 Dated CHD - 10/20/2023

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
No.SSA-12/3/2023-MIS-SEC/7853 Date : 20.10.2023
Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha Axom, Kahilpara, Guwahati-19, Assam invites bids vide No. GEM/2023/B/4101916 Dated 17.10.2023 for supply of Tablet Computer through GeM portal.
Interested bidder may visit GeM portal and submit the bid on GeM portal accordingly. The bid is also available in SSA website : https://ssa.assam.gov.in
Sd/-Executive Director, Samagra Shiksha Axom Kahilpara, Guwahati-19
Janasanyog/CF/3196/23/21-Oct-23

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Notice Inviting Tender www.verka.coop
e tender is hereby invited for the supply of following item:-
Sr No Name of Work/Item Period/Tentative Qty
1. For Verka Head Office, Sector- 34 A, Chandigarh Annual/270 L22 Containers No's
NOTE:
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e www.verka.coop & e tendering portal i.e eproc.punjab.gov.in.
2. Corrigendum, if any, will be updated on website only.
Incharge (Purchase)

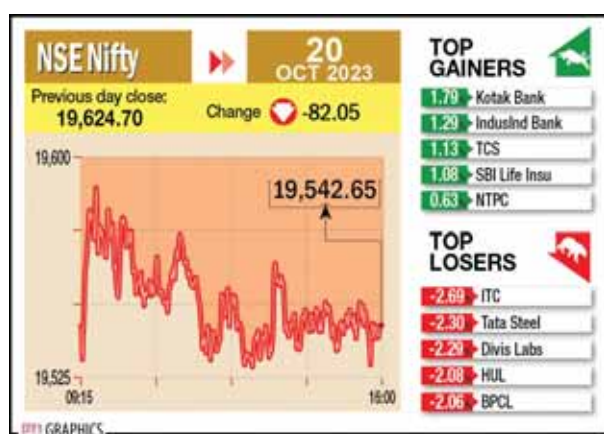
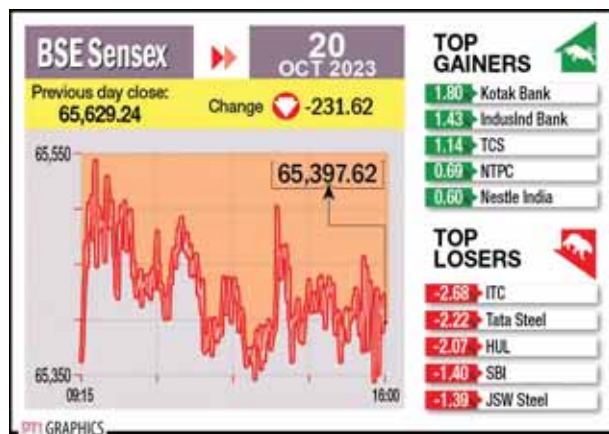
PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.
Regd. Office : PSEB Head Office, The Mall Patiala-147001.
Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813;
Website www.pspcl.in (Contact No. 96461-18774)
Tender Enquiry No. MQP-222/2023-24/PR Dated: 20.10.2023
CE/Metering, PSPCL, C-3, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, Patiala invites e-tender for procurement of 2600 no.(2184 no. of rating 10/5 A to 30/5 A & 416 no. of rating 50/5 to 400/5 A) 11KV Pfler resistant metering panel housed with 3 no. dry type 11KV CTs conforming to IS:16227 (Part-I&II) and IEC 61869 with revised/latest amendments upto 30.09.2023, 1 no. 3-Phase Dry type PT conforming to IS:16227 (Part-I& II) and IEC 61869 with revised /latest amendments upto 30.09.2023, and having meter compartment for installation of Trivector/Bivector Meter complete with wiring, cable glands etc. with accuracy of CTs as 0.2S & PT as 0.2 of 10/5A, 20/5A, 30/5A, 50/5A, 75/5A, 100/5A, 150/5A, 200/5A, 300/5A & 400/5A and empanelment of technically eligible firms for the private sale of above material. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 20.10.2023 (03:00 PM onwards).
Note: Corrigendum and amendments, if any, will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in
C-753/23
76155/12/2315/2023/29091 Dated CHD - 10/20/2023

Sensex, Nifty decline for 3rd day

RBI imposes ₹2.5 crore penalty on L&T Finance

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty fell for the third day running on Friday due to weak trends in global markets and soaring crude oil prices. Foreign fund outflows also weighed on investor sentiments amid strengthening US bond yields which are nearing 5 per cent for the first time since 2007. The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 231.62 points or 0.35 per cent to settle at 65,397.62. During the day, it plunged 320.63 points or 0.48 per cent to 65,308.61. Falling for a third straight day, the Nifty declined 82.05 points or 0.42 per cent to 19,542.65. In three sessions to Friday, Sensex dropped 1,030 points while Nifty tanked 268 points due to selling pressure. Among the Sensex firms, ITC, Tata Steel, Hindustan Unilever, State Bank of India, JSW Steel and Power Grid were the major laggards. Kotak Mahindra Bank, IndusInd Bank, Tata



Consultancy Services and Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services said, "The added uncertainty stemming from West Asia tensions and the imperative for continued monetary tightening emphasized by the US Fed Chair created a layer of volatility in the market. While heightened oil prices and elevated US bond yields will impact the domestic monetary environment and operational metrics of the compa-

nies." "The added uncertainty stemming from West Asia tensions and the imperative for continued monetary tightening emphasized by the US Fed Chair created a layer of volatility in the market. While heightened oil prices and elevated US bond yields will impact the domestic monetary environment and operational metrics of the companies. "Furthermore, the varied results of blue-chip companies, influenced by subdued global

and domestic demand, are steering the market towards a consolidation trajectory in the near term," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge fell 1.02 per cent and smallcap index declined 0.76 per cent. All indices ended lower, with oil & gas falling 1.73 per cent, consumer durables (1.68 per cent), metal (1.54 per cent), telecommunication (1.38 per cent), FMCG (1.36 per cent)

and commodities (1.32 per cent). On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark plunged 885.12 points or 1.33 per cent and the Nifty declined 208.4 points or 1.05 per cent. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the negative territory. European markets were trading lower. The US markets ended lower on Thursday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 1.14 per cent to USD 93.40 a barrel.

"Rising rates are intuitively not positive for equity markets. With US government bonds giving 5% dollar returns, the ask rate for equities goes up significantly if one were to adjust for risk premium and currency hedging," Alok Agarwal, Portfolio Manager at Alchemy Capital Management said. The yield on the 10-year Treasury touched 4.99 per cent, up from 4.91 per cent late Wednesday, before paring its gain to 4.98 per cent. Early Friday, the 10-year Treasury yield was 4.94 per cent. Brent crude, the international standard, picked up USD 1.29 to USD 93.67 per barrel as escalating Hamas-Israel conflict fueled supply concerns. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,093.47 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. The BSE benchmark fell 247.78 points or 0.38 per cent to settle at 65,629.24 on Thursday. The Nifty declined 46.40 points or 0.24 per cent to 19,624.70.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India on Friday said a penalty of Rs 2.5 crore has been imposed on L&T Finance Ltd for non-compliance with certain norms concerning non-banking financial companies (NBFCs). After examination of reports following statutory inspection of the company, the RBI said it was revealed that the NBFC did not disclose to its retail borrowers, the gradation of risk and rationale for charging different interest rates to different categories of borrowers in the loan application form/sanction letter. It also failed to notify the change in penal interest rate to borrowers, when it charged penal interest rate higher than what was communicated at the time of sanction, the RBI said. "After considering the company's reply to the notice, additional submissions made by it and oral submissions made



during the personal hearing, the RBI came to the conclusion that the charge of non-compliance... Was substantiated and warranted imposition of monetary penalty, to the extent of such non-compliance with such directions," it said. The RBI also said penalty is based on the deficiencies in regulatory compliance and is not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the company with its customers.



Sebi puts in place guidelines to improve governance, preparedness of qualified RTAs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Friday came out with guidelines to strengthen governance of qualified Registrars and Transfer Agents (QRTAs) for handling disruption and improving preparedness by conducting periodic drills. In its circular, the regulator has asked QRTAs to put in place a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and Disaster Recovery Site (DRS) in a bid to ensure continuity of operations and maintain data and transaction integrity. Apart from DRS, all QRTAs are required to have a Near Site (NS) to ensure zero data loss. Qualified RTAs — RTAs having more than 2 crore folios — are systemically important institutions as they provide the infra-

structure necessary for the smooth and uninterrupted functioning of the securities market. As part of operational risk management, these QRTAs need to have a high level of resilience to provide essential facilities and perform systemically critical functions uninterrupted in the securities market. The new guidelines are aimed at "strengthening overall resiliency, the procedures at or governance of QRTAs for handling disruption, augmentation of systems and practices to achieve better Recovery Time Objective (RTO) and Recovery Point Objective (RPO), and to improve overall preparedness by conducting periodic announced/ unannounced drills. Under the guidelines, Sebi said that the manpower deployed at



DRS is required to have knowledge and expertise of various technological and procedural systems and processes relating to all operations such that DRS/NS (near site) can function at short notice, independently. QRTAs need to have a sufficient number of trained staff at their DRS so as to have the capability of running live operations from the DRS without involving staff of the Primary Data Centre (PDC).

All QRTAs are required to constitute an Incident and Response Team (IRT) or Crisis Management Team (CMT), which will be chaired by the Managing Director (MD) of the QRTA or by the Chief Technology Officer (CTO), in case of non-availability of MD. Such a team will be responsible for the actual declaration of disaster, invoking the BCP and shifting operations from PDC to DRS whenever required. Sebi said that the disaster recovery site should preferably be set up in different seismic zones and in case of certain reasons such as operational constraints, change of seismic zones, etc., a minimum distance of 500 kilometres needs to be ensured between PDC and DRS so that both DRS and PDC are not

affected by the same disaster. In the event of disruption of critical systems, the QRTA will have to be within 30 minutes of the incident, declare that incident as 'Disaster' and take measures to restore operations, including from DRS within 45 minutes of the declaration of 'Disaster'. Accordingly, the Recovery Time Objective — the maximum time taken to restore operations of 'Critical Systems' from DRS after the declaration of Disaster — will be 45 minutes. "QRTAs to also ensure that the Recovery Point Objective (RPO) — the maximum tolerable period for which data might be lost due to a major incident — shall be 15 minutes," Sebi said. RTAs will have to conduct periodic training programmes to

boost the preparedness and awareness level among its employees and outsourced staff, and vendors, among others as per BCP policy. DR drills should be conducted on a quarterly basis. These drills should be closer to real-life scenarios (trading days) with minimal notice to the DRS staff involved. Further, QRTAs should also conduct unannounced live operations from its DRS for at least one day in every three months on normal working days. Moreover, unannounced live operations from DRS of QRTAs need to be done at a short notice of 45 minutes. The regulator has asked QRTAs to submit their revised BCP-DR policy to it within three months.

IRM Energy IPO subscribed 27 times on last day of offer

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Initial Public Offering (IPO) of city gas distribution company IRM Energy was subscribed 27.05 times on the last day of subscription on Friday. The Rs 545.40 crore-initial share sale received bids for 20,62,70,910 shares against 76,24,800 shares on offer, as per NSE data. The category for non-institutional investors was subscribed 48.34 times while the portion for Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) received 44.73 times subscription and Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) quota got subscribed 9.29 times. The IPO was a fresh issue of up to 1.08 crore equity shares. The price range for the offer was Rs 480-505 a share.

IRM Energy Ltd on Tuesday said it has raised over Rs 160 crore from anchor investors. Proceeds from the issue to the tune of Rs 307.26 crore will be used to fund capital expenditure requirements for the development of the city gas distribution network at Namakkal and Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu and Rs 135 crore for payment of debt. Besides, a portion will be used for general corporate purposes. Equity shares of the company are proposed to be listed on the BSE and the NSE. BOB Capital Markets and HDFC Bank were the managers to the offer. IRM Energy provides piped natural gas and compressed natural gas. It has operations in many states, including Gujarat, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu.

Paytm narrows loss to ₹292 crore in Jul-Sept qtr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

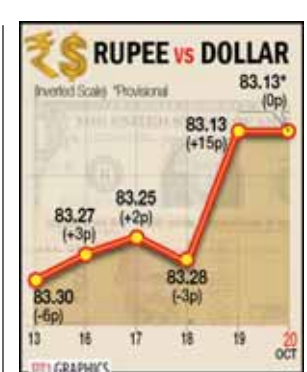
Fintech company One97 Communications, which operates under the Paytm brand, on Friday reported a narrowing of consolidated loss to Rs 291.7 crore in the second quarter ended September 30, 2023. The company had posted a loss of Rs 571.5 crore in the same period a year ago. The consolidated revenue from operations of the company increased by about 32 per cent to Rs 2,518.6 crore during the reported quarter from Rs 1,914 crore in the September 2022

quarter. "We continued our momentum with 32 per cent YoY revenue growth to Rs 2,519 crore, led by an increase in GMV, merchant subscription revenues, and growth of loans distributed through our platform," the company said in a statement. The company posted an EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization), before ESOP cost, of Rs 153 crore. Paytm's contribution profit grew 69 per cent during the reported quarter to Rs 1,426 crore from Rs 843 crore in September

2022 quarter on account of reduction in promotional cashbacks and other expenses. The company calculates operating profit after excluding payment processing charges, promotional cashbacks and incentives and other expenses. The gross merchandise value of Paytm grew 41 per cent on a Y-o-Y basis to Rs 4.5 lakh crore during the reported quarter from Rs 3.18 lakh crore in the September 2022 quarter. The average monthly transacting user base of the company grew 19 per cent to 9.5 crore and total transactions on the plat-

form grew by 59 per cent to 1,090 crore on a Y-o-Y basis. Paytm's revenue from financial services and others grew 64 per cent YoY to Rs 571 crore in the reported quarter. "The number of loans distributed through our platform grew to 1.32 crore, an increase of 44 per cent YoY, while the value of loans distributed surged to Rs 16,211 crore, up by 122 per cent YoY across our three product offerings — Paytm Postpaid, Personal Loans, and Merchant Loans," the statement said. The value of Postpaid loans more than doubled to Rs 9,010

crore during the reported quarter from Rs 4,050 crore a year ago. The personal loans disbursed from the Paytm platform grew 91 per cent to Rs 3,297 crore from Rs 2,055 crore basis while merchant loans jumped over 2.5 times to Rs 3,275 crore from Rs 1,208 crore on a Y-o-Y basis. Paytm said that following RBI's direction, Paytm Payments Banks Limited stopped onboarding new customers with effect from March 11, 2022, and continued to engage with the banking regulator on the matter.



Rupee settles flat at 83.13 against \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee settled on a flat note at 83.13 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday amid negative equity markets and rising crude oil prices. Selling pressure from foreign equity investors weighed on the domestic unit which has been under pressure due to a stronger American currency for the past few weeks, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened weak at 83.17 and traded between the peak of 83.03 and the lowest level of 83.20 against the greenback. The local unit finally settled flat at 83.13 (provisional). On Thursday, the rupee had risen 15 paise to close at 83.13 against the US dollar. Experts attributed the sharp gain in the rupee to RBI's move as well as some softening in the greenback. "It is worth highlighting that RBI's intervention, particularly at 83.25, played a significant role in supporting the rupee. Additionally, the rupee benefited from a period of weakness in the dollar index," said Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst at LKP Securities.

BUSINESS BRIEF

3,500 GIRLS BENEFIT FROM NEW MINI SCIENCE CENTRE
New Delhi: Empowering Tomorrow's Innovators Today! Empowering the next generation of female STEM leaders, BVPL unveiled a Mini Science Centre (MSC) at Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya in Ghazipur. This initiative, benefiting 3,500 girl students, transcends traditional learning. MSCs are designed to shift focus from rote learning to fostering long-lasting understanding.

WEAVING DREAMS: ANOKHA DHAGA EMPOWERS WOMEN
New Delhi: Nestled in amidst South Delhi's Sangam Vihar, BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) has launched "Anokha Dhaga", a unique handloom "training" unit. Outfitted with a diverse range of spinning equipment, from the traditional Khadis, Tana-Bana and Charkhas, this initiative underscores our dedication to promoting self-sufficiency among our communities, especially the women from the underprivileged backgrounds.

SOFTBANK SELLS 1.09 PER CENT STAKE IN ZOMATO
NEW DELHI: Japanese conglomerate Softbank on Friday divested a 1.09 per cent stake in online food delivery platform Zomato for ₹1,040 crore through an open market transaction. Softbank through its affiliate SVF Growth (Singapore) Pte Ltd offloaded shares of Zomato on the NSE. Bandhan Mutual Fund (MF), Motilal Oswal MF, Axis MF, Max Life Insurance Company, Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, Fidelity Investments, Goldman Sachs (Singapore), Societe Generale, and Morgan Stanley Asia Singapore, among others were the buyers of shares of Zomato.

JSW Steel reports ₹2,773 crore net profit in Q2, capex at ₹3,816 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Private steelmaker JSW Steel on Friday reported returning to black as it posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 2,773 crore for the July-September quarter on the back of higher income and exceptional gains. The company suffered a loss of Rs 915 crore in the second quarter of the last financial year. The total income increased to Rs 44,821 crore in the second quarter of the current fiscal as against Rs 41,966 crore a year ago, JSW Steel said in a regulatory filing. JSW Steel's expenses were lower at Rs 40,801 crore in the quarter under review against Rs 43,354 crore in the year-ago quarter. In a statement, the company said its capex spend during the second quarter of 2023-24 (FY24) in India was Rs 3,701 crore and at consolidated level Rs 3,816 crore. During the first half of 2023-24, the capital expenditure in India was Rs 7,795 crore and consolidated Rs 7,996 crore, against the planned capex spend of Rs 18,800 crore in India and Rs 20,000 crore consolidated for FY24. The company produced 6.34 million tonnes

(MT) of crude steel in July-September 2023, up 12 per cent compared to 5.66 MT in the same quarter of FY 2022-23. Sales increased by 10 per cent to 6.34 MT in the quarter from 5.74 a year ago. Exports, at 0.69 MT constituted 11 per cent of sales from the Indian operations. The company had taken certain maintenance shutdowns at Indian operations during the quarter, and the average capacity utilization was 89 per cent. The capacity utilization was lower at the Ohio, US operations due to adverse market conditions, JSW Steel said. The company was able to reduce inventories by 0.3 million tonnes during the quarter. The company had a "fair value gain of Rs 780 crores on its investments held in CSSL upon fair valuation pursuant to merger of CSSL and JISPL". It also had a gain of Rs 198 crore upon sale of property, plant and equipment and mineral rights held at West Virginia. The company also noted an exceptional provision amounting to Rs 389 crores pursuant to dismissal of the company's writ petition by High Court of Bombay, Goa Bench in the Goa Green Cess matter.

₹2,000 notes worth ₹10,000 crore left in system: RBI Governor

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reserve Bank Governor RShaktikanta Das on Friday said Rs 2,000 denomination notes are coming back and only Rs 10,000 crore worth of such notes are still with people. He exuded confidence that these notes will also be returned or deposited back. "Rs 2,000 notes are coming back and only Rs 10,000 crore is left in the system. The expectation is that the amount will also come back," he said on the sidelines of the event here. Earlier this month, Das had said 87 per cent of the Rs 2,000 denomination notes being withdrawn have returned as deposits into banks while the rest has been exchanged across counters. On May 19, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) took the finan-



cial world by surprise when it declared its plan to phase out the Rs 2,000 note, which had been introduced in 2016 as part of a rapid remonetisation effort. This had followed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement to withdraw more than 88 per cent of the currency in circulation by

invalidating the Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes. Public and entities holding such notes were initially asked to either exchange or deposit them in bank accounts by September 30. The last date was later extended to October 7. On October 7, both deposit and exchange services at bank branches were discontinued. Starting October 8, individuals were provided with the choice of either exchanging the currency or having the equivalent sum credited to their bank accounts at 19 Reserve Bank of India locations. Individuals or entities can exchange Rs 2,000 bank notes at the 19 RBI offices up to a limit of Rs 20,000 at a time. However, there is no limit on the total amount for getting Rs 2,000 notes credited into bank accounts.

Monetary policy must remain extra alert to ensure economic stability: MPC minutes

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Monetary policy has to remain extra alert to be ready to act as and when warranted to preserve the hard earned macroeconomic stability, Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das has said. The fundamental goal of the monetary policy is to align inflation with the 4 per cent target and anchor

inflation expectations, Das said, according to the minutes of the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) released by the RBI on Friday. The MPC in its last meeting earlier in the month, decided to keep the benchmark lending rate at 6.5 per cent, for the fourth time in a row, in a bid to keep retail inflation under check.

"Monetary policy has to remain extra alert and ready to act, if the situation warrants. The hard earned macroeconomic stability has to be preserved," Das said while voting to keep the benchmark lending rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent along with five other members of the MPC. Das had cautioned that recurring incidences of large and overlapping supply side shocks bring with them

the risks of generalisation of inflation impulses, possible loss of monetary policy credibility and de-anchoring of inflation expectations. RBI Deputy Governor and MPC member Michael Debabrata Patra said inflation prints for September and October will need to be monitored carefully to look out for the moderation that its projections anticipate. "If we tame inflation durably, we will

prepare the ground for a long innings of strong and stable growth. Our projections anticipate that growth will gather positive momentum from the second quarter onwards," he said. The three government nominees on the MPC are -- Shashanka Bhide, Ashima Goyal, and Jayanth R Varma. RBI Executive Director Rajiv Ranjan is also on the MPC, the apex rate setting panel.



RAMOS FACES REAL MADRID FOR FIRST TIME SINCE SEVILLA RETURN

AP ■ BARCELONA

Sergio Ramos, a long-time defensive pillar for Real Madrid, will face his former club on Saturday when the Spanish league leader visits struggling Sevilla.

Ramos left Madrid in 2021 after helping the club win 22 titles in 16 seasons, including four Champions Leagues and five Spanish leagues. Following two disappointing seasons at Paris Saint-Germain, the 37-year-old Ramos re-joined boyhood club Sevilla last month for what is expected to be his last hurrah.

Madrid is playing the best soccer in Spain, largely thanks to the explosion of new arrival Jude Bellingham.

The game will also mark the debut of Sevilla's new coach, the Uruguayan Diego Alonso, who replaced José Mendilibar during the international break that has just ended.

Mendilibar led Sevilla to the Europa League title last season, but was let go with his team in 14th place and just two points off the relegation zone.

Ramos returned to Sevilla with the season already underway and Mendilibar left him on the bench for two of the four league games he was available for.

Madrid leads the surprising second-placed Girona by two



points, with Barcelona three points off the pace in third spot. Bellingham has been on a superb scoring run since joining Madrid in the off-season. The England midfielder has netted 10 times in as many appearances overall for the club, including a league-leading eight goals.

BARCELONA UNDER SCRUTINY
Barcelona hosts fifth-placed Athletic Bilbao on Sunday, after a judge stepped up his scrutiny of the club by including its current president in his investigation into the payment of millions of euros (dollars) to a referee official.

The judge, investigating the payments made over several years to a vice president of Spain's refereeing committee, widened his probe on Wednesday to include the first mandate of current president Joan Laporta between 2003-2010. Laporta returned to power in 2021.

Laporta denied any wrongdoing on Thursday while accusing the judge and state prosecutors of working against his club and in favor of Madrid. "We can remain calm, nothing has been proven and nothing will be proven, because (the accusations) are not true," Laporta told Catalunya Radio.

"There is an orchestrated campaign to destabilize Barça... by those in favor of Madrid in the center of power in the capital that is very strong."

Barcelona coach Xavi Hernández may be without several key players due to injury. Striker Robert Lewandowski, who missed Barcelona's last game, a 2-2 draw at Granada, may still be suffering with an ankle injury. Xavi is also expected to be without starting midfielders Pedri González and Frenkie de Jong, forward Raphinha and defender Jules Koundé.

Forward Lamine Yamal and defender Alejandro Balde could be back fit for Barcelona. Bilbao will be without central defender Yeray Álvarez, who is expected to be sidelined for several months with a leg injury, while it hopes to have winger Nico Williams back.

OTHER GAMES

Girona will try to keep up its impressive start to the season when it hosts last-placed Almería on Sunday.

Atletico Madrid is in fourth place before playing Celta Vigo on Saturday. Álvaro Morata has scored seven times this season for Atletico, including five goals in the league, and four goals for Spain in recent European Championship qualifiers.



Former NBA head coach Terry Stotts leaves

AP ■ MILWAUKEE

Former NBA head coach Terry Stotts' return to the league as a Milwaukee Bucks assistant has reached a sudden conclusion a week before the start of the season.

Bucks coach Adrian Griffin confirmed Stotts' departure from Milwaukee's staff while speaking to reporters after a practice Thursday. Griffin declined to comment on the circumstances but said the move was Stotts' decision.

"It caught all of us off guard, of course, but again, you just support him," Griffin said. "He was a terrific guy. I learned a lot from him in a very short time. He was really good at what he does. He made a decision -- a personal decision -- and we just have to respect that."

ESPN first reported Stotts' departure. Stotts' experience was expected to give Griffin a boost as the former Toronto Raptors assistant begins his head coaching career by taking over a team with championship expectations. The Bucks open their season Oct. 26 by hosting the Philadelphia 76ers.

Stotts' presence also would have provided some familiarity with newly acquired seventh-time all-NBA guard Damian Lillard, who spent his first nine NBA seasons playing for Stotts with the Portland Trail Blazers. Lillard said Stotts contacted him directly Wednesday to let him know about the move.

"Everybody was kind of surprised by it," Lillard said. "It kind of came out of nowhere. I've been in this league long enough to know that these types of things happen. Everything continues, so you've got to kind of process things like this and other things that may come up and continue to move forward."

"For me, knowing Terry as long as I've known him -- playing for him for nine years and him also making this transition for me easier just having a familiar face be such a huge part of it -- was a good thing. I think now that I'm settled in, to see him go is unfortunate. It's sad to see him go. But like I said, everything is still moving forward."

Stotts owns a career head coaching record of 517-486 that includes stints with the Atlanta Hawks (2002-04), Bucks (2005-07) and Trail Blazers (2012-21).

Lillard said he didn't expect this sudden move to hinder the Bucks' focus heading into the season.

"It didn't come with a lot of drama," Lillard said. "Me knowing him so well, it just wasn't a dramatic, big deal. It was just a decision he had come to. It happened early, and it wasn't loud. It was just abrupt. I don't think it will be much of a distraction at all."

Lillard said Saturday after making his preseason Bucks debut that Stotts had helped him adjust to his new team.

"A lot of the things we run in, you know he's controlling that offense, so it's all familiar," Lillard said after that game. "A lot of times, guys are asking me questions when we're talking about plays because I'm familiar with a lot of this stuff."

Griffin said Thursday he was still evaluating whether to bring someone else in to fill the void created by Stotts' exit. Griffin said he had a good working relationship with Stotts.

"It was Terry's decision, and I respected that," Griffin said of Stotts' move. "We did have a great conversation. I can't disclose what we spoke about out of respect for him, but again, we support him and we're still excited about the season. We've got a great team, a great staff and life is good."



Collin leads the PGA Tour's Zozo Championship by 1 stroke

AP ■ INZAI CITY (JAPAN)

Collin Morikawa's last PGA Tour victory was the British Open in 2021, but his 6-under 64 to lead the Zozo Championship after the first round suggests the end of the American's mini slump might be in sight.

Japanese player Mikumu Horikawa and Americans Robby Shelton and Eric Cole were among five players just a shot back at the Accordia Golf Narashino Country Club on the outskirts of Tokyo, the only PGA Tour event in Japan. Morikawa has Japanese ties on his father's side, though he's unclear who his distant relatives might be in Japan. His mother's roots are in Hong Kong.

"There's obviously a little bit more meaning to this tournament for me," he said. "But look, a win's a win, I'll take a win anywhere, right. I'm doing everything I can the next three days and kind of tonight to make sure I give myself the best opportunity to do that."

Horikawa joked about looking up at the leaderboard and seeing a "kawa" on top -- but that was Morikawa, not Horikawa. The suffix or prefix "kawa" means river in Japanese and appears in many Japanese family names and place names.

"So, oh, that's not me," Horikawa said. "Oh, I want to catch up with him."

Morikawa won the PGA Championship in 2020 and followed it with the British Open, his quick fame putting him in demand abroad.

"It's been nice," he said. "We've kind of been able to travel over here and play golf to just learn a little bit more and kind of reconnect with the culture and essentially my history."

Morikawa, Xander Schauffele and Rickie Fowler have not played in three weeks since losing the Ryder Cup to Europe in Italy.

"Taking a few weeks off, you never know what you're going to get," Morikawa said. "But I've been kind of working on a few things trying to get control of the golf ball -- spent a lot of time putting yesterday. It's nice to kind of see the work I've put in just kind of recreate that on the golf course."

Daniel back on track and grinning again at Grand Prix

AP ■ AUSTIN

The biggest grin in Formula One is back on the racing grid -- again.

Daniel Ricciardo now wants to deliver results worthy of his return for AlphaTauri this season and that coveted seat in 2024.

Already given one career lifeline this season, Ricciardo missed the last five races with a broken left hand. But he returns this week to the U.S. Grand Prix, where the 34-year-old Australian has a history of having some cheeky fun.

"Hi guys! Long time no see," Ricciardo said to the group of his fellow drivers when he walked into Thursday's news conference.

"I'm very happy to be back. The hand feels good," Ricciardo said, adding that the bone break that required surgery was worse than initially expected.

"(Recovery) was tougher than I thought. But I'm probably a bit

of a wuss as well," he said. Ricciardo has often turned the Circuit of the Americas outside Texas' capital city into a bit of a personal playground. He has been known to enter the paddock riding a horse, to mimic a Western accent in interviews, and wear a University of Texas Longhorns basketball jersey in the pre-race driver parade.

Eventually there will have to be a serious side to the racing, which has not been so good for Ricciardo in recent years. At times it has been painful, both emotionally and physically.

"First and foremost, I see myself as a race car driver, not an entertainer," he said. "I want to go racing... Make sure I am seen as a race car driver who is still hungry and determined and not just here for a good time."

Ricciardo's best racing years were with Red Bull, where he claimed seven of his eight career victories and twice finished on the podium in Austin in 2014



and 2016. Then came a winless two-year stint with Renault before another move to McLaren.

The drive with McLaren produced the team's first win in a decade. But it was otherwise disappointing as he was routinely outpaced by teammate Lando Norris.

AlphaTauri cut loose rookie Nyck De Vries after 10 races and gave the seat to Ricciardo. He finished 13th in Hungary and

the final year of his contract. Red Bull brought Ricciardo back as a reserve driver for 2023. That got him back in the paddock, but it also simultaneously elevated his frustration that he was watching others race. Then came the break that could yet revive his career.

AlphaTauri cut loose rookie Nyck De Vries after 10 races and gave the seat to Ricciardo. He finished 13th in Hungary and

16th in Belgium, then broke his hand at the Dutch Grand Prix. He was once again stuck watching while New Zealand's Liam Lawson drove in his place five races and was good enough to earn a reserve slot with AlphaTauri for next season.

"He's young. It's not like he's at the end of his career," Ricciardo said of Lawson. "Keep assisting, keep your head down. If he keeps on that course, his time will come."

Ricciardo got to climb back into his car Thursday morning and quickly showed his toothy grin. He said he is fit and ready for the bumpy ride around the Austin racetrack.

"It does beat you up," Ricciardo said. "But I think I like that." **BIG FINES**

The FIA, which governs the racing side of F1, on Thursday raised the potential fines race stewards can impose on drivers from a maximum of 250,000 euros (\$264,000) to 1 million euros (\$1.06 million).

Three Indians secure medals at Badminton Asia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian shuttlers Jagsher Singh Khangurra, Bornil Aakash Changmai and Tanvi Sharma advanced to the semi-finals of the Badminton Asia U-17 and U-15 Junior Championships to assure themselves of a medal on day 4 of the tournament in Chengdu, China on Friday.

In the boys' U15 singles category, Jagsher defeated China's MA Chu Xuan 21-14, 21-13 in just 28 minutes, while Bornil emerged victorious in a closely-contested match against



Korea's Park Jung Bin, securing a 21-19, 22-20 victory. Tanvi Sharma overcame a first-

game loss to register a 20-22, 21-15, 21-15 win over Liao Jui-Chi of Chinese Taipei in the girls' U17 singles quarter-final match.

In the girls' U17 doubles match, Tanvi and Reshika Uthayasooriyani faced a 10-20, 20-22 defeat against the Chinese pair of Fu Xin Yi and Qin Shi Yang.

Jagsher and Bornil will face off in the boys' U15 singles semi-finals on Saturday, while Tanvi will face second seed Anapat Pichitpreechak of Thailand in girls' U17 singles semi-final tie.

Djokovic, Swiatek headline United Cup team event

AP ■ SYDNEY

Novak Djokovic and Iga Swiatek will headline the new-look United Cup mixed team event in Perth and Sydney from Dec. 29 to Jan. 7 as one of the key warm-up tournaments for the Australian Open.

Team Poland, led by world No. 2 and four-time Grand Slam champion Swiatek and Hubert Hurkacz, has been named as the top seed for the 2024 edition after the entries from the top 16 countries were released by Tennis Australia on Friday.

Stefanos Tsitsipas and Maria Sakkari will lead No.2-seeded Greece, with the defending champion United States, featur-

ing Jessica Pegula and Taylor Fritz, seeded third. France, the No. 4 seed, will be led by Caroline Garcia and Adrian Mannarino.

Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova will headline the Czech Republic team alongside Jiri Lehecka while Croatia rounds out the top six, featuring Borna Coric and Donna Vekic.

Four countries will make their debut in 2024.

Serbia, led by Djokovic and Olga Danilovic, and Canada, featuring Felix Auger-Aliassime and Leylah Fernandez, will compete for the first time. China's Qinwen Zheng and Zhizhen Zhang and the Netherlands' Tallon Griekspoor and Arantxa Rus will also make their debuts.

American Logan Sargeant trying to hang on in F1

AP ■ AUSTIN

It was one year ago this week that a Formula One team announced a future with an American driver.

But Logan Sargeant's rookie season with Williams has been seemingly on the skids ever since, with a series of expensive crashes and dismal results that have some wondering if that future is careening toward a quick end.

Sargeant returns to the United States Grand Prix this weekend as the only full-time driver this season to not yet score a point. And Williams, despite some public assurances that it hopes to keep him in 2024, has felt the strain of Sargeant's missteps.

Williams officials have said Sargeant has "very clear targets" to hit over the final stretch of the season, but exactly what those are, the team and driver

haven't said. Sargeant said Thursday he hasn't been told to "deliver anything special, but to be consistent and clean. That's been the message. That's all my goal is: to have consistent, clean weekends and try to be on the limit of what the car gives me."

Presumably that means avoid wrecking his car. Sargeant was given the Williams drive in a promotion from F2 just as the sport began a popularity boom in the U.S. He is the first American driver in F1 since Alexander Rossi's brief stint in 2015 with a gold-



That second part is the hard part. Sargeant was not going to challenge for race wins at Williams. The team's cars just don't have that kind of muscle. But a Williams driver can forge a path to success and gain valuable experience.

Mercedes driver George Russell spent three years with Williams before getting the call up to the big team in 2022. Alex Albon,

first promoted then demoted at Red Bull, has refueled his career with Williams.

Albon currently stands 13th in the driver standings with 23 points behind five top-10 finishes. Albon has finished ahead of Sargeant in every race both Williams cars made it to the end.

After a crash in qualifying in Japan, Williams Team Principal James Vowles noted the expenses were piling up. Just building spare parts for Sargeant's cars were compromising development for 2024.

Then came the race in Qatar desert. The severe heat impacted several drivers. Sargeant struggled so badly he had to abandon the race early.

But Vowles hasn't wanted to give up on the young American.

"We brought Logan in with a

minimal amount of testing," Vowles said. "We have a responsibility to make sure we give Logan every opportunity to succeed. I don't believe we've done that yet. He is quick."

"At the end of the year, we'll know, and I'll be able to look him in the eye and know we've given him the best opportunity, or that he is absolutely going to be in the car next year," Vowles said.

Sargeant believes he can finish the season strong. Starting this weekend would help. The F1 calendar has three U.S. Races and each one draws attention to just how the Americans are faring in a sport continues to grow here.

"It's been frustrating at times, but since the summer break I've sort of found speed again. It's putting it all together that matters," Sargeant said.

KIND ATTENTION : RAIL PASSENGERS!

EXPERIMENTAL STOPPAGE OF TRAINS

For the convenience of rail passengers, Northern Railway has decided to provide the experimental stoppages to following trains at the below given stations. The details are given below:-

Stoppage of train no. 01619 Delhi – Saharanpur Express Special at Usmanpur Dehat Halt from 21.10.2023

Station	Timings	
	Arr.	Dep.
Hind	08:32	08:33
Usmanpur Dehat Halt	08:35	08:36
Harhar Fatehpur	08:39	08:40

Stoppage of train no. 01622 Saharanpur - Delhi Express Special at Usmanpur Dehat Halt from 21.10.2023

Station	Timings	
	Arr.	Dep.
Thana Bhawan	04:30	04:31
Usmanpur Dehat Halt	04:37	04:38
Hind	04:42	04:43

Stoppage of train no. 04521/04522 Delhi-Saharanpur-Delhi Express Special at Usmanpur Dehat Halt from 21.10.2023

Train no. 04521	Station		Train no. 04522
	Arr.	Dep.	
15:46	15:47	Hind	19:16
15:49	15:50	Usmanpur Dehat Halt	19:13
15:53	15:54	Harhar Fatehpur	19:09

Stoppage of train no. 14305/14306 Delhi-Haridwar-Delhi Express at Khandrawali station from 21.10.2023

Train no. 14305	Station		Train no. 14306
	Arr.	Dep.	
12:24	12:25	Kandhla	12:11
12:33	12:34	Khandrawali	12:05
12:48	12:50	Shamli	11:53

For detailed information, please call RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit enquiry website: www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

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Warner, Marsh slam centuries, Australia score 367

PTI ■ BENGALURU
Brutal hundreds by David Warner and Mitchell Marsh led Australia's batting renaissance in the World Cup as they piled a hefty 367 for 9 against a listless Pakistan, here on Friday.
 Warner hammered his 21st ODI hundred, a 124-ball 163, and Marsh his second, a 108-ball 121, as the five-time champions twisted the knife on their opposition through their opening pair who built a massive 259-run association in just 203 balls. It was only fourth instance in World Cup history that both openers notched centuries in the same match. Australia, who were asked to bat

first, needed a dominant show to spruce up their confidence after three middling efforts that fetched two defeats and a win in this tournament, and they did it with a bang.
 Left-arm pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi's five-wicket haul (5/54) was just a sad reminder as to what other Pakistan bowlers could have done with a bit of thinking on a vastly underwhelming day.
 Warner, who was dropped twice on 10 and 105, and Marsh were at their marauding best against a Pakistan attack that lacked direction on a smooth M Chinnaswamy Stadium pitch with a quick outfield adding value to the shots too. They were either too full, too



short or strayed on to the legs, and the Aussie batters did not need any second invitation to exploit the flowing freebies. All this could have been a tad different for Pakistan had Usama Mir, who replaced Shadab Khan, held on to a simple skier from Warner or Afridi, the best among Pakistan bowlers this day with his clever variations, inside the ring. Warner was on 10 then in Australia's total of 22. From that point, there was no looking back for the Aussies. Pakistan captain Babar Azam gave the ball to Haris Rauf in the ninth over, hoping for a breakthrough. But the Aussies slipped into the top gear from that over. The right-arm pacer was carted for

24 runs in his first over. Warner started the carnage with a four and six and Marsh finished it with three fours in succession. Thereafter, Australia's run-rate hardly came under seven for the rest of the innings.
 Hasan Ali found some early movement away from Marsh, but Warner took him head on with a series of pulls and flicks, including a monster six that thudded on to the roof, to neutralize the pacer. Pakistan pressed their spinners Mir and left-arm spinner Mohammad Nawas into service but they made zero impact. They were quite unimaginative, and just kept feeding both Warner and Marsh, who preferred the ground route

early on in his innings, with short balls which were effortlessly put away. Australia notched up their 100 in the 13th over, 200th in the 30th over and 300 in the 41st over as their run machine marched forward inexorably. Warner brought up his hundred, fourth consecutive against Pakistan in ODIs, with a single off Mir, and the signature jump-and-punch celebration followed to the joy of a near full house of crowd, that encouraged both the sides.
 Birthday boy Marsh followed his senior partner soon in reaching the three-figure mark with a boundary off Mir, and he celebrated the landmark with a mighty roar.

Indian spinners do exceptional job: Gill

PTI ■ PUNE
Openers Shubman Gill feels India's spinners Kuldeep Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja have done an "exceptional" job on pitches that have not favoured them in the ongoing ODI World Cup.
 Jadeja and Kuldeep teamed up to tame Bangladesh's batters here on Thursday, contributing to India's seven-wicket win.
 Jadeja was in his elements, returning a measly spell of 10-0-38-2 while also taking a spectacular catch, whereas Kuldeep once again displayed his variations and skills to help restrict Bangladesh to 256/8. The Indian spinners came into operation after Bangladesh had raced to 90 for no loss in 14 overs. "I think leading up to the

World Cup, especially when we were playing in Sri Lanka, the wickets were assisting spin. But here, I do not think (that) after the first match, there was much assistance for the spinners," Gill told reporters here on Thursday.
 "But the way they have bowled in the middle overs (they) have been exceptional. And that has been actually game-changing for us.
 "At one point, we were looking at maybe 300-320 (given) the way their openers were batting, but the way, especially in the middle overs, our bowlers are coming in especially spinners and getting us those crucial breakthroughs and keeping the pressure on the batsmen - that is a big difference for us," Gill added. India defeated Bangladesh by seven wickets with more than eight overs to spare to record



their fourth consecutive win in the competition. The win gave the team additional confidence as a group since India next face New Zealand in Dharamsala on Sunday. Virat Kohli scored his 48th century in ODIs - a feat accomplished only after KL Rahul decided to let the No 3

score the remaining 15 runs which India needed to win and the batter to complete his ton.
 However, Bangladesh's spinner Nasum Ahmed bowled one down the leg side which was not called a wide by the umpire Richard Kettleborough, and Kohli hit a six soon to complete his ton and India's win.
 Gill was asked if he thought the wide ball was intentional. "I don't know if he intentionally tried to bowl wide, or he was just trying to keep it tight and then (it) went away," he said.
 Among the highlights of India's fourth win on the trot in the World Cup were Jadeja's diving catch to his right to dismiss Mushfiqur Rahim and KL Rahul taking a one-handed catch to get rid of Mehidy Hasan Miraz.

Gill provided insights into India's mindset when it comes to their approach during training sessions.
 "We all spend a lot of time on our fielding, because as a batsman I don't know how many balls I will face in the match but I know for sure that I will be there for 50 overs and I will field for 50 overs," he said.
 "(It is the) same for bowlers, they know that they are going to bowl maybe 8, 9, 10 overs but they have to field for 50 overs. As a cricketer, I think it's a very important skill and we keep upping our fielding skills whenever we get the chance.
 "Both the catches were fantastic in terms of where the game was at that point of time. I can't single out because both were spectacular," Gill added.



KL Rahul hopes India batters keep delivering centuries

PTI ■ PUNE
With Virat Kohli joining Rohit Sharma among India's century makers in the World Cup, wicketkeeper-batter KL Rahul hopes the others too will chip in with triple-figure knocks to help the team maintain its unbeaten run in the league stage.
 After India captain Rohit scored 131 against Afghanistan in India's second game in New Delhi, Kohli's 48th century - 103 not out off 97 balls (6x4s, 4x6s) ensured a fourth consecutive win here on Thursday.
 The team's next challenge will be against a formidable New Zealand who have got the better of India in ICC events of late, including the 2019 World Cup semifinal and WTC final in 2021.
 "Virat, the less you say the better about it. He has been notching up those numbers for years now - that is what he did again. There was an opportunity at the end, (and) he finished the game for us," Rahul told the media here after India's seven-wicket win over Bangladesh.
 "Getting a hundred is always very special. I am really happy for him. Ro (Rohit Sharma) has got a hundred now, Virat has got a hundred (too). Hopefully, as the World Cup goes (on), a few more of us can get these hundreds and keep winning the matches," Rahul expressed.
 Rahul said India were not much troubled despite Bangladesh openers Tanzid Hasan (53) and Litton Das (66) making most of the powerplay to add 93 runs. "We knew it was a good wicket and they got off to a good start. We have been in this situation before, not just us, every other team when the openers get off to a really good start and the new

ball comes on really nicely on the bat," he said.
 "But once the field opens up, it becomes better for the opposition to control the run rate and that is what we did. Once we get a couple of wickets, we were back to building pressure on the batsmen," he said.
 After reaching 90 for no loss in 14 overs, Bangladesh lost their momentum completely to make a moderate 256/8 with Indian bowlers proving how tough it is to score off them.
 "(It was a) good day in the field overall, I did my job quite well. Everyone else did their job really well. (It was a) good fielding day for us as a team. I think we took some really good catches, really good outfield (work) so a tick mark in that aspect of the game," said Rahul.
 India have won each of their four games so far - against Australia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh - while chasing but Rahul said it will not make a lot of difference if they have to bat first and set a target.
 "Not thinking so much, (we) just want to take one game at a time. Whatever we do, whether we bowl first or bat first, it is important that we do it well and we are not thinking too much about it," he said.
 Jasprit Bumrah once again left a strong mark on a featherbed and Rahul said his teammates were lucky to have the bowling wizard on their side.
 "(He is) super special, really lucky that we have him on our team and lucky that we don't have to break our bats with his yorkers and have to face at the end," Rahul said.
 "We have faced him a little bit in the IPL. He is a top quality bowler, really happy that he is back, he is fit. He spent a lot of time at the NCA in recovery and getting stronger," he added.



Pandya ruled out of World Cup fixture against New Zealand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
India all-rounder Hardik Pandya was on Friday ruled out of the World Cup clash against New Zealand due to an ankle injury he suffered while bowling against Bangladesh. Hardik underwent scans following the injury in Pune on Thursday and is heading to the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru for his recovery. India will play New Zealand in Dharamsala on October 22.
 "Team India vice-captain Hardik Pandya sustained an injury to his left ankle while fielding off his own bowling during India's match against Bangladesh at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium, Pune," said the BCCI in a statement.
 "The all-rounder was taken for scans and is advised rest. He will be under the constant supervision of the BCCI Medical Team. He will not be taking the flight to Dharamsala with the team on 20th October and will now join the team directly in Lucknow where India play England," the board added.
 In all likelihood, KL Rahul will be Rohit Sharma's deputy for the New Zealand game. Rahul captained the side in the bilateral series against Australia in Rohit Sharma and Pandya's absence.
 India have a long gap between the Dharamsala and Lucknow game, which is scheduled for October 29.

Winless Sri Lanka desperate to break shackles

PTI ■ LUCKNOW
Having caused a major upset, the Netherlands will have a spring in their stride when they take on a struggling Sri Lanka in the World Cup here on Saturday.
 The Netherlands, who stunned South Africa in Dharamsala for their first World Cup win against a Test playing nation, will be eyeing an improved show from their top-order as they look for back-to-back victories.
 The top three Vikramjit Singh, Max O'Dowd and Colin Ackermann have not been able to get the team off to a good start, putting additional pressure on the middle-order.
 A morale-boosting win over South Africa will provide an extra dose of confidence to the trio ahead of the Sri Lanka clash.
 Star all-rounder Bas de Leede is doing his bit with the ball but can step on the batting front.
 The performance against the Proteas showed that the Netherlands mean business, having set an ambitious target of reaching the semifinals in their first World Cup appearance in 12 years.
 Sri Lanka, on the other hand, have plenty to worry about on



the bowling front. They have not been able to produce a collective performance thus far.
 The Lions have been decent with their batting, having posted 300-plus total in their opening two contests.
 However, it is Sri Lanka's bowling that have let them down in the absence of a few injured players.
 They would rely on pacer Dilshan Madushanka, who has been their leading wicket-taker in the event so far with seven scalps. He got the ball to swing against Australia at the same venue and would be looking to do the same against the struggling Dutch top-order.
 The Lucknow wicket has so far seen the team batting first having the advantage, as the ball has been moving under the lights.
 Therefore, if chasing, the Netherlands must be careful against the seam barrage of Madushanka, especially Vikramjit, who has a poor record against the left-arm pacers since last year.
 The Dutch will also expect a lot from Roelof van der Merwe, whose orthodox spin bowling can come in handy on this wicket.
 As for their head to head encounters so far, Sri Lanka and the Netherlands have met on five occasions, with the former winning on all instances.

England and South Africa look to turn the tide

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Reeling from upsets in their previous outings, a formidable South Africa will have an upper hand against a faltering England when the two teams meet in a World Cup match here on Saturday.
 Having recorded the highest total of this competition (428/5) previously, South Africa crumbled against the Netherlands in a rain-truncated game in Dharamsala for their first loss in the competition.
 Similarly, England too caved in to pressure when Afghanistan brought out their best with the ball in Delhi.
 England may have a 4-3 record over South Africa in 50-over World Cup history but it is the Proteas who have had a better run in this edition.
 South Africa sizzled at the start of the tournament beating Australia and Sri Lanka by more than 100 runs but their second consecutive defeat in ICC events to the Netherlands showed the Proteas' vulnerability under pressure.
 A defeat to the Dutch notwithstanding, South Africa will have enough confidence in their ranks to outgun England, who are struggling almost in all

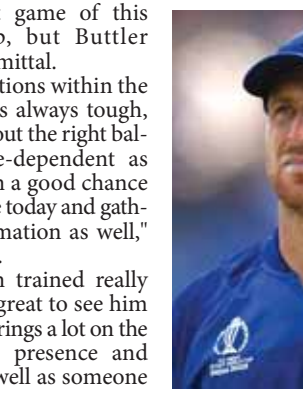
departments and are yet to put a collective effort on the field.
 England have been largely rusty and inconsistent despite having a dangerous squad on paper. They are likely to have the services of their "spiritual leader" Ben Stokes for the game at Wankhede. Stokes missed the first three games due to a hip injury.
 Jos Buttler's men took a battering at the hands of New Zealand in the tournament-opener and despite bossing over a feeble Bangladesh, they were bludgeoned by Afghanistan in the World Cup's first upset.
 With scores of 43, 20 and 9 in three matches so far, Buttler has not made a mark on the tournament in conditions he has extensive knowledge of.
 If Buttler is a concern in the middle-order, Liam Livingstone's returns of 20, 0 and 10 in three matches give England more headache in the lower order.
 Joe Root and Dawid Malan have been England's best batters with the former getting two fifties and the latter a century, but they would know more is needed from their batters collectively against a high quality South African bowling attack.

England moves on from defeat to Afghanistan: Buttler

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Defending champion England has had 'good conversations' in the aftermath of its ICC Cricket World Cup upset at the hands of Afghanistan, a defeat from which captain Jos Buttler claimed on Friday that the team has moved on from.
 Given England's longest batting lineup among all teams in the competition, a target of 285 did not appear threatening halfway through the game. But Buttler and his men folded meekly for 215, succumbing to their second loss in three matches.

"We had a few days to let the defeat sink in and moved on and focused. We had some good conversations and the energy and hunger around practice last night was very high," Buttler told the media here ahead of England's training session at the Wankhede Stadium.
 England brought its talismanic all-rounder Ben Stokes out of retirement for its World Cup defence, but he has missed all three matches so far due to fitness issues.
 The intensity with which Stokes trained here on Thursday and also on Friday raised hopes of Stokes finally

getting his first game of this year's World Cup, but Buttler remained non-committal.
 "I've got so many options within the squad selection, it is always tough, and you're working out the right balance, always venue-dependent as well, so (it has) been a good chance to see the wicket here today and gather a bit more information as well," Buttler said in reply.
 "But obviously, Ben trained really well last night. It is great to see him back. He obviously brings a lot on the field and with his presence and leadership skills as well as someone



who is always good to turn to," added the wicketkeeper-batter.
 Like England, South Africa too is coming off an upset at the hands of the Netherlands in its previous assignment, and the outcome did surprise Buttler, who said Proteas have a balanced all-round side.
 "Yeah, surprised. I think you are always surprised when those kind of things happen. No disrespect to the Netherlands. They played a fantastic game of cricket and deserved to win it. You always have to give credit to the opposition in that instance," Buttler said.

"The bookies' favourites, I'm sure, would have been South Africa on the day. But that is why sport is fantastic. It throws up these upsets.
 "And, everyone is on the same field trying to compete and win the game, and you have to give credit to the opposition," he added.
 Buttler was impressed with the way South Africa has gone about its business in this quadrennial event.
 "They have been playing some really good cricket. Obviously, the top six is a very strong top six, and I think pace with the ball is one of their strengths," said Buttler.