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NEW DELHI, THURSDAY OCTOBER 26, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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ENGLAND NEEDS IMPROVEMENT AGAINST LANKA
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Gaza hangs by a thread

UN says blockade hinders relief efforts, Israel accuses UN chief of justifying Hamas terror

AP ■ RAFAH/ JERUSALEM

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees warned on Wednesday that without immediate deliveries of fuel it will soon have to sharply cut back relief operations across the Gaza Strip, which has been blockaded and hit by devastating Israeli airstrikes since Hamas militants launched an attack on Israel more than two weeks ago.

The warning came as hospitals in Gaza struggled to treat masses of wounded with dwindling resources, and health officials in the Hamas-ruled territory said the death toll was soaring as Israeli jets continued striking the territory overnight into Wednesday.

Israeli officials were outraged on Wednesday over UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' comment that the deadly Hamas attack on southern Israel "did not happen in a vacuum," calling it justification for terrorism. Foreign Minister Eli Cohen cancelled a scheduled meeting with Guterres while Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial, said the UN chief "failed the test."

"I will not meet with the UN secretary-general. After the October 7 massacre, there is no place for a balanced approach. Hamas must be erased off the face of the planet!" Cohen posted on social platform X,

formerly known as Twitter. Israel's envoy to the UN Gilad Erdan called for his resignation, saying Israel must rethink its relations with the world body. "We will refuse to grant visas to UN representatives. We have already refused to give one to Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths," Erdan told Army Radio, accusing Guterres of justifying a slaughter. "It's time to teach them a lesson."

The Israeli military said its strikes had killed militants and destroyed tunnels, command centres, weapons storehouses and other military targets, which it has accused Hamas of hiding among Gaza's civilian population. Gaza-based militants have been launching unrelenting rocket barrages into Israel since the conflict started.

The Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry said the airstrikes killed at least 704 people between Monday and Tuesday, mostly women and children. The Associated Press could not independently verify the death tolls cited by Hamas, which says it tallies figures from hospital directors.

The death toll was unprecedented in the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even greater loss of life could come when Israel launches an expected ground offensive aimed at crushing Hamas mil-



A Palestinian rides by destruction caused by the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip in the Maghazi refugee camp in Deir Al-Balah on Wednesday

itants.

In Washington, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters the US could not verify the one-day death toll. "The Ministry of Health is run by Hamas, and I think that all needs to be factored into anything that they put out publicly," Israel said on Tuesday it had

launched 400 airstrikes over the past day, an increase from the 320 strikes the day before.

The UN says about 1.4 million of Gaza's 2.3 million residents are now internally displaced, with almost 600,000 crowded into UN shelters.

Gaza's residents have been running out of food, water and medicine since Israel sealed off the territory following the

attack on southern Israel by Hamas, which is sworn to Israel's destruction.

In recent days, Israel allowed a small number of trucks filled with aid to come over the border with Egypt but barred deliveries of fuel, needed to power hospital generators, to keep it out of Hamas' hands.

The UN said it had managed to deliver some of the aid in

recent days to hospitals treating the wounded. But the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, the largest provider of humanitarian services in Gaza, said it was running out of fuel.

Officials said they were forced to reduce their operations as they rationed what little fuel they had.

"Without fuel our trucks cannot go around to further places in the strip for distribution," said Lily Esposito, a spokesperson for the agency.

"We will have to make decisions on what activities we keep or not with little fuel." Meanwhile, more than half of Gaza's primary healthcare facilities, and roughly a third of its hospitals, have stopped functioning, the World Health Organisation said.

Overwhelmed hospital staff struggled to triage cases as constant waves of wounded were brought in. The Health Ministry said many wounded are laid on the ground without even simple medical aid and others wait for days for surgeries because there are so many critical cases.

The Health Ministry says more than 5,700 Palestinians have been killed in the war, including some 2,300 minors. The figure includes the disputed toll from an explosion at a hospital last week.

The fighting has killed more than 1,400 people in Israel -

mostly civilians slain during the initial Hamas attack, according to the Israeli government. Hamas is also holding some 222 people that it captured and brought back to Gaza.

The conflict threatened to spread across the region, as Israeli airstrikes hit Syrian military sites in the south Wednesday, killing eight soldiers and wounding seven, according to Syria's state-run SANA news agency.

The Israeli military said in a post on X, its jets had struck Syrian military infrastructure and mortar systems in response to rocket launches from Syria. Israel has launched several strikes on Syria in recent days, including strikes that put the Damascus and Aleppo airports out of service, in an apparent attempt to prevent arms shipments from Iran to militant groups, including Lebanon's Hezbollah. Israel has been fighting the Iranian-backed group Hezbollah across the Lebanese border in recent weeks.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah met on Wednesday with top Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad officials in their first reported meeting since the war started. Such a meeting could signal coordination between the groups, as Hezbollah officials warned Israel against launching a ground offensive in Gaza.

Israeli military spokesman Rear

Admiral Daniel Hagari said Iran was helping Hamas, with intelligence and by "whipping up incitement against Israel across the world." He said Iranian proxies were also operating against Israel from Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon.

Fighting also erupted in the West Bank, which has seen a major spike in violence. Islamic Jihad militants said they fought with Israeli forces in Jenin overnight.

The Palestinian Health Ministry in the West Bank said Israel killed four Palestinians in Jenin, including a 15-year-old, and two others in other towns. That brought the total number of those killed in the occupied West Bank since October 7 to 102.

Across central and south Gaza, where Israel told civilians to take shelter, there were multiple scenes of rescuers pulling the dead and wounded out of large piles of rubble from collapsed buildings. Graphic photos and video shot by the AP showed rescuers unearthing bodies of children from multiple ruins.

A father knelt on the floor of the Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah next to the bodies of three dead children cocooned in bloodied sheets. Later at the nearby morgue, workers prayed over 24 dead wrapped in body bags, several of them the size of small children.

Feeling blessed for Ram temple invite: Modi

Consecration on January 22

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra on Wednesday invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, which is expected to take place on January 22.

Modi said in a post on X that he is feeling blessed and it is his good fortune that he will be a witness to this historic occasion in his lifetime.

"Jai Siyaram! Today is full of emotions for me," the Prime Minister said, posting about the invitation to him.

He posted a picture of functionaries of the trust, which is presiding over the temple's construction at the place where devotees believe Lord Ram was born, extending him an invitation.

Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Trust Champat Rai on Wednesday confirmed that the idol of Lord Ram will be installed at the temple on January 22, 2024, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has accepted their invitation.

The temple trust has decided to



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives an invitation from the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra trust for the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, in New Delhi on Wednesday

start the process of the consecration of Ram Lalla after Makar Sankranti on January 14, 2024, and observe a 10-day ritual of Ram Lalla's pran pratishtha (consecration). The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra plans to invite over 25,000 Hindu religious leaders from 136 Sanatana traditions for the consecration ceremony. In addition to the 25,000 sants who will attend the

consecration ceremony, there will also be 10,000 "special guests."

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat had on Tuesday said that the idol of Lord Ram will be installed at the Ayodhya temple on January 22, and asked people to organise programmes at temples across the country to celebrate the occasion.

On November 9, 2019, a Supreme Court ruling cleared

the path for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. The Supreme Court had ruled that the 2.77 acres of the disputed land where the demolished 16th century-era Babri Masjid once stood will remain with a Central Government receiver and will be handed over to the trust within three months of the ruling for the construction of the temple.

Following this, the Central

Government established the Shri Ram Janma Bhoomi Tirtha Kshetra to oversee decisions throughout the construction process.

The trust has been overseeing the temple's construction, ensuring steady progress. The sanctum sanctorum of the temple will house the idol of Ram Lalla.

On August 5, 2020, Prime Minister Modi laid the foundation stone for the temple.

The temple complex encompasses the Ram Mandir, along with temples dedicated to six other deities, including Valmiki, Vashisht, and Sabari. Additionally, there will be a pilgrim facilitation centre, a botanical garden, and various amenities such as an electric substation, sewage treatment plant, and water treatment plant.

At a Dussehra event in New Delhi on Tuesday, Modi called upon people to root out distortions like casteism and regionalism in society, saying the Dussehra festival should mark the triumph of patriotism over every evil in the country.

Meanwhile, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Wednesday accused the BJP of raising the Ram Mandir issue just ahead of elections to five States and next year's Lok Sabha polls for electoral gains.

India treats Pak Kashmir rant at UN with contempt

India treats Pak Kashmir rant at UN with contempt

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

India has said it will treat a reference by Pakistan to Kashmir during a United Nations Security Council meeting on the Israel-Gaza situation with the contempt it deserves and will not dignify it with a response.

The remarks by India's Deputy Permanent Representative at the UN, Ambassador R Ravindra, came on Tuesday after Pakistan's UN envoy Munir Akram made reference to Kashmir at the Security Council meeting on the situation in West Asia.

"Before I end, there was a remark of habitual nature by one delegation referring to Union Territories that are integral and inalienable parts of my country," Ravindra said.

"I would treat these remarks with contempt they deserve and not dignify them with a response in the interest of time," Ravindra said.

Earlier, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told the Security Council meeting that all acts of terrorism are unlawful and unjustifiable, whether they are carried out by Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, the Pakistan-based



terror outfit, or by Hamas, targeting people in Mumbai or Kibbutz Beeri.

"We must affirm the right of any nation to defend itself and to prevent such horror from repeating itself. No member of this Council, no nation in this entire body could or would tolerate the slaughter of its people," Blinken said.

"As this Council and the UN General Assembly have repeatedly affirmed, all acts of terrorism are unlawful and unjustifiable. They are unlawful and unjustifiable, whether they target people in Nairobi or Bali... Istanbul or Mumbai, in New York or Kibbutz Beeri," Blinken told the UN Security Council.

"They are unlawful and unjustifiable whether they're carried out by ISIS, by Boko Haram, by Al Shabaab, by Lashkar-e-Tayyeba or by Hamas. They are unlawful and unjustifiable whether victims are targeted for their faith, their ethnicity, their nationality or any other reason," Blinken said.

He stressed that the UNSC has a responsibility to denounce member states that arm, fund and train Hamas or "any other terrorist group that carries out such horrific acts." Blinken's remarks appeared to make a reference to the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks carried out by Pakistan-based terrorist organisation Lashkar-e-Tayyeba.

NCERT panel for Bharat in textbooks, stirs row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

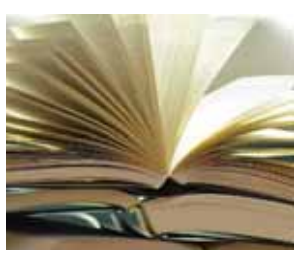
A day-long controversy erupted over the reports of a high-level panel of NCERT Text Books suggesting that "India" should be replaced with "Bharat" in the entire school textbooks for all classes. While the chairman of the committee for social sciences, CI Isaac, said the panel has suggested replacing the name "India" with "Bharat" in the textbooks, NCERT Chairman Dinesh Saklani clarified no decision has been taken yet on the panel's recommendations.

The committee has also recommended highlighting "Hindu victories" in various battles in the textbooks. "NCERT states that since the development of new syllabus and textbooks is

in the process and for that purpose various Curricular Area Groups of domain experts are being notified by the NCERT. So, it is too premature to comment," NCERT, an autonomous body of the Union Education Ministry, said in a statement.

The panel was constituted by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to revise the school curriculum.

The recommendation of the panel invited criticism from Opposition parties, particularly the India bloc, which asserted that the recommendations are driven by political motives. They also questioned whether services such as RBI, IAS, and IFS, which have names containing "India", will be replaced with "Bharat".



Isaac, on his part, informed early in the day that a unanimous recommendation has been submitted, proposing that the name "Bharat" should be used in the textbooks for students across all classes. Among the other suggestions made by the panel is the introduction of "classical history" instead of "ancient history" in the curriculum, and the inclusion of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in the syllabus for all sub-

jects.

The name "Bharat" first appeared officially when the government sent out G20 invites in the name of "President of Bharat", instead of "President of India".

Later, the nameplate of Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the summit in New Delhi also read "Bharat", instead of India.

"Bharat is an age-old name. The name Bharat has been used in ancient texts, such as Vishnu Purana, which is 7,000 years old," Isaac said. "Our failures are presently mentioned in the textbooks. But our victories over the Mughals and sultans are not," said Isaac, who is also a member of the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR).

"The British had divided

Indian history into three phases — ancient, medieval and modern — showing India in darkness, unaware of scientific knowledge and progress. Therefore, we have suggested that the classical period of Indian history be taught in schools, along with the medieval and modern periods," he added.

The NCERT is revising the curriculum of the school textbooks in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The council recently constituted a 19-member National Syllabus and Teaching Learning Material Committee (NSTC) to finalise the curriculum, textbooks and learning material for these classes.

Isaac has been closely associated with Sangh Parivar organisations for decades and has also

served as the vice president of rightwing think tank Bharatheeya Vichara Kendram. He worked as a professor of history at the CMS College in Kerala's Kottayam and was later appointed as a member of the ICHR.

Other members of the committee include ICHR Chairperson Raghuvendra Tanwar, Vandana Mishra, Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Vasant Shinde, former vice-chancellor of the Deccan College Deemed University, and Mamta Yadav, who teaches sociology in a Haryana Government school.

The panel chaired by Isaac is among the 25 committees formed by the NCERT in December 2021 to prepare position papers on various subjects and themes. Likewise,

the States have also constituted 25 groups each on the same subjects and themes to send inputs to the NCERT as part of the new curriculum and textbook development exercise.

Further, in response to reports regarding "mixing science with mythology" with reference to the Chandrayaan 3 Special Modules, Ministry of Education on Tuesday clarified that in the light of the rapid advancements and notable milestones achieved at the national level, it becomes imperative to equip our teachers and students with knowledge that transcends traditional textbooks.

Recognising the significance of acquainting the 26 crore students in our school education system with this remarkable space initiative of India,

NCERT has taken a proactive step in this direction. With the aspiration to integrate significant achievements into the curriculum, NCERT has developed pedagogically enriched curricular resources spanning a wide range of themes from Nari Shakti Vandan to COVID management, Sustainability, Bharat the mother of democracy, National Education Policy 2020, the success of Chandrayaan-3, etc. The content within these modules has been thoughtfully designed to be interactive and engaging. It includes graphics, photographs, illustrations, activities, challenging questions, and more. These modules cater to students across the stages of school education, spanning from grades 1 to 12, the MoE said in a statement.

Jarange Patil resumes hunger strike for Maratha quota

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Charging that the Eknath Shinde Government was not "serious" in granting reservations in jobs and education to Maratha community, Shivba Sanghatana founder Manoj Jarange Patil began his second round of indefinite fast at Jalna from Wednesday.

With no decision forthcoming from the Maharashtra government over the Maratha reservations even six weeks after he had called off his fortnight-long hunger agitation over the Maratha reservations issue, Jarange-Patil - along with his supporters -- resorted to a fresh hunger agitation at home village of Antarwali Sarati village in Jalna district in Marathwada. Jarange-Patil said that he would abstain food, water and medication till the state government made a formal announcement, conceding all his demands, including the grant of Kunbi OBC community caste certificates to all Marathas.

Talking to media persons, Jarange-Patil said: "The Maharashtra government wanted 30 days, but we gave them 40 days... Today, it's the



41st day since our ultimatum. But, the state government has not done anything. The state government is not serious about resolving the Maratha reservations issue." "We the Marathas are come well within the ambit of quotas. Still we have been denied reservations even after a series of agitations, processions and promises," the Maratha leader said.

Jarange-Patil's fresh round of hunger agitation should be seen in the backdrop of the fact that chief minister Eknath Shinde - speaking at a Dussehra rally organised at the Azad Maidan in south Mumbai on Tuesday--had taken a pledge before the stat-

ue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj that he was committed to providing reservations to the Maratha community. Alluding to Shinde's pledge made at the Dussehra rally, Jarange-Patil expressed hope that the government would announce the quotas in the next few days.

Marathas across Maharashtra have been up in arms for the past two months demanding reservations in jobs and education to their community. It may be recalled that Jarange-Patil - who had gone on a hunger agitation Antarwali Sarati village in Jalna district from August 29 demanding reservations for the Maratha community - had called off his

fast on September 14 after chief minister Eknath Shinde met him and assured him that his government would fulfil all his demands, including Kunbi OBC community caste certificates to all Marathas.

Jarange-Patil, who had earlier embarked on a state-wide tour from his home village on September 30 to mount pressure on the Shinde government to fulfil its commitment on reservations, Jarange-Patil had earlier said: "I broke my fast after the Shinde saheb assured me that all steps would be taken to ensure that the Maratha community gets reservation. We have given 40 days to the state government to act on its promise. But the government should get down to implementing its promise and not waste time unnecessarily."

Among other things, the Shinde government has promised Jarange-Patil that it would issue Kunbi caste certificates to Marathas from the Marathwada region who possess revenue or education documents from the Nizam-era recognising them as Kunbis - a move that would enable them to avail of benefits currently enjoyed by the OBCs.

BRO achieves breakthrough in crucial tunnel work



MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A highly skilled and spirited team of engineers belonging to the Border Roads Organisation has achieved a major breakthrough in the ongoing Project Sampark on National Highway 144A (NH144A) from Akhnoor to Poonch.

Defence spokesman Lt-Col Suneel Bartwal in a statement Wednesday said, "In a commendable feat of engineering, the first of the four tunnels 260 meters Kandi Tunnel has achieved its breakthrough".

The crucial tunnel, once completed, is set to enhance the strategic connectivity for the Armed Forces, enabling smoother and more expedient

movement from Jammu to Poonch for commuters.

The breakthrough came ahead of schedule, demonstrating the exceptional expertise and determination of the BRO.

Brigadier Tejpal Singh, Chief Engineer Project Sampark, was present to witness this momentous occasion.

The Defence Spokesman said, this crucial project has been divided into eight packages, and the BRO is making remarkable progress in enhancing the Horizontal and Vertical Profile of the road.

The tunnel work, which commenced in March 2023, has seen remarkable progress despite facing adverse weather conditions, including heavy rainfall and landslides along the entire road stretch.

Maha Congress attacks Centre over Maratha, OBC, Dhangar quota

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Dubbing the BJP as an "anti-reservation" party, the Opposition Congress on Wednesday charged that the ruling party in the state and at the Centre had "cheated" the Maratha, OBC and Dhangar communities by dangling the carrot of reservations before the 2014 Lok Sabha polls but failing to fulfil its promise.

On a day when Shivba Sanghatana founder Manoj Jarange-Patil began his second round of indefinite fast at Jalna, Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole came down heavily on the BJP - which is the main constituent in the Eknath Shinde government -- for its failure to keep the promise of according reservations in jobs and education to Marathas.

"Before coming to power in 2014, the BJP promised reservation to the Maratha, Tribal, Dhangar, Halba and OBC communities. Despite being in power for 10 years now, they haven't been able to keep this promise. The reservation issue is intensifying in the state,

which is a result of the BJP's attempt to create strife within different communities," Patole said.

"Today, there is a huge outcry against BJP in all these sections of society, but the government does not understand the public sentiment. Chief Minister Eknath Shinde is himself not sure whether his seat will remain or not, his word has no value, so what reservation will he give?," Patole said.

Patole said that the BJP governments at the Centre and in the state were "blind, deaf and mute" and that the reservations would not be resolved "unless and until this government is thrown out of power".

Patole said that the state government had sought a month's time from the agitating Maratha leader Manoj Jarange Patil, but he gave them 40 days.

"This deadline also expired but the government could not solve the reservation issue and Jarange Patil is on a hunger strike yet again. It has once again shown that the government is not serious about giving reservations," he said.

India should declare Hamas as terrorist body: Israel envoy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Israel is determined to destroy Hamas and hopes India proscribes it as a terrorist organisation like many other nations have done, Israel Ambassador to New Delhi Naor Gilon said here Wednesday.

He thanked India for its "100 per cent" support to his country in its anti-terror operations against Hamas and said Prime Minister Narendra Modi was

among the first world leaders to condemn the terror attack. Making these assertions here, the Israeli envoy, in an interaction with media, said time has come for India to proscribe Hamas as a terrorist organisation like many other nations have done. He also thanked India for its "100 per cent" support to Israel in its anti-terror operations against Hamas.

Gilon said Israel conveyed to relevant Indian authorities to

declare Hamas as a terrorist organisation following its brutal attack on Israel on October 7. At the same time, he indicated that the matter was taken up earlier as well.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi was among first world leaders to condemn the terror attack... India is a very important moral voice in the world and the important countries for us are with us," Gilon said. "It is time for India to declare

Hamas as terrorist organisation in India," he said, adding many countries have already done that. "India is solidly supporting us in our counter-terror operations," he said.

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

"For Israel, it is a war to survive in the Middle East," Gilon said, asserting that Israel is determined to destroy Hamas.

Soon after Hamas launched 5,000 rockets at Israel in 20 minutes and began a multi-pronged attack by land, air and sea on October 7, Modi had said he was "deeply shocked by the news of terrorist attacks in Israel" and expressed India's solidarity with the country in the difficult hour.

Opposition questions haste in adopting new IPC Bill draft

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition MPs in the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs have questioned the "haste" in adopting the draft reports on the three bills to replace the IPC, CrPC and the Evidence Act, as a meeting has been called later this week for the purpose.

The committee, which is examining the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Bills, has informed its members through a notice that the draft reports will be adopted on October 27.

According to sources, at least two opposition MPs have written to the panel's chairperson raising concerns about the process of scrutiny of the bills and have also urged him to postpone the meeting. Questioning the "haste", both the MPs have said that they did not get enough time to go through the three reports which were sent to them only on the late evening of October 21.

Members of the panel who belong to parties of the opposition INDIA bloc are set to submit dissent notes against adopting the reports. In the 30-member panel, the BJP has 16 members.

Opposition MPs, who have in the past raised questions over the experts being called for examination, have questioned the short notice for calling the meeting even as a number of experts suggested by them are yet to be called.

One of the opposition MPs, in his letter to the panel chairperson, pointed at an "alarming lack" of consultation with stakeholders and shared a list of experts that had been suggested by them for examination.

Former Chief Justice of India U U Lalit, retired Supreme Court judge Justice Madan B Lokur, eminent jurist Fali Nariman, Senior Advocate Rebecca John and Advocate Menaka Guruswamy are among the names included in



the list.

Requesting postponement of the panel's meeting, another opposition MP pointed out that the draft report was sent in the middle of festivals even though the next Parliament session is at least four weeks away.

TMC MPs in the panel have, meanwhile, raised concern over the meeting being called a day before Lakshmi Puja which is celebrated in Bengal a few days after Durga Puja. "It shows that the BJP does not understand anything about the culture of Bengal," said a TMC MP, who is a part of the parliamentary panel.

Raising concern about the bills, an opposition MP alleged that these proposed laws which are meant to replace the colonial-era procedural laws are "even more colonial". The 30-member Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs has 16 BJP MPs including the chairperson, four of the Congress, two each of DMK, TMC, JD(U) and BJD, and one of the Shiv Sena.

It was given three months to examine the three bills and submit its report after Home Minister Amit Shah had requested the Lok Sabha chair to refer the bills to the panel for threadbare examination. In the 11 meetings held so far, the panel took the views of various experts, including the Law Commission. The IPC and the Evidence Act are colonial-era procedural laws that form the backbone of Indian criminal jurisprudence along with CrPC.

KV alumni join hands to transform scrap into mural

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a rare glimpse, alumni of Kendriya Vidyalaya, Berhampur in Odisha, joined hands to collect scrap and transform into an outstanding piece of art to create something immemorial and grand after passing out from their alma mater.

A huge 400 square-foot mural of Mahaprabhu Jagannath, Mahaprabhu Balabhadra, & Maa Suvadra backgrounded by the towering image of the Sri Mandira of Puri has been made out of 5500+ plastic bottle caps collected from the sea beach of Gopalpur in Odisha.

The giant mural adorns the east-facing two-storied wall of PMSHri Kendriya Vidyalaya, Berhampur in the Bhubaneswar Region. The



mural has won Certificate of World Record in Environment Artistry by Influencer Book of World Records, registered with MSME, Govt. of India. Led by Bharat Gourav Dash, an alumnus of the KV (2012 batch), a team of alumni-Voona Srihari (2018 batch), Purnima Swain and Asutosh Padhi (2021 batch) along with the students of the Vidyalaya worked four hours for a fortnight to create this magnificent mural christened as 'The Divine Wall'.

"The Divine Wall stands as a

towering testimony to the commitment of our students to 'sustainable creativity and responsible waste management'. The twin messages the mural proclaims are 'never forget nature and never forget your Vidyalaya,'" said a KV spokesperson.

The alumni took the initiative as part of Ministry of Education Special Campaign 3.0 with main focus areas as cleanliness drive in the workplace and around the premise, disposal of scrap and weeding out of files.

Department of School Education & Literacy (DoSE&L), Ministry of Education is actively conducting the Special Campaign 3.0 on Swachhata, encompassing both the Ministry and its Autonomous Bodies (ABs).

Bharat has become agenda setter on global issues: VP

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bharat has become the agenda setter on global issues and the country's stand that war should be resolved through diplomacy and dialogue is in consonance with its civilisational ethos, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar said on Wednesday.

Dhankhar made the comments while addressing students at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) here.

"You are living in an era where Bharat's influence is felt beyond its borders. I have experienced it during my three visits abroad and interaction with global leaders. India is looked at very differently. India defines its own policies and its own interest and the world takes note of what India does, how India will

do and what India's standing is," he said.

"India is being looked upon as a problem solver for the challenges of our time. Imagine the strength of our diplomacy, we have taken a stand that suits our country the best. The stand that we have taken with respect to war (resolution) by diplomacy (and) dialogue... Is in consonance with our civilisational ethos. Bharat has become the agenda setter on global issues today," he added.

The Vice President noted that a decade ago, India was counted as one of the fragile five -- those five countries that were a burden for the economies of the world.

Now, Dhankhar said, India is poised to become the third-largest economy in the world by 2030.

Reel to real: Rao poll panel national icon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has named National Award-winning actor Rajkumar Rao as its national icon to create awareness among voters ahead of the five Assembly polls. The EC appoints prominent Indians as national icons to motivate voters to participate in elections. Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar will formally appoint Rao as a national icon of the poll body on Thursday. Earlier in August, former India cricketer and batting legend Sachin Tendulkar was recognised as the ECI's national icon for voter awareness and education.

Rao has been actively involved in voter awareness programmes in Haryana. In 2017, he was appointed brand ambassador by the MCG (Municipal Corporation Gurugram) for civic polls. Rao's portrayal as a principled government clerk in "Newton" who is determined to conduct a free-and-fair election in the Naxal-affected areas of Chhattisgarh, overcoming the cynicism and apathy of a security officer, won accolades.



The movie won the National Award for Best Feature Film in Hindi and was also India's nominee for the Best Foreign Language Film category at the 90th Academy Awards, popularly known as Oscars. He is known for his work in films with socially relevant themes such as Shahid, Kai Po Che, CityLights, Aligarh, Newton, Omerta, Love Sonia, The White Tiger, Badhaai Do and Bheed.

In August, former India cricketer and batting legend Sachin Tendulkar was recognised as the ECI's national icon for voter awareness and education. Rao has been actively involved in voter awareness programmes in Haryana. In 2017, he was appointed brand ambassador by the MCG (Municipal Corporation Gurugram) for civic polls. Rao's portrayal as a principled government clerk in "Newton" who is determined to conduct a free-and-fair election in the Naxal-affected areas of Chhattisgarh, overcoming the cynicism and apathy of a security officer, won accolades.

ingering the safety of infrastructure such as habitation sites, roads and hydropower projects.

The climate sensitive higher Himalaya is not only home to endemic and endangered flora and fauna but also contains a large number of glaciers which sustain millions of people inhabiting the Indo-Gangetic Plains.

"Therefore, it is now being increasingly considered that similar to the Bhagirathi Eco-Sensitive Zone, the river stretches between the headwaters till the southern flank of the Main Central Thrust (MCT) covering a stretch of over 125 km should be declared as eco-sensitive zones."

Declare entire Himalayan mountain region eco-sensitive zone, demand geologists

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Citing a series of disasters--the recent one being 2013 Kedarnath, 2021 Rishi Ganga and 2023 Joshimath and 2013 Satluj-Kinnaur floods and 2023 Beas floods in eco fragile Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, geologists have sought entire Himalayan mountain range to be declared as an eco-sensitive zone, which they said is now becoming climate change induced "sediment-surplus and transport-limited".

Presently, the Government has notified two ecologically sensitive areas and 92 eco-sensitive zones in 13 Himalayan states.

In a study 'Need to declare the Higher Himalaya an eco-sensitive zone' published in latest edition of journal Current Science, Shubhra Sharma and Anil D Shukla from Physical Research Laboratory in Ahmedabad also sought long-term measures to curb construction and address the ecological needs of the region. They warned that under the impending climate change scenario, the sustainability of the geologically fragile higher Himalayan ecosystem would be threatened, endan-



ed out.

They noted that the Himalayan rivers contribute over 10% of the total global sediment budget, where over 44% of total sediments are stored in the glacially scoured higher Himalayan valleys.

"Therefore, it is considered that the higher Himalayan valleys are sediment-surplus and transport-limited. These sediments are left behind by the receding glaciers, and the valleys where they are sequestered are called the paraglacial valleys (zones), having reasonably long sediment residence time (103-104 years)," they further said.

To bring home their point they referred to various studies pertaining to past floods in the region. The list is long. For instance, a study in Alakananda valley had suggested that since the last 6000 years, multiple floods have originated from the Higher Himalaya (around the MCT), transporting 86-45% sediment. These features suggest that uplift (convergence) is outpacing the incision (downcutting by the river), thus implying that the slopes of the higher Himalayan valleys are unstable," the scientists point-

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PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mr. Charan Singh who is purchasing Plot area measuring 50 Sq. Yds. out of Kharsa No. 14/2, situated in the revenue area of Village Karawal Nagar, colony known as Kamal Vihar, Gali Samadhi Wali, Ilied Shandara, Delhi from Mr. Sanjeev Kumar who is owner/attorney holder of the aforesaid property vide Regd. GPA (Document No. 44556), AT&S & WILL dated 09.11.1998, and intend to mortgage the aforesaid property against the financial assistance from Umneed Housing Finance Private Limited. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim / right / interest creating mortgage 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 etc. Lucern Legal LLP 136, Basement Floor, Uday Park, near Mother Dairy New Delhi-110048 Contact: 011-4266177, 78, 79

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mrs. Aarti to general public that the Original Sale Deeds respectively dated 30.08.1998, Document No. 4389, 06.10.2006, Document No. 7123, 19.01.2007, Document No. 11250 and 06.09.2010, Document No. 6269 related to the Property, area measuring 50 sq. yds., out of Must. no. 44, Killa no. 22, Must. no. 55, Killa no. 2, 11, 10/1, 9, situated in the area of Village Ucha Gaon, (Vijay Nagar), Tehsil Ballabgarh, Distt. Faridabad, Haryana, have been lost/ misplaced. Public is being warned not to deal with the documents. Any person dealing with the Property, should notified to the undersigned/ risk and responsibility. Owner shall not be liable in any manner whatsoever for any loss incurred by such persons. If anybody found these documents OR notice any misuse of these documents, Concemed Person is required to communicate at the address given below. Juris NextGen LLP E-56, LGF, Greater Kailash Enclave Park, New Delhi-110048, 011-4266177, 78, 79

PUBLIC NOTICE
My client, Smt. Shabnam W/o Sh. Lalit Rawal is the Owner of the Property Bearing no. 90 Adoinnd to 89, Kharsa no. Mutali no. 41 Killa no. 13 Situated in the revenue estate of Village Nangol Jat Delhi. Vide notated GPA, WILL, AT&S dated 16.05.2023 executed by Sh. Ashok Kumar S/o Sh. Ratan Lal. This above-mentioned property is going to be Mortgage with IIFL Home Finance Limited. Any person/bank/financial institution having any claim/right, lien, any objection whatsoever in regard to Above Property, should notified to the undersigned/ risk and responsibility. Owner shall not be liable in any manner whatsoever for any loss incurred by such persons. If anybody found these documents OR notice any misuse of these documents, Concemed Person is required to communicate at the address given below. Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 along with documentary evidence under address through registered A/d within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived. Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi - 110092, Mobile no. 9811215161

'Red light on Gaadi off' to curb pollution begins today

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Wednesday said the city government will re-launch the "Red Light on Gaadi Off" campaign from October 26 to curb vehicular pollution in the national capital. Rai also said that the Air Quality Index (AQI) in the national capital will fluctuate in the coming days in the wake of the upcoming festive and winter season. However, several instances of firecracker burning were also reported from parts of Delhi on the occasion of Dussehra on Tuesday. Last year, Lieutenant Governor



Vinai Kumar Saxena had put the campaign on hold, questioning its effectiveness. According to Rai, to control vehicle pollution, Kejriwal government set to start 'Red Light On-Gaadi Off' campaign from ITO Chowk on October 26. It

will be implemented at Barakhamba Road on October 28; Chandgi Ram Akhada on October 30 and from all legislative assemblies on November 2. "On November 3, awareness campaign about 'Red Light On-Gaadi Off' will be conduct-

ed among children in schools through 2000 Eco Clubs," he said. Addressing a press conference, Rai said a recent data analysis shows a decrease in PM10 pollution and a rise in PM2.5 concentration due to biomass burning and vehicular emissions. "Considering this, we have decided to reintroduce the 'Red Light on Gaadi Off' campaign to reduce vehicular pollution, starting October 26," he said. Rai noted that in the previous years, civil defence volunteers were involved in the campaign. This year, the campaign will involve the general public.

AAP accuses DPCC chief of halting pollution study



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Days after after several department heads skipped a meeting to review pollution mitigation measures in the national capital, Delhi Environment Ministers Gopal Rai on Wednesday alleged that the Delhi government's first-of-its-kind study to determine pollution sources in the national capital has been halted unilaterally on the orders of Delhi Pollution Control Committee Chairman (DPCC) Ashwani Kumar. In a note to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai has demanded that Kumar be suspended for his "insensitive and irresponsible behaviour" and also urged to release the second instalment to the IIT Kanpur so that source appointment study could be continued through winter months. Delhi Services Minister Atishi also said the matter will be referred to the NCCSA for action against him. "The matter will now be referred to the National Capital Civil Services Authority (NCCSA) and the lieutenant governor, who will make the final decision. I am hopeful that the LG will make a decision in the best interests of the two crore Delhi residents," she said at a joint press conference with Environment Minister Gopal Rai. Kumar is member secretary of NCCSA that is headed by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. Chief Secretary of the Delhi government is third member of the panel. In a press conference, Rai said

the Delhi Cabinet had approved the study proposal in July 2021 and signed an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with IIT Kanpur in October 2022. "The estimated cost was over Rs 12 crore. The Delhi government had released Rs 10 lakh to IIT Kanpur for the procurement of necessary equipment," he said. The minister claimed that Ashwani Kumar, who took up the role of DPCC chairman in December, made a file note earlier this year, expressing concerns about the "substantial expenses associated with the study". Following several meetings with IIT Kanpur scientists, Kumar issued orders on October 18 to stop the release of the remaining funds to IIT Kanpur, effectively cancelling the study, Rai said. "It's very unfortunate that such a decision has been made at a time when Delhi urgently needs scientific data to address its pollution problem," he lamented. The minister said Kumar also did not inform him or the Cabinet about his decision and his actions were in gross violation of the Transaction of Business Rules. Rai added that he has requested Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to suspend DPCC chairman Kumar for his "insensitive and irresponsible behaviour". According to Rai, Kumar was convinced that the source of Delhi's pollution has to be internal factors and cannot be majorly attributed to outside factors such as biomass (stubble) burning. Taking a dig at Rai, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva

questioned the AAP minister's claim saying he should tell if stalling of Real Time Source Apportionment Study in February is responsible for rise of winter pollution then how come summer air remained clean while all through this year Minister Gopal Rai has been taking credit for giving Delhi clean air. "Now when the winter pollution has struck and the pollution level is rising Gopal Rai to evade his responsibility is trying to pass the buck on officials," BJP leader said. "He does not put forth any scientific basis for his conclusions. As the IIT-Kanpur report does not align with his idea of what causes pollution in Delhi, he is willing to sabotage the entire project with no care or concern for the people of Delhi and no respect for scientific research," Rai wrote in the letter. "Kumar has been seeking validation of the scientific models employed by Kanpur. Despite multiple meetings with IIT-Kanpur and their responses explaining their validation model, he keeps rejecting the scientific work done by one of the most prestigious institutes of our country," he added. Rai urged the chief minister that the remaining payment be immediately released to IIT-Kanpur and said the Delhi government will ask prominent scientists to review the pollution source apportionment study results after winter. The Delhi environment minister alleged that Kumar is a "habitual delinquent" when it comes to routine government business and there have been serious complaints against him from other departments where he holds positions of power. It is a very important matter that needs to be investigated at the earliest. By halting a study of this magnitude and importance which is crucial for bringing Delhi's air quality to ambient levels, Kumar has endangered the life, health and public safety of the residents of Delhi, Rai alleged.



National War Memorial Amrit Vatika soon: LG

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lt Governor (LG) V K Saxena, while celebrating "Meri Maati Mera Desh", which is a tribute to the brave hearts who made the supreme sacrifice for the nation, announced at Raj Niwas on Wednesday that a symbol of unity "Amrit Vatika", near National War Memorial here, will be developed soon. This beautiful garden, to be developed by soil and earth brought from all 11 districts of Delhi, will not just be a green space; it will be a living testament to our shared heritage, nurtured by the soil and saplings from every corner of our vast nation. The LG also flagged off the 11 urns containing the earth to travel through the city, for their destination at National War Memorial. Youth, volunteers and other people from all corners of the country collected 'mitti' from Panchayats/Villages and brought it to the Block level. Similarly, 'Mitti' was collected from smaller urban bodies and brought to larger Municipalities/urban local bodies. Subsequently, Mitti Kalash having the soil from the Panchayats/Villages/urban areas was carried to the National Capital. The "Amrit Kalash Yatra", which carries the essence of our villages, signifies the strength that is derived from the unity and shared roots. This campaign, envisaged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stands as a testament to the indomitable spirit of our heroes which unites us in the diverse tapestry of our great nation, said Saxena. "Meri Maati Mera Desh" is not merely a set of activities but it is a collective expression of gratitude etched into the very earth of our villages and cities, paying homage to the valour that defines our nation.

DIAL opens 2 flyovers for smooth, signal-free transit

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL), that operates and manages Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport, on Wednesday inaugurated the two approach flyovers - the Aerocity flyover and the Parallel Access Road flyover - to provide a signal-free transit experience to passengers going towards Delhi airport. The two flyovers will help ease the traffic movement to and from Delhi Airport. The Aerocity Flyover, a four-lane one-way flyover constructed at Aerocity metro station junction will reduce travel time from T1 to T3 of the Delhi Airport by making a signal free movement. The flyover commences from in front of Andaz Hotel, Aerocity (West side) and ends at Central spine road, terminating short of the Eastern Cross Taxiway. The Parallel Access Road (PAR) Flyover, is part of a dedicated corridor of two lanes on both carriageways for Cargo Terminal (To and Fro) of the airport, with a flyway close to NH8. The corridor commences close to Hanuman temple and ends near Andaz Hotel, whereby segregat-



ing the heavy vehicular movement from passenger vehicles and further helping decongest the airport approach road. With a total length of the Aerocity Flyover and PAR Flyover 800 meters and 600

whereby ensuring a seamless transit passage towards and from Delhi Airport. Speaking at the inaugural function, I Prabhakara Rao, deputy group managing director of the GMR group said that passenger experience is paramount for the GMR and the same is visible in the various initiatives undertaken at the Delhi airport. "However, for us, the passenger experience begins even before a traveller enters the Delhi airport. Keeping this in view, two new flyovers have been constructed to help ease the transit to and from Delhi Airport and provide seamless passage for the passengers," he said. In 2019, before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, DIAL had proposed to make the traffic crossing at the intersection where passengers arriving from the city side turn left toward T3 or proceed straight to T1, signal-free. This proposal involved the construction of a Y-shaped mini flyover, which would offer two-way access between roads leading to T3 and Dwarka, with a one-way lane for travelers driving from T1 to T3. The plan aimed to eliminate the need for traffic signals at this intersection.



CM effects 'minor' reshuffle in Cabinet

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has effected a "minor" reshuffle in his Cabinet taking charge of the water department from minister Saurabh Bhardwaj and giving it to his colleague Atishi, officials said. The charge of Tourism, Art and Culture departments, handled so far by Atishi, will now be under the charge of Bhardwaj, they said. The file related to the reshuffle was sent for approval of Lt Governor VK Saxena who has given his nod to it, they added.

HC refuses nod for event at Ramlila Maidan over 'communal' posters

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday refused to interfere with a Delhi Police order revoking the permission to an organisation for holding a public meeting of around 10,000 people at Ramlila ground on October 29, saying the posters indicate the event can have communal overtones and result in communal tension in Old Delhi area. The high court, however, said after the festive season is over, it will be open for the petitioner organisation to approach the authorities seeking fresh permission by giving a list of speakers and an assurance to the authorities that the event will not result in tension in the area. The application, if received, shall be considered by the authorities on its own merit. "The letter dated October 16 withdrawing the no objection certificate (NOC) granted by Respondent no. 2 (Delhi Police) for conducting the event... Does not require any interference,"

Justice Subramonium Prasad said. The high court pronounced the order on a petition filed by Mission Save Constitution, which claims to be working for creating awareness among the masses about their constitutional rights. The petitioner said that after a series of meetings with officials of Delhi Police and taking several clearances, permission was granted for the meeting on October 29. Later, the deputy commissioner of police (DCP) of Central Delhi district "unilaterally, in an arbitrary manner" revoked the permission calling the event as "communal", the plea claimed. It said the petitioner seeks to initiate a series of events for strengthening all weaker sections beginning with minority communities followed by other communities like SC, ST, OBC, and in the meetings/panchayat voice of all the oppressed would be raised. This series is to be started with an event on October 29.



The high court, while disposing of the plea, said the entire country celebrates Navratri from October 15 to October 24 and Diwali on November 12. Between Diwali and Navratri, there are several festivals like Karwachauth and Dhanteras and the period from end of Shraadh to Diwali is considered auspicious for the Hindu community, it said. "Though the event has been strived for the purpose of educating people of their rights but the tenor of posters produced by Delhi Police's counsel indicates that the event in question can

have communal overtones which can result in increase in communal tension in the Old Delhi area which is a sensitive area as people of different religions live here and communal violence in the area is not unknown," it said. The court said the apprehension raised by the SHO of the area who is aware of the ground reality cannot be said to be mere fanciful. "Though Article 19 (1)(a) and 19 (1)(b) of the Constitution is freedom to raise one's voice but at the same time the possibility of creating law and order situation

which can lead to loss of lives and properties cannot be ignored. Therefore, the reason given in the letter of October 16 cannot be termed as arbitrary," it said. The court said it is well settled that the authorities need to be given some leverage while taking the decisions and the scope of judicial review is limited. The police had earlier told the court that the organisation had misled authorities while applying for permission to hold the meeting at Ramlila Maidan. The police had said while the permission was initially granted, it was later revoked on receiving several complaints from people of the locality that the proposed event appeared to be "communal". The counsel for the police said the petitioner sought nod for a meeting to educate people about their constitutional rights, so the permission was granted with a condition that no participant shall make provocative speeches which is prejudicial to maintenance of harmony.

LNJP security guards protest against salary delay



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A group of security guards employed by the Delhi government-run Lok Nayak Jai Prakash (LNJP) Hospital on Wednesday staged a protest on its campus alleging delay in disbursement of salaries and overwork among other issues. However, they resumed work after authorities of the LNJP Hospital stepped in and assured them to look into their grievances, officials said. "The guards deployed at the hospital have been engaged through multiple agencies, the majority of them via an agency hired by the government. The guards who protested today are those who have been hired via a small private agency," a senior official at the hospital said. About 140 guards are linked with this agency and the protest was led "largely by their supervisor" and all the guards of the agency did not participate in the protest, the official claimed. Patient services at the hospital have not been affected, sources said. "Their grievances are related to delay in disbursement of salaries and provident fund-related matters, among other

issues. Their allegation of overwork for more than eight hours is also being looked into. Duty registers will be checked to ascertain their claim," the official said, adding that the guards resumed work after getting the assurance. Meanwhile, the Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri has strongly criticized the deteriorating state of healthcare services in the capital city. Taking a dig at the AAP government, Bidhuri said the health system has been collapsed in Delhi and this government is busy in politics. Speaking out against the Arvind Kejriwal-led government, Bidhuri highlighted the dire conditions faced by both medical professionals and patients. He pointed out that doctors in Rajiv Gandhi Hospital, labelled as a super-specialty institution, have not received their salaries for four months. "The hospital lacks essential staff, including a permanent director and accounts officer, leading to the breakdown of critical medical equipment. Basic medical screenings have stopped, leaving patients without necessary care. Even reputed hospitals like Pant Hospital are grappling with medicine shortages, causing distress among patients. Moreover, almost half of Delhi's Mohalla clinics have shut down, and the ones that remain operational lack vital medicines and facilities," he said.

MCD to discuss plan to engage breeding checking workers as muti-tasking staff

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A proposal to engage over 3,000 domestic breeding checking (DBC) workers as multi-tasking staff on contract basis is likely to come up in the next municipal House, sources have said. DBC workers' job involves prevention and control of malaria, dengue and other vector-borne diseases. Presently, 3,112 DBC workers are engaged with the approval of the mayor and as per the minimum wages fixed by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), the sources said on Tuesday. Henceforth, it is "contemplated to engage DBC workers against vacant posts of multi-tasking staff (MTS) in various departments of MCD, including the Public Health Department",

they said. The proposal is likely to come up in the next MCD House on Friday, the sources said. Apart from 172 vacant posts in the Public Health Department, MTS posts will be created to deploy 3,112 DBC workers on contract basis to work exclusively for the prevention and control of vector-borne diseases, a source claimed. According to the Public Health Department, DBC workers are playing a crucial role in checking the spread of dengue, chikungunya and other vector-borne diseases. These workers conduct door-to-door surveys to check the breeding of mosquito larvae in domestic containers, coolers, overhead tanks, flower pots, tins, tyres, etc. They also create public awareness about the prevention of such diseases.

Switzerland confirms Swiss woman's death in Delhi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Switzerland has confirmed that a woman whose chained body was found from west Delhi's Tilak Nagar was a Swiss citizen. In a reply to a query from the PTI, Valentin Clivaz, Deputy Head of Media, Embassy of Switzerland in Delhi, in a statement said: "The FDFA (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs) confirms the death of a Swiss citizen in India." The Swiss embassy here is in contact with the local authorities. The FDFA supports relatives within the framework of consular protection, Clivaz said and added that no further details can be given for reasons of "data protection and personal privacy". The decomposed body of Nina Berger, aged around 30 years, was found from a spot near the wall of a Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) school in Tilak Nagar on Friday. Her limbs were tied with metal chains, which were locked. On Tuesday, the Delhi Police had said it was waiting for the family members of the decea-



sed to come forward and identify the body so that the process of autopsy could be started. The body has been kept at the mortuary of a west Delhi hospital, police said. The Delhi Police has arrested Gurpreet Singh (33) in connection with the incident. Police said during interrogation, Singh has confessed that he killed Berger as he wanted to marry her but she turned down his request. Berger had come to Delhi on October 11 on Singh's request. Police have found documents, such as the passport and visas, of Berger from Singh's possession. According to the documents, she hailed from Zurich. Singh was sent to police custody for four days, during which police recreated the scene of the crime and took him to various places where he had accompanied Berger before allegedly killing her. A psycho-analysis test of the accused has also been conducted as he was changing his statements continuously, police said.

Man kills wife over extramarital affair suspicion

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A 35-year-old woman was strangled to death by her husband over the suspicion of an extramarital affair in northeast Delhi's Dayalpur area, police said on Wednesday. On the intervening night of the mid-night of Tuesday and Wednesday, Shabnam and her husband Umeed got into an argument over the same issue. In a fit of rage, Umeed strangled the woman and she went unconscious, they said. The couple lived at a rented house in E Block of Chand Bagh with their four children, police said. The family members rushed Shabnam to Jag Pravesh Chandra Hospital, where doctors declared her dead, they said. According to police, Umeed suspected Shabnam of having an extramarital affair. The accused has been arrested and a case of murder registered against him, they said.

Teenager stabbed to death over minor dispute in N Delhi's Timarpur: Police

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A 17-year-old boy was allegedly stabbed to death by a group of youngsters over a minor issue during a Dussehra event in north Delhi's Timarpur, police said on Wednesday. The incident took place at Sanjay Basti, near the Gol Market, around 8.30 pm on Tuesday. "Victim Aryan was involved in a dispute with some of his friends over talking to a girl. During a Dussehra event organised in the locality on Tuesday evening, the dispute again got

triggered, following which the accused attacked him with knives," a police officer said. The victim, a Class-10 student, sustained multiple wounds and died on the spot, while his attackers fled the area. The accused were known to the victim as they lived in the same locality, police said. Police have registered a murder case and zeroed in on five juveniles. Aryan used to live with his family in Sanjay Basti. He was studying in an open school. His father works as a construction labourer, police said.

PM to launch ₹7,500 cr projects for farmers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Thursday launch a scheme in Maharashtra aimed at benefiting over 86 lakh farmers and launch projects worth over Rs 7,500 crore and then travel to Goa to inaugurate the 37th National Games.



famous Shri Saibaba temple in Shirdi and inaugurate its new "darshan queue complex". He will perform "Jal Pujan" of Nilwande Dam and dedicate a

canal network of the dam to the nation and later attend a public programme in Shirdi to inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth about Rs 7,500 crore in sectors like health, rail, road and oil and gas. The statement said the new "darshan queue complex" at Shirdi is a state-of-the-art modern mega building envisaged to provide comfortable waiting areas for devotees.

Law panel head presents road map for one nation, one election

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Law Commission chairperson Justice (retd) Ritu Raj Awasthi on Wednesday gave a detailed presentation on the way forward to hold simultaneous elections in the country before the high-level committee on 'one nation, one election' headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind here. The panel has been renamed as the High Level Committee on One Nation, One Election, according to an official statement. Sources said the law panel had a long discussion on the roadmap and the changes required in the Constitution to hold simultaneous elections. "But some more things are required to be done. They said the law panel is yet to submit its report to the government on simultaneous polls' sources informed adding the Law Commission may again be called by the Kovind panel.



The panel had invited the Law Commission to seek its views on how simultaneous polls can be held in the country. The committee, 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. The Law Commission 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 the 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. 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 ballots for the two polls. The commission 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, sources added.

SFTS gets Army's first Vertical Wind Tunnel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



In a landmark move to augment the training infrastructure of special forces and combat free-fallers, the Special Forces Training School (SFTS) at Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh, gets Indian Army's first Vertical Wind Tunnel (VWT). Army Chief General Manoj Pande, virtually inaugurated the facility. The state-of-the-art wind tunnel is set to refine the Combat Freefall (CFF) skills of armed forces personnel, army said here on Wednesday. As part of the ongoing transformation of the Indian Army, technology is being infused into the training methodologies. Installation of a VWT is also a step in that direction. Functioning as a freefall simulator, the VWT creates a column of air at specific velocities, orchestrating different CFF conditions. The system offers a controlled environment, enabling trainees to enhance their skills by simulating real-life freefall conditions. The VWT's integration into the CFF training curriculum at SFTS brings forth numerous pay-offs. The system simulates varied freefall scenarios which is crucial in assessing individual reactions to numerous situations in an airborne operating environment.

It reduces potential instability in the air and during parachute deployment thereby assisting trainees to get used to free-fall conditions. The VWT is not only beneficial for beginners but also an exceptional resource for delivering advanced training to seasoned free-fallers and CFF instructors. Installation of the first VWT is aligned with the current impetus given to modernising the training infrastructure in the Indian Army. This project, a first of its kind in the Indian Army, will deliver simulated training on combat freefall to the special forces. It is poised to greatly enhance the operational readiness of the future-ready Indian Army, ensuring that the special forces are fully prepared to tackle contemporary challenges of current and future battlefields. It promises faster and more precise training results.

PUBLIC NOTICE

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

The following borrower(s) have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Shobha Goel, Sunil Goel, Kaysons India, A-14 Pitam Pura, Saraswati Vihar Near Dipali Chowk, Delhi- 110034 A/c:-LBFD00003541823	Land Bearing No. 5, Block A, 1st Floor, Green Park Extension, Village Yusuf Sarai Jat, Delhi 110034	30/09/2023 Rs. 1,20,51,912/-	03/08/2023
2.	Usha. Deepak Singh Bhati, 131 Village Badhpura Greater Noida, Dadri- 203207 A/c:-LBNOD00004699590, LBNOD00004749132	Unit No 937/ Gaur Atulyam, Floor 9 Tower E, Gaur Atulyam Situated At Plot No. Gh-01a, Sector Omicron 1 Gautam Buddha Nagar Greater Noida- 201307	26/09/2023 Rs. 26,13,647/- Rs. 1,86,868/-	03/06/2023
3.	Bhavish Kumar Rana, Monika Rajput, C-11-601 Santap Vihar A/2, White Field Hosakote Road, Kanna Mangala, Bangalore-560067 A/c:-LBNOD00004900538	Apartment No 1403, 14th Floor, Tower C, Sathi Vento, Situated at Sc-01/A-4, Sector-150 Noida- 201301	26/09/2023 Rs. 62,11,483.12/-	04/07/2023
4.	Archana Mishra, Avinash Mishra, House No. 852 Sector 23, Faridabad- 121005, A/c:-LBNOD00005198782	Flat No. F- 11011 10th Floor, Tower-F, Piyush Heights, Situated at 89 Faridabad 121005 (Along With Rights to Use Common Amenities & One Number Parking Space)	26/09/2023 Rs. 1,57,910.35/-	31/12/2020
5.	Dhananjay Kumar Sinha, Nivedita Sinha, 506, B2 Shivalik Apartments, Sec 1 Manesar, Gurgaon- 122052 A/c:-LBDEL00004033759	Flat No. 518, Block B-5 5th Floor, Sidco Shivalik Apartment Situated at Gh-2, Int Manesar, Sector 1, Gurugram- 122052	26/09/2023 Rs. 34,15,931.11/-	03/06/2023
6.	Sachin Narayan, Nutan, Dubey, Plot No. A 182 Flat No. 1102 II Floor, Chandra Vihar Mandawali, Fazalpur Mandawali, Delhi- 110092 A/c:-LBDEL00002418546	Flat No. Q-2207, 22nd Floor, Tower- Q, Ajnara Le Garden Situated at Plot No. Gh-02, Sector 16, Greater Noida West- 201307	26/09/2023 Rs. 26,61,066/-	30/07/2023
7.	Kartik Radhakrishnan Venkatasubramanian, Rashmi Jain, 203 Yamuna Apartments Alaknanda, Delhi, 110019 A/c:-LBDEL00002331637	Flat No A2-1502, 15th Floor Casa Grande-2 Situated At Plot No- 08, Sector Chi-v, Greater Noida Noida-201301	26/09/2023 Rs. 17,17,146/-	04/07/2023
8.	Amrit Kumar, Kirshan Pal, Bhuvneshwar Singh, Ramesh Kumar, H. No.- 626, Gali No. 6, Chander Lok Mandoli Road, Delhi, Na, Delhi- 110093 A/c:-LBDEL00005140420	Flat No. 105, 1st Floor, Tower A, Aero Heights Situated at Koyal Enclave, Ghaziabad- 201001	26/09/2023 Rs. 16,88,095.99/-	03/06/2023
9.	Javed Alam, Nagma Parveen, H No- G-81 Santosh, Medical Sec-11, Pratap Vihar Ghaziabad- 201009 A/c:-LBGHZ00004069531	Flat No. I-301, 3rd Floor, Spis Aawasiya Yojna, situated At Jal Nigam Road, Govind Puram Extension Nh-24 Ghaziabad- 201017	26/09/2023 Rs. 10,78,507/-	04/07/2023
10.	Kiran Upadhyay, Chandan Kumar, E-1035 12th, Avenue Gaur City 2 Greater Noida West Noida- 201301 A/c:-LBDEL00004944301	Shop No-1492, 13th Floor Work Spaces, Gaur City, Gaur City Mall Situated at Plot No. Gh 01, Sector 4 Greater Noida- 201307	26/09/2023 Rs. 7,35,636/-	09/07/2023
11.	Shashi Jain, Rishant Jain, 1829 Gali Matawari Maltiwara 1 St Floor, Chandni Chowk Mumbai- 400001 A/c:-LBGHZ00001039389	Flat No. 102, 1st Floor, Type Block A-4, Krishna Agra Gardens, on Group Housing Plot No. 7, Vibhav Ghaziabad- 201010	26/09/2023 Rs. 5,68,810.45/-	02/05/2023
12.	Vishal Kapoor, J-504 Princess Park, Sector-86 Faridabad, 121001 A/c:-LBFD00002853072, LBFD00002853075	Unit No. J-504, 5th Floor Tower J, in Multistoried Residential Housing Complex Princess Park, Sector 86 Village Budena Faridabad- 121001 (Along With Parking Bearing No. J-504-22-P2 in Princess Park)	07/10/2023 Rs. 50,89,820.98/- Rs. 1,81,874.98/-	03/08/2023
13.	Lakshmi Devi, Suresh Kumar, Rgs Logistics I Pvt.Ltd, D-50 2nd Floor, Flat No. 8 Gali No. 8, Mandawali Unchaper Delhi 110092 A/c:-LBDEL00002428416, LBNOD00004983803	Flat No. P9 1203, 12th Floor Prateek Grand City Situated at 4/BS-1 & 4/BS-05 Siddharth Vihar Ghaziabad- 201001	7/10/2023 Rs. 24,49,651/- Rs. 88,304/-	04/07/2023
14.	Sachin Sharma, Flat No. 2042, Block E 20th Floor Plot No. GC 3D, Laxy North Avenue 2, Gautam Budh Nagar Sector 16C, Noida A/c:-LBGHZ00006052088/LBHGZ00006118477	Flat No. T9 037, Ground Floor, Tower 9, Wave City Dream Homes Group House, Sector 5, Wave City Nh24 Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh- 201001	04/10/2023 Rs. 19,76,280.41/- Rs. 1,05,100/-	06/10/2022
15.	Surinder Kumar Rastogi, Santosh Rastogi, Rahul Rastogi, Sp 42 Maurya Enclave, Pitam Pura Delhi, Delhi- 110088 A/c:-LBNOD00002375713	Flat No. Sat 4- 912, 9th Floor Block 4, Blossom Zest Situated at Gh-02, Sector 143 Noida Uttar Pradesh- 201301	04/10/2023 Rs. 16,82,784/-	30/08/2023
16.	Kishor Kumar, Sanjay Kumar, Flat No 26, 1st Floor Sec G8, Pocket 3 Block F 16, Delhi- 110090 A/c:-LBDEL00002375470	Flat No. 26, First Floor Sector G 8, Pocket 3, Block F 16, Narela Delhi- 110090	04/10/2023 Rs. 24,18,692/-	31/12/2017
17.	Rajiv Sircar, Priya Sircar, 4/68 A-1, Gwalior Road, Balugarh, Agra, Uttar Pradesh Agra 282003 A/c:-LBNOD0000639572	Plot No. D-166/16, Sector 50, New Okhla Industrial Development Area, Noida District Gautam Budh Nagar Uttar Pradesh- 201301	04/10/2023 Rs. 3,62,006.99/-	30/06/2023
18.	Amir Sharma, Laxmi Sharma, No 106, Block No. 1, Mamc Campus Mirdard Lane Delhi- 110002 A/c:-LBGUR00003503031	Flat No. 704, 6th Floor, Tower S, SuperTech Eco City, Gh-03, Sector 137, Noida, Noida	05/10/2023 Rs. 38,62,153.8/-	03/08/2023
19.	Naveen Kumar Tyagi, Anupama, Flat No. 201 2nd Floor, Nand Kishore Apt Gulaib Nagar, Near Reliance Petrol Pump, Jammu-361004 A/c:-LBDEL00002361230	Flat No. 1706, 17th Floor, Tower A, Gayatri Aura, Plot No. Gh 11, Sector 1, Noida Extension, Greater Noida, Noida 110004 A/c:-	05/10/2023 Rs. 32,92,412/-	30/07/2023
20.	Mohan Singh, Neetu, 3944 Ground Floor, Kaseru Wala, Paharganj Delhi- 110055 A/c:-LBDEL00003153859	Shop No. Gf 161, Ground Floor, Gaur City Centre, Plot No. C-1A in Gh-01, Gaur City 2, Sector 4, Greater Noida, Noida, Uttar Pradesh	05/10/2023 Rs. 20,96,847/-	03/08/2023
21.	Vikash Kumar, Alka Rani, Wz-1071 Second Floor Nangal Raya Delhi, Delhi 110046 A/c:-LBNOD00002064143	Flat No. 111, Floor 1, Tower A, Manhar Garden, Harish Nagar Sikandra Bodla Road, Sikandra, Agra	05/10/2023 Rs. 19,12,308/-	08/06/2023
22.	Meenakshi Singh, Ramesh Singh, H No. C 1101 New Ashok Nagar, East Delhi, 110096 A/c:-LBNOD00002368088	Shop No. F-16, First Floor, Commercial Tower, Sethi Group Sethi Arcade, Plot No. Gh-2B Sector-76, Noida	05/10/2023 Rs. 16,22,346/-	30/08/2023
23.	Shweta Kalra, Nitesh Kumar, C-4/F 196 Janakpuri, Delhi- 110058 A/c:-LBDEL00005295255	Dda Janta Flat No. 140, Category-B, Ground Floor, Pocket-6, Sunrise Apartment, Nasirpur, Phase 1, Dwarka, Delhi	05/10/2023 Rs. 16,00,964/-	22/07/2023
24.	Rajesh Kumar, Deepa Upadhyay, Flat No. 351 2nd Floor, Pocket 6 Sunrise Apartment, Nasir Pur Dwarka Palam Village, Delhi 110045 A/c:-LBDEL00005118029	Dda Janta Flat No- 351, 2nd Floor, Pocket-6, Phase-1, Sector 1A, Sunrise Apartment, Nasirpur, Dwarka, Delhi	05/10/2023 Rs. 10,29,153/-	08/08/2023
25.	Nitin Kumar Singhal, Nikhil Kumar Singhal, No. 5/ 399 A Flat No. G1, Plot No. 399A Sec 5, Vaishali Ghaziabad- 201101, A/c:-LBGHZ00003889514, LBGHZ00003889524	Flat No. G1, Ground Floor (Without Roof Rights), Nilaya Greens, Kharsa No 1015, 1023/1, 1023/2 and 1023M1, Village, Morta, Raj Nagar Extension, Nh-58, Pargana Jalalabad, Tehsil Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh	05/10/2023 Rs. 20,32,632.2/- Rs. 13,42,395/-	04/07/2023
26.	Harsh Wardhan, 370 Dhanauri Gautam Buddha Nagar, Bulandshahar Gautam Buddha Nagar Uttar Pradesh- 203201 A/c:-TBNOD00006520258, LBNOD00006523888	Unit No:1902, 19th Floor, Tower M, The Express Park View-2, Plot No. Gh-03, Sector-Chi-V, Greater Noida, Noida, Uttar Pradesh.	05/10/2023 Rs. 30,24,773/- Rs. 85,549/-	04/07/2023
27.	Sudhir Kumar Singh, Rinku Singh, Flat No. 807 Vvip Addresses, Raj Nagar Extension, Uttar Pradesh, 201017, Ghaziabad A/c:-LBGHZ00005532935	Flat No. 3J-0307, 3rd Floor (without Roof Rights), Nilaya Greens, Kharsa No 1015, 1023/1, 1023/2 and 1023M1, Village, Morta, Raj Nagar Extension, Nh-58, Pargana Jalalabad, Tehsil Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh	06/10/2023 Rs. 24,76,694/-	03/07/2023
28.	Soumi Mukherjee, Saikat Mukherjee, Suchanda Chakraborty, 2/2 Lawrence Street Uttarpara Kotrung, Hooghly, West Bengal- 712258 A/c:-LBGUR00005060363	Plot No - A-27, Amaya Greens, Village Farukhnagar, Sector 3, Gurgaon, Haryana	6/10/2023 Rs. 22,54,442/-	03/08/2023
29.	Vineet Gupta, Arif Gupta, G- 234 Vikaspuri Delhi- 110018 A/c:-LBNOD00002031001, LBNOD00002036232	Flat No. 1405, 14th Floor, Tower-C4, Golf Village, Golf Country, Ts-5, Sector-22D, Yamuna Expressway, G. B Nagar, Nodia, Uttar Pradesh	06/10/2023 Rs. 13,72,082/- Rs. 76,838/-	09/01/2023
30.	Heena Gohil, Hemant Pathak, Flat No. 638, Ground Floor, Sector-37, Arun Vihar, Uttar Pradesh Noida- 201301 A/c:-LBDEL00001461840, LBDEL00001979490	Flat No. 638 Ground Floor Arun Vihar Sector 37, District Gautam Budh Nagar Noida Uttar Pradesh- 201301	04/10/2023 Rs. 11,39,186/- Rs. 38,576/-	08/08/2023
31.	Alok Kumar, Pratima Kumari, CL- 62, Basanti Colony, Sundargarh, Rourkela- 769012 A/c:-LBDEL0000691603	Flat No. 1004, 10th Floor Shipra Apartments, Kaushambi Situated at Khasra No. 22m2 & 22m3 Village Haspur, Bhopapur Ghaziabad- 201010	26/09/2023 Rs. 3,91,305/-	09/07/2023

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower(s) and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Date : October 26, 2023
Place : Delhi/ NCR
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Online scams strike at heart of country's financial stability: HC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Online financial scams strike at the heart of country's economic stability and there is an urgent need to address them not only to protect individuals but also to ensure the continued vitality of online financial systems, the Delhi High Court has observed.

Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma, while denying bail to an accused in one such case, asserted that when trust in online transactions is shaken, the public becomes increasingly reluctant to deal with digital systems, which can significantly impede economic growth, innovation, and financial inclusion.

"This court notes that the seriousness of such scams extends far beyond the immediate victims. At their core, they strike at the heart of the nation's financial stability. By undermining trust in online transactions, these fraudulent activities have a cascading effect that resonates throughout the entire economic landscape," Justice Sharma said in a recent order.

"This court recognizes the urgent need to address such issues with the utmost seriousness, not only to protect individuals from financial harm but also to ensure the continued vitality of online financial systems and, by extension, the broader economy," added the court.

As per the prosecution, the accused was part of a large scale scam in which he sent messages to the general public offering online jobs and trap them into paying certain sums of money. The complainant alleged that he had received a WhatsApp message in relation to an offer of earning part-time income online by giving rating on Google platform.

It was stated that the complainant was induced to pay money and complete certain tasks for getting commissions and profits and was eventually defrauded into giving an amount of over Rs 7 lakh. The court observed that the instant case was of a "well-organized, inter-state racket" which engaged in "financial trap-laying scam conducted through online channels".

It said that the actions constituted a form of cheating and fraud, which erodes the public's confidence in online financial transactions and cast a long shadow of doubt and insecurity over the digital platforms that are an essential part of modern financial systems.

"In an era where online transactions are the lifeblood of commerce, finance, and communication, any compromise in their integrity has severe repercussions for society as a whole," the court said.

20 vital signs of earth worsened to imperil life on it, says study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Twenty out of the 35 vital signs of the Earth have "worsened beyond anything humans have seen, to the point that life on Earth is imperiled," a global team of scientists has sounded an alarm bell in a study, published in the journal BioScience.

The 20 signs, such as the Arctic sea-ice levels, ice mass loss in Antarctica and Greenland, sea level rise and surface temperature anomaly, are at record extremes, the team of researchers, including those from the US, the UK, Brazil and Bangladesh, said the study.

It also established pertinent statistics regarding temperatures and greenhouse gas emissions. For example, 2023 has already witnessed 38 days with global average temperatures more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the researchers said in their study. Further, the highest average Earth surface temperature ever recorded was in July, and there was reason to believe it was the highest surface temperature the planet has seen in the last 1,00,000 years, they said.

"Life on our planet is clearly under siege," said co-lead author William Rippe, a distinguished professor at the Oregon State University, US. "The statistical trends show



deeply alarming patterns of climate-related variables and disasters. We also found little progress to report as far as humanity combating climate change (was concerned)," said Rippe. On greenhouse gas emissions, the researchers asserted that the Canadian wildfires this year pumped more than 1 gigatonne of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which they said was higher than the country's total greenhouse emissions of 2021. Their study also acknowledged that fossil fuel subsidies had roughly doubled between 2021 and 2022 globally, from USD 531 billion to just over USD 1 trillion. The authors noted that rising energy prices, brought about by Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine, could have contributed to this rise in subsidies.

"The trends indicate the need to drastically speed and scale up efforts globally to combat climate change while more generally reducing our ecological footprint," said study author Thomas Newsome from the School of Life and Environmental Sciences at the University of Sydney, Australia. "Extreme weather and other climate impacts are disproportionately felt by the poorest people, who have contributed the least to climate change," he said, stressing that all climate-related actions must be grounded in equity and social justice. The authors say policies are needed that take aim at the underlying issue of "ecological overshoot" and urge transitioning to a global economy that prioritises human well-being and curtails overconsumption and excessive emissions by the rich. Specific recommendations in their study include phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, transitioning toward plant-based diets, scaling up forest protection efforts and adopting international coal elimination and fossil fuel non-proliferation treaties.

Specific recommendations in their study include phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, transitioning toward plant-based diets, scaling up forest protection efforts and adopting international coal elimination and fossil fuel non-proliferation treaties.

PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

[See proviso to rule 8(i)]
Notice for sale of immovable asset

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Asset 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.

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s) / Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Lata (Borrower), Deepak Choudhary (Co-borrower) Lan No. LBGUR00004931127	Prop No 1 /6426- Plot No 18, 1st & 2nd Floor, Gali No 5, East Rohtash Nagar Shahdara, Delhi, 110032 Area: Land Area- 693 Sq Ft and Built up Area- 1247 Sq Ft	Rs. 89,41,648 (as on October 17, 2023)	Rs. 55,90,000/- Rs. 5,59,000/-	November 13, 2023, 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon	November 22, 2023, From 11:00AM- 12:00 Noon

The online auction will take place on the website of e-auction agency M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited (URL Link-<https://disposalhub.com>) The Mortgagee/noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till November 21, 2023 before 05:00 P.M failing which, this/these secured asset/s will be sold as per schedule. The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Bank Limited, Plot No. 23, Shal Tower, 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before November 21, 2023 before 05:00 P.M and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before November 21, 2023 before 05:00 P.M along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, in case prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at ICICI Bank Limited, Plot No. 23, Shal Tower, 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before November 21, 2023 before 05:00 P.M. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/Scheduled Bank in favour of "ICICI Bank Limited" payable at Delhi. For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the e-auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Bank Limited On 9372730494/8584874809 Please note that Marketing agencies 1.M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited 2. Augeo Asset Management Pvt Ltd 3. Hecta Proptech Pvt Ltd have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property. The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/n4p4s

Date : October 26, 2023
Place : Delhi/NCR
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

PUBLIC NOTICE: Builder Cancellation

This is to bring to your notice that BHOOPENDRA SINGH/ RENU SINGH (borrower/s) has notified Home loan facility vide facility agreement number LBGHZ00001944979 & LBDEL00001967585 located Flat No LE/E-205, Luxuria Estate, Aditya World City, NH-24, Sector-6, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh. The borrower/s has failed to pay the contractual amount to the builder as per the terms and conditions of the agreement. The Bank had informed the same to the borrower through letter dated March 16, 2017, informing that M/S AGARWAL ASSOCIATES (PROMOTERS) LIMITED has cancelled the allotment of the above mentioned property. You are therefore requested to resolve this matter with the builder within 7 days from the date of this publication. Please take further notice that post cancellation of the allotment of the said property ICICI Bank shall not be bound and/or responsible for any other allotment done by the builder.

Dated: October 26, 2023
Place: Delhi
For ICICI Bank Limited Sd-

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. DEE-TRS-GZB acting for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Tender against Tender No. 230-TRS-GZB-2023-24-13. The details are as under:-

- Name of the work: The different mechanical work of (i) Dismantling of motorized axle from bogie and disassembly of TM and Gear case and cleaning of Gear case, (ii) Removal and fitment of elastic ring of WAP-7 locomotive during major/minor schedule and (iii) Removal and fitment of spheri blocs of axle guide and torque arm of WAP-7 locomotives at Electric loco shed, Ghaziabad.
- Approx. cost of work: Rs. 35,83,188.00
- Earnest Money to be deposited: Rs. 71,700.00
- Last Date & Time of Submission of tender bid of tender: 16.11.2023 (11:00 Hrs.)
- Date & Time of opening of tender document: 16.11.2023 (After 11:00 Hrs.)
- Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen: www.ireps.gov.in

Note: (i) The tenderer/s must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement System (IREPS) site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for participating in e-tender system. (ii) For all terms and conditions please refer tender document. (iii) No manual offers are acceptable. (iv) Cost of Tender document and Earnest money will be acceptable through net banking or payment gateway only. No.: 230-TRS-GZB-2023-24-13 Dated: 25.10.2023

Bharat Milap held with traditional gaiety and religious fervour

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Thousands of people thronged Nati Imli and adjoining areas to watch the internationally famous Bharat Milap event held here on Wednesday evening which was celebrated with all traditional gaiety and religious fervour. Right from afternoon hours, the people started gathering there to have a glimpse of the reunion of Lord Rama with his brother Bharat. It is a famous event which even attracted Bollywood to make a movie on the event.

Former Kashi Naresh Kunwar Anant Narayan Singh reached the venue as per tradition. The event was also watched by many dignitaries. After the reunion of Lord Rama with his brothers, Banaras royal family chief gifted coins to members of the committee as per tradition.

As per tradition, children playing the roles of divine characters were brought to the grounds of Nati Imli for public viewing of their reunion. Then the devotees paid their



Famous Bharat Milap being held at Nati Imli in Varanasi on Wednesday late afternoon.

respect by putting a tilak on their forehead and garlanding Lord Rama, Bharat, Lakshman and Shatrughan.

Later, Kunwar returned to Bada Ganesh with the same route through which he had

reached and in a similar procession. Earlier, to attend the event Kunwar left his Ramnagar Fort along with his sons along with traditional fort security personnel. The event was presented by the Ramayani

Dal of Shri Chitrakoot Ramleela Samiti. The tight security arrangements were made at the venue of Bharat Milap to avoid any untoward incident. To avoid the rush, the areas were barricaded.

Thousands watch Ravan dahan at BLW

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Thousands of people watched the famous Ravan Dahan event at Central Sports Grounds in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) on Tuesday evening as this year the Dussehra festival was celebrated with great pomp and its traditional fervour. In the recent decades, the event has become very popular as a huge number of people turned out there. When the effigies of 'Demon King' Ravana, his brother Kumbhakaran and son Meghnad which were 75, 70 and 65 feet high respectively were burnt, the mood of the people turned electrified and the slogans of 'Jai Siya Ram' echoed the atmosphere. The grounds as well as roads in its surrounding areas were packed with thousands of people. A large number of firecrackers were set in all the three effigies.

The event marked the triumph of good over evil and prior to that, the artistes performed Ramlila. The audience was mesmerised by the dialogue of Angad and Ravana and wars between Lord Ram and Ravana as well as Lakshman and Meghnath. After defeating Ravana by Lord Ram, the event of burning of effigies began. Prior to effigy burning, the firecrackers were lit, changing the mood of the people. Earlier, the Principal Chief Electrical Engineer (PCEE) SK Srivastava performed the aarti of Lord Ram and Mata Sita. Then the artistes performed Lila of Ram Van Gaman to Ravana Vadh based on Ramcharitmanas. The Lila performed by the students of BLW Inter College for two-and-a-half hours was highly appreciated.

There was a ban on carrying bags, tiffins, water bottles and any kind of inflammable material in the fair premises. Even after 12 noon, all types of vehicles including two wheelers were stopped from entering the Mela areas. General Manager Basudev Panda constantly instructed the officials to make the Vijaydashami fair well organised. District administration, Uttar Pradesh



Ravana effigy being burnt on the occasion of Vijaydashami at BLW in Varanasi on Tuesday evening.



Artistes presenting Ramlila prior to Ravana Dahan event at BLW in Varanasi on Tuesday evening.

Police, Railway Protection Force, St John's Ambulance Brigade, Civil Defence, District Scouts and Guides and members of Vijaydashami Committee played an important role in conducting the fair smoothly and peacefully. To deal with any untoward incident, the medical team of BLW Central Hospital was present there, setting up its first aid posts there.

The Ravana Dahan event of BLW is unique in itself as it is an example of Ganga-Yamuni (harmonious) culture. The effigies of Ravana, Kumbhakaran and Meghnad are made by Shamsahad Khan

and his family, who have been residents of Kashi for three generations and Angad was portrayed by Sohrab Hussain in this unique Ramlila.

The function was also attended by Principal Chief Engineer Vinod Bampal, Principal Chief Personnel Officer Ranvijay, Chief Mechanical Engineer (SE) Neeraj Jain, Chief Materials Manager (Loco) Trilok Kothari, Chief Materials Manager (Headquarters) SK Mishra, Senior Deputy General Manager Vijay, Chief Engineer Vinod Kumar Shukla, Chief Electrical Engineer (Inspection) MK Singh, Chief

Mechanical Engineer (QMS) Ramjanam Choubey, Public Relations Officer Rajesh Kumar and a large number of BLW officers and employees. In making the programme successful, Vijaydashami Samiti's office-bearers Anup Singh, Alok Singh, Mohammad Eklakh Hussain, VD Dubey, Dharmendra Singh, Ritesh Singh, Tarkeshwar Singh, Sunil Kumar, Chandramohan Jha, Sanad Pandey and Bobby Singh played an important role. In the end, the vote of thanks was given by the convener of Vijaydashami Samiti MP Singh, Deputy Chief Mechanical Engineer (Spares).

Idols of Maa Durga immersed in ponds

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Amidst tight security arrangements, a large number of idols of Goddess Durga and others were immersed in various ponds in different parts of the city here on Wednesday. Several preferred to do the same on the occasion of Vijaydashami as per tradition but many postponed their immersion programme by a day due to Tuesday. Right from the afternoon, the processions of idols were carried out from different parts of the city and later, they were immersed in the ponds as there was a ban on the immersion of idols in river Ganga as per the instructions of the High Court.

The idols were immersed in ponds at Vishwa Sundari Bridge, Bhikharipur,

Shankuldhar Pokhara, Laharata, Laxmi Kund, Machhodari Kund, Company's Bagh, Pahadiya, Ganeshpur Pokhara, Kandwa, Ramnagar and Ishwargangi as the Nagar Nigam had identified as many as 12 kund/ talabs (ponds) in the city to immerse the idols of Goddess Durga and other deities. The boats were also made available during the immersion to avoid any untoward incident.

With the immersion of idols of Goddess Durga at different ponds, the Durga Puja came to an end and at all the puja pandals of Bangiya Samaj, the women of Bengali families did the traditional rituals of Sindur Khela with religious fervour and then the women gave an emotional Vidai (farewell) to Maa Durga. There was enthusiasm among the Bengali women during Sindur

Khela at various pandals of Bhelupura, Shivala, Sonarpura, Godowlia, Ramkrishna Mission, Bharat Seva Sangh. This is an old tradition among the Bengalis to seek the blessings of Goddess Durga for the long life of their husbands.

During the immersion, elaborate security arrangements were made at different ponds.

The Shastra Puja programmes were also organised at some places on the occasion of Vijaydashami. The local jewelers performed the traditional puja at Swarnkar Karmshala at Daranagar under the auspices of Swarnkar Kshetriya Samaj which has been organising the programme since 1954.

The activists of Namami Gange launched a cleanliness campaign at Ramghat with a call for victory of cleanliness

over dirt. Every corner was cleaned at the mythical Ram Ghat.

Many materials were removed from the foothills of the Ganges and carried to the dustbin. People were appealed to maintain cleanliness. Regional convener (Kashi unit) Rajesh Shukla said that the holy festival of Vijaydashami is associated with the victory celebration of Maryada Purushottam Lord Ram. "This festival reminds us that the people who follow the path of truth, righteousness and justice always win. Falsehood, unrighteousness and injustice can never be eternal. Let us take a pledge that we will cooperate in making the victory of cleanliness over filth," he appealed to the people. Sonu, Virendra Upadhyay, Soumya Upadhyay and many others were also present.

Dussehra Mela organised at IFFCO Phulpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Dussehra Mela was organised at IFFCO Ghiyanagar Phulpur. The puja in the beginning was performed by Senior Executive Director (Unit Head) Sanjay Kudesia after which the mela started. A grand 'shobha yatra' was taken out from the temple premises to Ghiyanagar Colony, which was the centre of special attraction. In the Ramlila was staged by the children of Ghiyanagar Sundar Kand and Rama-Ravana Yuddha were especially depicted. The effigy of Ravana was burnt in the Dussehra fair.

The Manbhavan fair was organised in the Dussehra Mela. Fireworks were also organised. The programme was conducted by IFFCO Recreation Club Secretary DK Shukla. Senior Executive Director Sanjay Kudesia announced a reward of Rs 30,000 for the team staging the Ramlila. General Manager Sanjay Vaish and MD Mishra, JGMs respectively AP Rajendran, PK Singh, PK Patel, Sanjay Bhandari, HOD Human Resources Shambhu Shekhar, PRO Sonu Tiwari, IFFCO Officers' Association president Anurag Tiwari and general



Ravan Dahan at IFFCO Phulpur

secretary Swayam Prakash, IFFCO Employees' Union president Pankaj Pandey and general secretary Vinay Yadav and

a large number of people present in the Dussehra Fair. **PROTEST:** The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad

(ABV) Allahabad University unit protested against the Stalin government at the Allahabad University Crossing. During the cricket match between Afghanistan and Pakistan, protests were held at Chepauk Stadium over the incident in which 'disrespect' was allegedly shown to the tricolour by the police and the spectators were prevented from carrying it to the stadium.

Stalin's effigy was burnt and an apology was demanded. The national flag of any nation is a symbol of that nation's prosperity and self-respect, the activists said and added that any act that hurts our sentiments is not acceptable under any circumstances.

Meanwhile, ABVP Allahabad University Unit President Shivam Singh said, "The alleged insult to the national pride and glory of the tricolour is unbearable." The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu should apologise to the entire country on this incident.

Alok Tripathi, secretary of ABVP Allahabad University unit, said, "The DMK government is continuously pursuing its divisive politics." Rishabh, Kartikeya Pati Tripathi, Shivam Sharma, Vinayak Pandey etc. were present.

Development work starts at Prayagraj airport

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

With the state government allocating around Rs 173 crores for enhancing the facilities at the Prayagraj airport, the development work at airport has begun. After the completion of work, Prayagraj airport will expand its capacity to handle passengers and aircraft so as to give it an international look.

Presently, the lobby at the airport can accommodate up to 350 passengers simultaneously whereas after renovations and expansion, over 650 passengers will be able to sit together. A comprehensive security plan has been devised to ensure the safety of the lobby while maintaining smooth access for security personnel. This strategy enables constant surveillance of the lobby, ensuring 24x7 security oversight without causing inconvenience to passengers. The funds and the expansion thereof is being done in view of facilitating tourists and pilgrims from within and other countries during the upcoming

Mahakumbh in 2025.

Another important facility that will be enhanced pertains to aerobridges. Presently, the airport has two aerobridges whereas after 15 months of sprucing up the facilities, this number will increase to six before the Mahakumbh. Following this expansion, Prayagraj airport will be the first airport in Uttar Pradesh with six boarding bridges.

The ambitious expansion of Prayagraj airport is set to be completed within just 15 months in anticipation of the Mahakumbh. The construction of a new building connecting to the main terminal has already commenced.

The current airport terminal occupies an area of 6,700 square metres, which will soon expand to 9,500 square metres. Once the expansion is finalised, the airport will have the capacity to accommodate seven large and eight small aircraft simultaneously.

Efforts are underway to give the airport a globally appealing facelift, complete with modern amenities, at an

estimated cost of Rs 173 crore.

The project is being handled by a company that has previously executed similar construction projects at Pune, Madurai and Cochin airports.

Prayagraj airport, inaugurated by PM Narendra Modi in December 2018 in preparation for Kumbh 2019, has consistently grown in significance since its inception. Over 22 lakh passengers have availed its services till date and in September this year it witnessed a record-breaking footfall of more than 55,000 passengers marking the highest monthly turnout in the four years of its operation.

POLICE GET PERMISSION TO ATTACH HOUSES: The Prayagraj police have received permission from the court to attach the houses of six persons, including the three absconding shooters carrying a reward of Rs 5 lakh each and the wives of Atiq Ahmed and Khalid Azim alias Ashraf in the Umesh Pal murder case.

The Dhoomanganj police will now take action against them under Section 83 of

CrPC. Pal and two constables engaged in his security were publicly shot and killed on February 24.

Thereafter a cash reward of Rs 5 lakh was declared on each of the absconding accused, including Sabir, Arman and Guddu Muslim, who was caught on CCTV hurling a crude bomb in this murder case.

Apart from them, police are also looking for Atiq Ahmed's wife Shaista Parveen, Ashraf's wife Ruby Zainab and Atiq's sister Ayesha Noori, for their involvement in the murder conspiracy. As all these six accused were absconding, the police, on the orders of the court, had pasted notices on their houses under Section 82 of CrPC, but even after a month, no one has surrendered. Thereafter, the police registered another case against all the six accused for disobeying the court order.

Now, on the orders of the court, an order for attachment has been obtained under Section 83 of CrPC. The police will soon attach their houses.

NCC cadets worship firearms

VARANASI (PNS): The 100th Battalion of National Cadet Core (NCC) held a programme to perform puja of firearms on the auspicious occasion of Vijaydashami.

The 100th Battalion of NCC is holding a joint annual camp at Mahadev Degree College in Bariyasanpur here and on the third day of the

camp, a religious programme was organised to worship the firearms on the auspicious occasion of Vijaydashami on Tuesday. Under the guidance of Camp Commandant Lt Col RS Moni, the worship of firearms was performed by the cadet Divyanshu Mishra.

Dy Camp Commandant Lt Col Ila Verma emphasised

on discipline and self-reliance to be skillful in life as well as armed forces. The cadets were also apprised of the maintenance of .22 rifles, map reading and objective of NCC.

In the evening session, while delivering motivational speech the national awardee Dr (Major) Arvind Kumar Singh exhorted the cadets to enhance

their knowledge circle if they want to remove fear from within them. The larger circle of knowledge of any person means that the circle of his concerns is smaller. A large circle of concern only means that your circle of knowledge is small. The growth of knowledge takes you beyond all fears, he added.

Two killed in road accident

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Two persons died in a road mishap in an area under the Dehat Kotwali police station on Wednesday. Reports said a tempo was going on the Mirzapur-Shaktinagar highway when it was hit by an unknown vehicle near Jasovar village under Dehat Kotwali police station. On information the police reached the spot and brought the injured to the divisional hospital where the doctors declared them as brought dead. The victims were identified as tempo driver Surendra Kumar Paswan (37) and passenger Anand Kumar (27) of Barkachha Kala under Dehat Kotwali police station. The police took their bodies into possession for completing the legal formalities.

ARRESTED: The Halia police on Tuesday arrested a drug smuggling accused and recovered 850 gms ganja from his possession. On being tipped off by an informer the police intercepted one person who was going on his motorcycle.

On frisking the police recovered 850 gms ganja from his bag. After registering the case under relevant sections and completing the legal formalities the police sent the accused, identified as Amlesh Kol of Pataar Kala village under Halia police station, to jail and seized the motorcycle as he failed to show its documents.

MAN HANGS SELF: A man committed suicide by hanging himself under police station Halia on Tuesday. On receiving information about the suicide of a person in Khodayipur village the police reached the spot. The deceased was identified as Shambhoo (60) of the said village. After registering the case the police completed the legal formalities. Meanwhile Murli Bind (52) of Chandradeepa under Katra Kotwali police station was run over by a train while crossing the railway track near his residence on Tuesday. The police took his body into possession.

SUSPENSION ORDER: SP Abhinandan suspended a head constable (HC) posted at

Baraundha police outpost under Lalganj police station on Tuesday. Taking cognisance of the viral video in which the HC was found guilty of allegedly demanding money from the family members of an accused of vehicle theft in the name of higher officer the SP issued the order to suspend head constable Akhilesh Rai and constituted an inquiry.

organised under the aegis of RSS on Tuesday said Vijaydashami is not merely a festival to remember Maryada Purushottam Ram but was also a festival of introspection as to what was our contribution towards the society.

He spoke about the tradition of 'Shastra Poojan'. He exhorted the people to keep the nation on top and work for



The Vijaydashami Utsav was organised by the RSS on Tuesday

VIJAYDASHAMI UTSAV: Vibhag Sangchalak RSS Tilak Dhari Advocate during the Sri Vijaydashami Utsav

making it a super power. The programme was conducted by Lkhan Agrawal and chaired by Sharad Chand Upadhyay.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Unhappy with friends

The INDIA bloc seems to be taking the challenge of seat sharing too lightly. It must quickly decide

INDIA, the 28-party rag-tag Opposition bloc forced to sit together smilingly on the national platform with the same leaders they would rather punch in their respective State legislatures, has run into another problem: All the constituent leaders cannot mutually agree on an early next date to discuss the important issue of seat sharing among themselves, which has delayed decision-making on this front. Somebody is busy in poll campaign because they need to retain their State Governments, while others are busy because of personal, religious or festival season demands. Basically, individual party agenda takes precedence over the grouping's sum total of electoral fortunes. Though INDIA, the first comprehensive experiment in Opposition unity after Narendra Modi came to power in 2014, started with much exuberance, now the reality of politics is hitting it hard. It was always seen as a challenge to keep the flock together as the parties that were ideologically different. The NDA, led by the BJP and the UPA, led by the Congress, have been the two major political blocs on the national stage. Besides, there are numerous State-specific blocs and alliances, adding another layer of complexity. But the INDIA bloc has changed the rules of the game. It is acting on the maxim that the BJP can be defeated only through a direct fight, and for that there should be no vote division. But then each party wants to contest as many seats as possible to maximise its chances of winning. As a result, alliance partners often find themselves in a tug of war over seat allocations.



Political stragglers, particularly in States with a strong regional identity, are often reluctant to cede a significant number of seats to the national parties. This is the crux of the problem with the INDIA bloc—too many regional parties or national parties with regional base, clubbed with the Congress (though currently a relatively weak party but with strong pan-India appeal and recognition), and competing for seats in the Lok Sabha elections. Deciding who contests the swing seats, which are crucial in determining the overall outcome of an election, is another contentious issue. We have seen the miserable failure of the Samajwadi Party and the Congress coming together and losing in Uttar Pradesh. Thus the parties must carefully weigh their candidate selection. The allocation of seats can lead to dissatisfaction among the alliance partners and this is perhaps the reason why the date for the next meeting of INDIA conclave has been postponed. If a party feels that it has been unfairly treated, it might contest the election independently or, worse, sabotage the entire grouping's chances. The Aam Aadmi Party is a case in point which sees itself as an alternative to the Congress, though in reality it has a long way to go. The implications of these seat-sharing arrangements are significant. If handled well, they can strengthen the unity of the political bloc and help it secure a broader voter base. However, mishandling these arrangements can lead to internal strife; it may weaken the alliance's overall chances and dismantle the alliance itself!

PICTALK



The idol of Kumaraswamy arrives atop a silver horse during a procession on 'Vijaydashami,' in Thiruvananthapuram. PTI

The pesticide must be used in a safe manner

The pesticides not only affect the health of those who consume these farm produce, but also the farmers who use them

Success in agriculture is closely linked to increased use of pesticides. Even though humans have been using chemicals for controlling pests since time immemorial, the rampant use of toxic chemicals like arsenic, mercury, lead etc started during the early 20th century. The green revolution that focussed on increasing the productivity of crops expedited its usage. Pesticides are chemical compounds specifically formulated to combat and eliminate pests. This category includes a wide range of substances used to control and eliminate many types of organisms, such as plants, insects, nematodes, molluscs, fish, birds, rodents, bacteria, fungi, and lampreys. Herbicides are the most widespread type of pesticide, accounting for nearly 50% of pesticide consumption worldwide.



Predominantly, pesticides are designed to serve as botanical defence agents, shielding plants from the threats of weeds, fungi, or insects. A pesticide is a chemical molecule, like carbamate, or a biological agent, such as a virus, bacterium, or fungus, that prevents, incapacitates, eliminates, or otherwise discourages pests. Various scientific studies have shown that pesticide exposure is linked with health issues like cancer, neurodegenerative diseases, birth diseases, reproduction disorders etc. They even harm the ecosystem balance. Presently every vegetable, fruit or spice that is produced in our country has the residues of pesticides. The pesticides not only affect the health of the consumers, but they also badly affect the farmers who use them. The farmers are exposed through skin, inhalation and ingestion during the application of these pesticides. The common adage 'An apple

a day keeps the doctor away" is no longer relevant today. Millions of tonnes of chemicals like chlorpyrifos, mancozeb, captan, dimethoate, phosalone etc are used by the orchard farmers in the once pristine Kashmir valley itself. The unscrupulous use of these chemicals has resulted in the increased incidence of brain tumours among the orchard farmers. In spices like cardamom that everyone chews raw as a mouth freshener, the presence of highly toxic 'cypermethrin' has been reported. Sometimes the adverse effects of these pesticides are so severe that it is affecting many generations. For example, the notorious case of aerial spraying of endosulfan in Kerala for over 20 years, caused congenital anomalies associated with the brain, like mental retardation and cerebral palsy. Even though the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has outlined instructions for the safe use of pesticides, which include the use of protective clothing to cover the whole body while handling, these are not effective and mostly not followed in principle. Even in farms

managed by the government, no one is concerned about the lives of farmers or workers. A few years back researchers at the Institute for Stem Cell Science and Regenerative Medicine (InStem), Bangalore led by Praveen K. Vemula developed a gel, poly-Oxim, to give protection to farmers. The gel functions as a catalyst to render organophosphate insecticides are so inactive. Unfortunately, these technologies have not reached the grassroots level. Unlike medicines prescribed for human consumption that need the prescription of a qualified medical practitioner, pesticides can be easily bought directly from the stockist. The government needs to restrict the sale of pesticides. The pesticides should be sold only with a prescription from a local agriculture officer or recognised agricultural graduate. This will reduce the unscrupulous use of these toxic chemicals. The Govt should promote organic farming by providing incentives to farmers. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru; views are personal)



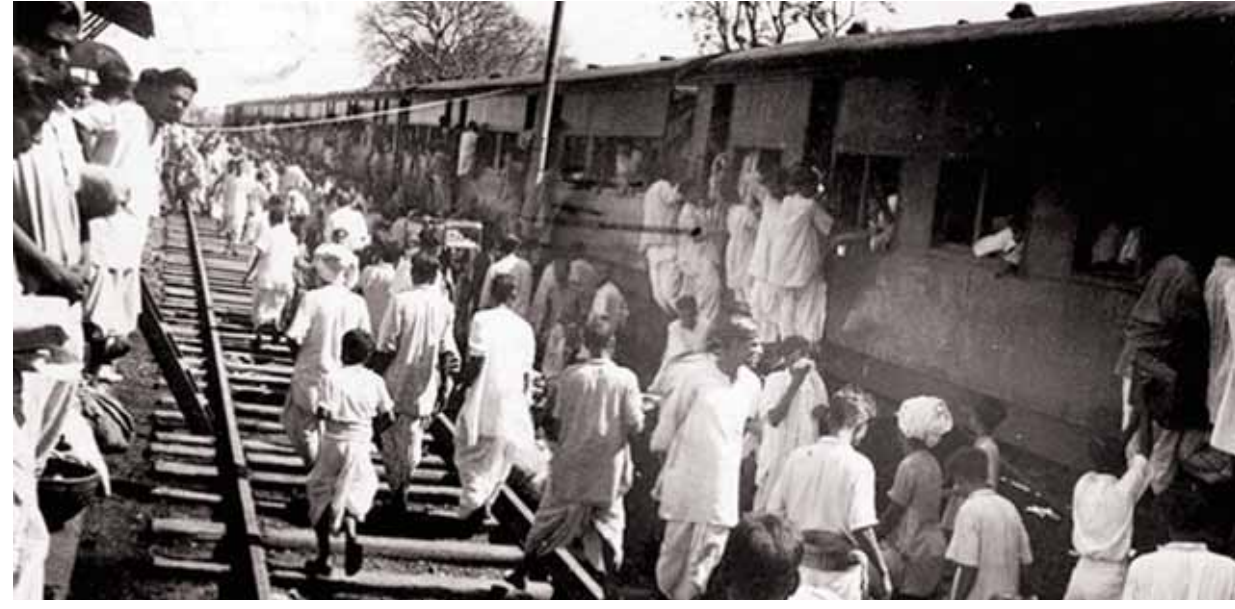
BIJU DHARMAPALAN

Was partition really a mistake?

Partition was accompanied by rivers of blood and the displacement of millions of people. But turns out, it has helped India in many ways

Member of Parliament Asauddin Owaisi has made a statement at Hyderabad saying "the Partition of India should never have happened" and it was a "historical mistake". Mr Owaisi need not have a conscience for what happened in 1947 for the simple reason that he was not born when the country's division happened. Secondly, even if he had been present, he would have been a subject of Nizam's princely state of Hyderabad, without access to the then-newly formed dominions of India and Pakistan. His ancestor Janab Abdul Rashid was occupied with ensuring that his Highness the Nizam could be able to form a third dominion, i.e., Hyderabad.

Qaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah had to move heaven and earth to win support for Partition. Punjab was happy under its Unionist Party government, a coalition of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, with the latter always the province's chief minister. Punjab's wheat benefited from an all-India market. Sindh was happy in its province, while the North West Frontier Province had a Congress government under the Khan Abdul Ghattar Khan. Balochistan was independent and not a part of British India. The situation in the eastern end of India was similar; Bengal was a Muslim-majority province and content. The insecurity was felt more by Muslims in those provinces where they were in a minority; they would have no say in the decision on Partition. The one segment keen on Partition was Muslim businessmen. They felt they would be better off in Pakistan, where there would be virtually no businessmen to compete with, whereas Hindus have many business communities. The Qaid felt that the two cultures, Muslim and Hindu are poles apart and cannot co-exist. Their souls do not beat in unison. Therefore, despite his age and failing health, Jinnah nearly drove himself to death campaigning for Partition. He couldn't survive beyond thirteen months after August 14, 1947. His weight was a mere forty pounds at the time



of his passing. His other great handicap was that he knew only two languages—English and Gujarati and had to address his public meetings in English. The Muslim League, in its desperation to win the 1945-46 elections, resorted to subterfuge. It propagated the idea that the Adivasis of Assam were not Hindu but worshippers of animal deities. Therefore, Hindus in the province were much less than 50 per cent. Assam therefore, ought to be included in Pakistan. This canard went a long way, spread by Bengal's premier Saadullah, who was masterminding the campaign. Viceroy Mountbatten had already concluded that the two communities couldn't co-exist, due mainly to Jinnah's campaign for Direct Action. The rioting across many parts of northern India was so rampant as to convince any foreigner that what Jinnah intended to convey was indeed true. There was another factor in the Viceroy's mind and that was Netaji's Subhas's Indian National Army (INA), many of whose soldiers had gone back on their oath of loyalty to the king and country. The question arose: what was the guarantee that other employees of the Crown, civil and military, would not follow

INDEPENDENCE-CUM-PARTITION WAS ANNOUNCED ON AUGUST 14, 1947. THE GREEN FLAG OF PAKISTAN WAS UNFURLED BY THE QAID IN THE PRESENCE OF EARL MOUNTBATTEN OF BURMA

the example of Netaji's men? To make matters worse for the British, the Indian Navy mutinied in February 1946 on the streets of Bombay and Karachi. The Clement Atlee government in London therefore, decided to gracefully pull out of India before having to face many such embarrassing mutinies. By the time Jinnah's election campaigning was over, by and large, most Muslims of India were converted to the idea of Partition. This is notwithstanding the occasional unconventional conduct of the Qaid. At a public meeting in Jalandhar, reported by Pran Chopra of the Statesman, the muezzin's call to prayer was heard. The Qaid stopped speaking to let the audience disperse for namaz, but he sat down on a chair and pulled out a cigar to enjoy a satisfying smoke. Independence-cum-Partition was announced on August 14, 1947. The green flag of Pakistan was unfurled by the Qaid in the presence of Earl Mountbatten of Burma. Partition was accompanied by rivers of blood and the displacement of millions of people. Was Pakistan's creation a "historical mistake" as Owaisi of the Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen suggests? Let us

take a look at what undivided India would have looked like today. With about 450 million Muslims; 180 in Pakistan, a similar number in India and 110 or so million in Bangladesh, an undivided India would have been in a state of perennial civil war, or would have had a democratically elected sultan at the centre. The trajectories India and Pakistan have taken after 1947 prove this point beyond a shade of doubt. While India today has risen to become the world's fifth biggest economy, a scientific and technological power and is on the pathway to becoming a superpower, Pakistan is a country of religious strife and global terrorism. It broke up once in 1971 and will eventually implode again. A Pakistani interviewee on YouTube recently congratulated India for landing Chandrayan-III on the moon but did not forget to add, "Hindus should thank Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah for this success, because had he not separated us (i.e., Muslims) from the Hindus, India today would have been a gigantic Pakistan; forget Chandrayan or anything else". (The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)



PRAFULL GORADIA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

STRAY DOGS POSE A THREAT

Sir—The menace of stray dogs is a growing concern, endangering the lives of seniors, children, and adults alike. The recent incident involving the Wagh Bakri Tea Group executive director raises questions about street safety. Children are at risk of dog bites, causing alarm for parents and schools. The unpredictable nature of these stray dogs' behavior poses a significant threat to public safety in cities across India. The recent death of Parag Desai has sparked a debate on social media, with some attributing it to the stray dog menace. It is high time that we consider vaccinating and implementing birth control measures for stray dogs to prevent such incidents. While animal welfare is important, we must also prioritise human safety.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

CULTURAL MARXISTS?

Sir—Mr Mohan Bhagwat has spoken about cultural Marxists and has called upon people to be careful before casting votes in the ensuing elections in 2014. Though this is a mere part of the election campaign, he has not pointedly identified the elements whom he refers to as cultural Marxists who are bent upon disturbing the unity and integrity of the nation. As the chief of an organisation whose political wing is in power, his statement cannot be simply brushed aside. It is also recalled that the elite section that was conveying dissent over some of the policies and programmes of the ruling dispensation were called urban Naxalites. Now his narrative is more to confuse people than to guide them on the right path. Because it is the organisation he leads that is suspected of dividing society on a communal basis, and by sticking to Manusmriti, it is to further divide on the caste line. It is also suspected that the launch of the Viswakarma scheme is to promote caste-based crafts under the cover of traditional crafts.

AG Rajmohan | Anantapur

Guterres consoles Palestinians



Until today, I used to consider the current Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, to be a conservative like his predecessors. Who talks about the problems of the Middle East in the language of Israel. But on Tuesday, Mr. Guterres surprised us all when he said "The October 7 attack did not happen out of nowhere; the Palestinian people have suffered 56 years of oppressive occupation". He further said, "The grievances of the Palestinian people cannot justify Hamas's horrific attacks." And those horrific attacks cannot justify collective punish-

ment of the Palestinian people." Israel is stunned after this just and neutral statement. They are demanding the immediate resignation of Secretary General Guterres. Perhaps he will have to resign under pressure from Western countries, but for the first time, he has shown the courage to speak the truth in front of the United Nations. He deserves congratulations. How can all Palestinians be terrorists? You killed six thousand civilians in the Gaza Strip. A little less than half of them were innocent children. Were these children also terrorists? Israel has every right to take revenge. But war also has a rule. It is the duty of the Israelites to follow. But this responsibility is not being fulfilled. By cutting off water, electricity, logistics, medicines, and fuel supply, are you trying to kill 22 lakh people by locking them in gas chambers? Exactly what did Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler do to your ancestors? Jang Bahadur Singh | Jameshpur

CASTE SURVEY

Sir—The data from the comprehensive caste survey (CCS) released by the Bihar government on Gandhi Jayanti has caused a flutter, reviving memories of the early 1990s. The release of the Mandal Commission report and the LK Advani-led rath yatra were two events that triggered the politics of Mandal-Kamandal. The VP Singh government's efforts to implement the Mandal Commission report and provide caste-based reservation to OBCs in the name of social justice gave a fillip to regional parties based on caste identity. The rath yatra for the Ram Temple, spearheaded by the BJP's emerging Hindutva phalanx, culminated in the destruction of the Babri Masjid in December 1992. Both captured the public's imagination and votes. It is also noteworthy that the last decadal census was conducted in 2011, and the census that was due in 2021 was not held due to COVID-19 and subsequent apathy on the part of the central government. Conducting the

first caste-based census post-Independence is a promise made by the Congress. This not only upsets the BJP's electoral calculations but also works towards redrawing caste configurations for the purpose of higher reservations, proportionate to their population share, in educational institutions and employment. Rahul Gandhi's call for 'jiti abadi utna haq' has found an echo among the opposition groups, which have added their voices to the increasing demand for a nationwide caste census. Calling the CCS a social survey, the Bihar government has committed itself to bringing out its socio-economic dimensions in a month and a half, in time for the next sitting of the state legislature, so that targets can be fixed for allocating benefits and marking reservations for groups hitherto unaccounted for.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

HOW DOES GOD FULFILL OUR WISHES?

God fulfills our wishes if we meet his requirements



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

An example of a parent vis-à-vis his son will make it somewhat clear. All children have desires, and they express them to their parents. In the case of God, He knows our desires, because God knows what we think. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 13.2) What does a parent do? He loves his son, and very much wants to please his son. He forces his son to do what will be in the interest of his son. For example, his son wants an expensive electronic gadget. Father's response most likely will be: do well in your annual exam and you can have it. God acts similarly, if we, who are generally good persons, pray to Him for something. God forces us to become dutiful, to begin with. And God has many channels to communicate His instructions.

He gives intuitions and uses some medium – a family member, etc. The reason is simple: many are good people, not necessarily dutiful because that is very tough. In the Geeta, God is very specific about 'yukta' (appropriate action) at all times. (6.17) In verse # 3.8, God instructs us to be always dutiful. As we pass this test, God forces us to follow 'dharma'. This is another big challenge. God is not unnecessarily strict; He has allowed us all enjoyment, which is not against dharma. (7.11) Now basics to get started are in place for God to take charge of our lives. He does so because these are minimum qualifications to please God.



The next requirement of God is for us to develop the mood of service. Aren't we all made to serve one another? Now we must begin doing it consciously and sincerely. I will take the example of doctors. They are supposed to give relief to those stricken with diseases. They can do so in the mood of service or do so to make the maximum amount of money by this profession. One will please God and the other will send one into deeper clutches of 'maya' (the illusory energy of God). Lord Krishna has eulogised this tendency to serve if done in the right mood. The Lord gave the example of King Janaka for selfless service. (3.20) Not being judgemental will also help greatly. Is there anyone who doesn't have faults? Therefore, we must also serve people who have faults.

Results are not in our control; they are decided by divine authorities under the superintendence of God. (9.10) Therefore, we must be always dutiful to please God, who in turn can please us by fulfilling our desires, which are according to dharma. Next, comes spiritual acts. These are superior acts. They are required to please God, and these are quite simple contrary to what one may assume. God just wants us to develop God's consciousness, because He and He alone control everything.

Try to love God. Who else should we love? Isn't God ready to guide and help when we pray to Him sincerely? Another simple spiritual act is to do 'namaskar' to Him. This we do to many persons during the day as a habit. Why not pay obeisance to God, who is the Supreme Person? How about going to a temple? I go regularly to some temple or other; there are so many options for my daily visits. I have realised that where I live is my home, but God is my shelter like a parent to a child. I am forever seeking something, mostly material. I am not ashamed to admit this because this is what I presently need. I have not reached the stage when I will seek liberation. Sanjaya of the Mahabharata fame has made it quite clear that God is open to it. Sanjaya stated, "Where there is the yogeshwara Shri Krishna and where there is the archer Arjuna (all of us), there will be opulence, victory, wealth and definite principles (morality)." (18.78) So what is the conclusion? God will fulfill our wishes if we meet His requirements just like a parent would. If He didn't God will be accused of partiality. A parent may be limited, he or she mostly is; God isn't. Therefore, let us obey God and get all our wishes, which are according to dharma, fulfilled. When we take God's shelter, He gets active vis-à-vis us. He knows how to bring us around to become deserving of His 'Kripa'.

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

Do not tinker with national pension scheme



UTTAM GUPTA

The increase in life expectancy and rise in the cost of living further reinforces the need for assured monthly income for a decent life in old age



Stung by the Opposition States, including Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab reverting to the old pension system (OPS) and these parties promising the same in the impending state elections as also in Lok Sabha elections next year, the Union government is considering to amend the national pension scheme (NPS) to ensure that its benefits to the employees covered under it are more or less at par with the OPS. This will be at the cost of sacrificing fiscal prudence. The pension provides a person with a monthly income when he is old and hence not productive enough to be able to earn. The increase in life expectancy and rise in the cost of living further reinforce the need for assured monthly income for a decent life in old age.

Under the OPS, retired employees received 50 per cent of their last drawn salary as a monthly pension. As of date, the minimum pension paid by the government is Rs 9,000 a month, and the maximum is Rs 62,500. Just as the government offers its employees an adjustment in dearness allowance or DA to offset the increase in the cost of living, the monthly payouts of pensioners also increase to provide for DA.

A government employee under OPS could not have got anything better. He was entitled to a decent 'pre-determined' monthly amount; the pension was fully protected against inflation and got it as long as he lived. After death, his wife gets the same amount for seven years and thereafter the family pension is around 60 per cent of this amount till she is alive. However, from the perspective of the government, the arrangement could not have been worse.

Given the architecture of the scheme, there was an inherent tendency for pension liabilities to balloon due to the addition to the pensioners' club every year, higher salaries of those joining, inflation indexation, increased longevity and so on. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. In 1990-91, the Centre's pension bill was Rs 3,272 crore. By 2020-21, it had jumped 58 times to Rs 190,886 crore (for 2023-24, this is Rs 234,000 crore). For all states, it shot



NPS OFFERS A SELF-FINANCING AND FULLY FUNDED ARRANGEMENT FOR DISCHARGING PENSION LIABILITIES IN WHICH THE STATE KNOWS FOR CERTAIN 'HOW MUCH IT HAS TO CONTRIBUTE'

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

up 125 times from Rs 3,131 crore in 1990-91 to Rs 386,001 crore in 2020-21.

Overall, pension payments by states account for a quarter of their tax revenues. For some states, these took away a much higher share of their tax revenue. For Himachal Pradesh, it was 80 per cent whereas for Punjab and Rajasthan, it was 35 per cent and 30 per cent respectively. Financial prudence requires that every year, the government set aside capital which together with return accruing thereon would create a growing corpus sufficient to pay for the pension liabilities on a sustainable basis thus avoiding any stress on the budget. But, that was never done. Instead, both the Centre and states have followed what in jargon is known as 'pay-as-you-go'.

This has made the present generation of taxpayers bear the continuously rising burden of pensioners. The ball doesn't stop here. Given the persistent shortfall in tax revenue, they were forced to borrow more and more thereby passing on the burden to future generations of taxpayers as well.

Unlike OPS where the employee doesn't contribute anything, NPS (this was introduced for government employees joining service from January 1, 2004) is a contributory pension scheme under which employees contribute 10 per cent of their salary (Basic + Dearness Allowance). The government also contributes 14 per cent towards the employees' NPS accounts. The money is invested in multiple investment avenues i.e. equity, corporate debt, government bonds and alternative investment funds (AIFs) where it grows into a sizeable corpus by the time an employee reaches retirement age.

On retirement, she is allowed to withdraw 60 per cent of the corpus (this is tax-free), and buy an annu-

ity from the remaining 40 per cent. This annuity is known as a pension. NPS offers a self-financing and fully funded arrangement for discharging pension liabilities in which the state knows for certain 'how much it has to contribute'. There won't be any major stress on the budget even as the employee gets a good pension depending on the amount of contribution made, the age of joining, the type of investment, and the income accruing from that investment.

Under this scheme, the pensioner enjoys a lot of flexibility; he can increase the pension amount by asking his fund manager to invest in say a 'growth fund' wherein 50 per cent of the corpus can be put in equity which is capable of generating better returns than investment in corporate bonds or government securities.

If the Centre and all states were to continue with NPS, post - 2034, employees who joined service after January 1, 2004 (assuming an average service period of 30 years) wouldn't be needing any budget support for their pension liabilities. But, five aforementioned states that have gone back to the OPS even for such employees plus other states where opposition parties promising its restoration win, will face monumental increases in stress on their budget.

In the interregnum, these states face an additional dilemma. This has to do with the corpus already built out of contributions made under NPS in the employees' accounts. Having decided to give pension under OPS, it would be unfair to allow that corpus (albeit under NPS) to be used for her benefit. On the other hand, taking away that money to pay pension under OPS will face legal hurdles. But, opposition parties are least bothered. Their sole obsession is with garner-

ing votes. They are sure to succeed in their game plan all the more because under that scheme, employees get a minimum of 50 per cent of their last salary drawn and that too without having to make any contribution. These parties need not also bother about its impact on the budget as this will arise only after 2034 when they won't be around to face the music.

Modi - government wants to remain glued to NPS, this being a progressive scheme. But, it faces a real threat on the political front. So, it wants to modify NPS in a way such that it could match the benefits under OPS. It is mooted changes in "actuarial calculations" to offer higher returns, as well as changes in the share of contributions made by the employee and the government. With these changes, it hopes to ensure at least 40-45 per cent of its last-drawn salary as a retirement payout. This won't satisfy employees who have been promised Moon by opposition parties.

Modi - government seems to be sailing in two boats at the same time. It says it doesn't want to fiddle with the core of NPS where returns are market-determined. Yet, it wants to interfere to match the pension amount guaranteed under OPS. Any such attempt will seriously undermine the finances of the state and yet there is no certainty that it will get any political mileage.

To conclude, neither OPS nor any major interference in NPS is desirable. Team Modi should continue with the status quo. However, it should create mass awareness of the pitfalls of OPS. The government employees also need to understand that the vast majority of workers in the unorganised sector don't get any social security coverage. Scarce resources should be deployed to help them.

Hanker on DEI for a just, equitable, and inclusive world

In organisations, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is akin to codifying respect and dignity, writes Amrita Tripathi and Sharmistha Ghosh

Respect is the bedrock on which relationships, communities, institutions, and even nations are based. If we break down respect into its components, we might think of it as acknowledging different viewpoints, showing support, accepting someone as equal, and treating them with the same consideration that one expects for oneself. In organisations diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is akin to codifying respect and ensuring that its value permeates throughout the organisation. DEI in the workplace refers to the measures taken to raise awareness and modify mindsets, behaviours, and practices to build and preserve a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment.

Understanding DEI requires grasping the nuances of its three core components. Diversity in workplaces entails representing varied identities like gender, ethnicity, nationality, class, sexuality, and disability. These identities can overlap, like a lesbian woman who is also disabled and from a minority ethnicity. An organisation's diversity is gauged by its representation of these identities across employees, consumers, and stakeholders. Equity ensures fair treatment, access, and opportunities for all, particularly those historically underserved. Inclusion is about integrating them into decision-making roles and fostering a safe environment, especially for those hired through diversity initiatives. LGBTQIA+ and DEI

For organisations embarking on a DEI journey, establishing an inclusive, just, and equitable workplace should be at the forefront of strategic priorities. The decriminalisation of homosexuality in India in 2018 marked a significant step forward for DEI initiatives for LGBTQIA+ persons. The need of the hour now is to understand intersecting identities and acknowledge that gender and sexual identities do not exist in isolation. The DEI vision should extend to ensuring that every stakeholder feels valued and respected. In this context, how can organisations ensure that LGBTQIA+ individuals feel safe and included in workplaces? From this starting point, policies can then be formulated to cover some crucial aspects



that uphold the safety, dignity and complete participation of LGBTQIA+ persons in the workplace. To cultivate such a workplace, organisations should consider the following

inclusive strategies:

1. Comprehensive Non-discrimination Policy: Establish a policy that explicitly recognises sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity as protected statuses, ensuring all employees are treated equitably. A DEI committee must be set up to understand the issues faced and then make policy recommendations.
2. Review of Existing Policies: Reevaluate and refine current policies, including Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH), grievance redressal, leave entitlements, and hiring practices, to promote a deliberate and positive approach towards LGBTQIA+ inclusion. As pointed out in the Apnon Ka Bahut Lagta Hai (Our Own Hurt Us the Most) report by

PUCL and the National Network of LBI Women and Transpersons, in many cases, young LGBTQIA+ persons who face familial violence are forced to give up their studies by their families. In-house programs on updating skills and support in obtaining degrees can go a long way in expanding the career growth of LGBTQIA+ employees within the workplace.

3. Combat Gender Stereotypes: Drawing inspiration from resources like the Handbook on Combating Gender Stereotypes' by the Supreme Court of India can guide organisations in addressing and eliminating unconscious biases. Choosing words and actions that empower and represent everyone equally will

make a significant difference. Similarly, Consciously Speaking, a book explaining 34 terminologies on gender, sex and sexuality was recently acknowledged when the Press Council of India issued media guidelines for covering LGBTQIA+ news which were presented to them by Nazariya QFRG and Rainbow Lit Fest.

4. Tailored Benefits: Organisations should adopt policies that address the unique needs of LGBTQIA+ individuals. This includes providing health insurance coverage for same-sex partners, recognising the chosen families of LGBTQIA+ employees in leave and bereavement policies, offering paid leave for gender-affirming surgeries, and ensuring insurance policies cover these surgeries.

5. Inclusive Infrastructure: Ensure office facilities, like restrooms, are accessible and gender-neutral, reflecting a conscious effort towards inclusivity.
6. Employee Resource Groups (ERGs): Foster Employee Resource Groups dedicated to LGBTQIA+ issues. These groups can champion inclusion, provide support, and harness the power of allyship within the organization. DEI must be a steady, unwavering process. Sustainable policies and actions will guarantee an organisation that everyone is proud to be a part of.

(Ghosh is Sr Vice President, of Social Impact and Healthcare, Avian WE and Amrita Tripathi, is Consultant, with Avian WE; views are personal)

US plans to evacuate Americans from Mideast

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The White House said Tuesday that "prudent contingency planning" is underway to evacuate Americans from the Middle East in case the Israel-Hamas war spreads into a broad regional conflict. White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby stressed there are currently no "active efforts" to evacuate Americans from the region beyond charter flights the U.S. government began operating earlier this month out of Israel.

"It would be imprudent and irresponsible if we didn't have folks thinking through a broad range of contingencies and possibilities," Kirby said. "And certainly evacuations are one of those things." The White House addressed the contingency plans amid growing concerns that the 18-day-old Israel-Hamas war could further escalate. The US has advised Israel that postponing a possible ground invasion of Gaza could be helpful as the US and other partners in the region try to secure the release of more than 200 hostages who were captured in the Oct. 7 attack on Israeli soil. The contingency planning was first reported by The Washington Post.

"The Israelis are making their own decisions," Biden said Tuesday night when asked whether he has asked Israel to hold off on its expected ground offensive.

President Joe Biden and Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman spoke by phone on Tuesday about the deteriorating situation. It was the two leaders' first interaction

since before the Hamas attack on Israel.

Biden and the crown prince spoke about "efforts to deter state and non-state actors from widening the conflict between Israel and Hamas," according to the White House. Biden administration officials have repeatedly warned Iran not to become involved in the conflict. U.S. forces in the region over the last few days have come under repeated attacks that the Pentagon has said were likely endorsed by Iran, which is the chief sponsor of Hamas, the Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon, as well as militant groups in Iraq and Yemen.

"The two leaders agreed on pursuing broader diplomatic efforts to maintain stability across the region and prevent the conflict from expanding," the White House added.

At the Pentagon, Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder said the US is preparing for an increase in violence, noting that there have already been at least 13 attacks against troops and installations in Iraq and Syria.

"What we are seeing is the prospect for more significant escalation against US forces and personnel across the region in the very near term coming from Iranian proxy forces and ultimately from Iran," said Ryder, the Pentagon's press secretary. He added that the US won't hesitate to take action if needed to protect its forces and interests in the region.

Biden said last week he believed that Hamas was motivated to attack Israel in part by a desire to stop that country from normalizing relations with Saudi Arabia.

'Population can't be collateral damage in Israel-Gaza conflict'

Dublin (PTI): The innocent population of Palestinians cannot be collateral damage as Israel pursues its right to go after Hamas, Ireland's Deputy Prime Minister has warned even as he admitted "different strands of opinion" within the European Union (EU) on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. In an interaction on the sidelines of the Global Ireland Summit in Dublin on Tuesday, Micheal Martin told reporters that Europe is united in condemning Hamas but any Israeli response has to be within the parameters of humanitarian law. Martin, also Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence who has just returned to the Irish capital after a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Luxembourg, called for an immediate pause in hostilities

to allow humanitarian aid to flow into the region.

"I unreservedly condemn the attack by Hamas on Israel. Israel absolutely has the right to self-defence; to defend itself and its people in response to this heinous attack by Hamas," said Martin.

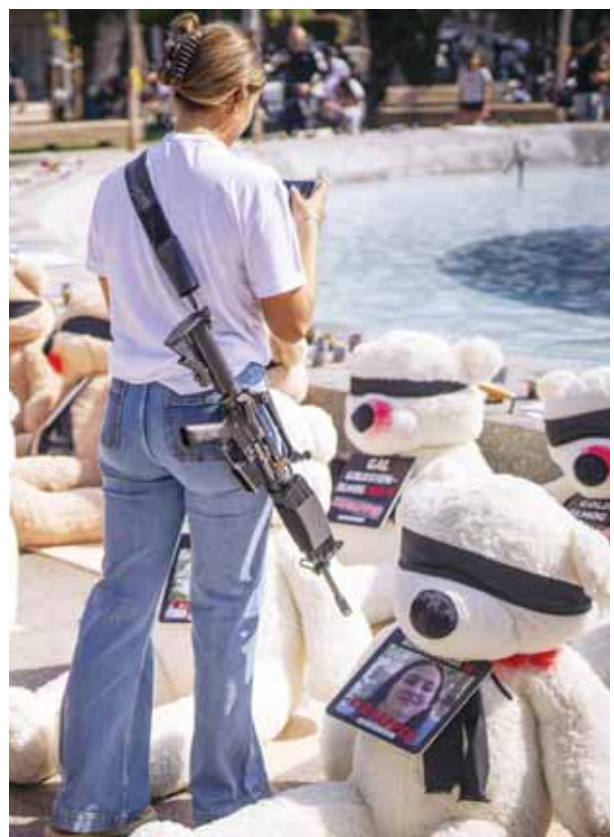
"The issue is how, what methodology to use and proportionality; the population can't be collateral damage to the degree that it is now with the death of Gazan civilians — men, women and children, possibly doctors, nurses and medical staff working in hospitals," he said.

The minister noted that Hamas uses civilians as "human shields" and has protectors and supporters in the region, which makes matters more problematic. "There's a wider chess board, unfortu-

nately, politically and geopolitically that we can't ignore. Ireland's focus is on getting aid in now," he said, stressing the urgent need to allow access to fuel that Gazans need for the desalination plants and pumps to function to meet their desperate need for "water, water, water".

The Tanaiste, as the Deputy Prime Minister is known in Ireland, swapped roles with the country's Indian-origin Prime Minister (Taoiseach) Leo Varadkar as part of their coalition arrangement at the end of last year.

In his role as Minister for Foreign Affairs, Martin is focussed on deploying the country's Global Ireland strategy and renewed the country's commitment to the Asia Pacific region within that strand at the summit this week.



An off-duty Israeli soldier takes photos of an installation of blindfolded giant teddy bears adorned with photos of Israelis held captive in Gaza, in Tel Aviv, Israel, Wednesday. The installation is meant to draw attention to over 200 people who were abducted by Hamas militants during a bloody and unprecedented Oct. 7 cross-border attack. AP/PTI

Hurricane Otis weakens over southern Mexico after battering Acapulco

AP ■ ACAPULCO (MEXICO)

Hurricane Otis slammed into Mexico's southern Pacific coast as a catastrophic Category 5 hurricane early Wednesday, bringing dangerous winds and heavy rain to Acapulco and surrounding towns, stirring memories of a 1997 storm that killed dozens of people. A strong Category 2 storm by Wednesday morning, the hurricane was expected to continue to weaken quickly in Guerrero state's steep mountains. As dawn broke, authorities had given no preliminary damage assessments as much of the area remained without power. Downed trees, persistent rain and flooding made it difficult to move.

The 5 to 10 inches (13 to 25 centimeters) of rain forecast, with as much as 15 inches (38 centimeters) possible in some areas, raised the threat of land-

slides and floods. Otis was about 60 miles (100 kilometers) north-northwest of Acapulco with its maximum sustained winds decreasing to 110 mph (175 kph) and moving at 10 mph (17 kph). The center of Otis is expected to move farther inland over southern Mexico through Wednesday night.

A long convoy of trucks from the national electric company moved through the Guerrero state capital Chilpancingo before dawn Wednesday toward Acapulco.

Otis had strengthened rapidly, going from a tropical storm to a Category 5 hurricane in 12 hours Tuesday. Residents of Guerrero's coast scrambled to prepare, but the storm's sudden intensity appeared to catch many off guard. "We're on maximum alert," Acapulco Mayor Abelina López said Tuesday night as she

urged residents to hunker down at home or move to the city's shelters.

Videos from hotel guests in Acapulco posted to X, formerly known as Twitter, as the storm came ashore showed blinding horizontal rain and howling winds.

In one, white towels danced high above a hotel's cavernous courtyard like sheets of paper and bed mattresses trembled on balconies, apparently an effort to blunt the storm's winds. Another showed wind and rain howling unimpeded down hotel hallways. While in still another, a family huddled inside a hotel room shower to escape breaking windows and fierce wind. Otis is stronger than Hurricane Pauline that hit Acapulco in 1997, López said. Pauline destroyed swaths of the city and killed more than 200 people. Hundreds of others were injured in flooding and

mudslides. Between the internationally known resorts of Acapulco and Zihuatanejo are two dozen small towns and villages perched between the mountains and the ocean.

Otis' arrival came just days after Hurricane Norma struck the southern tip of Mexico's Baja California Peninsula to the north. Acapulco is a city of nearly 1 million people at the foot of steep mountains. Luxury homes and slums alike cover the city's hillsides with views of the glistening Pacific. The city had opened two dozen shelters in the hours before Otis made landfall. Guerrero is one of Mexico's most impoverished and violent states. Just Monday, a local police chief and 12 police officers were massacred and found on a highway in El Papayo, which is in the Guerrero township of Coyuca de Benitez not far from Otis' impact zone.

California Gov. Newsom meets China's leader Xi

AP ■ BANGKOK

California Gov. Gavin Newsom had a surprise meeting with China's leader Xi Jinping in Beijing on Wednesday after being warmly welcomed by other senior leaders in a display of friendliness that stands in sharp contrast to the dialogue between the United States and China in recent years. The governor is on a weeklong tour of China where he will push for climate cooperation. Newsom's trip as governor, once considered routine, is drawing attention as it comes after years of heightening tensions between the US and China. "I'm here in expectation, as you suggest, of turning the page, of renewing our friendship and reengaging (on) foundational and fundamental issues that will determine our collective faith in the future," Newsom said in brief opening



Calif Gov. Gavin Newsom, left, shakes hands with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi during a meeting at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing, Wednesday. AP/PTI

remarks ahead of his meeting with Wang Yi, China's top diplomat earlier in the day.

Though Newsom is here to push a climate cooperation agenda, Chinese officials took the opportunity to welcome speeches ahead of the closed-door meetings to talk about

US-China relations, as Wang prepares to visit the US on Thursday. Newsom and Xi discussed ways to "accelerate our progress on climate in meaningful and substantive ways," the California governor said at a news conference, but did not mention more specifics.

Australia's state visit to feature talk of submarines

Washington: President Joe Biden is pressing forward with this week's state visit from Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, carving out time to nurture the relationship with a critical U.S. ally in the Pacific against the backdrop of escalating fighting between Israel and Hamas.

The state visit, only the fourth since Biden took office, is a reminder of how he's pursuing long-term plans to counter China's influence even as bloody conflicts in the Middle East and Europe, where the Russian invasion of Ukraine continues after almost two years, remain the most immediate concerns.

Senior administration officials said Biden and Albanese would be focused on innovative partnerships intended to support economic development among Pacific island nations, a key arena as the U.S. seeks the upper hand in the region.

The US and Australia plan to work together on building maritime infrastructure and laying undersea cables to strengthen internet connectivity, according to the officials, who insisted on anonymity to discuss details before they're announced.

There are also plans to have U.S. companies launch space missions from Australia, and Microsoft announced it would spend USD 3 billion on cyber security, cloud computing and artificial intelligence there.

The initiatives come on top of a previously announced defence arrangement in which the U.S. is developing nuclear-powered submarines for Australia. The collaboration, which also involves the United Kingdom, is known as AUKUS, an acronym for the three countries' names. "State visits are a big deal," said Charles Edel, a senior adviser and Australia chair at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. AP

Relatives of victims of alleged war crimes in Myanmar seek justice

AP ■ MANILA

Relatives of victims of alleged war crimes committed by Myanmar's military filed a criminal complaint in the Philippines against their nation's ruling generals as they increasingly seek to hold them accountable in courts outside the violence-ravaged country. Human rights lawyers representing five Myanmar nationals, who filed the joint complaint before the Department of Justice, contend that a 2009 Philippine law that promotes human rights obligates the Philippines to prosecute war crimes committed elsewhere in the world under the principle of universal jurisdiction.

Those named in the complaint are Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the head of Myanmar's ruling military council, eight of his military commanders and a state minister. Myanmar and the Philippines are both members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a conservative 10-nation bloc that has a policy of not intervening in each other's domestic affairs. Critics say such an approach has allowed human rights atrocities to persist in the region.

Philippine government prosecutors have 90 days to approve or dismiss the complaint. The legal effort underscores the desperation of many in Myanmar, where at least 4,155 people have been killed and more than 19,600 others remain in detention, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, a group that keeps detailed tallies of arrests and casualties since the military overthrow Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government in February 2021.

Myanmar has been wracked by civil strife since then, with many opponents of military rule taking up arms and large parts of the country

embroidered in bloody conflict.

A group of investigators established by the United Nations said in August it found strong evidence that the army and affiliated militias indiscriminately and disproportionately targeted civilians with bombs, carried out mass executions of people detained during operations and large-scale burning of civilian houses. It said it is collecting evidence that can be used in future prosecutions of those responsible.

The actions of Myanmar's generals also are under investigation by the International Criminal Court and in a genocide case at the International Court of Justice, also known as the World Court. In November 2021, courts in Argentina agreed to investigate allegations of genocide and crimes against humanity against senior Myanmar officials under the universal jurisdiction principle.

"My father and his friend were murdered," said Zing Raltu, one of the complainants, who wept during a news conference in Manila. "We will never get justice through the Burmese courts. We pray that the Philippines will hear our cry for help." Myanmar is also known as Burma.

The 47-year-old mother of two, who later escaped to Canada, said army troops gunned down her father, a Christian community leader, and his friend two years ago while attempting to deliver medicine to displaced villagers in Myanmar's western Chin state.

Another complainant, Salai Za Uk Ling, said at least 350 people had been killed in army artillery bombardments and airstrikes in Chin, the only predominantly Christian state in Buddhist Myanmar where armed struggle for greater autonomy has raged for decades.



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau rises during Question Period in the House of Commons on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Ontario, on Tuesday. AP/PTI

Rishi Sunak completes one year as UK's first Indian-origin PM

PTI ■ LONDON

Rishi Sunak on Wednesday completed a year as Britain's first Indian-origin Prime Minister, having taken charge at 10 Downing Street amid the turmoil of predecessor Liz Truss' short-lived premiership and several domestic and global challenges.

The 43-year-old faced off with Opposition Labour Party leader Sir Keir Starmer in the House of Commons as his office was keen to portray it as just another working day, without any anniversary celebrations planned.

In a video posted on social media, Sunak indicated a similar sentiment. "We've achieved a lot in the year since I became

PM. But be in no doubt, there's so much more to do," said Sunak.

"I know this year has been tough. And there is still work to be done to help hardworking families across the country, but I'm proud of the steps we've made," he added.

The governing Conservative Party chairman, Greg Hands, praised the party leader on his one-year milestone.

"When Rishi Sunak became Prime Minister a year ago today, he took immediate action to support families with the cost of living, paying

half their energy bills. Since then we have made good progress towards halving inflation, growing the economy, reducing debt, cutting NHS waiting lists, and stopping the boats," said Hands.

"But for the last 30 years, the Prime Minister recognises that there has been too much short-term political decision making, politicians taking the easy way out, ducking the hard choices, rather than fixing the underlying problems. The Prime Minister has proven he is the only person who is determined to change that," he said. Besides external challenges posed by the Israel-Hamas conflict and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Sunak faces a heavy domestic in-tray of inflation and cost of living pressures as the UK prepares for a general

election next year.

There is an anti-incumbency factor playing against the Conservatives, which trail between 15 and 20 points behind Labour in opinion polls — a gap that hasn't moved much during Sunak's year in office.

In September 2022, he lost a Conservative leadership contest to Liz Truss, who took over as prime minister from the scandal-hit Boris Johnson. Then, Truss announced a mini budget that included billions in uncosted tax cuts and leaked the financial markets, leading to her hasty exit.

His party chose Sunak to replace her, and was named Britain's third Prime Minister of the year and the first of Indian heritage on Diwali day in October 2022.

Cohen's testimony to resume in Donald Trump business fraud lawsuit

New York (AP): Michael Cohen will be back on the witness stand on Wednesday, testifying against his ex-boss Donald Trump in a civil trial over allegations that the former president chronically exaggerated the value of his real estate holdings on financial documents.

During his first day of testimony on Tuesday, Cohen said he and key executives at Trump's company worked to inflate the estimated values of his holdings so that documents given to banks and others would match a net worth that Trump had set "arbitrarily."

Trump watched as his lawyer Alina Habba then cross-examined Cohen, working to portray him as a convicted liar.

Cohen worked as Trump's lawyer and fixer for many

years, but in 2018 he was prosecuted for tax evasion, making false statements to a bank and to Congress and making illegal contributions to Trump's campaign in the form of payouts to women who said they had extramarital sexual encounters with the Republican.

Trump said the women's stories were false. Cohen has said he orchestrated payments to the women at Trump's direction.

Since his legal problems started in 2018, Cohen has been a Trump foe. The two men hadn't been in a room together in five years until Tuesday's court session.

Cohen called it a "heck of a reunion."

Outside the courtroom after Tuesday's court session, Trump dismissed Cohen as a "disgraced felon."

Biden presents National Medal of Science to Indian-American scientist

Washington (PTI): US President Joe Biden presented the prestigious National Medal of Science to top Indian-American scientist Dr Subra Suresh, among others, for pioneering research across engineering, physical sciences and life sciences. Suresh, the former head of the National Science Foundation, is a professor at large at Brown University's School of Engineering.

Biden presented the prestigious science medal to nine people on Tuesday. Suresh was awarded the medal for pioneering research across engineering, physical sciences and life sciences, and particularly for advancing the study of material science and its application to other disciplines. The announcement from the



National Science and Technology Medals Foundation noted Suresh's commitment to research and collaboration across international borders, which has demonstrated how science can forge understanding and cooperation among people and nations. "It's very satisfying," said Suresh, who said he takes special pride in the recognition because of what the medal signifies, according to a Brown University statement.

Imran Khan moves HC against 'hasty' indictment

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan Wednesday moved the Islamabad High Court (IHC) against his indictment by a special court on charges of leaking state secrets and violating the laws of the country, urging it to declare the move "illegal and unlawful". Khan, 71, and his close ally ex-foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, 67, were on Monday indicted by the special court on charges of leaking state secrets, in another blow to the jailed leaders who could now face a possible death sentence.

Khan, the chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) filed a plea with the IHC through his lawyer Salman Safdar on Wednesday, Dawn newspaper reported.

The petition named the state through the attorney general's office and Ministry of Interior Secretary Yousuf Naseem Khokhar as respondents.

It said that the petitioner was "quite aggrieved" with the mode and manner of framing

of charges as well as the proceedings and the trial under the Official Secrets Act. "The trial is clearly progressing, violating and compromising settled principles of 'criminal law' resulting in [a] grave miscarriage of justice," it said.

It said that there was a "visible haste" apparent in the actions of the judge.

"There seems to be a clear rush and haste on the part of learned trial judge to hurriedly frame charges and conclude trial."

This contention holds appeal especially in light of the fact that [the] challan has only recently been submitted in court, and there is no direction for its early conclusion or for conducting day-to-day hearing by any superior court.

It further said that the special court had framed charges under Section 5 of the Official Secrets Act, which was in "blatant and brazen violation of the law". The petition urged the IHC to declare the "hasty exercise" of framing of charges to be "illegal, unlawful and against the settled principles of the Code of Criminal

Procedure".

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

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on September 30 filed the charge sheet against Khan and Qureshi who signed its copies.

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

Khan, who served as prime minister of Pakistan from August 2018 to April 2022, is accused of "misuse the contents of the cipher" to build a narrative that his government was ousted due to a foreign conspiracy hatched by the US, a charge denied by Washington.

The charge sheet added that Qureshi "aided and abetted" Khan and therefore was liable for the act in the same manner.

Ex-Pakistan PM dares Nawaz for contest from 'whatever constituency' he chooses

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party chairman Imran Khan has thrown a challenge to Nawaz Sharif, saying he will contest against the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supreme in "whatever constituency" he chooses in the upcoming polls. Khan's challenge came as a video posted from his X handle. The former prime minister has been in Adiala Jail at Rawalpindi in the cipher case since early August and the video was recorded before his arrest. "Nawaz Sharif was waiting to return to Pakistan once I am sent to jail and the PTI is eliminated. All the corruption cases against Nawaz and company have already been closed," Khan said in the video, posted after Sharif returned to Pakistan after a four-year self-imposed exile in London. Nawaz returned to Pakistan on



October 21.

"Nawaz wanted this level playing field before going into polls. I will contest in any constituency Nawaz chooses. And I assure him that I will not even run a campaign in that constituency. I will tell you the feelings of Pakistani people. This country has changed as its people will never vote for such people. Social media has changed people. Gone are the days when those who had the

patronage of the (military) establishment got elected," Khan said further.

His party said in its post on X that chairman Khan had already intimidated the nation about the 'London Plan' on numerous occasions and added: "With absconder Nawaz Sharif's return, the plan appears to be unfolding as anticipated. State protocol, public resources, and use of public money to facilitate a convict can't sway

the public's opinion who want nothing less than immediate, free, and fair elections." The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has announced that general elections are expected to be held in the last week of January 2024, however, no specific date has been announced.

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari alleged that the ECP would give the polls date once Nawaz gets clean chit from the courts in all the cases he is facing. Both the PPP and PTI have called Nawaz a 'new ladla' (favourite) of the military establishment.

Khan's party said Nawaz returned to the country after four years exile because of the blessing of the military establishment which has given him assurance to make him the next prime minister.

On the other hand, Khan is facing around 200 cases.

Pak's top judge questions utility of caretaker governments

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa has questioned the utility and purpose of having caretaker governments while noting that the responsibility of holding free and fair elections lies with the Election Commission and not the interim setup.

The top judge made the remarks on Tuesday while hearing a case related to holding timely elections in the country, the Express Tribune newspaper reported.

Pakistan, which is currently being run by the caretaker government led by Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, is expected to go to polls in January next year. Caretaker governments are also ruling Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa provinces.

"One objective of a caretaker government is to ensure transparent elections. However, the responsibility for transparent elections lies with another institution (ECP) as per the Constitution," Chief Justice Isa said.

"When this responsibility is vested in the ECP (Election Commission of Pakistan), what is the need for a caretaker government?" he questioned.

Justice Isa, who was leading a three-member bench, noted that the person — military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq — who introduced the idea of caretaker government in the Constitution did not implement it himself. "Zia induced the idea through the Eight Constitutional Amendment but when the government of Mohammad Khan Junejo was dismissed, a caretaker government was not formed. There have been two elections in the country without a caretaker government," he said.

The chief justice also traced the history of caretaker set-ups in Pakistan, starting from the dismissal of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto's first government to the dissolution of assemblies by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz-led coalition in August, the Dawn newspaper reported. He observed that the constitutional amendment with regard to caretaker government was made in haste. However, he noted that it was for Parliament to look into this matter.

Chinese research ship docks at Colombo port

Colombo (PTI): A Chinese research ship on Wednesday docked at Sri Lanka's Colombo port, officials here said, amid security concerns raised by the US over its visit.

"Shi Yan 6 was given permission to enter the (Colombo) port for replenishment," a Sri Lankan foreign ministry spokesperson told PTI.

According to sources, Sri Lanka was delaying granting permission for the arrival of Shi Yan 6 due to security concerns raised by India. However, there is no official confirmation of the same.

It was not clear how long the vessel would remain docked at the Colombo port.

The arrival of Shi Yan 6 followed President Ranil Wickremesinghe's visit to China last week. In August, Colombo had announced that the Chinese research vessel is scheduled to arrive in October for marine research activities in collaboration with Sri Lanka's National Aquatic Resource Research and Development Agency (NARA). Described as a Research/Survey Vessel with a carrying capacity of 1,115 DWT, the vessel is reported to be 5.3 metres in length overall 90.6 metres and width 17 metres. Last month, the US expressed concern to Sri Lanka about the scheduled visit of the Chinese research ship to the island nation.

US Under Secretary Victoria Nuland, who met Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Ali Sabry in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session, had reportedly raised concerns about the visit of 'SHI YAN 6'. China dispatches its research/surveillance vessels to Sri Lanka on a regular basis. India has been raising concern over the visits of Chinese vessels in Lanka. In August this year, the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy warship HAI YANG 24 HAO arrived in Sri Lanka on a two-day visit. It was reported that the arrival of the 129-metre-long ship was delayed due to concerns raised by India.

IMF team to visit Pak next week to hold review talks

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The IMF will send its team to Pakistan next week to hold talks for the release of USD 710 million second tranche of a USD 3 billion loan to the cash-strapped country to stabilise its debt-ridden economy, media reports said on Wednesday.

A clarity on next general elections date can further strengthen the hands of the Ministry of Finance during the upcoming review talks for the July-September period of this fiscal year, although the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has not explicitly attached any such condition.

"The IMF team led by Nathan Porter will field a mission to Pakistan starting on November 2 on the first review under the current Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) of USD 3 billion," Esther Perez, the resident representative of the IMF, was quoted as saying by the Express Tribune newspaper.

The IMF had proposed November 7 in anticipation of a delay in compiling the first quarter data but the Ministry of Finance assured that all the relevant data was available for the review talks, according to sources.

The first review talks will be held for the second loan tranche of USD 710 million and a staff-level agreement would pave the way for its approval by the IMF board in December.

While approving the USD 3 billion loan in July this year, the Washington-based global lender had also released the first tranche of USD 1.2 billion. Although essentially a bridge loan, it offered much respite to Pakistan, which was battling an acute balance of payments crisis and falling foreign exchange reserves.

Pakistan's economy has been in a free fall mode for the last many years, bringing untold pressure on the poor masses in the form of unchecked inflation.

The federal government and the State Bank of Pakistan remain hopeful that they would comfortably complete the review on the back of meeting the conditions agreed with the IMF in July.

However, the external financing gap remains a hard area for the government, as the Ministry of Finance's internal assessment shows a wide gap between the loans planned to be received and the actual disbursements during the current

fiscal year.

Only on account of Eurobonds and the foreign commercial loans, the government has recently estimated a shortfall of USD 4.5 billion. The hole is even bigger than this while taking into account shortfalls against some other projected disbursements.

The exchange rate management and the monetary policy stance are the other two areas that would be minutely reviewed by the IMF, a senior government functionary said on Tuesday.

After showing a constant downward trajectory for over a month, the dollar has again started strengthening against the rupee during the past couple of days. The rupee depreciation is seen as a prelude to the IMF talks.

The rupee has appreciated by 8% in the interbank market and by 14% in the open market during the past over a month due to a military-pushed crackdown against the hoarders and smugglers and management of imports.

The sources said that the international financial institutions are eager to have clarity on the political horizon. Under the Constitution, the elections have to be held by November

9 but the Election Commission of Pakistan has indicated the end of January 2024 as a tentative period for the elections.

Highly placed sources told the paper that during the recently held IMF-World Bank annual meetings, the Pakistani delegation faced three major questions in almost every meeting.

The finance ministry officials were asked about the status and role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council, the prospects of next elections, and the mandate of the interim government, the sources said.

Unlike the last failed USD 6.5 billion programme, the Ministry of Finance seemed committed to meeting the conditions set for the USD 3 billion programme during the past three months. At many occasions, the finance secretary appeared receptive to the IMF queries and ensured transparency. This was contrary to the past practice when the Ministry of Finance appeared dragging feet on the USD 6.5 billion deal that eventually collapsed. The USD 6.5 billion Extended Fund Facility could not be completed and the programme expired on June 30 with USD 2.6 billion undis-

bursed.

IMF Director of Strategic Communications Julie Kozack had said in July that "steadfast implementation" of the nine-month SBA was "critical to Pakistan's future".

SBP Governor Jameel Ahmad said this month that the central bank was "comfortably placed" in terms of meeting end-September IMF targets.

He had said that SBP's forward foreign exchange liabilities Saudi Arabia to provide a USD 1 billion oil facility on deferred payment for the calendar year 2024, The News International reported.

"Pakistan has made a formal request for USD 1 billion Saudi Oil Facility on deferred payment with effect from January 2024.

Saudi Arabia has not yet given its confirmation, and its exact modalities will be worked out within the next couple of months, including attached cost and other terms and conditions," a source was quoted as saying by the paper. The facility is part of the financing plan agreed upon and worked out with the IMF by Pakistani authorities as part of the USD 3 billion Standby SBA. The existing facility will expire in December of this year.

Russian drone debris downs power lines near Ukraine nuclear plant

AP ■ KYIV

Russia fired 11 Shahed drones against Ukrainian targets, reaching deep into Ukraine while falling debris damaged power lines near a nuclear power plant in the country's west, officials said on Wednesday. Ukraine's air force said it intercepted all the overnight drones. For the fourth day in a row, the Kremlin's forces took aim at the Ukrainian region of Khmelnytskyi, injuring 16 people, according to local authorities.

Ukraine's Ministry of Energy Infrastructure said falling drone wreckage in Khmelnytskyi broke windows in the administrative building

and the laboratory of the local nuclear plant and knocked out electricity to more than 1,800 customers. The plant is about 200 kilometers (120 miles) east of the border with Poland.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his country's air defenses are preparing for another winter of Russian attacks on energy infrastructure as the war enters its 21st month.

But Kyiv also plans to take the fight to Russia through its ongoing counteroffensive, he said. "This year we will not only defend ourselves, but also respond," Zelenskyy said. "The enemy knows this well." Last winter, Moscow's drones and

missiles zeroed in on Ukraine's power grid, hoping to erode the country's will to resist Russia's invasion by denying civilians heating. Ukraine said it was an effort to weaponise winter.

Ukrainians are bracing for another onslaught. The looming wintry weather could further hamper battlefield movements in a conflict that is largely deadlocked and compel the warring sides to focus more on long-range strikes, including drones that have played a key role in the war. The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, said Russia "is likely trying to expand and diversify its arsenal of drones, missiles and

guided bombs for strikes against Ukrainian critical infrastructure" ahead of the change in weather. "Russia appears to be increasingly supplementing the use of Shahed... drones with cheaper and lighter domestically produced drone variants during strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure," it said in an assessment late Tuesday.

Russian news reports have mentioned one such drone, Italmas, which reportedly has a range of about 200 kilometers (120 miles), allowing Moscow's forces to strike targets far beyond the front line. Another is an upgraded version of the Lancet drone.

Upper house of Russian parl rescinds ratification of global N-test ban

Moscow (AP): The upper house of the Russian parliament on Wednesday revoked the ratification of a global nuclear test ban in what Moscow has describes as a move to establish parity with the United States.

The Federation Council voted to endorse a bill rescinding the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, also known as the CTBT. The bill will now be sent to President Vladimir Putin for final approval. The lower house approved the bill last week.

The vote follows a statement from Putin, who warned earlier this month that Moscow could revoke its 2000 decision to ratify the bill to "mirror" the stand taken by the US, which has signed but not ratified the nuclear test ban.

The CTBT, adopted in 1996, bans all nuclear explosions anywhere in the world but the treaty was never fully implemented. In addition to the US, it is yet to be ratified by China, India, Pakistan, North Korea, Israel, Iran and Egypt.

There are widespread concerns that Russia could move to resume nuclear tests to try to discourage the West from continuing to offer military support to Ukraine. Many Russian hawks have spoken in favour of a resumption of the tests.

Putin has noted that while some experts have argued that it's necessary to conduct nuclear tests, he hasn't yet formed an opinion on the issue. Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said earlier this month that Moscow will continue to respect the ban and will only resume nuclear tests if Washington does it first.

Japan's top court strikes down sterilisation surgery to change gender officially

AP ■ TOKYO

Japan's Supreme Court on Wednesday ruled that a law requiring transgender people to undergo sterilization surgery in order to officially change their gender is unconstitutional, a landmark verdict welcomed by advocates as a sign of growing acceptance of LGBTQ+ rights.

The ruling by the top court's 15-judge Grand Bench applies to the sterilization portion of the 2003 law only. It does not address the constitutionality of requiring gender-transition surgery in general to obtain a state-sanctioned gender change — a requirement also criticised by international rights and medical groups. The law forces those who seek a gender change a "cruel choice



between accepting the sterilisation surgery that causes intense bodily invasion and giving up important legal benefits of being treated according to their gender identity," the Supreme Court said.

The decision, which requires the government to reconsider the law, is a first step

toward allowing transgender people to change their identity in official documents without getting sterilised. But it was not a full victory for the claimant because the Supreme Court sent her case back to the high court to further examine the requirement for gender-affirmation surgery.

China announces plan for new space telescope

Taipei (AP): China announced plans on Wednesday to send a new telescope to probe deep into the universe as it prepared to launch the country's next, three-member crew for its orbiting space station.

The telescope, dubbed Xuntian, will be installed by China's Tiangong space station and will co-orbit with it, according to a statement from Lin Xiqiang, spokesperson and deputy director general of the Chinese Manned Space Agency. No timeframe was given for the installation. State broadcaster CCTV said the telescope would enable surveys and mapping of the sky.

China has researched the movement of stars and planets for thousands of years while in modern times, it has pushed to become a leader in

space exploration and science. The announcement came on the eve of the flight by three astronauts - Tang Hongbo, Tang Shengjie and Jiang Xinlin - who will replace a crew that has been on the station for six months. The launch is expected for late morning on Thursday. Tang is a veteran who led a 2021 space mission for three months.

China has made majors advance in its burgeoning space power and says it plans to send a crewed mission to the moon by the end of the decade while also pursuing other ambitions in space.

The programme largely comes in competition with the United States but also seeks to draw in support from nations in Europe, Southeast Asia, South America and elsewhere.

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Tender Notice
सिडकुल के औद्योगिक आस्थानों (हरिद्वार, पन्तनगर, कोटद्वार, सितारगंज एवं काशीपुर) में भी 0 साइट / आरओओ अथवा फ्यूल स्टेशन के निर्माण कार्य हेतु इच्छुक बोलीदाता के चयन हेतु 07 नमूने निविदाये दिनांक 10.11.2023 के अपराह्न 02.00 बजे तक e-tendering द्वारा आमंत्रित की गयी है। विस्तृत निविदा नोटिस सिडकुल की वेबसाइट www.siidcul.com एवं www.uktenders.gov.in पर दिनांक 26.10.2023 से देखी जा सकती है। इस सम्बन्ध में यथा आवश्यक Corr@siidcul.com केवल उक्त [Website](mailto:Corr@siidcul.com) पर ही upload किये जायेंगे।

Managing Director

Municipal Corporation Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar
Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar - 431001 (M.S)
E-Tender Notice No. :- AMC/Dy.Engg./Zone-07/262/2023.

E-Tender in B-1 Form for the following work invited by the Municipal Commissioner, Municipal Corporation Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar (M.S)
1. Development of 18 m wide road from MGM Hospital Road to Basayye nagar Plot no. 65 Gas Gowdown at Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar.
Tender Cost Rs. :- 2,40,74,210.00 /-

Please visit web site <https://www.Mahatenders.gov.in> for detailed information from Date- 23/10/2023

Sd/-
Executive Engineer- (Roads)
Municipal Corporation Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar
RO no. ज.क्र [मनचा] उपपत्र [मजनि] /262/2023

सार्वजनिक सूचना

सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि यमुना एक्सप्रेस-वे औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण के एल0एफ0डी0 परियोजना के अन्तर्गत भवन सं-0-KM-43-0104 in Kosmos Tower KM-43 at Jaypee Greens Wish Town, Sector-134, Noida, Suffer Area-88.21 sq. mtr. जी कि Mr. Masroor Hasan के नाम सबलीज्ड है। Mr. Masroor Hasan की मृत्यु उपरान्त उक्त सम्पत्ति को उनकी पत्नी Mrs. Hina Kausar के पक्ष में नामान्तरण किये जाने हेतु प्राधिकरण में आवेदन किया गया है।

अतः इस नामान्तरण (Death Mutation) के सम्बन्ध में किसी को कोई आपत्ति है तो प्रकाशन कि तिथि से 35 दिनों के भीतर अपनी लिखित आपत्ति प्राधिकरण कार्यालय में दर्ज कराने का कष्ट करें, अन्यथा नियमानुसार प्राधिकरण अभिलेखों में Mr. Masroor Hasan की मृत्यु उपरान्त उक्त सम्पत्ति को उनकी पत्नी Mrs. Hina Kausar के नाम पर दर्ज कर दिया जायेगा।

प्रबन्धक संपत्ति

यमुना एक्सप्रेसवे औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण,
प्रथम तल, कामशिशिल काम्पलेक्स, ब्लाक-पी 2, सैक्टर-ओगोपी 1, ग्रेटर नोएडा पिन कोड-201308 जिला - गौतमबुद्धनगर उ०प्र०

Market tremors wipe off investors' wealth by ₹14.60 lakh cr in five trading sessions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Equity investors became poorer by Rs 14.60 lakh crore in five days of market slump amid mounting tensions in the Middle East and higher valuations of Indian stocks. Falling for the fifth day running, the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 522.82 points, or 0.81 per cent, to settle at 64,049.06. During the day, it dropped 659.72 points, or 1.02 per cent, to 63,912.16. In five days, the BSE benchmark has plunged 2,379.03 points, or 3.58 per cent. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies eroded Rs 14,60,288.82 crore to Rs 3,09,22,136.31 crore in five days. "Markets extended fall for the fifth straight session as banking, IT stocks led the slump in the backdrop of persisting global turbulence. Higher valuations of Indian stocks have been a concern and the current global tur-



moil is allowing investors to reduce their equity exposure," said Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd. Among the Sensex firms, Infosys, Bharti Airtel, NTPC, IndusInd Bank, ICICI Bank, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro, Bajaj Finance, Tech Mahindra, Titan and Axis Bank were among the major laggards. Tata Steel, State Bank of India, Maruti, Mahindra & Mahindra, Nestle, and JSW Steel were the gainers. "It was a sea of red at Dalal Street which was primarily clouded by lingering concerns about corporate India's earnings, which as of date was uninspiring and, most importantly, they could come



under heavy pressure from inflation, an economic downturn, and soaring interest rates. "The negative takeaway was that the bear remained in total control despite WTI oil prices tumbling to \$83 a barrel," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.77 per cent and midcap index fell 0.52 per cent. Among the indices, teck dropped 1.39 per cent, telecom communication fell 1.29 per cent, utilities (1.25 per cent), IT (1.13 per cent), power (1.09 per cent), financial services (0.83 per cent), realty (0.80 per cent) and bankex (0.70 per cent).

RBI asks private banks to have at least 2 whole-time directors

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday asked private banks and wholly-owned subsidiaries of foreign banks to ensure at least two Whole Time Directors (WTDs), including the MD & CEO, on their boards to facilitate succession planning. Given the growing complexity of the banking sector, it becomes imperative to establish an effective senior management team to navigate the ongoing and emerging challenges, the RBI said in a circular. "Establishment of such a team may also facilitate succession planning, especially in the background of the regulatory stipulations in respect of tenure and upper age limit for Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD & CEO) positions," it said. The RBI asked banks to ensure the presence of at least two WTDs, including the MD & CEO, on their boards, to



address issues and challenges. The number of WTDs should be decided by the board of the bank by taking into account factors such as the size of operations, business complexity, and other relevant aspects. "In compliance to these instructions, banks that currently do not meet the minimum requirement...Are advised to submit their proposals for the appointment of WTD(s)... Within a period of four months," the circular said. It further said banks, which do not already have the enabling provisions regarding appointment of WTDs in their Articles of Association, may first seek necessary approvals from the RBI, expeditiously.



ADB nod to \$400 mn loan to support Government's urban reform agenda

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a USD 400 million loan to support the Indian government's urban reform agenda for creating high-quality urban infrastructure and efficient governance systems. The programme also envisages integrated urban planning reforms to control urban sprawls and foster systemic and planned urbanisation through enhancing the entire ecosystem of legal, regulatory, and institutional reforms along with capacity building of ULBs and community awareness, ADB said. "The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a USD 400 million policy-based loan to India for Sub-programme 2 of the Sustainable Urban Development and Service Delivery Programme. "The programme aims to support the government's urban reform agenda for improving the quality of urban life through the creation of high-quality urban infrastructure, assured public



services, and efficient governance systems," ADB said. While Subprogramme 1, approved in 2021, established national-level policies and guidelines through inclusive, resilient, and sustainable infrastructure, which is also in line with ADB Strategy 2030," ADB Principal Urban Development Specialist Sanjay Joshi said. "India has recognised the potential for cities to be centres of economic growth and has emphasised the need to make cities livable through inclusive, resilient, and sustainable infrastructure, which is also in line with ADB Strategy 2030," ADB Principal Urban Development Specialist Sanjay Joshi said.

VIL sets up lab for IoT device interoperability testing, certification

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom operator Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) has set up an IoT Lab, essentially a facility for device testing and certification as per standards, in collaboration with Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT). The IoT (Internet of Things) lab not only validates network performance as per device, but also helps certify solution interoperability, the company said in a release. "...Vodafone Idea (Vi) in partnership with C-DOT is offering a first-of-its-kind IoT Lab with the common vision of promoting standardisation and interoperability in the IoT ecosystem," the release said. Since its formation in December 2022, more than 50 devices across industries like automobile, utility, BFSI and logistic have been tested. As per a report by industry body NASSCOM, India's Internet of Things (IoT) market is projected to reach USD 15 billion by 2025.

However, the industry faces operational challenges such as device network compatibility and remote device configuration. There are also ecosystem challenges such as fragmented ecosystem preventing businesses to scale. "Addressing this concern, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has mandated oneM2M as the National IoT Standards for Interoperability of IoT devices," it said. According to the release, the 'Lab-as-a-Service' initiative from Vi Business, the enterprise arm of Vodafone Idea, is equipped to test 175-plus scenarios that include network and functional testing, field testing, application testing, compatibility testing, oneM2M standard testing among others. It can also test 30-plus diverse use cases across industries, including connected car. The lab has the capability to test a wide spectrum of ecosystem components ranging from device, modules, SIMs, application, and firmware, among others.



IOC starts producing 'reference' petrol, diesel for testing automobiles

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has begun producing specialised 'reference' petrol and diesel, which are used for testing automobiles, for the first time in India, sources said. These fuels, which have higher specifications, are critical for calibrating and testing by automobile manufacturers and testing agencies like the International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) and the Automotive Research Association of India. For decades, India relied on imports to meet the demand for these specialised fuels. But now, IOC has indigenously developed products that will replace imports, ensuring a reliable supply at a much lower cost for vehicle manufacturers and testing agencies, sources said. Fuel retailers like IOC sell petrol and diesel of primarily two kinds - regular and premium, through their fuel station network. The biggest difference between the normal and premium fuel lies in the octane number. The regular fuel boasts an octane number of 87, but premium fuel has an octane number of 91 or even more. The octane number is nothing but a unit to measure the ignition quality of petrol. However, for vehicle testing

purposes, the fuel has to be of a higher grade than regular or premium petrol and diesel. The host of specifications — from Cetane number to flash point, viscosity, sulphur and water content, hydrogen purity and acid number — are listed under government regulations, such fuels are referred to as 'reference' petrol/diesel. These reference fuels are used for emission testing of vehicles equipped with spark ignition engines. Sources said since the volume requirements for such fuels were traditionally not very high, refineries did not produce them. All the requirements of 'reference' for vehicle testing were imported. IOC in line with the government's objective of becoming Aatmanirbhar, or self-reliant, has started producing the fuel at its refineries. The fuel, they said, is likely to be unveiled for the first time at a function on Thursday. The event is likely to feature Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri. Besides IOC, Bharat Petroleum Corporation and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) are the other two dominant fuel retailers in the country. Between them, the three state-owned firms control roughly 90 per cent of the market.

OCS Services starts O&M services for FPSO KG-D6 Ruby

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

OCS Services on Wednesday announced the commencement of its role as operations and maintenance contractor for KG-D6 Ruby FPSO — a floating production, storage and offloading vessel operating at the deepsea oil and gas fields of Reliance Industries Limited and bp plc in KB basin. "OCS Services will also be responsible for the operation of subsea production system using topside subsea control system equipment installed on the FPSO," the firm said in a statement. The FPSO is currently deployed in the MJ field in the KG-D6 block, off the east coast of India. Raju Shete, founder of OCS Services, said, "We are honoured to be part of this prestigious project of national importance and to contribute our expertise in delivering high standards for safety and environmental protection. We look forward to our continued services to Reliance". OCS Services, a joint venture between Planet Energy Services (Singapore) and BW Offshore (Singapore), provides services in operations, maintenance, and hook-up.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Home textiles major Welspun Living Ltd on Wednesday reported a multi-fold rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 200.41 crore for the September quarter. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 8.33 crore in the year-ago period, according to a regulatory filing by Welspun Living (formerly known as Welspun India). Its revenue from operations rose 18.71 per cent to Rs 2,509.08 crore during the second quarter of the current fiscal as against Rs 2,113.46 crore in the year-ago period. This is the highest quarterly revenue by the company, which is part of the USD 3 billion enterprise Welspun Group. "It is a proud moment for the company to have reported the highest-ever consolidated quarterly revenues in Q2FY24 with

Welspun Living's net profit rises to ₹200 crore in Q2

consistent profitability in the last few quarters, in the face of the relatively adverse global economic situation and subdued consumer sentiments," Welspun Group Chairman BK Goenka said. Its revenue from the home textiles segment was Rs 2,352.3 crore, while the same from the flooring business stood at Rs 242.6 crore during the quarter under review. "It is also heartening to see the flooring business picking up well and reporting highest quarterly revenues and margin. All our emerging businesses of global brands, domestic con-



sumers, advanced textile and flooring are continuing to show strength and grew 28 per cent in Q2FY24," said Goenka.

On the domestic front, Welspun showed resilience during the quarter despite weak retail market sentiments, as a result of the focus on continued expansion, and also continued to be in positive margin space, said an earning statement from the company. Total expenses of Welspun Living during the quarter were at Rs 2,283.42 crore, up 7.56 per cent. Its total income increased 19 per cent to Rs 2,542.37 crore. Shares of Welspun Living Ltd settled at Rs 142.30 on Wednesday, up 11.48 per cent from the previous close.

NITI Aayog initiates study to develop action plan to bridge India's trade deficit with China

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Government think tank NITI Aayog has initiated a study to develop a comprehensive action plan to bridge India's trade deficit with China over time and align trading strategies with emerging geopolitical situation and potential risks to safeguard supply chains," the Aayog said in a notice posted on its website. The terms of reference of study includes analysing the trends in India-China trade (at product category level) over the recent years to discern patterns of trade dependency and underlying reasons for the same. The study will analyse the supply chains of India-China trade and also comparable supply chains of India's trade with other Asian countries to derisk India's trade. It will also examine product categories where India has comparative advantage and a sizeable market in China to scale up exports to China. According to the Aayog, the study should recommend key policies to boost domestic production and productivity in sectors comparable to the global economy not only to reduce the trade deficit with China, but also to capitalise on global supply chain shifts.

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"(The study should) analyse the type and quantum of foreign investment which may bridge the technology gap and utilise the abundant domestic manpower for competitive products. Provide recommendations to resolve the same," NITI Aayog said. The study will also have to examine tariff, non-tariff barriers, regulatory ecosystem and market access concerns for Indian exports to China. Besides, it will have to recommend measures to enable India to diversify supply chains to India, while pointing out what are the sectors to focus, incentives to offer and reforms required to achieve the objective of attracting global supply chains to India. India's merchandise trade with the world reached more than USD 1 trillion in 2021-22. During the year, India exported USD 422 billion worth of goods while importing USD 613 billion, implying a merchandise trade deficit of USD 191 billion. About 38 per cent (USD 73.3 billion) of India's merchandise trade deficit was with China alone in 2021-22. During 2022-23, India exported USD 450 billion worth of goods while importing USD 714 billion, implying a trade deficit of USD 263 billion. About 32 per cent (USD 83.1 billion) of India's merchandise trade deficit was with China alone in 2022-23. In 2022-23, among top trading partners, India has the highest trade deficit with China. On analysing the composition of exports and imports with China, it's observed that India largely imports capital goods (USD 47 billion in 2021) from China, followed by intermediate goods (USD 30 billion), consumer goods (USD 9.4 billion) and raw materials (USD 1 billion), while it mainly exports intermediate goods (USD 1.1 billion) to China followed by raw materials (USD 6 billion), consumer goods (USD 3.4 billion) and capital goods (USD 2.4 bil-

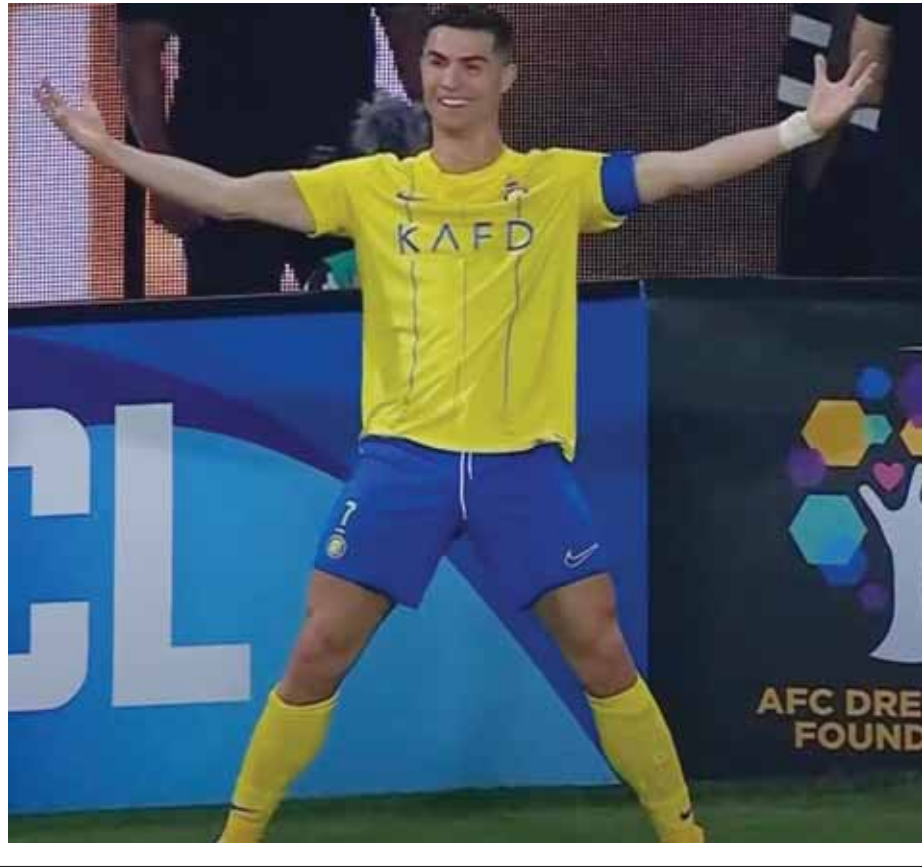
Surge in skilled jobs demand, says study

New Delhi: WorkIndia, a leading tech-enabled blue-collar recruitment platform, has unveiled compelling insights into the current job market, shedding light on the increasing demand for skilled professionals across the country. There is a 69 per cent surge in job searches for architects with an increase of 75 per cent in openings. A staggering 125 per cent increase in job searches for beauticians. Engineers are also in high demand, experiencing a 78 per cent surge in job searches, with a clear 93 per cent increase in openings. "This data reinforces the need to empower individuals with access to opportunities and bridge the gap between job seekers and employers," said Nitesh Dugarwal, Co-founder, and CEO of WorkIndia.

India had a trade deficit with China in three of these four product groups in 2021, namely, capital goods (USD 45 billion), intermediate goods (USD 19 billion) and consumer goods (USD 6 billion). Indian and Chinese troops clashed along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Tangang sector of Arunachal Pradesh on December 9, 2022 and the face-off resulted in "minor injuries to a few personnel from both sides", according to the Indian Army. The terms of reference of 'Research Study on sectors for India to be Global Manufacturing Hub' include mapping India's manufacturing sector with Global landscape and identifying at least 12 sectors which have the potential to transform the country into a manufacturing hub. Furthermore, the study will also have to recommend strategies and interventions to overcome challenges and promote growth in the identified sectors in order to make India a global manufacturing hub.

RONALDO SCORES TWICE IN AL-NASSR'S VICTORY IN ASIAN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

AP ■ RIYADH
Cristiano Ronaldo scored two second-half goals as Saudi Arabia's Al-Nassr beat Al-Duhail of Qatar 4-3 in the Asian Champions League. Al-Nassr has nine points from three games in Group E, three clear of Persepolis after the Iranian team defeated Tajikistan's Istiklol 2-0. Ronaldo's backheel set up Anderson Talisca for the opening goal and Sadio Mane doubled the lead before halftime. The Portugal star's left-footed curler from outside the area made it 3-0 before the hour mark. Al-Duhail pulled two goals back thanks to Ismael Mohammed and Almoze Ali. Ronaldo intervened once more with nine minutes remaining as he volleyed a deep cross into the net, and Al-Nassr hung on after Michael Olunga's strike made it 4-3. On Monday Al-Hilal routed Mumbai City 6-0. Aleksandar Mitrovic scored a hat trick for the four-time champion to put Al-Hilal atop Group D with seven points from three games.



In the absence of the injured Karim Benzema, a last-minute goal from Abderrazak Hamdallah gave Saudi Arabian champion Al-Ittihad a 1-0 win over Al Quwa Al Jawiya of Iraq. Al-Ittihad is two points clear of Iranian team Sepahan, which won 3-1 in Uzbekistan against AGMK, in Group C. In the eastern zone — the competition is divided into two geographic halves until the final — two teams with three titles to their name met in Japan. Pohang Steelers of South Korea defeated host Urawa Reds 2-0, Jeong Jae-hee scored the opener midway through the first half and Goh Young-jun added a second. Pohang is atop Group J with three wins out of three and five points clear of Urawa and Wuhan Three Towns after the Chinese champion beat Vietnam's Hanoi FC 2-1. Two-time champion Ulsan Hyundai Horangi of South Korea defeated Malaysia's Johor Darul Tazim 3-1 but stays second in Group I behind Japan's Kawasaki Frontale, which won 4-2 at Thailand's BG Pathum United.



Gabriel Jesus shines for Arsenal in 2-1 win over Sevilla in Champions League

AP ■ SEVILLE
Gabriel Jesus set up one goal with a brilliant piece of skill before scoring a stunning strike himself to lead Arsenal to a 2-1 win over Sevilla in the Champions League. The Brazil striker's match ended when he hobbled off with a hamstring injury in the 81st minute but he'd done plenty more damage before that at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan Stadium. Jesus seems to save his best scoring form for the Champions

League, having netted 23 goals in 41 appearances in Europe's elite club competition. It was an assist that stood out in the first half as he produced a Cruyff turn inside Arsenal's half before sliding a pass through to Gabriel Martinelli, who surged through a gaping hole in the defense, rounded the goalkeeper and converted into an empty net in the third minute of stoppage time. Jesus' goal was a solo effort as he moved in off the left wing, got the ball onto his right foot and curled a finish past goalkeeper

Orjan Nyland in the 53rd. Sevilla responded well and got back into the contest when Nemanja Gudelj powered a header past David Raya from Ivan Rakitic's corner. The Europa League holders came within inches of equalizing soon after, with substitute Mariano Diaz's strike tipped onto the crossbar by Raya. Arsenal held on and moved top of Group B in a strong recovery from losing away to Lens last time out. Lens is one point behind in second place after a 1-1 draw against PSV Eindhoven.



Bellingham scores again to lead Real Madrid to 2-1 win over Braga in Champions League

AP ■ BRAGA (PORTUGAL)
Led by Jude Bellingham yet again, Real Madrid defeated Braga 2-1 to keep a perfect record in the Champions League and move closer to securing a spot in the knockout stage. Bellingham scored his 11th goal in 12 matches since joining Madrid to help the 14-time European champion earn the away victory and strengthen its lead in Group C. Madrid has nine points from three matches, three points more than Napoli, which won 1-0 at winless Union Berlin. Braga stayed in third place with three points. Another win against Braga at home in the next round in November will guarantee Madrid a spot in the knockout stage for the 28th consecutive time. Braga has never advanced past the group stage. The Portuguese team is making its third Champions League appearance and first in 11 seasons. Rodrygo, who hadn't scored since August, put Madrid ahead in the 16th minute with a shot from inside the area after a run by Vinicius Junior down the left flank, and Bellingham added to the lead in the 61st with a low shot into the far corner after another assist by Vinicius. Spaniard Alvaro Djaló pulled the hosts closer in the 63rd with a shot into the top corner. "It's normal to suffer a little in away matches," Vinicius said. "But we played well and scored the goals with the chances we created. And could've scored even more. We have to keep this run going after having won the

first three matches." The 20-year-old Bellingham is yet to go consecutive games without scoring for Madrid. The Englishman has scored in each of the first three matchdays in the Champions League for the second season in a row, after doing the same with Borussia Dortmund in 2022-23. He controlled the pace of the game at midfield to help Madrid dominate early. Braga, which had won five in a row in all competitions, didn't have any attempts on target in the first half. The hosts improved after halftime and threatened Madrid through the end but couldn't capitalize on a few late chances. The Brazilian duo of Rodrygo and Vinicius each had goals disallowed for offside, one in each half. "The game was under control after Bellingham's goal but after we conceded it changed the dynamics," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. Madrid now turns its focus to Saturday's match against Barcelona in the first clasico of the season in the Spanish league. Bellingham was replaced late against Braga with an apparent muscle discomfort but Ancelotti said it didn't look like a serious problem. Ancelotti wasn't able to count on goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, defender Éder Militão and midfielder Arda Güler because of injuries. Braga saw striker Bruma, who was not fully fit, come into the match only in the second half. He had scored in five of Braga's previous six European matches this season.

Harry Kane scores to lead Bayern Munich over Galatasaray 3-1 in the Champions League

AP ■ ISTANBUL
Harry Kane scored a crucial goal to help Bayern Munich earn its 16th straight win in the group stage of the Champions League with a 3-1 victory over Galatasaray. Kane made little impact until late in the second half but he was there when needed to score the team's second goal. The England captain first tried a flashy backheel off Jamal Musiala's low cross but the ball hit defender Sacha Boey. It then bounced favorably for Kane to score with his second effort in the 73rd minute. Soon after, Musiala scored the third to take the game out of Galatasaray's reach. Kingsley Coman had scored early for Bayern but the German team was under pressure from Galatasaray for much of the game. The Turkish team had more shots - 20 to 14 - while Bayern was mostly a threat on the counter until the goals from Kane and Musiala turned the game around.



Bayern leads Group A with a perfect nine points at the halfway stage and hasn't dropped a point in group play since 2020. Bayern has gone 37 games unbeaten since its loss in the group stage in 2017. Just like the 2-1 win over Copenhagen in Bayern's last Champions League game, the German champions had to dig deep for a win in an away game where

they were the favorites. In front of a vocal home ground in Turkey, Coman gave injury-depleted Bayern the lead in the eighth minute off a pass from Leroy Sané, but Galatasaray had the better of the first half. The Turkish champions twice went close from shots by Kerem Aktürkoğlu, who had an acrobatic volley saved by

Bayern goalkeeper Sven Ulreich and then sent the ball over the bar when Ulreich's error gifted him an open goal. Galatasaray striker Mauro Icardi was playing despite an ankle injury and got his team back into the game. Bayern midfielder Joshua Kimmich lunged in with a late challenge on Icardi to give away a penalty which the Argentine converted in the 30th. Icardi could have scored again shortly before halftime when Kimmich gave the ball away on the edge of his own penalty area, but the Argentine's shot went wide of the post. At the other end, Sané was the main threat on the counterattack but twice failed to get a shot away from good positions. Bayern took control of the game in the final half hour and gradually increased the pressure on Galatasaray's defense before Kane and Musiala's goals. Manchester United beat Copenhagen 1-0 in the later Group A match Tuesday for the English team's first points of the group stage.



Krejčíková opens with a win at WTA Elite Trophy in China. Haddad Maia upsets Keys

AP ■ ZHUHAI (CHINA)
Top-seeded Barbora Krejčíková beat Magda Linette 6-2, 6-4 in her opening round-robin match at the WTA Elite Trophy, the first post-season event on the women's tour. The 10th-ranked Krejčíková, who has won two titles this season at Dubai and San Diego, broke Linette twice as she raced through the opening set. The Czech player then recovered from 3-0 down in the second to close out the match in 1 hour, 48 minutes. Krejčíková will next face sixth-seeded Daria Kasatkina on Wednesday. In the opening match of the tournament, Beatriz Haddad Maia upset second-seeded Madison Keys 6-4, 6-4 to take an early lead in the Camellia group, which also includes 20th-ranked Caroline Garcia. It was just the second win in four tournaments on the tour's Asia swing for Haddad Maia. Keys plays Garcia on Wednesday, in what is now a must-win match for the American to keep her semifinal hopes alive. Also, Chinese wild-card Zhu Lin saved three set points on her way to a 7-6 (5), 6-1 upset of fifth-seeded Veronika Kudermetova to take an early lead in the Rose group. The 12-player tournament features the 11 highest ranked singles players who did not qualify for the WTA Finals in Cancun, Mexico, which will be held in November. Zhu is the final entry. Players are divided into four groups of three players with the winner of each group advancing to the semifinals on Saturday.

Challenging test awaits Indians in windy Melbourne

PTI ■ MELBOURNE
It is going to be a windy week at the Royal Melbourne Golf Club as 120 amateurs, including seven Indians, tee up for the 14th edition of the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championships on Thursday. It is one of the most awaited amateur events in this part of the world, and this week it will test the young competitors to the fullest as they go about trying to grab a chance to play at the 2024 Masters at the Augusta National and the Open at the Troon. "It was quite a task playing in these winds. It was chilly and the green were slick and very, very fast. It will be a challenge and let's see how it goes," said Shubham Jaglan, who is very

keen on a good finish in challenging conditions. He admitted, "The field is very strong, but there is no reason for us not to do well. We will give our best. I have one and a half years more in college and then I will have a shot at pro golf." "The PGA Tour U (University) is an amazing route to the PGA Tour, and I would love to do that." The seven Indians in the field are Jaglan, Kartik Singh, who is just 13, Krishnav Nikhil Chopra, Shaurya Bhattacharya, Yuvraj Singh, Raghav Chugh and Vedant Sirohi. Only Jaglan, Krishnav and Shaurya have played an AAC before. Also last week Yuvraj and Shaurya played at the World Amateur Team Championship



but finished low down in 33rd place. The conditions will be windy on the first and third days, and scoring could be tough, but these are also among the best amateurs in the world. This year marks the second time the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship is visiting Royal Melbourne. Quite predictably, when the

championship was held here in 2014, it was Australia's Antonio Murdaca who won by a landslide margin of seven shots, which remains the largest winning margin in the 13 editions held thus far. India's best at that AAC at Royal Melbourne was Rigel Fernandes, who finished T-15, as Murdaca of Australia won by seven shots. Fernandes has since turned pro and is giving it a shot on some of the smaller Tours. The other four Indians that year included Aman Raj, Udayan Mane, Viraj Madappa and Manu Gandas. Aman, Udayan and Viraj play on the Asian Tour while Manu Gandas topped the Indian Tour Order of Merit, and now plays on the DP World Tour, the erstwhile European Tour.

The Australian team, which had Jack Buchanan, finished second at the World Amateur Team Championship in Abu Dhabi last week. Buchanan, who is playing here this week, did well in the event. The Australians have played this course before, so will have a big advantage as Sandbelt golf at Royal Melbourne is quite different from other courses. The huge advantage is they know where to miss it, but if you don't then it could be a bogey or worse. Also Golf Australia conducted a camp for the players at Royal Melbourne a few weeks earlier. Also the locals have been saying that they will need to use the slopes well and flight the irons shots well.

Former No. 1 tennis player Simona Halep files appeal against doping ban

AP ■ LAUSSANE (SWITZERLAND)
Two-time Grand Slam champion Simona Halep has asked the Court of Arbitration for Sport to overturn the four-year ban she received for doping violations. The court said Tuesday it has registered Halep's appeal of the International Tennis Integrity Agency's decision in September. The ITIA ruled that the 32-year-old Halep "committed intentional anti-doping rule violations" after failing a drug test during the 2022 U.S. Open and for irregularities in her Athlete

Biological Passport. Halep had blamed contaminated nutritional supplements and said she would "do everything in my power to clear my name of these false allegations and return to the court." Halep reached No. 1 in the WTA rankings in 2017. She won Wimbledon in 2019, beating 23-time major champion Serena Williams in the final, a year after winning the French Open. CAS said a panel of arbitrators will rule on the appeal. The court said there's no timetable for a decision.



MAXWELL, WARNER'S TONS TAKE AUSTRALIA TO 399-8

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Glenn Maxwell bludgeoned his way to the fastest World Cup century after David Warner slammed his second successive hundred as Australia displayed their batting might to amass 399 for 8 against the Netherlands here on Wednesday.

Opener Warner laid the foundation with a 92-ball 104 before Maxwell went on a six-hitting spree, smashing 106 off 44 balls, as Australia knocked the daylight out of the Dutch bowlers. Steve Smith (71) and Marnus Labuschagne (62) also returned to form with resolute fifties after Australia won the toss and elected to bat.

Maxwell reached the hundred in 40 balls to surpass South African Aiden Markram's 49-ball effort which also came during this World Cup against Sri Lanka. Maxwell smashed nine fours and eight sixes during his stunning innings, which was also the fourth fastest hundred in ODI cricket.

Warner, who captains the Delhi Capitals in IPL, used his cut shot to good use and also was quick between the wickets as his innings was studded with 11 hits to the fence and three maximums.



Warner was involved in two partnerships — 132 with Smith and 84 with Labuschagne — as Australia kept a steady run rate, keeping it above six run per over throughout the innings.

The Dutch might have nurtured hopes of a fight back as Australia lost three wickets in 19 balls to slip from 244 for 2 to 267 for 5 but Maxwell forged a 103-run stand off 43 balls with Pat Cummins to take Australia just

one run short of 400.

Maxwell's blitzkrieg saw Australia accumulate 131 runs in the last 10 overs.

Earlier, in a bold decision, Netherlands introduced twin spin attack but Warner took Aryan Dutt to the cleaners with four successive fours on the off side.

Logan van Beek struck the first blow with a short ball to get rid of Mitchell Marsh (9) as he and

Paul van Meekeren kept things tight initially.

Smith, who has been struggling, looked in good touch, pulling and driving van Meekeren for two fours in the seventh over before picking three successive boundaries off van Beek as Australia scored 66 for one in first powerplay.

Warner survived a run-out chance when Max O'Dowd fumbled after the two batters

found themselves at the non striker's end.

The left-hander then clobbered the first six of the innings over deep midwicket. He then deposited Vikramjit Singh over long on to bring up the team hundred and reached his fifty with a four next, before hitting another boundary to accumulate 16 runs off the over.

Smith too picked up his first fifty as 124 came up in 20 overs.

The 23rd over was a dramatic one with Smith plundering Bas de Leede for a six and four.

Warner too pulled him for a boundary before Roelof van der Merwe produced a stunning catch only to be denied after reviews showed he had grassed the ball. Warner put another one across the ropes as 19 runs came off the over.

Aryan broke the stand with van der Merwe holding on this time to dismiss Smith. It put a break on the Australian as 22 runs came from 23rd to 28th overs.

Labuschagne was the next batsman to be dismissed off the bowling of de Leede who also got rid of Josh Inglis (14).

Warner holed out to Aryan off van Beek after completing his century and Cameron Green was run out next.

I do want to talk about lot of things but it's not right time: Mahmudullah

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Without uttering a word on the treatment meted out to him by Bangladesh selectors in the run up to the World Cup, senior batter Mahmudullah said while there's lots to say, it is not the right time to be speaking his mind in the middle of the tournament.

Mahmudullah's batting has been one of very few positives for Bangladesh in the tournament as they find themselves at the bottom of the points table after four losses.

Batting at number six, he hit a valiant 111 — his fourth ODI century and first in the last six years — even as the Shakib Al Hasan-led side slumped to a 149-run defeat to South Africa on Tuesday.

It was believed that Bangladesh selectors were moving on from the 37-year-old in months leading to the World Cup. But underwhelming performances from the other batters, especially the young brigade, forced them to call him back after six months in the wilderness.

During the period Mahmudullah was away from the team, Bangladesh selectors maintained the stance that he was rested.

"It was a good time. I can't say anything regarding that time. I do want to talk about a lot of things but this is not the right time to talk about," Mahmudullah told the media after the match on Tuesday.

"All I can say is that I wanted to contribute to the team. I would have liked to contribute more so that we won the game. Probably Allah has given me the strength to keep going. I tried to keep my fitness in shape. I kept working hard. That is all I can do," he added.

Chasing a massive target of 383, Bangladesh were reduced to 81 for six at one stage as Mahmudullah tried delaying the inevitable with the tailend batters to take them as far as 233 in 46.4 overs.



Mahmudullah said Bangladesh could not bat aggressively against South Africa as they lost too many wickets at the top.

"Nobody likes to lose. I think there was movement early on, but it was a good wicket overall. We lost early wickets. We did not recover."

Mahmudullah said Bangladesh are not able to create momentum for themselves after hurtling from one loss to another.

The veteran batter was specific in dedicating his century — only the fourth in his 225-match ODI career — to those who supported him in the "last three months".

"I would like to dedicate it to my family and those people who supported and prayed for me in the last three months. I want to thank those among you who supported me, and those who didn't support me."

The 37-year-old said he was told by the coach Chandika Hathurusingha that he would bat as low as at No. 6 despite the fact that Bangladesh needed his experience and presence in the middle-order.

"I tried to contribute to the team's cause. I have seen a lot of ups and downs throughout my career. (Batting down the order) is fine. On Monday, coach told me that I was batting at No. 6. I went out there and played my game."



Indecisive England needs improvement against Sri Lanka

PTI ■ BENGALURU

England will get a chance, perhaps a final one, to drag their shipwreck of a World Cup campaign, marked by batting and bowling downtime, to less stormy shores when they face fellow strugglers Sri Lanka here on Thursday.

The defending champions have two points from four matches, similar to their opponents, and are ninth on the table.

A win here will not push them too far ahead on the chart, but it may give them that tiny bit of motivation against teams like India and Australia ahead. But a defeat against Lanka will take away even the benevolence of mathematics, which is currently scaffolding their hopes.

To avoid being in the proximity of an early exit, England need improvement through the order, and in particular their batters need to fire. For that, they will not get a more favourable venue than the M Chinnaswamy Stadium with its short boundaries and pitch aiding runs.

The last match here between Australia and Pakistan produced a combined 672 runs, and the England batters would desperately want to repeat their effort against Bangladesh on October 10 when they mustered 364 for 9 at Dharamsala.

It has been their bane during this tournament as none of their batters, barring Dawid Malan and Joe Root to a lesser extent, have been able to find their range, a defeat against Afghanistan and the mauling by South Africa still play out like the reels of a bad dream.

There was so much riding on the likes of captain Jos Buttler, Harry Brook, Sam Curran, Moeen Ali, Chris Woakes and Liam Livingstone but none of them have delivered.

Among them the malfunctioning of their all-rounders might

have been the most disappointing as they were central to England's bull run in white ball cricket.

They started the tournament with four all-rounders - Woakes, Ali, Curran and Livingstone - but three matches later against South Africa none of them made it to the playing 11. Ben Stokes played as a pure batter. Such a drastic change of template shows the all-round indecisiveness inside the England camp.

If their batting is rudderless, then their bowling is omnishambles. Reece Topley was their top wicket-taker in this tournament with eight wickets, but in a severe blow to England the pacer was ruled out of the rest of the World Cup with a fractured index finger.

It leaves leg-spinner Adil Rashid as their most bankable bowler, as he has taken six wickets so far and his economy rate of 5.18 is the best among the Englishmen.

However, England will find some consolation from the fact that Sri Lanka are dealing with an equal amount of mess despite a five-wicket win over Netherlands in their last match.

They have lost two players to injuries after four matches - captain Dasun Shanaka and young pacer Matheesha Pathirana. But that does not even feel like a loss as those two were not exactly setting the stage ablaze.

If England lacked clarity on several fronts, Sri Lanka are giving them a close run. Sample this. They brought in veteran Angelo Mathews as Pathirana's replacement when they had a like-for-like pacer in Dushantha Chameera available among the travelling reserves.

It looks like a serious brain fade as Sri Lanka's main headache is their stingless bowling. They have conceded 428 against SA, 345 against Pakistan and 215 in 35.2 overs against Australia.

'Free-spirited' Quinton de Kock must be allowed to 'fly': Aiden Markram

PTI ■ MUMBAI

South Africa stand-in skipper Aiden Markram believes the soon-to-retire wicketkeeper-batter Quinton de Kock is a "free-spirited guy" who should be allowed "to fly".

The explosive lefthander smashed 174 off 140 balls, his third century in five innings, to propel South Africa to 382/5 against Bangladesh before the Proteas sealed a thumping 149-run win here on Tuesday.

De Kock's century was complemented by fifties from Heinrich Klaasen (90; 49b) and Markram (60; 69b) as South Africa racked up 144 in the final 10 overs.

"We all know Quinton to be the free-spirited guy that he is, but he actually has a fantastic cricket brain on him," Markram told reporters in the post-match interaction.

De Kock, who had earlier said he would



retire from the ODIs after the World Cup, has now overtaken Virat Kohli (354) to be the leading run-scorer with 407 runs.

"And then you never want to clip his wings, really. You just want to let him fly. He structures it the exact way he feels (the) need, and we back that completely as a unit," Markram

added.

Continuing his rich praise on De Kock, Markram further said: "He assesses conditions really well and communicates that to us off the field even before we have walked out to bat. It adds a lot of value in that regard."

Markram said taking good decisions on the field has also been a driving force behind the team's success.

"I know that word (process) is thrown around quite a bit, but that really is what it is. And like I have mentioned, for us as a batting unit, even as a bowling unit, we try to take really good options out there and make good decisions," Markram said.

"If those options speak to the conditions, we feel like we will be in the game. If we can do that for long periods of time and move forward each game, then we hope it puts us in a good position," he added.



Momentum creates confidence: SA batting coach Duminy

PTI ■ MUMBAI

South Africa will look to carry the momentum gained over the last few days here as they head to Chennai for their next World Cup assignment against Pakistan, says batting coach and former player JP Duminy.

South Africa trounced reigning champions England and Bangladesh posting successive 350-plus totals to bounce back strongly after being upset by the Netherlands in Dharamsala.

"We are certainly going to take confidence out of it," Duminy told reporters after their 149-run win over Bangladesh here on Tuesday.

"We have been speaking about 'momentum creates confidence', you think about back-to-back wins and I guess the way we have played in the last two games, we will certainly take a lot of confidence out of it," he said.

Boasting a better net run-rate than India, South Africa will now be eyeing to go to the top of the table, upstaging the hosts when they face Pakistan

on Friday.

"Getting into a big match against Pakistan, we certainly want to enjoy the victory and soak up what we really did well. There are areas where we can improve, there are always areas that you can focus on and see how we can get better at. The next game against Pakistan is obviously a crucial one for us," Duminy added.

A big question, however, remains on South Africa's ability to handle pressure while chasing each of their win batting first and piling up big scores.

Duminy believes that his side would be ready as their mantra is to read the conditions well.

"For us, it is (about) what is in front of us, which is, the conditions. What are the conditions saying in terms of giving us the best chance to win a game?" he said.

"At the end of the day, the toss is a 50-50 call. I think for us, it is just wrapping our heads around the fact that if we are in a position where we need to chase, I think we are ready for it."

It has always been my motto to chase betterment and not excellence: Kohli



PTI ■ CHENNAI

Enjoying a good run of form in the ongoing World Cup, star India batter Virat Kohli says his motto has always been to chase betterment and not excellence.

Kohli is currently India's highest run-scorer in the tournament, having made 354 runs in five outings at an average of 118.00, including a century and three half-centuries.

"I have always worked on how I can better myself every day, every practice session, every year and every season. So, that is what has helped me play for this long and perform," Kohli told Star Sports.

"I don't think it is possible to perform consistently without having that mindset, because if performance is your goal, then one can get satisfied after a while and stop working on their game."

"It has always been my motto to chase betterment and not excellence because I honestly don't know what the definition of excellence is. There is no limit to it, nor there is a set standard that when you reach here you have achieved excellence."

Pandya may miss more World Cup matches, continues his recovery at NCA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star all-rounder Hardik Pandya is likely to sit out of India's next two World Cup matches as he is yet to recover from his ankle injury that rendered him out of action last week.

Pandya had slipped in his follow-through while playing against Bangladesh in Pune on October 19 and missed the clash against New Zealand in Dharamsala on October 22.

The Bardoa player had reported to National Cricket Academy on Monday in Bengaluru for injury management.

"Hardik is still under medication. While the swelling on his left ankle has subsided considerably, he will start bowling only towards the weekend. Right

now, important is to give him time to recover," an NCA source told PTI.

Since India are in a very strong position to make the semifinals, having won all five matches so far, Pandya could easily be rested for the next two matches that will allow him complete recovery before the knock-outs.

"Pandya has suffered a bad sprain but fortunately not a fracture. The BCCI medical team wants to take maximum precaution. He is likely to miss next two to three matches. The team wants him fully fit for the knock-out stage," added a BCCI source.

India next play against defending champions England on October 29 in Lucknow and take on Sri Lanka in Mumbai on November 2.

Lack of aggression is costing England dear in World Cup: Moeen

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Over the last few years, England's success in the white ball formats was built on downright aggression, and all-rounder Moeen Ali on Tuesday admitted that the defending champions have not been able to produce that kind of cricket in this World Cup.

England have lost three games out of four in this tournament and are in dire need to win the next matches to keep their hopes of reaching the semifinals alive.

"We've been playing aggressive

cricket since 2015 and done it quite well. I think the lack of that way of cricket has probably cost us a little bit in this tournament.

"I think we need to play that way, but without slogging the ball, but just be that really aggressive side that we know we can be," said Ali in the pre-match press conference.

However, Ali was candid enough to say that playing that brand of cricket is not always easy, as it required sustained aggression.

"It's not always that easy. Yeah, most of the time you want the



guys to score quickly and score for longer periods, so then it makes it easier for everybody else. But it doesn't always work

like that," he said.

However, the 36-year-old hoped that openers - Jonny Bairstow and Dawid Malan - and the No. 3

batter would fire soon so that the middle-order players can cash in on it, something of a template South Africa have been setting here.

"If you get your openers and your top three firing, it certainly helps everybody else and you get in the big scores aside."

"We've spoken about it, and it's not always easy. We know you can't do it all the time. But the guys are due for some runs, and hopefully, it's going to come now," he added.

Ali reasoned that his and captain Jos Buttler's experience of playing in the IPL would come

good for England at some stage in the tournament.

"Jos has played a lot here as well, so he knows a lot of the conditions, and he knows what happens in India. And yeah, he bounces a few ideas off me, and I do the same thing," he said.

The Warwickshire all-rounder said the team as a whole will have to regroup quickly to affect a turnaround in its fortunes.

"We're disappointed. You've got to move on as quick as you can and regroup. Everything is a must-win and we know we've been in this position before, probably not to this degree."