

OPINION 6
BRINGING THE
VETERANS HOME

WORLD 8
CROWD STORMS RUSSIAN AIRPORT
TO PROTEST FLIGHT FROM ISRAEL

MONEY 10
MARKETS LOG GAINS
FOR 2ND DAY ON BUYING

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PAK TO GIVE ALL IN
MUST-WIN AGAINST
BANGLADESH
12 SPORT

Kerala blast has Terror link

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The bomb blast on Sunday at the prayer meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) that claimed three lives was a well-planned and executed act of terrorism, according to Intelligence Bureau officials probing the case. Though Dominic Martin, the JW follower-turned-rebel, surrendered to the police with claims that he alone was responsible for the explosion perpetrated by a tiffin box bomb powered with IED, the IB has found out that he was helped in the act by various people including Bangladesh-based terrorist groups. "The telephone numbers given by Martin are fake and do not exist," IB officials told a satellite TV news channel on Monday.

Martin's claim that he learned how to assemble the bomb and IED from YouTube has fallen apart as the IB officials pointed out that one would not be able to comprehend the technology, especially a person who has no basic technical qualifications. "He received help from others in acquiring the materials to make the bomb," said an IB official. RVS Mani, a former bureaucrat who gained fame with his book "The Myth of Hindu Terror," informed The Pioneer that Martin's claim is akin to that of an assembly-line-manufactured accused. He emphasised that crafting a tiffin box bomb and IED is not achievable without external assistance. Mani drew a parallel between Martin and



National Security Guard personnel inspect the blast site at Samra Convention Centre in Kalamassery in Kochi on Monday

Pranesh Pillai (who converted to Islam and adopted the name Javed Ghulam), recalling that Pillai, along with three others, was fatally shot by the Gujarat Police and Intelligence Bureau on June 15, 2004. They were allegedly on a mission to assassinate the then Chief Minister of Gujarat in Gandhinagar. He expressed shock over the attempt by the Kerala Police and the media to subvert the investigation by portraying Dominic Martin as the sole person responsible for the bomb blast. "The Chief of Kerala Police, Sheikh Darvesh, was heard telling reporters that the investigation into the Kalamassery blast would be

conducted as directed by the Chief Minister. Is it the Chief Minister who decides the type of investigation to be carried out in a case like this?" asked Mani. He said there was an attempt to conceal the true culprits in the case. The police chief has urged people not to post any messages on social media. "We will take stringent action against those spreading false and fake news through social media," warned Darvesh. Leaders of various Islamist organisations, including the Muslim League, openly stated on Monday that they accused a certain section of people of attempting to depict a partic-

ular community as terrorists. "The reactions of some political and social groups are driven by preconceived notions and prejudice," said Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal, president of the Muslim League. Earlier in the day, Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar stated to the media that Kerala has become a safe haven for terrorists and anti-national elements. In response, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan countered by accusing the Union Minister of making baseless claims. Vijayan said, "He and his group are upset over the support given by the people of Kerala to Hamas and Palestine. His style of pol-

itics won't work here." Chandrasekhar was referring to Vijayan's frequent visits to New Delhi as part of his effort to position himself as a potential Prime Ministerial candidate for the Opposition parties. On Monday, the BJP's Kerala unit staged a protest at the Government Secretariat, demanding the resignation of Vijayan as the Chief Minister. BJP chief JP Nadda, who led the protest, described the CPI(M) Government as the most corrupt government the State has witnessed. He said the CPI(M) and the Congress were collaborating with terrorists and anti-national forces as part of their appeasement policy.

Attacks on migrants continue in Kashmir

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

After a brief lull, terrorists in Kashmir Valley have once again started resorting to an old tactic of attacking soft targets. A day after an Inspector rank officer of Jammu & Kashmir Police was targeted by terrorists in the Eidgah area of downtown Srinagar, a brick kiln worker hailing from Uttar Pradesh was killed in cold blood in the Tumchi Nowpora area of South Kashmir's Pulwama district on Monday. Jammu & Kashmir police identified the labourer as 38-year-old Mukesh Kumar, a resident of Bhatpura, Unnao district near Kanpur. Mukesh was earning his livelihood by working in a nearby brick kiln.

On Monday as he was approaching a local shop to get some items, he was targeted by unidentified terrorists. With multiple bullet wounds, Kumar was rushed to the nearby hospital but he succumbed to his injuries. Earlier on Sunday, a police officer, playing a game of cricket, was critically wounded after he was targeted by an unidentified terrorist at the Eidgah ground in downtown Srinagar. According to police, the terrorist used a pistol to target the police officer identified as Masroor Ahmad. The police officer had also



received multiple wounds, including in the head. He was operated upon by a team of doctors at the Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Science (SKIMS). J&K DGP Dilbagh Singh on Monday confirmed the injured officer is recovering in the hospital. Sounding a word of caution, the outgoing police chief said threats are still around and cops have to be careful and cautious about incidents like the attack on a police officer while playing cricket at a playground here. "We have to be cautious. The threats are still around; we cannot take these so lightly. We have to be careful, we have to be cautious and I pray that he will come out of it," Dilbagh Singh, who is set to retire on

October 31, told reporters on the sidelines of a function in Srinagar. He said the officer had gone to play cricket when he was attacked by terrorists. Asked if Pakistan will try to disrupt the atmosphere in view of forthcoming elections, Singh, without naming Islamabad, said the neighbouring country has always tried to disturb peace in Jammu & Kashmir. "Elections or no elections, they (Pakistan) have always been trying to disturb the peace here, ensuring that the military continues here but our brave force JKP with the support of other forces, including army and people, have been able to eliminate that design and ill-intended actions by our adversary. I am sure that will continue," he said.



An anti-smog gun sprays water vapour to curb air pollution in Delhi on Monday

Toxins engulf Delhi's lungs

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Air pollution levels entered the "severe" zone in parts of Delhi on Monday, while the overall air quality index (AQI) in the city stood in the "very poor" category for the third consecutive day, with the AQI crossing over 400 in several areas. Rohini (418), Wazirpur (419), Mundka (422), and Delhi University (408) recorded "severe" air quality (AQI above 400). The AQI serves as a measure of pollution levels. A higher AQI value indicates a greater level of air pollution and increased health concerns. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the city's 24-hour average AQI was recorded at 347 at 4 pm, worsening from 325 on Sunday, 304 on Saturday and 261 (poor) on Friday. The CPCB data shows that the air quality is recorded in the "very poor" category in various areas: Anand Vihar (384), Ashok Vihar (374), Bawana (384), Burari (377), Delhi Technological University (353), Dwarka (347), ITO (330), Jhangeripuri (383), Narela (353), Nehru Vihar (379), Vivek Vihar (380), and Shadipur (391).

The AQI was 272 in neighbouring Ghaziabad, 300 in Faridabad, 203 in Gurugram, 303 in Noida and 336 in Greater Noida. According to CPCB officials, the air quality is expected to remain "very poor" for a few

more days. The Capital's air quality in October 2023 has been worse compared to the last two years, and meteorologists attribute it to the lack of rainfall. The Centre's Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has ordered that only electric, CNG and BS VI-compliant diesel buses will be allowed to operate between Delhi and the cities and towns of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan falling within the NCR from November 1. As the AQI has entered the "severe zone", the Government may impose ban on construction activities in Delhi and NCR. The Bharat Stage emission standards set legal limits on the amount of air pollutants such as carbon monoxide and particulate matter that vehicles in India can emit. These standards focus on improving emission control, fuel efficiency and engine design. As vehicle manufacturers provide vehicles that meet these new norms, oil companies supply fuel that adheres to the BS-VI standards, known as the world's cleanest fuel. The city's air quality deteriorated to "very poor" on October 28 due to slow wind speed at night and a dip in the temperatures. The AQI was 256 on October 26, 243 on October 25 and 220 on October 24. Special drives to check dust, vehicular and industrial pollution are already underway in the city.

AAP dealt a death blow

CM Kejriwal summoned by ED, Sisodia gets no SC relief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a double whammy for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday summoned Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for questioning in an excise policy-linked money-laundering case on November 2, and the Supreme Court on Monday denied former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia bail in the same case. Kejriwal (55) has been issued the summons under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and according to the sources, the agency will record his statement once he depose before the investigating officer of the case in Delhi. The ED has mentioned Kejriwal's name multiple times in its chargesheets filed in the case and said the accused were in touch with the AAP leader regarding the preparation and execution of the now-scrapped Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22. In a related development, the

Supreme Court rejected two separate bail pleas of Sisodia in corruption and money-laundering cases related to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam and said the accusation of "windfall gains" of ₹338 crore to wholesale liquor dealers was "tentatively supported" by evidence. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and SVN Bhatti, which termed several charges levelled by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) against Sisodia as debatable, said, "However, there is one clear ground or charge in the complaint filed under the PMLA Act, which is free from perceptible legal challenge and the facts as alleged are tentatively supported by material and evidence." It referred to the CBI's chargesheet, which said the excess amount of 7 per cent commission/fee earned by the wholesale distributors of ₹338 crore constitute an offence as defined under section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, which relates to a public ser-

vant being bribed. The bench said as per the ED's complaint, the amount of ₹338 crore constituted the proceeds of crime. "This amount was earned by the wholesale distributors in a span of ten months. This figure cannot be disputed or challenged. Thus, the new excise policy was meant to give windfall gains to select few wholesale distributors, who in turn had agreed to give kickbacks and bribes," the bench noted from the CBI's charge sheet, adding, the "conspiracy and involvement of the appellant - Manish Sisodia is well established". Regarding the claim of ₹2.20 crore bribe paid to Sisodia, as stated by alleged middleman Dinesh Arora, the bench said it is not a charge or an allegation made in the chargesheet filed by the CBI and it may be difficult to regard the alleged payment as a "proceed of crime" under the PMLA. It noted the ED's submission that a portion of the alleged

proceeds of crime was used by the AAP to fund its Goa election campaign. "The Directorate of Enforcement (DoE) has stated at the Bar, and in the written submissions, that once the quantum of amount used in the election in Goa is ascertained, a decision to consider AAP as an accused under Section 3 will be taken. It is stated by the DoE that the matter in this regard is being processed," the bench noted. The bench said the ED's allegation that a kickback of ₹100 crore was actually paid by a liquor cartel is a matter of debate. "However, there is an assertion, and the DoE has relied on evidence and material, that a portion thereof, that is, ₹45 crore was transferred through Hawala for the Goa election and used by AAP, a political party, which is a juristic person. The AAP is not being prosecuted. The charge that the appellant Manish Sisodia is vicariously liable in terms of Section

70 of the PML Act cannot be alleged and has not been argued," it said. The bench said, "Prima facie, there is lack of clarity, as specific allegation on the involvement of the appellant - Manish Sisodia, direct or indirect, in the transfer of ₹45 crore to AAP for the Goa elections is missing." Justice Khanna, who penned the 41-page verdict said, "In view of the aforesaid discussion and for the reasons stated, we are not inclined to accept the prayer for grant of bail at this stage". Referring to a 2020 apex court verdict in a case against Congress leader P Chidambaram, the bench said the former union minister had served 49 days in prison, and it was concerned about the "prolonged" incarceration of Sisodia. "Detention or jail before being pronounced guilty of an offence should not become punishment without trial. If the trial gets protracted despite

assurances of the prosecution, and it is clear that the case will not be decided within a foreseeable time, the prayer for bail may be meritorious," the bench said. It added while the prosecution may pertain to an economic offence, it may not be proper to equate these cases with those punishable with death, imprisonment for life, 10 years or more like offences under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, murder, cases of rape, dacoity, kidnapping for ransom, mass violence, etc. "Neither is this a case where 100/1000s of depositors have been defrauded. The allegations have to be established and proven. The right to bail in cases of delay, coupled with incarceration for a long period, depending on the nature of the allegations, should be read into Section 439 of the Code and Section 45 of the PML Act," it said. Sisodia was arrested by the CBI on February 26.

Gaza: A War Nobody Wanted

AP ■ KHAN YOUNIS

Israeli troops and tanks pushed deeper into Gaza on Monday, advancing on two sides of the territory's main city, as the UN and medical staff warned that airstrikes have hit closer to hospitals where tens of thousands of Palestinians have sought shelter alongside thousands of wounded. The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, says nearly 672,000 Palestinians are sheltering in its schools and other facilities across Gaza, which have reached four times their capacity. Some have been there for weeks, without knowing when they will be able to return home or if their homes have been demolished by airstrikes. Video circulating on social media showed an Israeli tank and bulldozer in central Gaza blocking the territory's main

highway, which the Israeli military in recent weeks has suggested Palestinians use to evacuate to the south. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who remain in the north would no longer be able to escape if the road is blocked. The video, taken by a local journalist, shows a car approaching an earth barrier across the road. The car stops and turns around. As it heads away, a tank appears to open fire, and an explosion engulfs the car. The journalist, in another car, races away in terror, screaming, "Go back! Go back!" at an approaching ambulance and other vehicles. The Gaza Health Ministry later said three people were killed in the car that was hit. The Israeli military declined to comment on where its forces were deployed. Israel said late on Monday that a female soldier captured by



Palestinians wounded in an Israeli strike on the Gaza Strip wait for treatment in a hospital in Rafah on Monday

Hamas militants has been released during its ground operations in Gaza. The military provided few details, but she appears to be the first captive to be freed since Israel stepped up its ground war. The military says Private Ori

Megidish "was medically checked, is doing well, and has met with her family." Hours earlier, the militant Hamas movement ruling Gaza released a short video on Monday purporting to show three women captured during

its wide-ranging October 7 attack inside Israel, which triggered the war. One of the women delivers a brief statement, likely under duress, criticizing Israel's response to the hostage crisis. Hamas and other militants captured around 240 people during the deadly raid and have said they will release them in return for thousands of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, including many implicated in deadly attacks on Israelis. Israel has dismissed the offer. It was not clear when the video was made, but it was likely to add to the mounting domestic pressure on Israel's leaders. Families of the captives who met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the weekend expressed support for an exchange. The Associated Press usually refrains from reporting details of hostage videos because they

show individuals speaking under duress and are often used for propaganda purposes. The Israeli military has been vague about its operations inside Gaza, including the location and number of troops. But the movements of recent days, including stepped-up ground operations both north and east of Gaza City, combined with calls for residents to head south, point to a focus on the city. Israel says much of Hamas' forces and militant infrastructure, including hundreds of kilometers of tunnels, are in Gaza City, which before the war was home to over 650,000 people, a population comparable to that of Washington, DC. Casualties on both sides are expected to rise sharply if Israeli forces expand their ground operation and end up battling Palestinian militants in dense residential areas.

Maratha quota stir turns violent, leaders face heat

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The ongoing hunger agitation by Shivba Sanghata President Manoj Jarange-Patil over job and education reservations to Maratha community on Monday resulted in a violent backlash on Monday, as his pro-quota activists attacked the houses of three ruling alliance MLAs, vandalised vehicles of three thesildars and also targeted State transport buses, burnt tyres and pelted stone at different places in Marathwada.



three thesildars have been damaged in stone throwing incidents indulged in by the protesting pro-reservation activists. The NCP office was set on fire at Beed, while a portion of Zilla Parishad office was torched, while Shiridi town in Ahmednagar district also observed a shutdown in support of the Maratha quotas.

Bengal Minister, aides' assets under ED radar

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The huge number of properties accumulated by Bengal Minister Jyoti Priya Mallick — and his cronies — arrested for his alleged role in the multi-crore ration scam have come under the radar of Enforcement Directorate.

Besides, Rehman who allegedly ran many of his businesses in partnership with Mallick's wife and daughter also has properties in Dubai, sources said. This, besides lands and farmhouses at Bolpur Shantiniketan, a popular tourist spot.



erty grew 900 times and why was he not granted bail considering the non-availability of prima facie evidence."

allegedly earned during the pandemic period by way of giving tuitions. Adhikari also said that Mallicks owned at least three luxury hotels in the beach town of Digha and some farmhouses in Delhi.

obtained zero marks was finally given 162 thereby enabling him to land the job of a State civil services officer.

BJP wants probe into WB Health Dept

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Close on the heels of the arrest of senior Bengal minister Jyoti Priya Mallick for his alleged role in the ration scam, State BJP president, Sukanta Majumdar on Monday said he had written a letter to Governor CV Ananda Bose, drawing his attention to the scams that have taken place in the State Health Department.



investigation is done in the Health department scam too," Majumdar said. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is the minister in charge of the Health Department.

ministers and senior officials are involved in the scams in all these departments and if a thorough investigation is done then the entire Cabinet will have to be run from jail which is not possible...



Andhra accident: Initial probe points a finger at Rayagada passenger train crew

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/VISHAKAPATNAM

A preliminary railway probe into the Sunday night accident in Andhra Pradesh has held the driver and the assistant driver of Rayagada Passenger train responsible for the collision as it passed two defective auto signals violating norms. Both crew members were killed in the accident.

over 50 train passengers. Waltair Divisional Railway Manager Saurabh Prasad of the East Coast Railway Zone (ECR) confirmed the death of the guard.

Climate change most disruptive phenomena, says PK Mishra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Principal Secretary PK Mishra on Monday said climate change is the most disruptive phenomena of our times. Addressing the 98th common foundation course of trainee civil services officers at Kevadia in Gujarat, Mishra said that members of the elite civil services they need to equip themselves with insights and skills to navigate challenges and opportunities presented by issues, including climate change.

ers, representing 16 civil services of India as well as three of Bhutan. Speaking about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of India as a developed country, Mishra said Modi believes India should achieve the status of a developed country while caring for both nature and culture, according to a statement.

ive, and corruption, casteism and communalism will have no place in our national life," said Mishra, who is serving as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Principal Secretary.

He highlighted the use of technology in governance through initiatives such as GeM (Global e-Marketplace), GST, PFMS, DBT and UPI, Poshan Tracker ICT application and faceless tax assessment.

Disrespect to national anthem case: Court dismisses plaint against Mamata

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A court here on Monday dismissed the complaint against West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for allegedly showing disrespect to the national anthem at an event here in 2021, citing that "no offence is made out".



the complaint said, "no offence was made out" against Banerjee. Taking cognisance of Gupta's complaint, the magistrate court had in February 2022 issued a summons to the West Bengal chief minister.

PUBLIC NOTICE: BE IT KNOWN TO ALL THAT My clients Shri Rama Shankar S/o Sh. Subhal Singh and Ms. Sharda Devi W/o. Sh. Rama Shankar...

PUBLIC NOTICE: My wife Late Mrs Shashi Srivastava R/o D-47 A Chattarpur Enclave, New Delhi -110074, Booked a Unit Number 74-301 Project Supertech Basera, Sector 79, 79B, Gurgaon-122001.

PUBLIC NOTICE: He highlighted the use of technology in governance through initiatives such as GeM (Global e-Marketplace), GST, PFMS, DBT and UPI, Poshan Tracker ICT application and faceless tax assessment.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Be it known to all that I, RAMJILARI VERMA S/O M/J/O SHRI PHOOL CHAND R/O FLAT NO 26-B, BLOCK-B-2C, FIRST FLOOR, JANKAPUR, NEW DELHI...

PUBLIC NOTICE: Be it known to all that I Navin Dhankhar S/o Sh Khazan Singh R/o 3878 Sector 9A Bahadurgarh 124507.

PUBLIC NOTICE: It is for general information that I, Sukhmal Chand Jain S/o Kanwar Sen Jain R/O R-31, Vani Vihar, Uttam Nagar, West Delhi-110059 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Sukhmal Chand in my Passport No. X536970.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority

E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firm for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned.

Table with columns: S. No., Job No., Name of Work, Tender Amount (in Lacs.). Lists various infrastructure and construction projects.

Maratha quota stir: Call Special Assembly Session, MVA urges Governor

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

As the ongoing agitation over Maratha reservations turned violent in several parts of the State, the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on Monday urged Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais to convene a Special Session of Maharashtra Legislature.

For Bru families resettled in Tripura, Mizoram polls non-issue

PTI ■ DAMCHERRA (TRIPURA)

Hundreds of Bru families from Mizoram, who had migrated and settled in neighbouring Tripura following ethnic clashes, do not bother about the assembly elections in their home state.

Festival of India ends

New Delhi:

Delhiites had an amazing experience for five days at the magnificent cultural extravaganza, the Festival of India, held at the Major Dhyananand National Stadium in New Delhi.

Arbitration tribunal awards Tata ₹766 cr compensation over Singur losses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Already fighting against a plethora of corruption charges with its back against the wall there was yet another jolt for the West Bengal Government with a three-member arbitration tribunal on Monday directing the State to pay Rs 766 crore to the Tata Motors as compensation for losses the company incurred on account of the botched

12th convocation of IIT-Delhi held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The 12th convocation ceremony of the Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology Delhi (IIIT-Delhi) was celebrated at its premises in Okhla phase III.

DEATH SENTENCE TO 8 INDIANS IN QATAR

Govt will make all efforts to secure their release: Jaishankar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
The Government will make all efforts to secure the release of eight former Navy personnel sentenced to death by a local court in Qatar last week, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar gave this assurance in New Delhi on Monday to their families. He also said the Government attaches the "highest importance" to the case and fully shares their concerns and pain. Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar said the Centre is making "every effort" to secure the release of eight Navy veterans. "Every effort is being made by the government to ensure we take up through the legal course and we get relief for our personnel," he said at an event in Goa. He also mentioned that they have not yet received the transcript of the court hearing. The Navy chief said, "I have not yet seen the transcript of the

court hearing...it was supposed to have been transcribed and provided to us on Sunday...we will have a look at it. In fact, you have heard the MEA statement on this. Every effort is being made by the government to ensure that...through the legal recourse and find relief for our personnel." Talking to reporters in Panaji on the sidelines of the Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC) organised by the Indian Navy, Admiral Kumar said, "Every effort is being made by the (Union) Government to ensure we find relief for our personnel. We have heard the MEA (Ministry of External Affairs) statement on this." This assurance by the External Affairs Minister and the Navy chief came in the backdrop of the eight Indians handed down death sentences on October 26 by Qatar's Court of First Instance. New Delhi then had described the ruling as "deeply" shocking

and vowed to explore all legal options in the case. "Met this morning with the families of the 8 Indians detained in Qatar. Stressed that the Government attaches the highest importance to the case. Fully share the concerns and pain of the families," Jaishankar said on X. "Underlined that the Government will continue to make all efforts to secure their release. Will coordinate closely with the families in that regard," he said. The Indian nationals, who worked with private company Al Dahra, were arrested in August last year reportedly in an alleged case of espionage. Neither the Qatari authorities nor New Delhi made the charges against the Indian nationals public. In its reaction to the ruling by the Qatari court, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Thursday that it is attaching "high importance" to this case



and is exploring all legal options. The charges were filed against these Indian Navy veterans on March 25 and they were tried under Qatari law. The men, including decorated officers who once commanded major Indian warships, were

working for Dahra Global Technologies and Consultancy Services, a private firm that provided training and related services to Qatar's armed forces. Some of them were working on a highly sensitive project — Italian technology-based midget

submarines with stealth characteristics. Reports claimed the eight Navy veterans were accused of espionage. The company was owned by an Omani national, a retired squadron leader of the Royal

Omani Air Force. He too was arrested along with the eight Indians, but was released in November, it was learnt. The MEA had said, "We are deeply shocked by the verdict of death penalty and are awaiting the detailed judgement. We are in touch with the family members and the legal team, and we are exploring all legal options." Those sentenced are Capt Navtej Singh Gill, Capt Birendra Kumar Verma, Capt Saurabh Vasishth, Cdr Amit Nagpal, Cdr Purnendu Tiwari, Cdr Sugunakar Pakala, Cdr Sanjeev Gupta and Sailor Ragesh. Their bail pleas were rejected numerous times and their detention extended by Qatari authorities. India's Ambassador to Qatar met from men in prison on October 1 after being granted consular access. The seventh hearing in the case took place on October 3, it was learnt. The trial started in March.

Commander (retired) Purnendu Tiwari, who is among the detained Indians, served as Al Dahra's managing director and commanded several warships while serving with the navy. It was also learnt an Indian journalist and his spouse were recently asked by Qatari authorities to leave the country for reporting the case. Meetu Bhargava, sister of one of the former officers detained, had sought help from the Government to bring her brother back in June this year. In a post on X, formerly Twitter, on June 8, she had appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to intervene. "These ex-Navy officers are the pride of the nation & again I request our Prime Minister with folded hands that it is high time that they all are brought back to India immediately without any further delay," read her post, tagged to PM Modi and Union ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh.

Countries should build trust on maritime front through dialogue, says Rajnath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/PANAJI
Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday called for establishing multinational collaborative mitigation frameworks in the Indian Ocean Region to effectively tackle common maritime challenges such as climate change, piracy, terrorism, drug-trafficking, overfishing and freedom of commerce on high seas. Making this assertion in his keynote address at the fourth edition of Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC) in Panaji, he also emphasised that common maritime priorities need to be addressed cooperatively by avoiding selfish interests that make the region less secure and less prosperous. He underlined the importance of respecting the international maritime laws, as enunciated in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982. The three-day conclave, which commenced on Sunday is being attended by Delegate in Charge of Defence, Comoros Mohamed Ali Youssoufa and Chiefs of Navies/Heads of Maritime Forces/Senior representatives from eleven other Indian Ocean nations — Bangladesh, Indonesia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand. "A free, open and rule-based maritime order is a priority for all of us. 'Might is right' has no place in such a maritime order. Adherence to international laws and agreements must be our lodestar. Our narrow immediate interests may tempt us to flout or disregard the well-



established international law, but doing so would lead to the breakdown of our civilised maritime relations. Our common security and prosperity cannot be preserved without all of us committing to cooperatively adhering to the legitimate maritime rules of engagement. Fair rules of engagement are crucial for fostering collaboration and ensuring that no single country dominates others in a hegemonic manner," Rajnath said. His observation that 'might is right' has no place in maritime order and fair rules of engagement are crucial for fostering collaboration and ensuring that no single country dominates others were seen as an oblique reference to China's aggressive muscle-flexing in the Indo-Pacific. On climate change, the defence minister said the collaborative mitigation framework can involve the countries working together to reduce carbon emissions and transition to sustainable practices. He pointed out that the world could overcome this problem if all countries accepted the responsibility to cut emissions by investing in green economy and share technology and capital with the needy countries. Rajnath also referred to illegal

Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, a challenge which relates to resource over-exploitation. "IUU fishing endangers ocean ecosystems and sustainable fishery. It also threatens our economic security and regional and global food security. A multinational collaborative effort for compilation and sharing of surveillance data is the need of the hour. It will help in identifying actors with irregular or threatening behaviour, which will have to be countered resolutely," he said. To put in place these mitigation frameworks, Rajnath called for collaboration, and sharing of resources and expertise among nations. Speaking on the occasion, Minister of State for External Affairs Meenakshi Lekhi batted for cooperation among IOR nations to ensure peace and prosperity in the region. Underscoring the importance of IOR, she lauded the Indian Navy for protecting the nation's maritime interests and being the first responder in the region in times of crisis. In his address, Navy chief Admiral R Hari Kumar emphasised the changing nature of threats, both traditional and non-traditional and those emanating from the sea.

Modi to take part in 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' campaign

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate here on Tuesday in the culmination of the 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' campaign, a tribute to those who made the supreme sacrifice for the country, and inaugurate 'Amrit Vatika' and 'Amrit Mahotsav Memorial' on Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's birth anniversary. The event, to be held on the Kartavya Path at about five pm, will also mark the closing of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and the launch of the 'Mera Yuva Bharat' (MY Bharat) platform for the youth of the country, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said. Modi will also address thousands of people who spearheaded the Amrit Kalash Yatra



in different parts of the country. The PMO statement said the Meri Maati Mera Desh campaign is a tribute to the bravehearts who have made the supreme sacrifice for the country. In the spirit of people's participation, the campaign comprised many activities and ceremonies conducted across the country, including building of

memorials and people taking five pledges first spelt out by Modi in his Independence Day speech. These also included planting saplings of indigenous species, developing 'Amrit Vatika' and felicitating ceremonies for honouring the freedom fighters and the families of deceased freedom fighters. "The campaign became a massive success, with over 2.3 lakh

memorials built in 36 states/ Union Territories; nearly 4 crore 'Panch Pran' pledge selfies uploaded; 2 lakh plus 'Veeran ka Vandan' programmes nationwide; more than 2.36 crore indigenous saplings have been planted; and 2.63 lakh Amrit Vatikas created," the statement said. The 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' campaign also included the Amrit Kalash Yatra, which comprised collecting soils and rice grains from over six lakh villages and wards in urban areas that were sent to block level (where the soil of all villages in the block was mixed) and then to the state capital. The soil from the State level was sent to the national capital. All the States and Union Territories represented by their respective blocks and urban

local bodies will be mixing soil in one giant 'Amrit Kalash' on Monday, a day before the programme, in the spirit of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat', it said. The Meri Maati Mera Desh campaign was envisaged as a culminating event of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'. The Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav began on March 12, 2021, to celebrate 75 years of India's Independence. It has since witnessed more than two lakh programmes organised throughout the country with enthusiastic public participation, the statement said. It added that 'Mera Yuva Bharat' (MY Bharat) is being established as an autonomous body to serve as a one-stop "whole-of-government" platform for the youths of the country.

Can't regulate political alliances, EC tells HC on plea against INDIA use

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The Election Commission does not have any legal authority to regulate "political alliances", the poll panel has told the Delhi High Court in response to a petition challenging the use of the acronym INDIA by a coalition of 26 political parties. The Election Commission (EC), in its reply filed in the case, said it has the power to conduct elections and register entities as a political party but "political alliances" are not recognised as "regulated entities" under the Representation of the People Act or the Indian Constitution. It, however, clarified that its reply is limited to its role and the same may not be construed as its "expression" on the "legality of the usage of the acronym I.N.D.I.A.". "Answering Respondent (EC) is constituted under Article 324 of the Constitution of India for superintendence, direction and control of the conduct of all elections to parliament, State legislatures and the offices of president and vice president," the counter affidavit filed through advocate Sidhant Kumar said.

"The Answering Respondent has been vested with the authority to register association of bodies or individuals of a political party in terms of Section 29A of Representation of People Act, 1951 ('RP Act'). Notably, political alliances are not recognised as regulated entities under the RP Act or the Constitution," it stated. The EC highlighted a decision passed by the Kerala High Court, which said that a political front or an alliance of political parties was not a legal entity in terms of the Representation of the People Act and there was no statutory provision mandating it to regulate the functioning of such political alliances. Petitioner Girish Bharadwaj had approached the high court earlier this year against the use of INDIA acronym, saying the political parties were taking "undue advantage in the name of our country". The plea has sought interim order staying the use of acronym INDIA by the political parties and to also prohibit the use of the national flag with the acronym INDIA by the respondent political alliance.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
The ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas has fuelled war of words between the ruling party at centre BJP and Opposition led by Congress after the government's abstention on the UN resolution on the West Asia disturbances. Former Congress President Sonia Gandhi on Monday issued a statement that the grand old party is "strongly opposed" to India's abstention on the recent UN resolution on the Israel-Hamas conflict, asserting that while her party had unequivocally condemned Hamas' attacks, the tragedy is compounded with the Israeli state now focused on exacting

BJP, Cong spar over India's UN abstention on West Asia

revenge from a population that is largely as helpless as it is blameless. In a sharp attack against Sonia's stand, the BJP accused the Congress of being driven by petty, vote-bank politics. Party spokesman and Rajya Sabha MP Sudhanshu Trivedi said that there can be no politics on terrorism and international issues. "There should be no scope for ifs and buts on terrorism and India's stand should be clear, categorical and unequivocal. When was the last time the

senior most Congress leader wrote on an international conflict? It is said that the Congress policy is not in line with India's prestige and dignity but is inspired by petty vote-bank politics. Whatever the Congress is doing is against India's policy," Trivedi said at a Press conference in BJP headquarters. Even indirect support to terrorism is damaging to humanity and India's security and interests, he said, criticising the Congress. Noting that a Congress Working

Committee resolution had made no mention of the Hamas attack, BJP wondered if the party's tagline is "Judega Kattaranthi, Jeetega Hamas" on the lines of "Judega Bharat, Jeetega India", the catchphrase for the opposition's INDIA bloc. Trivedi said it was during the Rajiv Gandhi government's time that the ground was laid for boosting diplomatic ties with Israel before the P V Narasimha Rao-led dispensation established full diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Citizens don't have right to know source of political funds: AG to SC on electoral bond scheme

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Holding that the electoral bond scheme for political funding of parties contributes to clean money, Attorney General R Venkataramani has told the Supreme Court that citizens do not have the right to information under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution regarding the source of funds. In a statement filed before the top court, Venkataramani said there can be no general right to know "anything and everything" without being subjected to reasonable restrictions.

"The scheme in question extends the benefit of confidentiality to the contributor. It ensures and promotes clean money being contributed. It ensures abiding by tax obligations. Thus, it does not fall foul of any existing right," the AG told the apex court. The top court law officer said the power of judicial review is not about scanning state policies for the purposes of suggesting better or different prescriptions. "A constitutional court reviews state action only if it impinges upon existing rights and not because State action has not

provided for a possible right or an expectation howsoever desirable," he said. "That contribution to political parties has democratic significance and a fit subject for political debate and demand of governance accountability free from influences does not mean that the court will proceed to declare on such matters in the absence of a clear constitutionally offending law," Venkataramani said. A five-judge constitution bench of the Supreme Court is scheduled to commence hearing from October 31 a batch of pleas chal-

Covid survivors asked to avoid overwork amid rising heart attack cases

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI
If you had severe Covid-19, then you must not overexert yourself or overwork for a period of 1 to 2 years so that you do not become a victim of sudden cardiac arrest. Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Monday cautioned, indicating that the potential for cardiovascular complications doesn't go away after someone has recovered from Covid. The Minister cited a study by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in this regard in the wake of several cases of heart attack that were reported recently during garba dance as part of the Navratri celebrations in Gujarat. He said that people with Covid history should avoid overexerting themselves. Speaking with the media in Gujarat, Mandaviya the health minister said that "the ICMR has a detailed study that says people who have suffered with severe Covid should stay away from strenuous exercise or extreme amounts of work for a period of 1 to 2 years so that they don't succumb to sudden cardiac arrest." "The ICMR has conducted a detailed study and found out that people who have suffered from severe Covid-19 infection should not do hard work for some time. It should be postponed for a year or two," Mandaviya said. However, it's not only Gujarat, the trend of deaths due to heart attacks is being reported from across the country among young and middle-aged people. A senior official from the Union Health Ministry said that the ICMR has launched two studies to investigate rising deaths due to heart attacks among youth post Covid-19. He said that the studies target the individuals aged 18 to 45 years. Dr Bahl too had confirmed at an event recently that the research, which focuses on people between the ages of 18 and 45, seeks to understand the unexplained deaths of otherwise healthy individuals. "We are trying to understand the reasons or differences when we compare the results of these autopsies to those in previous years or pre-Covid years," Dr Bahl had told a news agency. The core objective of the studies was to ascertain whether under-

lying physiological changes within the human body could be attributed to the sudden deaths occurring among young adults in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. By identifying discernible patterns, such as an elevated incidence of sudden heart failure or lung collapse, researchers aspire to delineate the associations that might exist. The other case-control study identified centres on individuals aged 18 to 45 who have experienced sudden deaths in the past year. This research leverages data pooled from 40 centres spanning India, where Covid-19 patients were monitored for a full year subsequent to their discharge. Worldwide too such a disturbing pattern is being noticed. According to a study by Susan Cheng, director of the Institute for Research on Healthy Aging in the Department of Cardiology at the Smidt Heart Institute, heart attack deaths among young people have spiked in the US since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Cheng, senior and co-corresponding author of the study said that, "There are a lot of things that COVID can do to the cardiovascular system. It appears to be able to increase the stickiness of the blood and increase... the likelihood of blood clot formation. It seems to stir up inflammation in the blood vessels. It seems to also cause in some people an overwhelming stress—whether it's related directly to the infection or situations around the infection—that can also cause a spike in blood pressure." Cheng also said that people who have COVID-19 multiple times also are at higher risk of heart problems. She emphasized keeping blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar under control. Yet another large 2022 study tracking medical records of 691,455 patients in the United States too found that people had a significantly higher risk of developing virtually all heart-related diseases in the year after a Covid infection. According to the research, people were 1.5 times more likely to have a stroke, nearly twice as likely to have a heart attack, and had between 1.6 and 2.4 times the risk of developing different types of arrhythmias.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Noxious breath

Very poor air quality despite lesser stubble burning is a serious concern for Delhi-NCR

The shapeless monster of air pollution is haunting the National Capital Region once again, and it has become rather an annual affair. Come winter, Delhiites have to breathe and live with "very poor" air. India's Capital has long grappled with the issue of air pollution and it appears there is no way out. Even as you read it, the air quality in Delhi remains "very poor"; the Air Quality Index (AQI) has already breached the 300-mark. This situation raises concerns about the city's ability to combat air pollution effectively. Ironically, this year, so far there has been almost a 50 per cent reduction in stubble burning cases in the farms of Haryana and Punjab, but AQI is still hovering around the 300+ mark, which is considered 'hazardous' in the US and is an 'emergency' callout. But in Delhi, it is 'normal' with people enveloped in the deadly smog going about their daily lives. All the containment measures you can see on the roads include a few water sprinkler trucks spraying water in their feeble attempt to combat



pollution in the city. Right now, the AQI is showing an upward movement. It plainly indicates that air quality is worsening as we approach November, one of the worst months to be in Delhi. In some areas within Delhi, the situation is even more alarming. In the Delhi University area, the AQI stood at 316. Delhi's air quality woes are not confined to the city alone; neighbouring regions, including Gurugram, Ghaziabad and Faridabad, also grapple with "poor" air quality. Indeed, the NCR's collective air pollution issue demands a comprehensive regional approach to address this life-threatening problem. It is not for the first time that heavy winter air mixed with vehicular

exhaust and stubble smoke would play havoc with people's lives in the NCR. But the plan to fight it is conspicuous by absence. Mercifully, the incidents of stubble burning by neighbouring States have reduced compared to last year. But unfavourable meteorological conditions will soon lead to a spike in air pollution. Besides, the harvest is not completed yet as the festive season is delayed this year, which may significantly raise the AQI. Also, bureaucratic problems plague the fight against pollution. The Ministry of Earth Sciences' System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), which used to provide data on farm fires' contribution to Delhi's air pollution, has recently stopped providing updates. The reasons for this are unclear, but it further impacts the efforts to combat pollution effectively. The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has deployed mechanical road sweepers and acquired eight anti-smog guns as part of a comprehensive "Air Pollution Control" plan for 2023-24. But do these suffice for a city spread over 1483 sq km? The answer is a resounding 'no'. These are piecemeal steps with little or no impact on AQI. Authorities know that once winter is gone, so will people's complaints. But for the citizens, especially those suffering from bronchial ailments, the less said the better.

PICTALK



Soldiers display their skills during Indian and Malaysian armies' joint exercise in Meghalaya

PTI

Service learning is a catalyst for social change

Service learning, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is essential for ushering in social change and development

As educators, we aim to empower students as active citizens, but service learning often falls short in real-world impact and accessibility. To truly make a difference, service learning should be tied to pressing issues like the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, motivating students to effect meaningful change.

STEP 1 - Schools to Choose Organisations Aligned with SDGs

Schools looking to empower students should choose organizations and causes aligned with the UN's SDGs rather than generic "community service," focusing projects on issues like zero hunger (SDG 2), good health and well-being (SDG 3), and quality education (SDG 4). With this, students gain valuable skills and see how they can improve lives, empowering them to become true agents of change.

STEP 2 - Empower Students through Service Learning Projects

By guiding students to develop and implement their own service learning initiatives, schools can shape students into engaged citizens making



a real difference. Steps to consider: encourage students to identify issues in their local community, assist students in designing their own service projects, ensure the project's real impact, and have students reflect on how their efforts contributed to meeting the UN SDGs. Through this, students gain valuable skills and confidence while working to build a more just and sustainable world.

STEP 3 - Make Service Learning Accessible to All Students

Currently, service learning programs tend to attract privileged students, while lower-income students often miss out. To remedy this, schools can offer a range of projects at varying commitment levels, organise carpools or provide bussing to off-campus projects, spread the word

their work is valued and impactful.

STEP 5 - Evaluating Impact and Next Steps

Post-service learning, schools must evaluate the impact and plan for enhancements. Gather student feedback through surveys or focus groups and consult community partners to assess their views. Use these insights to make informed changes, fostering students' active community contributions. Empowering students through service learning aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is essential for developing agency and purpose. Schools prioritising this, foster citizens of character. Encouraging reflection through journals, discussions, and feedback helps students connect experiences to social issues, promoting solutions-oriented thinking. Deep reflection empowers students to create positive social change with a clear understanding of community needs and systemic issues, shaping their future actions.

(The author is the founder of a social initiative called Gullaq, views are personal)



MYRA RAJ KHETERPAL

Bringing the veterans home

The release of ex-Navy officers should be our prime concern. All options, including, diplomacy, must be employed, regardless of our stand on Gaza



UMANG KOHLI

Eight Indian Navy veterans have been awarded the death penalty by a court in Qatar and that has come as a shock for the people of India. There's an international job market for veterans who want to deploy the skills of our soldiers, but at times it can prove to be brutal. Most of the well-trained veterans are under-employed and undervalued domestically. Trained professionals in various fields, except management (MBA), are not given a fair deal within the domestic folds and hence are forced to look for jobs elsewhere. However, coming to the issue at hand, Al Dahra security company had some arrangements with the Qatari authorities for facilitating training to the latter's naval personnel. The said company was an established player in the Middle East. Being a company staffed with Indian Navy veterans, it made a name for itself in the last decade or so. For the last 5 years or so, this Indian-staffed company has faced a tremendous amount of competition from retired British Navy officers and other players, including Pakistani Navy officers, who wanted to get employed in similar roles.

The company with Indian Navy veterans on its payroll was primarily dealing with providing bridge work and radar navigation training to cadets of the Qatari Navy. Indian Navy officers are renowned for their bridge-laying skills and are highly competitive when it comes to watchkeeping at warships. Indian Navy officers have also been very successful captains of merchant ships over the decades. Dealing with military cadets requires the teacher to get to know them at various levels. Most of the military bonding goes beyond professional association; such is the nature of training. Personal motivation and professional training need to go hand in hand. Perhaps, long-term association with the Qatari Navy cadets led to the formation of bonds beyond classroom lectures and probably some Qatari cadets spilled work details and shared their gripes with these ex-servicemen. Though nothing is clear or being shared, it is alleged



that some ex-officers were 'found' to have access to 'some' information they were not supposed to have. It is another matter that working for over a decade with the Qatari Navy training establishment would have led to a trove of daily talk, work-related complaints and a steady stream of inputs coming their way anyway which obviously can't be quantified as such.

The Indian Navy veterans may have had some knowledge of the bridge and navigation equipment used on Qatar Naval vessels, however, they were totally isolated from the weapon radar and armament package. Now, the problem is, when we look at an actual warship, the Navigation, Weapons and Sensor systems are collocated in a 20 sq feet cramped workplace. This makes it impossible to have quality training sessions and to prepare a cadet to handle a massive sensor load along with communication systems without comprehensive knowledge of each individual platform including the armament section. These platforms are linked anyway. It is only fair to say that this assessment of unauthorised knowledge of advanced battleship platforms by these officers is speculative and the exact nature of the

charges is unknown. However, whenever a private company that has foreign nationals on its payroll is employed by a country for training its military personnel, the onus to check the flow of information lies with the establishment of that country. So, the restrictions on knowledge sharing along with the checks and balances to implement these restrictions should have been in the open domain and could be made public even now. Though the matter is extremely sensitive, access to a top-class legal team needs to be provided to these ex-servicemen at the earliest. It is shocking that these ex-servicemen have been sentenced to death (no less) by a lower court in a foreign country. They have also been in solitary confinement for more than a year now.

The ex-navy officers served India well and needed to come back home as soon as possible. They should not become a tool of larger geopolitics being played out in the Middle East. Geopolitical pulls and pressures related to the war in Gaza could also have an impact on the manner in which Qatar proceeds in this case. Qatar has been mediating between Israel, the US and Hamas to secure the release of

the hostages held by Hamas. It has been able to secure the release of four hostages till now which has earned the Qatar government some goodwill. The release of these officers on priority must remain disconnected from the position India takes on various geopolitical developments in the Middle East and for this, independent efforts may be carried out. Since a legal appeal in the current situation may take a long time or could hit a roadblock, the other option for India is to employ diplomacy. The diplomatic effort could work on prisoner exchange, with some Qatari citizens convicted in India being allowed to return to their country. India has good bilateral relations and strong trade ties with Qatar, this should facilitate some headway in this sensitive case. Most of the other countries in the West may not be able to help India in its diplomatic endeavour due to the situation in the Middle East, however, our good relations with Russia may come in handy to provide us the much-needed diplomatic push in this case.

(The writer is an expert on geopolitics and international Affairs. The views expressed are personal)



THE COMPANY WITH INDIAN NAVY VETERANS ON ITS PAYROLL WAS PRIMARILY DEALING WITH PROVIDING BRIDGE WORK AND RADAR NAVIGATION TRAINING TO CADETS OF THE QATARI NAVY

Clarification...
In yesterday's photo, on this page, PM Modi was with the former President of S Korea. Mr Yoon Suk Yeol is the present President of Republic of South Korea.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DIVISIVE DESIGN FOR MUSLIMS

Sir—To counter the divisive design of branding Muslims as 'invaders,' 'infiltrators,' and the 'Other' in India, we need Swami Vivekananda to perform a surgery to remove the malignant tumor of Islamophobia. We must understand his words, "The Mohammedan conquest of India came as a salvation to the down-trodden, to the poor," as well as his action of worshipping a Muslim girl as Goddess Durga, as he did in Kashmir in 1898. On the day of Maha Saptami of Durga Puja, Swami Vivekananda knelt down to touch the feet of a poor Muslim girl. With this singular act, he defied divisions of religion, region, race, caste, class, creed, occupation, gender, and generation to promote universal humanhood.

In fact, Swami Vivekananda was a follower of Sri Ramkrishna who practiced Islam, Christianity, and other religions to live his words, "many opinions, many paths." They lived secularism, not just spoke about it. Secularism gives people the unhindered freedom to practice any religion of their choice. We should adhere to Swami Vivekananda's prescription for a mixture "of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—Vedanta brain and Islam body" to counter anti-Muslim Hindu victimhood discourses and hate speeches.

Sujit De | Kolkata

DO NOT USE DANGEROUS CHEMICALS

Sir—The use of white phosphorus is becoming deadly for attack survivors. Israel's extensive destruction of Palestinian citizens is becoming increasingly costly. The use of white phosphorus is highly lethal, and Israel needs to immediately cease using such toxic chemicals. The Israeli attackers and military are causing destruction for generations to come, and the people who survive the brunt of such lethal weaponry with toxic chemicals are in great jeopardy. How can one be so cruel and inhumane toward

Iconic taxis are now only a memory



Age may wrinkle the face, but never the soul." Alright, but a die-hard fan of things old has to be ready for the new with a heavy heart. Close on the heels of Mumbai's iconic double-decker city buses passing into oblivion, another popular transport symbol of the city, the 'kaali-peeli (black and yellow)' Premier Padmini taxis, are history now. The last Premier Padmini taxi registered in the 'city of dreams' was way back in October 2003—October 29th, to be precise. So, for all practical purposes, that one has

crossed Mumbai's 20-year-old age limit. The "black and yellow" beauty ruled the streets of Mumbai for nearly six decades. It could have been more, but for the fact that its production was stopped in 2001. So, the dSo, availability of spare parts became a huge pain in the neck for operators, rators although their love and affection for Pawereni was beyond dThe advantagesantage of portability easy maintenance were the assets of the iconic taxis. Though newer hatchback models took over Mumbai's taxi kingdom, Padmini continued to linger in the minds of the residents as well as tourists and travelers to Mumbai. For the last ten years, visitors to Mumbai would often raise their eyebrows, unable to comprehend that the beautiful black and white cars were few and far between. The demand to preserve at least one iconic taxi in a museum has had no takers over the years; citizens should convince the government to fall in line.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

another? Why is Israel forsaking its humanity, ethics, and empathy toward the people of Palestine? Why does Israel want only Jewish followers to be the Palestinians when it is one of the world's strongest and most responsible powers?

White phosphorus, a toxic substance, is now toxic to life and humanity. The Human Rights Watch group, along with responsible state powers, must step in immediately to halt this harm before it's too late. The deterioration of humanity in one place should serve as a warning to the whole world. Israel must prioritise empathy for humans first and Palestinians later. The peace has no alternative.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

MORE MEDALS FOR INDIA

Sir—Yesterday, there were 107 medals at the Asian Games 2023 in Hangzhou, China. Today, four more medals were

won in the Para-Asian Games 2023. The right terminology to describe the "display of superhuman talent and skills" of all the participants is "NON-para super girls and boys—athletes." Not a trace of any handicap was visible in their skills, enthusiasm, and energy throughout the tournament. Handicaps only exist in the minds of humans. It is indeed heartening to see how humans can beat the odds and excel even while going through adverse circumstances. Terrorists, and warmongers as all of us can learn a great deal from these athletes who not only won medals for the country but sent a message to millions of people struggling with their lives that all one needs is right attitude and proper encouragement to unleash his or her full potential.

PV Rao Sreelekha | Secunderabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN IN SEARCH OF HEAVEN

Attachment is a vice, it subtly ties one in bondage to the object of one's attachment



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ

Most of us have listened to these stories of hell & heaven in our childhood days. The moral of all these stories has always been that 'Those who perform good deeds go to heaven, and those doing bad deeds would go to hell'. But, how does one actually describe Heaven? Well!! To put it in simple words, heaven is a place or time of complete happiness with no trace of sorrow. So, when did it exist or does it still exist somewhere at present? Many people believe that heaven is a world apart from the earth we inhabit. That is why people are said to ascend to heaven after death.

Mythological stories also describe angels coming to escort virtuous souls to heaven. Similarly, hell is believed to be the nether world, to where one descends if one has led a sinful life. However, the fact is that heaven and hell exist on this very earth at different points of time, hence they are not two different places, but different periods in the cycle of world history. The world we live in as of today was heaven during the Golden Age, when humans possessing divine virtues ruled the earth. These souls were complete in all virtues and free of vices. It is a world of total purity where all humans are aware of their true identity, that they are souls, not bodies. Because they are viceless, souls in heaven lead a life of unalloyed happiness. But for majority of us such a world might seem like a fantasy when we look at the world we live in at present. So, if at all heaven existed on this very planet then how has it turned into the chaotic, violent place that it is today? It's simple, blame it on the vices that turn the world from heaven to hell, wherein souls forget their true identity, which is that of a soul, and start identifying themselves as bodies that they inhabit. Hence, with body-consciousness come all the vices like lust, anger, greed, attachment, ego and others creating deep sorrow for us. These vices rob us of our happiness, purity, peace and powers.



To begin with, lust, the biggest vice, robs us of purity and honor. The honor that comes from chastity is evident even in today's world, where celibate priests are respected by the society. In contrast, those who trade in vice are looked down upon by everyone and they live as social outcasts. Similarly, anger robs us of peace and gives pain to oneself as well as others. It also impairs the intellect, whereby one is unable to take right decisions. An angry person disturbs the atmosphere wherever he goes, making others feel uneasy too.

Majority of us do not recognise attachment as a vice, but we must understand that it subtly ties one in bondage to the object of one's attachment, be it a person, thing or place. It makes us hold on to and identify ourselves with other people or things that give us some joy. Our happiness then becomes dependent on that object or person to whom we are attached. Hence, if that object or person suffers any harm or is taken away from us, we suffer pain. Unlike attachment, ego is easily identified as a vice because of the hurt it causes everyone. The more one's ego the lesser one respects others, thereby losing respect for others. This hurts all the more because an egoist expects others to show him respect, and when that does not happen, he feels insulted. Ego makes one rigid and spoils relationships. Ultimately, it repels others and makes one unloved and isolated. This is how the world turns gradually into hell. When viciousness reaches extreme proportions, the Supreme Almighty himself comes to this world to turn it into heaven once again, by making souls aware of their true identity, and their relationship with HIM. When souls remember HIM with this awareness, they get all virtues and powers from HIM that enable them to get rid of their vices and regain their purity, thus making way for an entry in heaven once more.

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

Aim at a tax-to-GDP ratio of 20 per cent

Buoyant tax collections hold the key to keeping up the tempo of investment in building infrastructure and funding welfare schemes



UTTAM GUPTA



In the past, invariably, the revised estimate (RE) for the relevant financial year (FY) fell short of the budget estimate (BE). During the last two years, the position has reversed with RE exceeding the BE. In fact, the trends during the first six months of the current FY point toward the Modi - government doing a hat-trick. Look at the gross tax revenue (GTR) which includes gross direct tax revenue (GDTR), GST collection, central excise duty (CED) and customs duty (CD) - net of refunds. During 2021-22, the BE for GTR was Rs 22,20,000 crore. Against this, the RE (mentioned in the budget for 2022-23 presented on February 1, 2022, it includes the actual for the first ten months and estimates for the last two months of the FY) at Rs 25,20,000 crore was Rs 300,000 crore higher. The 'actual' at Rs 27,10,000 crore turned out to be even higher than the RE by Rs 1,90,000 crore. When, compared to BE, the excess was a whopping Rs 490,000 crore. For 2022-23, Nirmala Sitharaman kept BE for GTR at Rs 27,60,000 crore. Against this, the RE at Rs 30,40,000 crore was Rs 280,000 crore higher. The 'actual' at Rs 30,50,000 crore turned out to be even higher than the RE by Rs 10,000 crore. When compared to BE, the actual was thus higher by Rs 290,000 crore. The excess amount would have been even more at Rs 380,000 crore but for a cut in CED on petrol and diesel announced in May 2022, which resulted in a revenue loss of about Rs 90,000 crore.

For the current FY, Sitharaman has kept the BE for GTR at Rs 33,50,000 crore including GDTR (net of refunds, but before transfers to states): Rs 1823,000 crore; GST (it includes Central GST and Integrated GST or IGST collection apportioned to the central government): Rs 957,000 crore; CED on petroleum products: Rs 339,000 crore and CD (on imports): Rs 233,000 crore. From April 1 to October 9, 2023, GDTR at Rs 957,000 crore was 21.8 per cent higher than the actual collections during the corresponding period of last FY as



SINCE TAXES ARE LEVIED AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE VALUE OF INCOME-GENERATING ACTIVITIES IN DIFFERENT SECTORS THAT MAKE UP THE GDP, THEIR COLLECTION INCREASES IN TANDEM WITH IT

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

against 11.6 per cent higher as per BE. This, in turn, was due to a sharp jump in personal income tax (PIT) collections of 32.5 per cent even as corporate income tax (CIT) collections were up by 12.4 per cent. At this pace, the year could end up with a GDTR of over Rs 1900,000 crore against BE of Rs 1823,000 crore. Likewise, total Central GST collections during the first half of the current FY stood at Rs 414,000 crore, 15.9 per cent higher than the corresponding period of last year as against the 12 per cent growth projected as per the BE. At this pace, the total central GST collections could surpass the BE of Rs 957,000 crore. As for CED on petroleum products, in view of the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri has ruled out the possibility of any reduction in duties on petrol and diesel, there won't be any shortfall in collections under this head. What is behind this exceptional performance in tax collection consistently for the three years? Two overarching factors come to mind. First, has to do with growth in nominal GDP. Since taxes are levied as a percentage of the value of income-generating activities in different sectors that make up the GDP, their collection increases in tandem with it. During 2021-22, nominal GDP grew by 18.4 per cent which was 4 per cent higher than the 14.4 per cent growth assumed for arriving at the BE. Likewise, during 2022-23, nominal GDP grew by 15.9 per cent which was 5.6 per cent higher than the 10.3 per cent growth assumed in the budget. The other factor has to do with the tax-GDP ratio. For any given level of nominal GDP, if this ratio is higher, that would lead to higher

tax collection. During 2021-22, the actual tax-GDP ratio was 11.5 per cent against 9.9 per cent assumed in the budget. Likewise, during 2022-23, the actual tax-GDP ratio was 11.2 per cent against 10.7 per cent assumed in the budget. The unprecedented surge in tax collection in both years was due to the combined effect of higher-than-expected growth in nominal GDP as well as the tax-GDP ratio. For 2023-24, the FM has assumed nominal GDP growth of 10.5 per cent. The actual growth during the first quarter of the current FY at 8 per cent turned out to be even lower than this (actual for 2022-23 was 15.9 per cent). The position during the second quarter won't be different. Yet, if tax collections during the first half of the current FY have grown faster than the BE, this has to do with a much higher tax-to-GDP ratio. The budget estimated the ratio at 11.1 per cent. The higher tax-to-GDP ratio is all the more creditable when we consider a steep reduction in the CIT rate to 15 per cent for new manufacturing enterprises and to 22 per cent for existing firms (done in September 2019); a reduction in the PIT (announced in the budget for 2023-24) and reduction GST rates notified from time to time. So, what has done the trick? This has to do with relentless efforts by the tax authorities to ensure compliance and prevent evasion. On the direct tax front, they have successfully used technology to reach out to the assesses in non-intrusive ways; e.g. by sending e-mail reminding them to file a return if not already or generating an 'auto-populated' form - a form in which income of the assesses from various sources is pre-filled. In particular, the use of

data analytics and AI has prompted assesses to report their income accurately thereby avoiding short payment.

According to the SBI report, in assessment year (AY) 2011-12, a total of 16 million people filed ITR, with 84 per cent belonging to the Rs 500,000 income group. In AY 2022-23, 68.5 million people filed ITRs, with the filers in the Rs 500,000 income group decreasing to 64 per cent. Total ITRs filed for income above Rs 10 million increased from 146,000 in AY 2021-22 to 269,000 in AY 2023-24. Based on spending profile data collected from diverse sources, the IT department is vigorously pursuing efforts to tax more persons in this class.

On the indirect tax front, tax authorities are focusing on strengthening of GST infrastructure with an emphasis on driving all businesses to be a part of the GST network, truthfully report all transactions and prevent fraudulent input tax credit or ITC claims. During 2022-23, they detected GST evasion of over Rs 101,000 crore and recovered Rs 21,000 crore. For the current FY, so far they have detected evasion of Rs 136,000 crore and hope to recover around Rs 50,000 crore (of this, Rs 14,108 crore has been already recovered).

More such efforts including rationalisation of the tax regime to plug loopholes are under way. For instance, recent clarification on the levy of GST @28 per cent on e-gaming alone has the potential of yielding extra tax collection of over Rs 100,000 crore annually. In view of a lot more potential remaining untapped, Modi should aim at a tax-GDP ratio of at least 20 per cent. Given the pace at which his government is moving, it is eminently possible.

Liberal-left coalition returns to power in Poland

Political change in Poland could open the way for the EU to release billions of Euros of funding

The right-wing Law and Justice Party, which has been ruling the government continuously for eight years, has suffered a major setback in Poland's parliamentary elections. Because they are facing defeat. If we talk about vote percentage, it has got a maximum of 36 per cent votes and its potential ally far right Confederation has got 7 per cent votes, but the opposition alliance of three parties i.e. Civil Coalition has got 53 per cent votes.

Poland's current parliament has 460 seats and 231 seats are required for a majority. There is so much polarisation in Polish politics right now that this time the voter turnout was more than 74 per cent, which is the highest since



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1919. In the year 1989, only 63 per cent of votes were cast in the elections to remove the communist rule. The most influential issues in Poland's elections include the government's bias towards power in the media and judiciary, divisions in families and society due to right-wing narrow-mindedness, and problems arising from the withholding of financial allocations by the European Union due to government policies.

If we talk about challenges, the present government has fully supported Ukraine in the war, but relations have also deteriorated due to allowing Ukrainian grain to enter the Polish market. This will be a big issue for the next government. Tension on the Belarus border is also a big



challenge.

At present, the biggest relief has been given to the European Union, against which the outgoing government has been opening a front from time to time. Within thirty days of the election, the President has to call a session of Parliament and appoint the Prime Minister. Andrzej Duda, the Polish president, has named Donald Tusk, the opposition leader, and Mateusz

Morawiecki, the current prime minister, as candidates for prime minister in the new government. But Donald Tusk has been a Prime Minister before as a potential Prime Minister. He has also been the head of the European Council. The victory of his coalition and his becoming Prime Minister is a relief for the liberal camp of Europe, which has been looking confused and agendaless in recent years. Tusk, who was Polish prime minister between 2007 and 2014 and then became president of the European Council for five years, declared his victory within minutes of voting closing on Sunday based on an exit poll. "This is the end of bad times, this is the end of the PiS regime," he said.

Will there be a big change in this direction socially, politically and culturally? It is now clear that Poland's voters have decided that they want a change in the direction of the country, not only politically, but also socially and culturally. At stake in the election were the health of the country's constitutional system, its legal stance on LGBTQ+ rights and abortion, and the country's foreign alliances as Ukraine has been a key ally after Russia launched a full-scale invasion. If we talk about public sentiments, LGBTQ+ rights activist Bart Staszewski called it the end of a "nightmare" for himself as a gay man and for others. "This is the beginning of reclaiming our country. The

fight is ahead but now we are breathing fresh air today." Environmental activist 'Dominika Lasota' was emotional with relief and said, "We have our own future." Law and Justice have dismantled checks and balances to gain greater control over state institutions, including courts, public media, and the electoral process. The election results show a change for the better in relations with the European Union. Political change in Poland could open the way for the EU to release billions of euros of funding into what the EU sees as democratic erosion. The fate of Poland's relations with Ukraine was also at stake. Which will now have to draw a clear policy and line. Now the referendum

on immigration may flop. A controversial referendum on migration, retirement age and other issues was held simultaneously with the election, in which the government wanted people to vote to accept thousands of migrants as part of an EU migration plan. Regarding this, some government opponents had called on voters to boycott the referendum, saying that it was an attempt by the government to motivate its supporters. Many voters were seen refusing to participate in the referendum and exit polls estimated participation at 40%, which meant the results would not be legally binding. More or less, the far-reaching effects of this election result are now in the womb of the future.

Lyon coach Fabio Grosso injured in team bus attack

PTI ■ MARSEILLE
Lyon coach Fabio Grosso suffered a head injury as the team bus came under attack from fans throwing projectiles, forcing the postponement of the French league soccer game at Marseille.
The team bus was hit on the way to Stade Velodrome, shattering some windows on Sunday.
Grosso was injured by falling shards of glass and needed medical treatment with his face bleeding heavily. Lyon assistant coach Raffaele Longo was also injured.
Grosso suffered a deep cut above his left eye that required stitches and a large bandage wrapped around his head.
"Our team (had) decided they would play," Lyon president John Textor told Amazon Prime Video.
"I'm obviously proud of the captain, proud of the players, for wanting to do that."
Lyon changed its mind when more details about Grosso's condition emerged.
"It was emotional. We have a coach who's got blood coming out of his head, he's got pieces of glass stuck in his head,"

Textor said.
"I couldn't have a conversation with him. It looked like he had a concussion. At that point, our team was mixed. They said, you know, it's not an emotional, physical game. It's a tactical game, and this is not the way football should be played. As the night went on, I think our team supported the decision of the referee."
A few minutes before the scheduled kickoff time at 19:45 GMT, a message on the giant screen at Stade Velodrome said: "Dear supporters, the game will not be played tonight."
A French league commission will meet to decide what to do with the fixture.
"Lyon didn't want the game to be played," referee Francois Letexier told a news conference. "We also applied the protocol, which states that the game shouldn't be played when a party is injured and his participation is compromised because of this physical assault."
Ten years ago, fans from Marseille and Lyon fought in a violent brawl after meeting each other by chance at a service station forecourt after traveling to and from their respective games.



The bloody clash left 17 injured, and the atmosphere has been tense ever since they play each other.
Marseille president Pablo Longoria said Sunday's attack was unacceptable.
"What happened to Lyon coach Fabio Grosso must be prevented. It's completely unacceptable," Longoria told Amazon Prime Video.
"I'm angry. I'm really upset by the current situation. It shouldn't happen in football or in society."
Coaches carrying Lyon fans were also attacked. The police arrested seven people suspected of being involved in Sunday's incidents but did not give details.
Grosso scored the winning penalty kick for Italy in the shootout victory over France in the 2006 World Cup final. Both clubs have been under pressure lately.
Despite replacing Marcelino with Gennaro Gattuso as coach in September, Marseille is still showing poor form with one win and three losses in its last four league games.
Gattuso went to check on his former Italy teammate in the locker room.
Lyon is the only team still winless in the league. Replacing Laurent Blanc with Grosso as coach in September hasn't paid off for Lyon, which sits in last place.

Atletico Madrid beat Alaves 2-1 for its 14th straight La Liga victory at home

AP ■ MADRID
Red-hot Alvaro Morata scored yet another goal and Atletico Madrid beat Alaves 2-1 for its 14th straight Spanish league victory at home, tying its longest winning home streak.
Morata scored his seventh goal in his last seven games with Atletico, which matched its winning run from a decade ago. Diego Simeone's team had also won 14 in a row at home between May 2012 and February 2013, while still playing at the Vicente Calderon Stadium.
The victory at the Metropolitan Stadium on Sunday moved Atletico to third place with 25 points, three behind both Girona and Real Madrid. Madrid came from behind to win 2-1 at Barcelona in the first league "clasico" of the season on Saturday, while Girona defeated Celta Vigo 1-0 on Friday.



Atletico has a game in hand because a home match against Sevilla in September was suspended because of bad weather. Atletico has won nine of its last 11 league games against Alaves, which stayed in 17th place, just outside the relegation zone. Alaves' winless streak in the league has reached seven games, with four losses and three draws. Rodrigo Riquelme put Atletico ahead in the 26th minute and Morata added to his scoring streak in first-half stoppage.
Alaves had no shots on goal until Ander Guevara scored deep in second-half stoppage time.
Atletico was still without a few injured players, including Samuel Lino, Thomas Lemar, Memphis Depay and Reinildo. Atletico next visits Las Palmas in the league, while Alaves hosts last-place Almeria. Alaves first visits Deportivo Murcia in the Copa del Rey.
Bilbao could have moved to fifth

place with a win but stayed sixth, just behind Basque Country rival Real Sociedad. Valencia stayed in ninth place.
SOCIEDAD HELD
Fifth-place Sociedad missed a chance to put pressure on the Champions League spots after conceding a stoppage-time equalizer in a 2-2 draw at Rayo Vallecano.
Bebé scored one minute into

Grand Swiss: Arjun downs Jumabayev to be in joint lead



PTI ■ ISLE OF MAN (UK)
Extending his fine run, Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi pipped Rinat Jumabayev of Kazakhstan in the fifth round to share the top spot with two others at FIDE's Grand Swiss, here on Monday.
With four points in his kitty from a possible five, Arjun is sharing the top spot with second seed American Hikaru Nakamura and Russian Andrey Esipenko who is playing under the FIDE flag.
Nakamura defeated Alexey Sarana of Serbia and Esipenko played out a draw with top seed Fabiano Caruana of United States.
Typical of his style, Arjun went for a razor sharp position out of a Ruy Lopez as white and Jumabayev obliged by accepting the challenge.
The Kazakh Grandmaster sacrificed a couple of pawns even as queens got traded and got compensation with his active pieces. Arjun in the end capitalised on a final blunder and won after 69 moves.
As many as sixteen players, including Vidit Gujrathi, trail the three leaders with 3.5 points each to their credit.
Gujrathi's three-game winning streak was halted by Russian Evgeniy Najer who drew as white against the Indian.
Top rated Indian D Gukesh's chances for a podium finish

almost ended after he succumbed to a loss against compatriot S L Narayanan.
This was Narayanan's second victory over Gukesh in about two weeks, earlier being in the Qatar Masters that concluded prior to this event.
It was a King's Indian defense by Gukesh and Narayanan went for opposite side castling inviting complications. Both players went for attacking the king but Narayanan's coordination proved stronger.
Gukesh lost a couple of pawns in the eventual rook and minor pieces and did not get another chance to recover.
In other notable matches involving Indians, P Harikrishna drew with Ruslan Ponomarev of Ukraine and the all Indian duel between Aravindh Chithambaram and Nihal Sareen also reached a deadlock while Raunak Sadhwani was on the receiving end against Parham Maghsoodloo of Iran.
In the women's event being held simultaneously, R Vaishali continued with her dream run and drew with higher-ranked Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine to an easy draw.
After defeating Anan's sister Mariya in the previous round, Vaishali did not get any real chance as Anna played it safe as black out of a Ruy Lopez opening. The pieces got traded at regular intervals as the player arrived at a drawn Bishop and

Thuram's goal leads Inter to a 1-0 win over Roma and Lukaku in Serie A

AP ■ ROME
On a night when Romelu Lukaku was the focus of Inter Milan fans' ire, Marcus Thuram - who replaced the departed Belgium striker - scored in a 1-0 win over Roma to restore the Nerazzurri atop Serie A.
Thuram redirected a cross from Federico Dimarco from close range in the 81st minute at the San Siro to finally break apart Jose Mourinho's defensive tactics on Sunday.
While Mourinho was suspended and watched the match from the stands, Roma still sat back and absorbed attack after attack. In the first half alone, Roma conceded 12 shots without attempting a single shot of its own. By the end, Inter had produced 19 shots to Roma's three.
Inter twice hit the crossbar, first with Hakan Calhanoglu early on



and then with Carlos Augusto in the final minutes.
Inter moved two points ahead of Juventus, which beat Hellas Verona 1-0 on Saturday to move top - albeit temporarily - for the first time in more than three years. Roma stayed eighth, 11 points behind Inter.
AC Milan remained third, three points back, after squandering a two-goal advantage in a 2-2 draw at defending champion Napoli.
While the buildup was all about Lukaku facing his former club, Lukaku's biggest impact was clearing away Inter corners - giving Inter fans little chance to whistle at the player who left their club acrimoniously after last season and then joined a fierce rival.
Mourinho was also formerly with Inter, having led the Nerazzurri to a treble of titles in 2010. Thuram has been involved in

seven points behind Inter.
Napoli finished with 10 men after center back Nathan picked up his second yellow in the 89th. Milan is now winless against Inter, Juventus and Napoli - its three title rivals.
HISTORIC COMEBACK
Claudio Ranieri's Cagliari became the first team in Serie A history to overturn a three-goal deficit after 70 minutes, coming all the way back to beat visiting Frosinone 4-3 with a brace from Leonardo Pavoletti in stoppage time.
Also, Modena and Udinese drew 1-1 with Andrea Colpani and Lorenzo Lucca trading goals. It was the fifth goal this season for Colpani - leaving only Jude Bellingham (10 goals) and Bryan Mbeumo (6) among midfielders who have scored more in Europe's top five leagues this season.

Anish wins Asian shooting bronze, bags India's 12th Paris Olympics berth

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Commonwealth Games gold medalist Anish Bhanwala bagged India's 12th Paris Olympic quota in shooting as he clinched a bronze medal in the men's 25m rapid pistol fire event at the Asian Championships in Changwon, Korea on Monday.
The 21-year-old from Karnal, who had 28 hits in the final, lost a shootout to Japan's Dai Yoshioka, who won the silver medal.
Local favourite Lee Gunhyeok took home the gold with a score of 34 in the eight five-shot rapid-fire series decider.
Bhanwala fetched the quota for the Paris Games by ending the qualification stage in third place with a score of 588, just one behind China's Wang Xinjie who topped the field.
Three Chinese made the six-man final as the Indian took the third qualifying spot behind world champion Li Yuehong on



countback.
It was enough to give him one of the two available 2024 Olympics spots, given that China had exhausted their quotas and Lee and Dai had also secured their Paris Games berths in earlier competitions.
Among other Indians, Bhavesh Shekhawat shot 584 to be among

the top-eight in the qualification but could not enter the final as he was competing for ranking points only (RPO). He was not eligible for the final.
Vijayveer Sidhu also missed out, shooting 581 to finish 10th overall and eight among the contenders. Adarsh Singh was further back in 25th with a score of 570.
The men's trap trio also won India a silver in the team competition as Zoravar Singh Sandhu, Kyanan Chennai (111) and Prithviraj Tondaiman (111) shot a total of 341 to finish three behind gold medalists Qatar. Iran took the bronze.
Sandhu finished sixth after reaching the individual final. India have now picked up 30 medals from the continental event, including eight gold. Bhanwala's quota was the fifth India have secured in Changwon.
In the women's trap event, the best Indian performers were the ones who were not in medal contention. Rajeshwari Kumari and Shagun Chowdhary, both playing as RPO shooters, shot 108 and 107 to finish seventh and eighth respectively.
Preeti Rajak was next best with 103, which gave her 10th spot overall. Manisha Keer (98) and Sabeera Haris (94) were further down the pecking order.

Red Bull's Verstappen dominates F1's Mexico City Grand Prix for season record 16th win

AP ■ MEXICO CITY
Max Verstappen split the Ferrari front row of Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz at the start to snatch the lead of the Formula One Mexico City Grand Prix by the first corner, then drove off to his record 16th victory of the season. Red Bull's three-time season champion collected his third consecutive win at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez on Sunday and broke his own season victories record set last year.
Verstappen started from third and won from the same spot as he did in 2021. Back then, he used the slingshot effect of the draft down the long starting straight to whip to the outside and pass two cars. This time, Verstappen's quick bolt off the starting line allowed him to squeeze between the two Ferraris and into the lead.
He still had work to do. A hard crash by Haas driver Kevin Magnussen at the halfway point forced the race into a halt and a restart. Verstappen nailed that one as well and was never threatened by the checkered flag.
The Dutch driver's 51st career win tied Alain Prost for fourth most in F1 history. Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton leads with 103. Hamilton finished second Sunday. Leclerc was third.



Leclerc had started on pole position for the second consecutive race but again failed to turn it into a win. In 22 career starts from pole, Leclerc has won just four times.
Home favorite Sergio Perez's race was over quickly. The Mexican driver, who is fighting to hang on to second in the championship behind Verstappen, was taken out in the first corner when his car clipped tires with Leclerc and bounced high into the air. The crackup silenced the massive crowd that had greeted Perez with thunderous cheers on every lap all weekend. Much of the crowd left after the crash. Most critically, it allowed Hamilton to close a 39-point gap to Perez to just 20 with three races left.
Perez hasn't won since April and hasn't been on the podium in the last five races.

