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TERRITORY TO CHINA?

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H-1B VISA PROGRAMME

MONEY 10
DIESEL SALES FALL IN
SEPTEMBER, PETROL UP

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PTI ■ COLOMBO

Mohammed Siraj conjured a magical spell of seam and swing bowling with magnificent figures of 6 for 21 as India crushed Sri Lanka by 10 wickets to lift the Asia Cup title after a gap of five years. This was India's eighth Asia Cup title and also their biggest victory (263 balls) in ODIs in terms of balls remaining. Siraj's astonishing effort saw defending champions Sri Lanka getting bundled out for 50. India did not bat an eyelid in the chase, as Shubman Gill (27) and Ishan Kishan

INDIA WINS ASIA CUP

(23) did the job in just 6.1 overs. This was India's first title in a multi-nation event after their triumph in the Asia Cup 2018, and in a way, it also exorcised the ghost of India's 54 all out against Lanka in the Coca Cola Champions Trophy at Sharjah in 2000. The match at Premadasa, forever, will be remembered for the way Siraj reduced the Lankan top-order to mere

puppets of his sorcery. The match started 40 minutes after the scheduled 3 pm beginning, but a storm of a different kind was awaiting Sri Lanka — a peak Siraj. His spell ensured that Lanka batted just 15.2 overs, and this was also their lowest ODI total against India. The pacer became only the fourth bowler in ODI history to take four wickets in an over, and he matched former



Lankan pacer Chaminda Vaas as the fastest to a five-wicket haul in one-dayers — in just 16 deliveries. Siraj also obliterated the best ODI figures against Sri Lanka, previously held by Pakistan pace legend Waqar Younis — 6 for 26 at Sharjah in 1990. However, the beauty of Siraj's bowling was beyond mere numbers. He got into action after Jasprit Bumrah jettisoned Kusal Perera in the third ball of the first over — a regulation caught behind. In conditions that resembled more London than Colombo, Siraj just had to

pitch the ball in the right areas. Siraj made his dance of destruction in the 4th over — 3.1, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.6 balls. Indian skipper Rohit Sharma hailed his team for an emphatic performance in the Asia Cup final against Sri Lanka, saying the effort will be "cherished for a very long time." "It was a great performance, especially to come and play like that in a final. Shows the mentality of the team. Very clinical. A performance like that will be cherished for a very long time," Rohit said at the post-match presentation ceremony.



Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar with Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla during the flag hoisting ceremony at 'Gaja Dwar' of new Parliament building in New Delhi on Sunday PTI

Opposition demands Women's quota Bill

DEEPAK UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

A day before the Special Parliament Session called by the Modi-Government, the Opposition leaders in an all-party meeting on Sunday urged the Government to pass the Women's Reservation Bill in the new Parliament building as no "new agenda" was revealed by the ruling party during the discussion. The Floor leaders of all major parties attended the meet at the Library building of old Parliament as the Government briefed them on the issues before the five-day Session and heard the Opposition's views. Several regional parties including Odisha's ruling party — BJD and Telangana's ruling party — BRS demanded for tabling of the Women's Reservation Bill. The same demand was echoed

by NCP leader Praful Patel. He said they were briefed that Parliament will shift to adjacent new building on the auspicious occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi on September 19. A separate meeting of the Floor leaders have been called by Leaders of House of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on Monday before the Session begins in the existing Parliament. There was no new agenda other than the five Bills which were earlier put on the table by the Government. Leader of Congress in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, after the all-party meeting, said, "All Opposition parties demanded passage of the Women's Reservation Bill in this Parliament Session." The Special Session begins against the backdrop of the Narendra Modi Government's recent success at the just-concluded G20 summit, controversies sur-



Union Ministers Rajnath Singh, Piyush Goyal, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and other leaders at the all-party meeting in New Delhi on Sunday PTI

Sabha on Monday, Leader of House in the Rajya Sabha, Union Minister Piyush Goyal, will start it in the Rajya Sabha. There is also intense buzz on whether the Government will have some 'surprise' item for the Opposition during the Session that will see a discussion on Parliament's 75-year journey and take up for consideration four Bills, including the controversial Bill on the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other election commissioners. On Sunday, Vice President and Rajya Sabha chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar hoisted the national flag at the new Parliament building. Flanked by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, he hoisted the flag atop the "Gaja Dwar" of the new Parliament building. The hoisting ceremony took place a day before Parliament

Session begins on Monday which may see parliamentary proceedings shift from the old to the adjacent new building. Earlier, Dhankhar and Birla were separately accorded a guard of honour by the CRPF's Parliament Duty Group. The event was attended by Birla, Union Ministers Pralhad Joshi, Piyush Goyal, Arjun Ram Meghwal among other, however, Congress chief and Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and party MP Rahul Gandhi were absent. Kharge said he received late invitation for the event and it was difficult for him to join as he was in Hyderabad for his party's meeting. Although, the Congress MP and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, took part in the event. **Continued on Page 2**

Churn in INDIA Bloc

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

From seat-sharing to the boycott of certain media platforms to different tunes on the controversy over Sanatan Dharma, three major differences of opinion have already cropped up in the three-month-old Opposition parties coalition INDIA bloc. Nonetheless couple of days after announcing that the INDIA alliance will hold its first public rally in poll-bound Madhya Pradesh, difference within some of its stakeholders has led to calling off the rally supposed to be scheduled at Bhopal in first week of October. Albeit the Congress in its just concluded Working Committee meeting at Hyderabad resolved to make INDIA initiative ideological, electoral success to free country from divisive politics. Amid a raging row over DMK leaders' remarks on Sanatan Dharma, sources said some Congress leaders in its CWC meeting called for a cautious approach on the matter and the party not getting drawn into the BJP's agenda.



Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Soni Gandhi asked its leaders to avoid media for unnecessary controversy while JD(U) chief Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar stated he does not support such a boycott of media and in similar vein leaders of Samajwadi Party too have decided not to get into the media boycott row terming it the 'Congress agenda'. Sources said former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi in the CWC said instead of getting involved in the Sanatan Dharma row, the leaders should focus on the poor and their issues as they have been the party's traditional vote bank.

Another major partners of INDIA alliance — the TMC and the AAP — have already distanced themselves from the Sanatan Dharma remarks by DMK leaders but maintained a status quo on the decision of media boycott. DMK leader Udhayanidhi Stalin recently caused a storm as he alleged that Sanatan Dharma is against social justice and that it should be eradicated. Days later, DMK leader A Raja said Sanatan Dharma should be compared to diseases such as AIDS and leprosy that have a social stigma attached to them. On the issue of seat sharing for the Lok Sabha polls

2024 amongst the coalition partners, negotiations between alliance partners may be undertaken by a representative of a political party which may have no presence in the current Lok Sabha. As of now INDIA bloc has about 28 partners including the bigger ones like Congress, TMC, RJD, JDU, NCP, Shiv Sena, Left parties, AAP and others. Sources from a party said as of now there is a consensus in the discussed formula for deciding on the strongest party in a State will take into account the results of previous elections. "While the parties will finalise the formula at State level in their negotiations, it would be based on the results of last Lok Sabha elections, or the last Assembly elections, or both, depending on what the parties concerned decide," explained the sources. Further, in the States where there has been no previous alliance between the partners, or if there comes a deadlock in seat sharing then a neutral leader owing allegiance to a third State will help iron out the differences. **Continued on Page 2**

Hunt for terrorists continues

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The manhunt to track down the group of terrorists, possibly hiding inside natural cave structures in the Garol forest area in Jammu & Kashmir's Anantnag district, entered its fifth day on Sunday even as intermittent firing continued and loud sounds of blasts pierced the relative calm at regular intervals. The commandos deployed on ground zero have been targeting natural cave-like structures to flush out the hiding terrorists to avoid any collateral damage. The civilian population has been shifted to nearby safer areas to prevent any loss of innocent lives in the exchange of fire. Unconfirmed reports claimed that the security forces had recovered a charred body from one of the hideouts blasted by the security forces but till late Sunday evening, the Army authorities had not issued any official statement confirming the same. Colonel Manpreet Singh, Commanding Officer, 19 Rashtriya Rifles, Major Ashish Dhonchak, and Deputy Superintendent of Jammu &



Security personnel on the fifth day of the ongoing encounter with terrorists, at Gadol Kokernag in Anantnag district, on Sunday PTI

Kashmir Police Humayun Bhat were killed in action by the terrorists on Wednesday. Meanwhile, the security forces have been maintaining a tight cordon in the outer ring to prevent these terrorists from fleeing. The police and paramilitary forces have been deployed in huge numbers to keep a close watch on any suspicious movement in the Kokernag area. The Army has been using surveillance drones and other sophisticated modern tools to zero in on their location but con-

tinuous rains and thick vegetation are hampering the ongoing operations. Meanwhile, on Sunday, Army's Chinar Corps Commander Lt Gen Rajiv Ghai visited the forward area along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu & Kashmir's Baramulla to review the anti-infiltration and counter-terrorist grid on Sunday. Three terrorists were gunned down in the area while they were attempting to infiltrate inside the Indian territory. The

Corps Commander Lt Gen Ghai visited the forward area in Uri Sector to review the anti-infiltration and Counter Terrorism grid along the LoC, the Army said. The Corps commander commended troops for maintaining the highest standards of combat readiness and operational preparedness. He also complimented the troops for the successful conduct of Operation Khandia in which three terrorists were eliminated on September 16.

Modi celebrates birthday at Yashobhoomi

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday unveiled the Phase 1 of the India International Convention and Expo Centre (IICC), known as Yashobhoomi, in Dwarka on the occasion of his 73rd birthday. He also launched the PM Vishwakarma scheme, aimed at uplifting traditional craftsmen and artisans in the country. Earlier, he had inaugurated the extension of the Delhi Airport Metro Express Line, which will now connect Dwarka Sector 21 to a newly established metro station called Yashobhoomi Dwarka Sector 25. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was not invited to the inauguration. Before the inauguration, Modi took a metro ride from the Dhaura Kuan station to the newly-built Yashobhoomi Dwarka Sector 25 metro sta-

tion. During the ride, many passengers interacted with the Prime Minister and took selfies with him. The Prime Minister, who turned 73 on Sunday, interacted with the passengers inside the metro as they wished him. The passengers were seen clapping and singing "Happy birthday Modi". The Prime Minister gave chocolates to the children who greeted him. A video of Modi's metro ride shared on social media showed the Prime Minister exchanging smiles with commuters, playing with children, talking with a school student and passengers taking selfies with him. One of the passengers took this opportunity to wish Modi on the occasion of his 73rd birthday. The passenger wished him in Sanskrit language. "Janma-dinam-idham ayi priya sakhe | shantanotu te sarvada mudam || prarthayamahe bhava shatayushi | ishvaras-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi travels via metro on his way to inaugurate India International Convention and Expo Centre (IICC) in New Delhi on Sunday PTI

sada tvam cha rakshatu || punya karmana kirtimarjaya jivanam tava bhavatu sarthakam (Happy birthday to the dear one. "May this birthday bring joy and prosperity to you. Praying to god for your long life. May god always protect you. May you walk on the path of noble deeds and your life be fulfilled)," she sang to Modi. This was Prime Minister's first birthday anniversary without his mother, who passed away last year. Earlier, Modi used to celebrate his birthday with his mother. In 2022, Modi had released eight imported cheetahs in the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh. In 2021, India administered 2.26 crore Covid vaccinations as part of a special drive to celebrate his birthday. In 2019, Modi first took the blessing of his mother Heeraben and then he attended the 'Namami Narmada' festival at Kevadiya

Gujarat. Upon arriving at the venue, the Prime Minister took a walk-through of the exhibition — Guru-Shishya Parampara and New Technology. He also inspected the 3D Model of Yashobhoomi. "Today I dedicate 'Yashobhoomi' to every worker of the country, to every Vishwakarma," he said. Modi said 'Yashobhoomi' is going to be a vibrant center connecting their creations with the world and global markets. Highlighting the increasing opportunity for India in conference tourism, Modi said Bharat Mandapam and Yashobhoomi will make Delhi one of world's best conference hub. He invited film and television industry as well as global event management companies to organise events at Bharat Mandapam and the newly-constructed Yashobhoomi, the state-of-the-art convention

centre. "You hold your award ceremonies, film festivals here. Hold first film shows here. I invite people associated with international event companies, exhibition sector to join Bharat Mandapam and Yashobhoomi," the Prime Minister said. Modi said conference tourism, estimated at ₹25 lakh crore, presents a huge opportunity for India. He highlighted that more than 32,000 big exhibitions and expos are organised in the world every year, where people coming for conference tourism spend more money than an ordinary tourist. India's share in such a big industry is only around one per cent and many big companies in India go to foreign lands every year to organise their events. He further emphasised that India is also preparing itself for conference tourism now.

Yogi: India's global prestige has increased under Modi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said that the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has instilled new self-confidence in 140 crore citizens of the country while India's global prestige has also gone up.

The Chief Minister made the remark during a visit to an exhibition based on the life of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the occasion of his 73rd birthday at the GPO in Hazratganj.

He said, "A feeling of respect towards Indian citizens worldwide has increased."

The Chief Minister said that the people of Uttar Pradesh were fortunate that Prime Minister Narendra Modi represents the state in the country's Parliament.

"For the first time after independence, the benefits of government schemes have reached every section of society without discrimination. Through his innovative schemes and with the programs that have been initiated over the past nine and a half



years, the Prime Minister has brought about extensive changes in the lives of crores of people in the country, including the poor, farmers, youth and women, especially in villages," he said.

Acknowledging the prime minister's achievements Yogi said for the first time in the country's history, agriculture was one of the priority agendas of the government while jobs and self-employment opportunities were being provided to the youth. He also highlighted various Government schemes such as the National Education Policy, Digital India, Start-Up India, Stand-Up India, PM

Vishwanath Dham in Kashi, Char Dham of Uttarakhand, the holy temple of Somnath and Mahalok of Mahakal in a new form. Additionally, the construction of the magnificent temple of Lord Ram in Ayodhya after 500 years reflects respect for heritage and unwavering faith.

The Chief Minister said that due to the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a new revolution has been brought about in the country through Digital India.

Additionally, the chief minister highlighted the government's commitment towards the welfare of citizens by providing various beneficial schemes, such as housing for the poor, LPG connections, toilets, and Saubhagya Yojana for lighting the houses of the underprivileged without any discrimination.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi's successful leadership and the exhibition held on his birthday, which reflects on various aspects of his life, will inspire the people of the state to remain dedicated to society and the nation," he said.

War of words between Delhi and Kolkata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

There was another war of words between Delhi and Kolkata with the Centre pulling up the Mamata Banerjee Government for not sending any representative in the launch of centrally sponsored Prime Minister Vishwakarma Scheme.

The Bengal ruling outfit hit back while providing its reason for skipping the PMVS programme even as it accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "trying to venerate his own birthday by the launch of a Government scheme funded out of people's money."

The war of words between the two sides started when Union Minister RK Singh slammed the State Government for sending no representative at the launch of the scheme in Kolkata.

"The State Government should have been more proactive regarding the new central scheme which targets the common people ... but here I can see that they have sent no representatives, which shows that the State is not fulfilling its duties," Singh said.



"It is the duty of the State Government to take these schemes to the people ... this at a time when the entire scheme is being funded by the Centre ... the State will have to spend not a single penny and it is the people of this State that will be benefited by the scheme," he said.

The Prime Minister on Sunday launched the much touted Rs 13,000 crore PM Vishwakarma Scheme for providing collateral-free loans and skills training to 18 categories of traditional artisans and crafts persons.

The Bengal Government was prompt to react with Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya alleging in the name of launching a project the Prime Minister was trying to commemorate his birthday.

"This is nothing but remembering the birthday of the Prime Minister through a scheme funded by public money," Bhattacharya said adding "the Centre is not giving any personal money to the people ... they are giving people's money realized as taxes back to the people ... so where is a big deal in it."

Bhattacharya is one of the senior ministers in the State in the absence of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who was presently touring Spain.

The Bengal minister recalled how the Chief Minister had launched a number of schemes often copied by the Centre and accused the Modi Government for holding back thousands of crores that rightfully belonged to the State.

"The (Central) minister is talking big today but what about the thousands of crores that the Centre has blocked ...

they are not even giving us permission to demonstrate in Delhi to demand out money ... the Centre is not giving several thousand crores towards MNREGA, PM Housing and other schemes and nor they are staging a new drama with this Viswakarma scheme which will be of no use to the people ... in Bengal our Chief Minister has opened scores of ITIs and polytechnic colleges," the Bengal minister said.

TMC MP Shantanu Se too hit back at the Centre saying "the Bengal Government has better schemes than the one's being brought by the Centre ...

Our Kanyashri project has a bigger budget than Beti Bachao Beti Padhao ... Our Swasthya Saathi project is 100 times better than the Ayushman Bharat ... Our Chief Minister has started Laxmir Bhandar scheme which has no parallel in Delhi ... so Mamata Banerjee does not have to take any lesson from the BJP Government ... it will be better if they release the money they are not releasing in order to make the poor voters who had not voted them in 2021 to suffer and starve."

Medical officers in CISF miffed at move to strip them of combatised ranks

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Medical officers of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), paramilitary force or the Central Armed Police Force designated to secure vital installations, are miffed over a recent decision to strip them of their combatised ranks.

Now onwards, these officers will be known in the civilian nomenclature of medical officers or chief medical officers. The combatised ranks are devised for the purpose of discipline, command and control only but the same cannot be used in official communications.

According to a recent CISF communication, the paramilitary clarified that now onwards medical officers will carry their general designations like chief medical officer and not as Assistant Commandant, Deputy Commandant or Deputy Inspector General who head the respective medical branches of a paramilitary force.

Referring to the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) Medical Cadre Recruitment Rules 1997, the CISF communication further said the combatised ranks for officers in the cadre is for the purpose of discipline, command and control only but the same were not used in official communications.

Unhappy with the decision, a senior medical officer of a Force said doctors joining paramilitary forces are driven by the zeal to serve the nation by working in harsh, hostile or tough conditions and it is the pride of the uniform and the rank which is a key motivator for the medical officers.

"The combatised ranks instill a sense of pride and an identity of a uniformed service.



Minus the ranks, what is the difference between us and other medical professionals in the government services or even private hospitals who derive better salary packages and working conditions. The combatised ranks differentiate us from the civilians," another senior medical officer of another paramilitary said on condition of anonymity.

"These officers (medical) are not recruited for combat duties and as per their RRs (recruitment rules), combatised ranks are for regulating discipline and command & control in the Force (wherever they are posted), combatised ranks cannot be suffixed in the existing medically sounding ranks of these officers," the CISF clarified in its recent communication for the medical branch.

The CISF communication also mentioned that as per clarification from the ITBP, the rank of medical cadre are, Medical Officer, Senior Medical Officer, Chief Medical Officer (OG), Chief Medical Officer (SG) and Director (Medical) and the same are printed on the ID card of medical cadre officers.

The doctors are on deputation to the CISF from the ITBP. The doctors in the ITBP still carry the combatised ranks like Commandant (Medical), DIG (Medical) and IG (Medical). This is another reason why the medical officers in the CISF feel the decision is discriminatory.

Police constable attacked with iron rod in West Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Three people allegedly attacked a 50-year-old Delhi Police head constable with an iron rod and bricks and left him unconscious on a West Delhi road after their car brushed past his vehicle, officials said on Sunday.

The incident of road rage occurred on September 15 near the Ghode Wala temple in Raghuraj Nagar and the head constable's car was damaged as well, they said.

Victim M G Rajesh is currently posted at the office of the Ashok Vihar Assistant Commissioner of Police.

"After finishing my duty, I was returning home in Tilak Nagar. It was around 11 pm when I crossed the slum area near Ghode Wala temple, a car overtook my vehicle and its rear portion brushed past my car," Rajesh said in his complaint.

He said that he then stopped his car on the roadside, asked the occupants of the other vehicle to drive safely and continued on his way home.



"All of a sudden the same car overtook me again and blocked the way. Two youths came out of that car and started shouting at me and asked me to exit the car. A woman also came out of the car. Suddenly, one of the men picked up a brick and damaged the windshield of my vehicle and the same youth, who had long hair, dragged me out of my vehicle and started thrashing me brutally," the FIR read.

The head constable said that in order to save his life, he pushed one of the men away but the woman allegedly attacked him with a brick.

"One of the youths over-

powered me and another attacked me with an iron rod. Due to this, I fell on the ground unconscious," he said.

The head constable said an onlooker took him to Guru Gobind Singh Hospital and police were informed. "I was unable to provide a statement at that time due to my injuries," he said in his complaint.

His statement was later recorded and an FIR was registered against three people under IPC sections 279 (rash driving), 307 (attempt to murder) and 34 (common intention) and section 184 of the Motor Vehicles Act at the Khyala police station.

Didi bringing Madrid club to Kolkata, footballs fans upbeat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Often teased for having failed to bring industry in Bengal after allegedly driving away the Tata Motors from Singur as an opposition leader, the Chief Minister is drawing kudos from the people of Kolkata for having successfully convinced the famous Madrid club La Liga to open a football academy in this part of the world.

La Liga is likely to open a football academy in Bengal soon, "probably within a few months time," a State minister said.

Banerjee who expressed happiness over the Spanish club promising to open an academy in Kolkata said, "we want them to train our young generation and aid in developing our skills... with the aid of Spain we may come up with hope and scope, reminding how the great cricketers like Kapil Dev, Sachin Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguli had brought fame for India and made her proud.



Incidentally Ganguli earlier announced setting up his third steel plant at Salboni in Purulia district of Bengal. His earlier two plants are functioning at Patna and Durgapur. The newer plant will draw an investment of Rs 2,500 crore and employ 6,000 workers, the former Team India captain who was also touring Spain with Banerjee said. Ganguli's plant will come in the place of erstwhile Jindal Steel Plant for which land had been acquired by former Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee but could not materialize in the wake of subsequent circumstances.

"We are happy that the Spanish club is coming to Kolkata ... we hope that in a few year's time Bengal will once again come to the forefront of football ... then we will not have to hire footballers from abroad," said a former India player.

Another senior functionary of the Mohun Bagan club said that "bringing La Liga to Kolkata is perhaps the biggest achievement of Mamata Banerjee in terms of sports ... We have seen how one cricketer star like Sourav Ganguli has done ... now we hope to expect similar stars to come up in football."

Cheetah Project on right path to becoming successful: Govt report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Four of the six criteria established for assessing the short-term success of India's cheetah reintroduction programme have already been met, a government report said on Sunday.

Released upon the completion of one year of the programme, the report highlighted that the initial progress has largely followed a favourable trajectory well within the envisioned limitations.

The project is on the right path to becoming a successful large carnivore conservation translocation and population establishment endeavour, it stated.

"It cannot be overemphasised that the challenges are formidable. However, with concerted efforts by officials and managers from India, Namibia, and South Africa, along with the support from the highest offices in all three countries, the project is on its assured path to recovery," the report read.

The Cheetah Action Plan, published last year, lists six short-term success criteria, including 50 per cent survival of the introduced cheetahs for the first year, establishment of home ranges in Kuno National Park, successful cheetah reproduction in the wild, survival of wild-born cheetah cubs past one year, successful F1 generation breeding, and cheetah-based revenues contributing to community livelihoods.

F1 stands for the first generation of offspring.

The report noted that the project has achieved four of



these criteria -- 50 per cent survival of the introduced cheetahs, establishment of home ranges, birth of cubs in Kuno National Park, and direct revenue contributions to local communities through the engagement of cheetah trackers and indirect appreciation of land value in surrounding areas.

India's ambitious initiative to reintroduce cheetahs after their extinction in the country marked its first anniversary on Sunday.

The project began on September 17 last year when Prime Minister Narendra Modi released a group of cheetahs

from Namibia into an enclosure at Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park.

Conservationists and experts worldwide have closely monitored the project since its inception.

Twenty cheetahs were imported from Namibia and South Africa to Kuno in two batches - one in September last year and the second in February.

Since March, six of these adult cheetahs have died due to various reasons. In May, three of the four cubs born to a female Namibian cheetah succumbed to extreme heat. The remaining cub is being raised

under human care for future wilding.

The report said that all cheetah individuals released in the wild "fared well and showed no aberrations in their natural behaviour."

A few mortalities of cheetah occurred from bacterial infection, maggots, renal failure, injuries and heat, it said.

The report noted that no unnatural deaths took place in free-ranging conditions despite some cheetahs traversing long distances in human-dominated areas. Such post-release mortalities are common in a project of this magnitude in Africa, it said.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Whereas M/s Vatika Limited is in the process of setting up of Residential Plotted Colony over an additional area measuring 10.04375 acres and 18.80 acres (after migration of entire area from License no. 66 of 2013 dated 20.07.2013 and License no. 91 of 2013 dated 26.10.2013 respectively granted for the setting up of Group Housing Colony, in addition to License no. 94 of 2013 dated 31.10.2013 and License no.11 of 2015 dated 01.10.2015) in the revenue estate of Village Harsaru, Sector-88B, Gurugram, Haryana.

And whereas several individuals have made bookings/entered into purchase agreements for allotment of plots/property in the said colony (hereinafter referred to as allottees).

And whereas the o/o Director General, Town & Country Planning, Haryana, Chandigarh, while granting the LOI vide Memo no. LC-4824/JE(SB)-2023/24788 dated 26.07.2023 and LC-2781-D/JE(SK)-2023/30293 dated 12.09.2023 for setting up the residential plotted colony, has required seeking of any objections from the allottees/General Public.

Accordingly, vide this public notice, objections are hereby invited from any of the allottees/General Public in the said residential plotted colony. The in-principle approved revised layout plan is available for perusal on our website www.vatikacollections.com and at our site office and in the office of Senior Town Planner, Sector-14, Gurugram, Haryana.

Place: Gurugram M/s Vatika Limited

Opposition demands Women's quota...

From Page 1
Defence Minister and Deputy Leader of Lok Sabha Rajnath Singh, Union Minister and Leader of Rajya Sabha Piyush Goyal, and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi were present at the all party meeting on the day when the ruling party and its members were celebrating the Modi birthday.

From the Opposition side, the INDDIA bloc, besides Adhir, Derek O'Brien from Trinamool Congress, Vandana Chavan from NCP, Farooq Abdullah from National Conference, Tiruchi Siva and Kanimozhi from DMK, Vaiko from MDMK too attended the meeting.

Other leaders including Binoy Viswam from the Communist Party of India, Vijaysai Reddy from YSRCP, Praful Patel from Ajit Pawar faction of NCP, ST Hasan from Samajwadi Party, K Keshava

Rao and Nama Nageswara Rao from BRS, HD Deve Gowda from Janata Dal (S)Pinaki Misra and Sasmit Patra from Biju Janata Dal (BJD) are also present there.

The unusual timing of the Session, which begins on Monday, has left everyone wondering, even though the main stand out feature on the listed agenda is a special discussion on Parliament's journey of 75 years starting from the "Samvidhan Sabha" (Constituent Assembly).

The Government has also listed the Bill on the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other election commissioners to be taken up for consideration and passage during the session.

The Bill was introduced in Rajya Sabha during the last Monsoon session. The Government enjoys the prerogative of tabling in Parliament some new legisla-

tion or other items that might not have been part of the listed agenda. The five bills to be discussed during the session include The Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023.

This bill was introduced in the previous monsoon session of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha, despite severe opposition from the other side. The bill proposes that a three-member committee led by the Prime Minister will be responsible for appointing future chief election commissioners and election commissioners.

Besides, The Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023, which was passed by the Rajya Sabha on August 3, laid on the table of the Lok Sabha on August 4 is also to be passed. It proposes regulation of the

legal profession by only Advocates Act, 1961 and repeals the Legal Practitioners Act, 1879, while retaining a provision dealing with touts in courts.

The Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023, was also passed by the Rajya Sabha on August 3 and laid on the table of Lok Sabha on August 4.

The government says it will lead to ease of doing business for media and publishing companies, simplify the process of registration, and decriminalise several colonial-era penal provisions.

Fourth is related to The Post Office Bill, 2023, was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on August 10. The bill is in consideration and after being cleared by the Rajya Sabha it will be laid on the Lok Sabha table. It repeals the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, and provides for matters related to the functioning of the Post Office, an undertaking of the central government.

Churn in INDIA...

From Page 1

While the alliance is focused on Lok Sabha elections, with elections coming up in five States where the Congress has high stakes, a political party has suggested to reach an understanding where prospective partners can be accommodated to set an example of unity till the India bloc prepares and go public under one umbrella.

However, sources said the Congress will never agree to this 'absurd' equations as it's already in power in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and was in power in Madhya Pradesh in the last Assembly and is confident to form Government in Telangana where it also held its Congress Working Committee meeting this weekend. On Sunday the CWC passed a resolution to work towards forming a Congress Government in all the poll bound States.

Less troubling partners of India bloc like in States of Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Bihar and Tamil Nadu seat sharing process have gained momentum after the third meeting of the group held in Mumbai.

In the coordination committee meeting last week, National Conference leader Omar Abdullah had suggested that seats which have an Opposition MP should not be disturbed. In the same meeting held at NCP chief Sharad Pawar residence it was decided that seat-sharing will be concluded at the earliest.

Modi takes metro ride, passengers click selfies

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday took the metro ride from Dhaula Kuan station on the Airport Express line and reached the Yashobhoomi Dwarka Sector 25 metro station where he inaugurated the nearly 2 km-long extension of Delhi Airport Metro Express line from Dwarka Sector 21 to Yashobhoomi Dwarka Sector 25 station.

He also unveiled a plaque at the new station marking the nearly two-km extension of the Airport Line. The Airport Express line was opened for passengers hours after its inauguration.

During the ride, many passengers interacted with the Prime Minister and took selfies with him. He unveiled a plaque at the new station marking the nearly two-km extension of the Airport Line. The Prime Minister also interacted with some metro workers at the station. The Prime Minister then also met



with artisans and craftsmen related to the footwear industry, in the national Capital.

A video of Modi's metro ride shared on social media showed the prime minister exchanging smiles with commuters, playing with child,

talking with a school student and passengers taking selfies with Modi.

"Modi took a metro ride to reach the new station at Dwarka Sector 25. The train he travelled in moved at 120 kmph. So that was in a way a



formal start of services with enhanced speed on the Airport Express Line the extension of which was also inaugurated by the Prime Minister today," a senior official said.

"With the addition of this section, the total length of the

Airport Express Line from New Delhi to Yashobhoomi Dwarka Sector 25 is now 24.9 km," a senior official said.

The journey from New Delhi Metro Station to the newly-built Yashobhoomi Dwarka Sector 25 station will

take about 21 minutes. The metro station is located near the brand new complex, and is connected to it via a subway link.

The addition of the metro station in Dwarka Sector 25 will now enhance urban con-

nectivity in the sub-city. The Airport Line earlier ended at Dwarka Sector 21 Metro Station, which is also an interchange point between the Airport Line and the Blue Line of the Delhi Metro.

In addition to serving the convention centre, the new station will also provide metro connectivity to the residents around Sector 25 of Dwarka and new sectors that have come up along the Dwarka Expressway in neighbouring Gurugram.

As a result, residents of these areas will be able to reach central Delhi in about half-an-hour, officials said. The Yashobhoomi Dwarka Sector 25 station has been constructed underground using conventional cut-and-cover technology.

With the opening of this section, the Delhi Metro network — including the Noida-Greater Noida Metro Corridor and Rapid Metro in Gurugram — will become 393 km-long with 288 stations. The Airport Express Line now has seven

metro stations — New Delhi (interchange with Yellow Line), Shivaji Stadium, Dhaula Kuan, Delhi Aerocity, Airport (T-3), Dwarka Sector 21 (interchange with Blue Line) and Yashobhoomi Dwarka Sector 25.

A total of eight trains comprising six coaches will run on this line at a frequency of 10 minutes, the DMRC had earlier said.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Metro has increased the operational speed of Metro trains on the Airport Express Line to 120 kmph starting Sunday, officials said.

Earlier the travel time between New Delhi and Dwarka Sector 21 was approximately 22 minutes, which now has been reduced to around 19 minutes between these two stations.

The approximate travel time between New Delhi and Terminal 3 of the Delhi Airport will be about 15 minutes and 30 seconds. Earlier, it was a little more than 18 minutes, the DMRC said.

AAP slams BJP for not inviting Kejriwal for metro event

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday rued the fact that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was not invited to an event, in which a metro line was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Delhi Minister and senior AAP leader Atishi said not inviting the Delhi Chief Minister to an event of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) reflects "cheap mentality" and added that the prime minister should rise above party lines. Atishi said PM Modi to 'rise above party lines' and said he is the 'guardian of states'. Addressing a press conference, Atishi



pointed out that the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) is a 50:50 venture of the Centre and the city government. "This means half the funds are spent by the city government and the other half by the Centre. But it was not considered important to invite the Delhi chief minister to the event. I want to tell the prime

minister that he is the guardian of all the state governments. He should rise above party lines," she said. "Splendid infrastructure of Delhi is the result of the Central and Delhi governments' collaboration, not inviting the Delhi CM to the metro line inauguration is unjust," she added.

The AAP leader said not inviting Kejriwal to a DMRC event reflects "cheap mentality" and added that since Delhi is the national capital, the Centre and the city government should work together for its development. She remarked that after the G-20 summit, BJP leaders never tire of asserting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is one of the world's top

leaders. "A person who is among the world's top leaders and leads the government of the world's largest party couldn't even invite Delhi Chief Minister for the inauguration of a mere two-kilometer metro line," she questioned.

"If we want to develop Delhi, then the central government and the Delhi government must work together. Delhi government is ready to collaborate closely with the central government.

However, it becomes the responsibility of a guardian to involve the Delhi government in decision-making," Atishi said Delhi minister and AAP leader Saurabh Bharadwaj also criticised Modi for not inviting

Kejriwal for the inaugural ceremony of Delhi Airport Metro Express line's extension. He recalled how the PM advocated for 'vasudhaiva kutumbakam' (world is a family) in front of the world leaders during the recently-concluded G20 Leaders' Summit, whereas, he fails to invite Kejriwal to the inauguration event, which he believes is an antithesis to the proposition.

"Just a week before PM Modi in front of the world leaders said 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' meaning the World is a family... And now in your own country, you don't invite a three-time elected Chief Minister to inauguration of Metro," Bharadwaj said.

AAP never invited LoP, MPs for inauguration events: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Criticising the AAP leaders, Delhi BJP General Secretary Harsh Malhotra has said Delhiites are surprised to see those who have never followed the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam are today quoting it to vent out their political frustration.

The BJP leaders said the Delhi Government has never invited Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly and area MPs for its functions or development projects launched. Malhotra said that the way Delhi's Ministers Atishi and Saurabh

Bhardwaj are crying over Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal not being invited for Metro Station inauguration today need to answer many questions of Delhiites and tell if Team Kejriwal can cite one example of inviting LoP in Delhi Assembly or any MP for any inauguration Delhi Government funded project.

Delhi BJP General Secretary has said that most development projects in Delhi are completed with major assistance of Centre Government and yet Kejriwal government never invites the LoP in Delhi Assembly or area MP for inau-

guration of renovated schools or any other development project. "Till last BJP served and ran MCD administration but Kejriwal government never invited the erstwhile 3 Mayors for any project launch," he added. Malhotra has said that till day present Lt Governor of Delhi took charge the Kejriwal Government never invited even Lt Governor of Delhi for any project inauguration. Delhi BJP general secretary has said Delhiites well remember dozens of such instances where CM Kejriwal inaugurated project but didn't invite even Lt Governor let alone any MP etc.

Install statues, fountains in Dwarka sub city: LG

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor (LG) LK Saxena has instructed officials to install statues and fountains in Dwarka sub-city as part of efforts to spruce up areas in Delhi that did not get a facelift ahead of the G20 Summit.

According to Raj Niwas officials, Saxena gave the instructions during a visit to Dwarka on Saturday. He began his visit from the underpass near the Palam flyover and covered various sectors of Dwarka up to the Dabri Nala road.

More than 100 kms of roads in Dwarka are under direct possession of Delhi Development Authority (DDA).

Works have started on the same with effect from Sunday, after LG's visit on Saturday.



During his visit, the LG directed the officials of all the concerned civic bodies to ensure that the area is encroachment-free and that pavements and footpaths are pedestrian-friendly.

"Heavy rains during the visit provided the LG and the accompanying officials a first-hand experience of the critical points of waterlogging in the area and instructions were issued on the spot to address the outstanding issues," said an

official.

Saxena took strong exception to the fact that the culverts leading to the main drains were either open or choked and directed that necessary action be taken to install grills at culverts and clear the blockages, the officials said.

The LG also instructed the officials to give an aesthetic facelift to the walls of the underpass leading to Dwarka and place potted plants on pavements, they said.

ABVP trashes AISA charges of waving guns

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi: The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) condemned the recent allegations made by AISA (All India Students' Association) regarding waving guns and other baseless accusations.

"These claims are devoid of any truth and are nothing more than desperate attempts to tarnish our reputation.

It is evident that AISA and NSUI (National Students' Union of India) are struggling to find valid issues to champion in the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) elections, resorting instead to falsehoods and misleading tactics," ABVP said in a statement on Sunday.

It stated that ABVP is committed to fostering a positive and constructive campus environment, unlike Left-leaning parties, including AISA, which have a history marred by involvement in hooliganism and instances of women harassment. SR

Nuh MLA's remand extended by 2 days

STAFF REPORTER ■ NUH (HARYANA)

A city court on Sunday extended by two days the police remand of Congress MLA Mamman Khan, who has been arrested in connection with the July 31 communal violence in Haryana's Nuh district.

Khan's remand was extended by two more days in connection with an FIR registered at the Nagina police station, officials said.

The MLA from Ferozpur Jhirka, who was named as an accused in a separate FIR lodged on August 1 after the communal clashes in Nuh, was arrested late on Thursday night from Rajasthan.



accounts for evidence, they said. After producing him before the chief judicial magistrate-cum-duty magistrate on Sunday, police sought a five-day remand of Khan for questioning him in connection with three more cases lodged in connection with the Nuh violence. The court extended the Congress MLA's police remand by two more days.

Take strict action against culprits in Noida lift crash case, Yogi instructs admin

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

The tragic lift crash which left eight construction workers died recently at Amrapali's Dream Valley Phase-2 project in Greater Noida West, has once again exposed the faulty maintenance of lifts and the lax attitude of officials concerned. It has also highlighted the crying need for the implementation of the Lift Act by the ruling BJP Government in Uttar Pradesh.

According to the construction workers at the Amrapali Dream Valley Phase-2 project, where the tragedy took place, they had complained about the faulty lift several times to their supervisors but no corrective measures were taken and in the end it resulted in the death of eight construction workers.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was briefed about the tragedy by the Gautam Buddha Nagar District

Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma. Adityanath directed Verma to take strict action against the culprits responsible for the death of the eight construction workers.

The District Magistrate visited the hospital where the workers were admitted after the mishap, along with the Police Commissioner and the CEO of Greater Noida Authority.

Later, Verma inspected the accident site with the officials concerned in tow, and ordered the sealing of the entire high-rise building project as the safety standards were being flouted with impunity and the lives of the construction workers were being put at risk callously.

The District Magistrate announced that the National Buildings Construction Corporation (NBCC) had decided to give a compensation of Rs 25 lakh each to the next of kin of the four construction workers who died on Friday.

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Source: Anarock Report. *As of March 31, 2023, within the Delhi NCR region. **Net of cancellation basis. *As of March 31, 2023

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Modi launches loan scheme for artisans

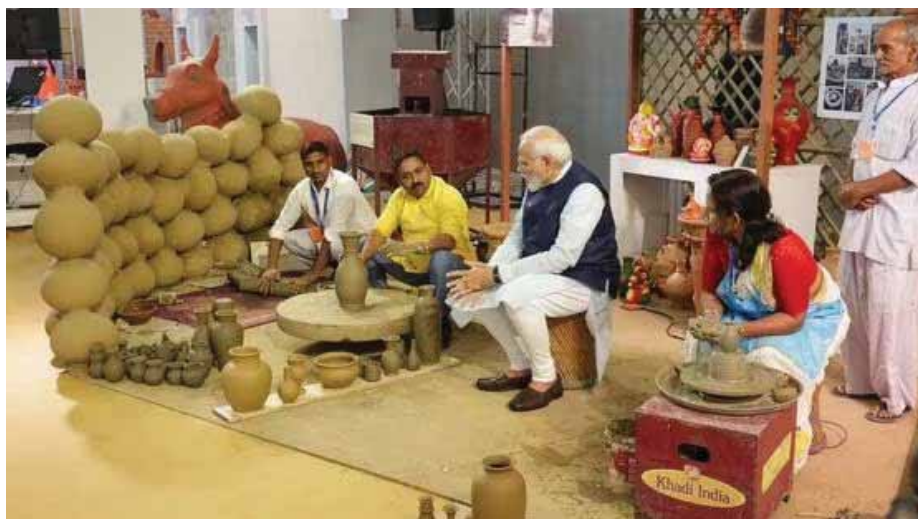
'PM Vishwakarma' scheme to provide ₹3 lakh loan without guarantee

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Affirming that his Government gives priority to the "deprived sections" of society, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched the "PM Vishwakarma" scheme under which traditional craftsmen and artisans will be provided loan assistance of up to three lakh rupees at a minimal interest rate without the need for a guarantee.

Addressing the artisans who were given "praman patra" (certificates) on the occasion of "Vishwakarma Jayanti", which also coincides with his birthday, the Prime Minister said amidst loud clapping that banks would not ask for the collateral for the loan as it is on "Modi guarantee".

With a financial outlay of Rs13,000 crore for a period of five years, the scheme will benefit about 30 lakh families of traditional artisans and



craftsmen, including weavers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, laundry workers, barbers, shoe makers and tailors, among others.

After inaugurating the newly built India International and expo centre at Dwarka, Modi said his government was the one who gave benefits to street hawkers and sellers under PM Nidhi scheme.

"Hamari vo sarkar hai jo vanchiton ko variyata deti hain", said Modi. The Prime Minister said the craft of Indian artisans was seen in G20 meet and

sought the audience to "go vocal for local and then Global". Modi who before his address interacted with individual artisan and those listening to him virtually that in coming festival months they should buy goods and articals which are "made in India".

"These purchases should not be limited to earthen Diyas only.", Modi said amidst peep of laughter in the packed auditorium. The goal of the Vishwakarma scheme is to enhance the accessibility and

quality of products and services offered by traditional artisans and craftsmen Modi said.

The scheme offers collateral-free enterprise development loans of ₹1 lakh (first tranche for 18 months repayment) and ₹2 lakh (second tranche for 30 months repayment).

A concessional rate of interest of 5% will be charged from the beneficiary with interest subvention cap of 8% to be paid by the Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises. The credit guarantee fees will

be borne by the central government. The scheme also entails benefits such as recognition as a Vishwakarma through a certificate and ID card and skill verification followed by 5-7 days (40 hours) of basic training. Interested candidates can also enrol for 15 days (120 hours) of advanced training and a stipend of ₹500 per day will be provided.

Besides, a ₹15,000 grant will be provided as a toolkit incentive and an incentive for digital transaction of ₹1 per transaction for up to 100 transactions monthly.

A National Committee for Marketing (NCM) will provide services such as Quality Certification, Branding & Promotion, E-commerce linkage, Trade Fairs advertising, publicity and other marketing activities. An artisan or craftsperson working with hands and tools and engaged in one of the 18 family-based traditional trades mentioned in the scheme, in the unorganised sector on a self-employment basis, shall be eligible for registration under PM Vishwakarma. The minimum age of the beneficiary should be 18 years on the date of registration.

Politicians wish PM on birthday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prim Minister Narendra Modi turned 73 on Sunday, with President Droupadi Murmu and other dignitaries and politicians extending their best wishes to him. The BJP has started "Sewa Pakhwara" from today till October 2, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, to reach out to different sections of society with a host of welfare initiatives to mark the birthday of its pre-eminent leader.

In Modi's Lok Sabha constituency Varanasi, a group of Muslim women celebrated the Prime Minister birthday by performing an 'aarti' and lighting 73 earthen lamps.

The women associated with the Muslim Mahila Foundation (MMF) also sang folk songs and wished for Modi's long life, its office bearers said. The women also made 'rangolis' and offered 'laddoos' to the photograph of PM Modi, and chanted slogan "Muslim bahne kare pukkar, har jagah ho Modi sarkar".



Extending best wishes, the President Murmu said she wished that Modi with his foresight and strong leadership paves the way for India's development in every field during the 'Amrit Kaal'.

Lauding the Prime Minister as the architect of new India, Home Minister Amit Shah said he has laid a strong foundation of a grand and self-reliant India on the basis of the country's ancient heritage. "Be it the party organisation or the government, we always get inspiration of national interest being supreme from Modi ji," he said, adding that he considered it his good fortune to serve the country under such a unique leader.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former party chief Rahul Gandhi and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also greeted Modi. "My best wishes to PM Shri Narendra Modi ji on his birthday. May he be blessed with good health and long life," Kharge said on X. Many Chief Ministers belonging to different parties, including Yogi Adityanath, Nitish Kumar,

Siddharamaiah and Shivraj Singh Chouhan, posted on X birthday wishes to Modi.

UP Chief Minister said Modi is "great devotee of Maa Bharati, the architect of 'New India' and the dreamer of a developed India". Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, Samajwadi Party supremo Akhilesh Yadav and Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati also extended birthday wishes to the Prime Minister.

Wishing him, BJP president J P Nadda said the Prime Minister has given tangible shape to Indian culture's global prestige, people's multi-dimensional development and the nation's universal progress. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Modi has not given merely a new identity to India but also enhanced its prestige in the world.

BJP members and Modi's admirers participated in a host of activities, including yagna and puja, cleanliness drive, plantation and distribution of food items among the poor, on the day. The Mrime Minister himself will be part of the launch of several development initiatives on his birthday. With 'Vishwakarma Jayanti' falling on Sunday as well, Modi is launching his government's ambitious scheme, "PM Vishwakarma", which is aimed at helping artisans and craftsmen and others engaged in traditional skills on the occasion.

As practitioners of these traditional occupations come largely from Other Backward Classes, the scheme with an outlay of Rs 13,000 crore is also being seen as the ruling BJP's outreach to the politically important segment. Modi inaugu-

gured the first phase of the India International Convention and Expo Centre (IICC), named Yashobhoomi, in Dwarka and also the extension of the Delhi Airport Metro Express line from Dwarka Sector 21 to a new metro station at Dwarka Sector 25 as well on Sunday.

Superstars Shah Rukh Khan, Akshay Kumar, Salman Khan and Mohanlal were among those from the Indian film industry to greet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his birthday and wish him health and happiness. The celebrities took to social media to wish the PM on his 73rd birthday. Shah Rukh Khan said he hopes the Prime Minister gets some time to have fun on his special day. "Happy Birthday to Hon. PM Shri @narendramodi!!! Have a healthy and joyful day. May u get some time off from work and have a bit of fun too. Best wishes," the "Jawan" star wrote on X.

Wishing Modi on his birthday, actor-BJP MP Hema Malini called him an "exemplary leader who leads us by example". Actor and BJP MP Sunny Deol also congratulated Modi on the occasion. Actor and politician Kamal Haasan also sent his greetings to the PM.

"May you be bestowed with good health and prosperity. @narendramodi," he wrote. Actor Kanganana Ranaut extended her wishes to the PM, whom she referred to as "the architect of New Bharat". "Happy birthday to the most loved leader in the world, an ordinary man who rose to the heights of empowerment through his hard work and perseverance..." she wrote on X.

Actors wish Modi health, happiness

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Bollywood on Sunday greeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his 73rd birthday with superstar Shah Rukh Khan also saying the Prime Minister may find some time to "have a bit of fun." Actors wished Modi health and happiness.

Besides Shah Rukh Khan, Akshay Kumar, Salman Khan, Mohanlal and Sunny Deol were among those from the Indian film industry to greet Prime Minister Modi. The celebrities took to social media to wish him.

Shah Rukh Khan said he hopes the prime minister gets some time to have fun on his special day. "Happy Birthday to Hon. PM Shri @narendramodi!!! Have a healthy and joyful day. May u get some time off from work and have a bit of fun too. Best wishes," the "Jawan" star wrote on X.

Akshay posted a picture with the prime minister on microblogging site X. "Happy Birthday @narendramodi ji. Keep inspiring us, year after year. Wishing you great health, prayers and happiness always," the "OMG 2" star wrote. "Wishing Hon PM Shri Narendra Modi ji a very Happy Birthday.... @narendramodi," Salman said.

Wishing Modi on his birthday, actor-BJP MP



Hema Malini called him an "exemplary leader who leads us by example".

"Modi ji @narendramodi stands tall, a beacon light in the modern world with all world leaders looking up to him, admiring the bold, wise decisions he has taken in the interests of our glorious country, India, which is Bharat!" she wrote on X.

Malayalam star Mohanlal tweeted: "Sending our Hon. Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi Ji love and best wishes on his birthday! Here's to crossing more milestones and making the nation prouder! @narendramodi @PMOIndia."

In his message, actor Ajay Devgn wished the Prime Minister "continued success in your relentless

efforts to lead our nation to greater heights".

Actor and BJP MP Sunny Deol also congratulated the prime minister on the occasion. "Happy Birthday our Prime Minister @narendramodi Ji, wishing you best of health and happiness always. #HappyBirthdayModiji," the "Gadar 2" star wrote on X.

Actor and politician Kamal Haasan also sent his greetings to the PM. "May you be bestowed with good health and prosperity. @narendramodi," he wrote. "Birthday Wishes to Honourable Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi Ji," Mammooty said in a post.

Actor Nimrat Kaur said she hopes the coming year brings "health, prosperity and the best of life experiences" for the PM.

Actor Kanganana Ranaut extended her wishes to the PM, whom she referred to as "the architect of New Bharat".

"Happy birthday to the most loved leader in the world, an ordinary man who rose to the heights of empowerment through his hard work and perseverance..." she wrote on X.

Singer Shaan called Modi the "pride of India". "May You always be blessed with Health, Happiness, Peace and Success in all your Endeavours !!! @narendramodi," he added.

CBI arrests executive secretary to CMD of BRIL in bribery case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has arrested the executive secretary to the CMD of public sector undertaking (PSU) Bridge and Roof Company (India) Ltd (BRIL) and six others in connection with the alleged bribery of Rs 20 lakh to favour a Gujarat-based firm to bag a Rs 56-crore tender for an Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) in Odisha.



Asish Razdan, the executive secretary to the Chairman and Managing Director of BRIL, Hetal Kumar Pravinchandra Rajyaguru, the proprietor of a Rajkot-based private firm, and five others - Shashank Kumar Jain, Somesh Chandra, Veer Thakkar, Rajiv Ranjan and Tarang Agarwal - have so far been arrested in the case, officials said.

The agency had received information from a source that Kolkata-based middleman Jain, allegedly working for BRIL officials, asked his co-conspirators Chandra and Ranjan to find a suitable party for the EMRS project, according to the FIR.

Ranjan and Chandra allegedly contacted Thakkar, who in turn arranged the Rajkot-based firm - H P Rajyaguru, reads the FIR.

"It was alleged that a conspiracy was hatched amongst the said accused for getting the tender of Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS), Odisha awarded to the private company (HP Rajyaguru) in lieu of illegal gratification to an unknown public servant of Bridge and Roof Company (India) Limited, Kolkata," the CBI said in a statement.

In its FIR, the CBI has accused Jain of demanding a bribe on behalf of unidentified BRIL officers from the owner of the private firm directly as well as through another private person for the award of the tender to it.

had ensured that the EMRS tender worth Rs 56 crore was awarded to HP Rajyaguru, as promised by him.

The very next day, Chandra allegedly told Ranjan that four per cent of the total contract value will be paid to Jain, of which three per cent will be used to bribe the BRIL officials while 1 per cent will be divided among all the middlemen - Chandra, Jain, Ranjan and Thakkar - the FIR alleged.

The CBI had received information that the proprietor of the firm, Hetal Kumar Pravinchandra Rajyaguru, made multiple payments to the middlemen between August 12 and September 11.

Rajyaguru had allegedly assured Jain that he would send him Rs 20 lakh (approximately) through "hawala" channels, meant for an unidentified public servant of BRIL.

The agency laid a trap when the transaction was to take place in Kolkata, arrested two private persons and recovered the bribe amount of Rs 19.96 lakh.

"During the investigation, it was found that the said bribe was allegedly meant for the executive secretary to the CMD, Bridge and Roof Company (India) Limited (a public servant). The said executive secretary and other private persons were also caught," the CBI said.

The agency conducted searches on the premises of the accused at different locations in Kolkata, Delhi, Noida, Mumbai, Nagpur and Rajkot, which led to the recovery of several incriminating documents, digital evidence and Rs 26.6 lakh in cash, it said.

Healthcare experts laud G20 Delhi declaration for health priorities

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The G20 New Delhi declaration has been appreciated by several healthcare experts for its priority on building a resilient healthcare system and tackling anti-microbial resistance.

Ahead of the G20 summit, India, under whose presidency the meet was held, had identified three major health priorities - strengthen the global health infrastructure, deliver health, and provide universal health coverage.

The first priority from India for this year's G20 conference was digital health - the future of health, preparing for the health crisis - antimicrobial resistance, and strengthening cooperation in the pharmaceutical sector with a focus on ensuring availability and access to safe, effective, quality and

affordable medical countermeasures like vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics.

Dr Girdhar Gyani, Director General of the Association of Healthcare Providers (AHP) called the G20 Delhi Declaration a crucial moment in the global healthcare scenario.

The declaration, he said, demonstrates a collective resolve to strengthen our healthcare systems and make them safe, effective, quality-assured, and affordable.

"It's great to acknowledge that focus has been laid on meeting the SDG-3 targets i.e., to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Equally noteworthy is the integration of the WHO's One Health Approach, which underscores the vital link between human, animal, and environmental health."



"Another significant pledge is the focus on mental health, as the declaration notes the need to promote access to mental health and psychosocial support services," Dr Gyani said. "In addition, the declaration stresses the importance of tackling anti-microbial resistance. Combining research and development, rigorous infection prevention measures, and

vigilant consumption surveillance will play a crucial role in preserving the efficacy of antibiotics for future generations," he added.

Dr Gyani underscored the importance of digital health, saying integrating technology into healthcare systems can enhance efficiency and accessibility of treatment.

"We appreciate that all

three health priorities of India's G20 presidency find mention in the G20 New Delhi Leaders' declaration that was released on Saturday. With WHO at its core, the G20 Delhi Declaration is committed to strengthening the global health architecture and building more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive health systems. It's great to note that the declaration is focused on giving a fillip to primary healthcare and essential health services," said Dr Shuchin Bajaj, Founder Director, Ujala Cygnus Hospitals.

"This will play a significant role in bringing the whole healthcare infrastructure to better than pre-pandemic levels, especially in India which lacks quality healthcare in Tier II and Tier III cities. Apart from healthcare, the declaration will pave the way for a more sustainable future as the world

grapplies with the urgent need to combat climate change and secure sustainable energy sources," he said.

"India's Presidency of the G20 Summit has witnessed many significant aspects of human life and health taken into account and it is quite clear that the Delhi Declaration, if followed in its true body and spirit can pave the way for a better, sustainable and resilient future for the whole world."

"The coming years will hopefully echo the sentiments of the G20 New Delhi Declaration while implementing tangible measures to address a range of pressing issues including climate change, biodiversity, natural energy sources, poverty alleviation, health crises, debt challenges, digital transformation, and international trade," said Kamal Narayan, CEO, IHW Council.

Sonia: My dream to see Congress Government in Telangana

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ HYDERABAD/NEW DELHI

Former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi on Sunday said it is her dream to see the party's Government in Telangana that will work for all sections of society, and appealed to people to support the Congress.

Addressing a rally in Tukuguda near Hyderabad, Sonia said, "We are announcing six guarantees and we are committed to fulfil each one of them."

Early in the day the party concluded with its two days Working Committee meeting during which it expressed confidence about receiving a decisive mandate in the upcoming Assembly polls in five States and reaffirmed its preparedness for the 2024 Lok Sabha election, with party chief Mallikarjun Kharge exhorting leaders to maintain unity and discipline.

This was the first meeting of the reconstituted CWC under Kharge's presidency. Addressing a massive rally



in the poll bound State, former party chief Rahul Gandhi dubbed the BRS as 'BJP Rishtedar Samithi' and said while opposition leaders were being attacked by government agencies there were no cases against Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao and AIMIM leaders because Prime Minister Narendra Modi considers them his own.

At the CWC meeting, leaders from Delhi unit including former Union minister Ajay

Maken and Alka Lamba, reiterated that the grand old party should not have any truck with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

Kharge also urged the party leaders to carry out the tasks given to them with diligence and reach out to the voters, especially those aged 18-25 years.

He said people are looking for an alternative and the Congress party's poll victories in Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka are a clear proof of this.

43 lakh anganwadi children across country found obese: Official data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

More than 43 lakh children in the 0-5 age group were identified as obese or overweight last month, accounting for around six per cent of the total children surveyed at anganwadi centres across the country, according to official data.

The data collected from the government-run rural child care centres also showed that the percentage of obese or overweight children was almost the same as that of severely and moderately malnourished children found in anganwadis - six per cent.

Out of the 7,24,56,458 children "measured" in the 0-5 years age category, approximately six per cent or 43,47,387 children, were classified as obese or overweight, showed the data collated from growth monitoring app 'Poshan Tracker'.

Thirteen states and union territories, including Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal, exhibit obesity



rates surpassing the national average of six per cent, it showed. Childhood obesity has exhibited a concerning upward trend in recent years.

There has been a notable increase in the percentage of children under five years of age who are overweight in NFHS-5 compared to NFHS-4, according to data from the NFHS-4 (2015-16) and the NFHS-5 (2019-21).

Before the 'Poshan Tracker', started in 2021, data was collected under the National Family Health Survey (NFHS).

In the NFHS-5, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir recorded the highest percentages of overweight children under five years of age, followed closely by Sikkim and Tripura. In contrast, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh reported the lowest percentages of overweight children under five years of age.

Every state, except Tamil Nadu and Goa, has witnessed an increase in the percentage of overweight children under five years of age in the NFHS-5 when compared to the NFHS-4, according to data from the surveys.

'India creating own identity under Modi's leadership'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Union Minister Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey said that the country has been successful in creating its own identity under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and today, India is playing a leading role among the countries of the world. He was speaking at a programme organised at Rudraksh International Convention Centre, Sigra here on Sunday, on the occasion of the launch of Vishwakarma Yojana. On the occasion, a live telecast of the launching programme of the Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana from New Delhi was watched and dignitaries and others present in the hall listened to the PM's address.

Pandey said that during the day, the people of his parliamentary constituency Varanasi celebrated the PM's birthday with full enthusiasm and joy. While wishing Baba Vishwanath for the long life and good health of the PM, he said that it is the result of the leadership of the PM that today India has achieved the feat of being the first country in the world to reach the south pole of the Moon. Discussing the successful organisation of G20, he said that this has been the most successful G20 programme ever organised which has been possible due to such strong leadership of the PM.

While discussing the Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana, he said that in reality, while this scheme will be successful in connecting the peo-



Union Minister MN Pandey addressing Vishwakarma Yojana programme in Varanasi on Sunday.

ple sitting in the last row of the society to the mainstream of the country, it is also realising Mahatma Gandhi's dream of Gram Swaraj. The PM's thinking has always been about the upliftment of the poor and the people in the last row of the society. "For which many public welfare schemes have been run by the Central Government. Be it the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana or providing free gas connections under the Ujjwala Yojana, construction of toilets or providing golden cards for free medical facilities under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme and now the Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana was launched today," he said, adding that all these schemes will be successful in uplifting the poorest of the poor and establishing them in the mainstream of the society.

District Magistrate (DM) S

Rajalingam, welcoming the people in the programme, said that Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana is a beneficiary-oriented scheme. "Artisans and craftsmen working in 18 traditional disciplines are included in this scheme. The main objective of starting the scheme is to increase the business of traditional craftsmen and artisans by providing them financial assistance and advanced equipment so that their standard of living can improve," he said.

The scheme covers many skilled artisans like carpenters, boat makers, gunsmiths, blacksmiths, hammer and toolkit makers, locksmiths, goldsmiths, potters, sculptors, stone carvers, stone breakers. Whoever will be the beneficiary of this scheme will also get a certificate and ID from the government. Only one member

of the family can apply for this scheme. The government will also provide loans up to Rs 3 lakh to make the artisans self-reliant.

This loan will be given in two installments on which a concessional interest rate of 5 percent will be charged. Under this scheme, free registration of Vishwakarmas will be done through Common Service Centres using biometric based PM Vishwakarma Portal.

Before this, the programme was formally inaugurated by lighting the lamp and the guests were welcomed. Uttar Pradesh's Ministers of State (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal and Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu', Zila Panchayat Chairperson Poonam Maurya, MLC and District Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) President Hansraj Vishwakarma, MLC Vineet Singh and many others were also present.

Big breakthrough in ₹7 lakh robbery case, four arrested

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Prayagraj Police has got a big breakthrough in the case of robbery of Rs 7 lakh from the employees of Jeevan Jyoti Hospital in Civil Lines. When the police surrounded the accused in Jhansi police station area, they started firing. In the encounter the police retaliated and two miscreants were shot in the legs and were admitted to Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital. Two other accused have been arrested by the police.

One criminal Neeraj Banjara was shot in his left leg while the other criminal, Kishan Yadav in his right leg. Two other criminals Shankar Yadav and Kashi Banjara have also been arrested by the police in the encounter. The police recovered the looted money and weapons from their possession.

The miscreants injured in the encounter were involved in the robbery of Rs 7 lakh that took place on September 12 in Civil Lines. The arrested criminals are residents of Katiyar,

Bihar. These miscreants are said to be involved in many robberies in West Bengal also. The police is interrogating the arrested and injured criminals. This encounter with miscreants took place in Jhansi on Sunday morning. A sum of Rs 7.65 lakh was recovered from the possession of miscreants.

According to police sources, the same miscreants had looted Rs 7.15 lakh in Sitapur also. Two days before the incident, the miscreant had come to Prayagraj and done

Prahlad Singh of Kydganj is working as a clerk in Jeevan Jyoti Hospital in Rambagh. Anirudh Kumar Yadav is an accountant there. On Tuesday afternoon they reached Punjab National Bank located at Sangam Place in Civil Lines on a bike with a bag full of notes. From there they reached Punjab National Bank in Civil Lines. Then two youths arrived there on a Pulsar bike and looted Rs 7 lakh from Prahlad and ran away. Since then SOG and local police were trying to nab the miscreants.

Woman's body found inside house

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The body of a married woman was found inside the house under mysterious circumstances in Deva Hata area under Manda police station area of Meja. This created panic among the family members. On getting Upon information, the parents created a ruckus accusing the in-laws of murder. On being informed the police arrived, took possession of the body and sent it for the post-mortem.

The body of Pushpa Devi (30) of Deva Hata was recovered from the room. A huge crowd of villagers gathered there. This information was given to the parents of the deceased and they also reached the spot.

The parents saw that there were injury marks on the body of the deceased. Accusing the in-laws of murdering her daughter, the maternal side started a ruckus. The police was informed and Manda police station in-charge Sanjay Sandhu, sub-inspector Shaitan Singh along with other policemen reached the spot. After talking to the maternal side, the police took the body into custody and sent for the post-mortem. On the complaint of the father of the deceased Brij Lal the police has started investigating the case.

Inspector Subhash Singh Yadav said the parents of the deceased accused her in-laws of dowry death. Investigation is being done on their complaint. After investigation further

action will be taken by registering a case.

CONDEMNED: Teerth purohiths from across the country, who had come to participate in the national convention of Akhil Bhartiya Teerth Purohit Mahasabha held here have passed a resolution condemning the continuous attacks on Sanatan Dharma.

Along with legal action against the leaders who make 'indecent' comments and statements against Sanatan Dharma, they have also been announced to boycott them.

UP Jal Shakti Minister Swatantra Dev Singh, who was the guest here, said a few years ago people were afraid of applying a 'tika' on the forehead but today it is not so. Responding to those who commented on

Sanatan Dharma, he said that Sanatan does not exist from today but is our identity.

Earlier the national convention of Akhil Bhartiya Teerth Purohit Mahasabha was inaugurated by Minister Swatantra Dev Singh and BJP MP Professor Rita Bahuguna Joshi. Teerth purohiths from more than 90 religious places from Rameshwaram to Kanyakumari and from Jammu and Kashmir to West Bengal took part in this convention. More than 650 teerth purohiths from shaktipeeths, 12 jyotirlingas, four dhams etc from across the country attended this convention organised under the chairmanship of Mahesh Pathak Chaturvedi, national president of Akhil Bhartiya Teerth Purohit Mahasabha.

73 kg laddu offered on Modi's birthday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A big function was organised at Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham on the occasion of 73rd birthday of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his parliamentary constituency here on Sunday. According to temple administration, 1,00,008 people offered belpatras at Kashi Vishwanath Temple (KVT) and prayed for long life of the PM. Besides, a 73 kg laddu was offered as 'prasad' and 73 Brahmins poured water from 73 pots apart from performing the ritual worship with 73 lotuses. The function was also attended by all the three local UP Ministers Anil Rajbhar, Ravindra Jaiswal and Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu' apart from MLAs and senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers who also participated in a special abhishek, havan and other religious rituals.



Laddu being offered at KVT on the occasion of PM Narendra Modi's 73rd birthday in Varanasi on Sunday.

Modi was the inspiration behind Mission Chandrayaan-3.0 and the architect of 'Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat' and prayed to the Almighty for his long life and good health.

During the special puja, Swasti Vachan and invocation were recited by 101 Batus (Sanskrit students). The entire complex was in devotion due to the playing of shankhnaad and damru band. After the puja, blessings were received from all the Brahmins including president and trustees Pandit Chandramouli Upadhyay, Pandit Deepak Malviya, Brijbhushan Ojha and Venkat Raman. After this, all the priests present in the programme, Archak Batuk Shastri

and Vedic Brahmins were also honoured with angavastram. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Sunil Kumar Verma distributed laddu prasad to all the visitors present in the temple. Temple Officer Nikhilesh Mishra, Officer on Special Duty Umesh Kumar Singh, regional BJP chief Dilip Singh Patel, district president Hansraj Vishwakarma and city chief Vidya Sagar Rai were also present.

Meanwhile, under the leadership of Nazneen Ansari, chief of Muslim Mahila Foundation (MMF), 10,000 Muslim women will send their support to Modi by sending letters. Nazneen said that due to the efforts of the PM, Muslim

women of India are now free and now no Maulana can interfere in their lives and evict them from their homes. "Narendra Modi not only freed Muslim women from socially disgusting practices like Triple Talaq and Halala but also gave them legal rights. Today Muslim women all over the world are looking towards Modi. After freedom from social evils, Muslim daughters moved rapidly towards education. Today, after getting educated, they are reaching high positions without any fear," she said.

On the birthday of Modi, the women of MMF expressed their gratitude by performing aarti on the picture of Narendra Modi, the most trusted leader of the era, under the programme titled "Modi, Patron of Muslim Daughters" at Subhash Bhawan in Indresh Nagar, Lamhi. Muslim women made rangoli and sang sohar to the beat of dhol, fed laddus to Modi's picture and raised slogans in favour of the PM. The function was also attended by Dr Archana Bharatvanshi, National General Secretary of Vishal Bharat Sansthan (VBS), Shabnam, Maroon, Zarina, Vajbunnisha, Shamsunnisha, Nagina and Najma.

Earlier, in the morning under the leadership of regional BJP chief DS Patel, a cleanliness drive was launched at Ambedkar Park, Kutchery and then fruits were distributed among the poor in Nagwa area and puri-katchudi in Chowk area.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

In an attempt to offer quick response to senior citizen, men-in-khaki have extensively launched 'Savera' scheme that offers services during health and other emergencies in seven districts of Prayagraj zone. Under the scheme, police are maintaining a record of people aged 60 and above and are available on call on helpline number 112 for quick response. Pointedly, police personnel will also check regularly the homes of the elderly to ensure their safety and well-being. Services under 'Savera' scheme include sending beat police personnel to visit seniors to their homes regularly and ask them about their well-being.

Additional DG (Prayagraj

zone), Bhanu Bhaskar told mediapersons that Savera scheme for elderly people is launched to enhance response time and prevent delays in addressing senior citizens' concerns.

Senior citizens are coming forward to get themselves registered under the scheme in all districts. They can visit the nearest police station, or use 112 helpline.

Safety and security are big issues for the elderly people who live alone and all by themselves. The scheme seeks to address the difficulties they face. Police are drafting a list of seniors under their police circles and jurisdiction for quick emergency assistance. Apart from personnel at the police stations, a police response vehi-

cle (PRV) will also cater to their needs.

Bhaskar also said, "The initiative seeks to reach out to all registered senior citizens and to provide timely help against harassment and other crimes, in which they often don't get timely assistance. Savera scheme has been drafted to address senior citizens' issues sensitively and delicately."

The ADG added, "Our focus is on offering timely response to elderly citizens and for that, beat personnel must know the addresses of those registered."

This scheme will considerably reduce the reaction time and help send aid faster because the details of the seniors, such as their names, addresses and phone numbers

would already be there in the records.

A person aged 60 and above can register for the service online. The information is transmitted to local police station automatically via 112. Details are registered with the police station concerned, which will verify the information by sending a police officer. Once verification is complete, senior citizen will become a registered user.

Seniors face many problems, mainly health and crime-related. Helpline services, such as 108 for ambulance, 181 for women in distress, and 101 for fire services are integrated with helpline number 112 so that senior citizens registered with Savera scheme can avail of all services.

BLW employees take cleanliness oath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

VARANASI: Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) is organising Cleanliness Fortnight from September 16 to 30 which began on Saturday with the officers and employees taking an oath of cleanliness. Under the guidance of the GM Basudev Panda, the oath ceremony was held at various places in BLW where the officers and employees took oath of cleanliness. The chief safety officer SB Patel administered the path at

Manthan, situated at the eastern gate of workshop, the chief material manager, loco Trilok Kothari and the chief quality assurance manager Praveen Kumar at the reception hall in the administrative building while the heads of various departments administered the oath in the departments. The officers and employees also launched a cleanliness drive in the premises of BLW and also made others aware about this through banners and posters.

UTS mobile app proving helpful for rly passengers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The UTS mobile app of the Railways is proving helpful for railway passengers. From January to August, more than 11 lakh passengers in Prayagraj division took railway services through this mobile app. The Railways has made a profit of Rs 2.39 crore through this app. This is 96 per cent more than the previous year 2022 (January 2022 to August 2022).

The UTS on mobile app was launched by Indian

Railways with the aim of promoting the Digital India initiative of the Government of India. Its objective is to encourage digital ticketing mode, promote self-ticketing and ensure that passengers can easily purchase tickets without facing the hassle of queues. Its a convenient way to buy tickets on the go. PRO Prayagraj Division Amit Singh said at Prayagraj Junction 1,75,507 passengers used this app which generated revenue of Rs 404,81,25 for Railways.

DC hears problems of people at Sampurna Samadhan Diwas

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Divisional Commissioner Dr Muthukumarasamy B has directed the officials concerned to dispose of cases related to the Sampurna Samadhan Diwas as well as IGRS on priority and on merit. Such direction was issued by him while hearing the problems of the people on the occasion of Sampurna Samadhan Diwas at teshil headquarters Madihan on Saturday. The DC took the action in a case which was pending for more than three decades. The case was related to Khoradeh village under Rajgarh police station. Bharat Prajapati the resident of the said village complained to the DC that he had got the 'patta' of agriculture land in year 1990 but still he is deprived of the possession. The DC directed to form a team and hand over the possession to the beneficiary. He asked the

District Magistrate Priyanka Niranjan, Chief Development Officer (CDO) Srilaxmi VS and sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) Yugantar Tripathi to review the disposal of cases received on the day. Taking plethora of complaints related to Electricity department seriously the DC directed to stop the salary of EE until the cases related to the day were not disposed of. Besides show cause notice was issued to EE Laghu Daal Nahar project for absence without proper permission. Out of 74 cases three were disposed of on the spot while teams were formed for disposing of the remaining cases. The day was organised in all four teshils of the district in which out of 449 cases 17 were disposed of on the spot.

DRIVE: DM Priyanka Niranjan while interacting with the media to provide details about the programmes under the 'Ayushman Bhav' drive at

Collectorate on Saturday said to achieve the target of universal health coverage intensive awareness was to be done and for it cooperation of the every section of life was needed.

She said there were five aspects of the drive — Seva Pakhawara, Ayushman Aapke Dwar, Ayushman Mela, Ayushman Sabha and Ayushman Gram. She said the government has already decided to make TB free India and serious efforts are on in that direction and even social organisations are providing full support to the drive. During the press conference the DM was accompanied by CDO Srilaxmi VS, CMO Dr CL Verma and other officials concerned.

SHRINGAR UTSAV: The Shringar Utsav of Ghanteshwar Mahadev was organised at Ghantaghar on Saturday in which the mahant of Burhenath temple Yoganand

Giri who was the chief guest, addressed a gathering.

Prior to the Shringar, Rudrabhishek was performed by custodian of the temple Pappu Giri. The programme started with the 'aarti' which was performed by Rahul Srivastava and other devotees related to arrangements and concluded with the 'bhajan sandhya'.

SEMINAR: President Vindhya Sant Mandal Bharat Giri while presiding over a seminar organised on the occasion of Barahi Utsav of Lord Krishna at Balnath Ashram on Saturday said the female foeticide is sin on the earth. Swami Dharm Das also addressed the seminar.

The seminar was conducted by Salil Pandey and the vote of thanks was proposed by Kotwal Tejbali.

The seminar was followed by a 'bhandara' and 'bhajan sandhya'.

Vishwakarma Puja celebrated at BLW

VARANASI (PNS):

Vishwakarma puja was celebrated with all traditional gaiety and religious fervour in all the industries, and other production units. Lord Vishwakarma is known as the founder of craft, art and construction and on the occasion, there was a festive mood in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW). On this occasion, General Manager (GM) Basudev Panda reached the place of worship and extended hearty congratulations and best wishes to the BLW officers and employees on the occasion of Lord Vishwakarma Pujanotsav.



and loyalty apart from offering prayers. This year, Chandrayaan rocket, Vikram Lander and Pragyan Rover based on Mission Chandrayaan-3 were shown in the Loco Assembly Shop to express their pleasure over the safe and clean landing on the lunar surface by Vikram Lander and Pragyan Rover which is continuously sending new information from the lunar surface to ISRO centre. The tableaux drew the attention of all. The main contribution in the thinking and construction

of this tableaux was made by senior technicians Sandeep Kumar, Neeraj, Anuj Gupta, Amit, Manish, Monu and Suryanath.

Besides, the entire instrument room was decorated by the hardworking supervisors and employees of the instrument room on a theme based on art, beauty and patriotism. The main centre of attraction in this was the model of Aditya L1 which has recently been completed by ISRO in Mission Surya. Through this medium, the employees of BLW had made a small effort to thank all those scientists and express their feelings towards them.

For the last few years, in fulfillment of social responsibilities towards the environment, idols of Lord Vishwakarma were not installed in the entire BLW campus and pictures were worshipped in their place. In particular, apart from Loco Assembly Shop, Lord Vishwakarma Puja

festival was celebrated with great pomp and show with attractive decorations at Traction Assembly Shop, Tool Room, Truck Machine Shop, Loco Test Shop, New Block Shop, Engine Division, Store Depot, Electrical and Civil Sections and Technical Training Centre (TTC).

On the occasion, Principal Chief Electrical Engineer SK Srivastava, Principal Chief Material Manager Rajneesh Gupta, Principal Chief Mechanical Engineer Prabir Kumar Saha, Principal Chief Personnel Officer Ranvijay, Principal Chief Engineer Vinod Bampal, Chief Design Engineer RR Prasad, Chief Mechanical Engineer (Production) Sunil Kumar, Senior Deputy General Manager Vijay, Chief Electrical Engineer (Loco) Arun Sharma, Chief Electrical Engineer (Inspection) MK Singh, Public Relations Officer Rajesh Kumar and many other including Staff Council's members.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Something special?

Parliament's special session begins today amid speculation over its true purpose

Though Parliament's special session's date with destiny is today, the real reason for summoning it has remained shrouded in suspense ever since its announcement only days after the monsoon session. Significantly, the BJP Government had called for this special session on September 18 while everyone and everything was focused on making the G20 Summit a resounding success. This unexpected announcement drew attention from across the political spectrum, but had everyone clueless about the agenda or the Government's underlying motive. Since a special session is called only when there is an urgent, important issue, there was a lot of speculation over the issues likely to be taken up: National security to agricultural reforms to legislative initiatives. Making it more secretive, for its part, the Government did not list any business. Only days before the session's start did the Government release the agenda: There is a special discussion on our Parliament's journey of 75 years. The Government also listed the Bill on the

appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner to be taken up for consideration and passage. The other listed items for the Lok Sabha include 'The Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023' and 'The Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023', passed by the Rajya Sabha on August 3, 2023. Besides, 'The Post Office Bill, 2023' has been listed for the Lok Sabha. The session is likely to see the proceedings of Parliament shifting from the old building to the new on the second day.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh has termed it "much ado about nothing" as all this business, assuming it is all, could have waited till the winter session in November. In the absence of any suitably tangible information, meanwhile, rumours and speculation are rife. Guesses are as wide-ranging as the declaration of Emergency, a Cabinet reshuffle or early Lok Sabha elections by dissolving the House (though all these can be achieved even when Parliament is not in session). The big question remains, why was the special session called in the first place? Given the year-end Assembly polls and the 2024 general elections, it could be a strategic move by the BJP to gain political mileage. To be fair, the sitting of the two Houses provides it a platform to articulate its vision to public. Calling a special session may also help in avoiding parliamentary logjams which have routinely marked the sessions. Having said that, it still remains an unprecedented move. A special session was not called to discuss grave situations like the Coronavirus pandemic, demonetisation or the incidents of violence in Manipur. So why now? Besides, for announcing it barely two months before the scheduled start of the winter session, the Government ought to have very sound reasons, else it would set a bad precedence. The bottomline is that arbitrary moves must be avoided as these create unnecessary confusion, affecting adversely not only the electorate but also the nation's economic sentiment and growth.



PICTALK



A pandal themed on Chandrayaan-3 is made for the Ganesh Chaturthi festival, in Kolkata

Who actually lost territory to China?

The war of 1962 exposed the inept leadership of a Prime Minister who was thoroughly alienated from the realities of both India and the geopolitics



PRAFULL GORADIA

While receiving the diplomatic credentials from India's Ambassador KM Panikkar, Mao Zedong had said, "India and China cannot afford to have war. We have too many important problems to think about," and added, "China had no aggressive intentions towards any body and least of all towards India." Being a socialist, Jawaharlal Nehru, fell for Mao's sweetness in good faith. Nehru's dear friend VK Krishna Menon, whose intellect the former was in awe of, was also a communist. Menon believed that no socialist country can go to war with another such country. When General Robert Lockhart, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army in the immediate years after independence, once asked Nehru as to the kind of army he envisaged for India so that he could plan accordingly, Nehru reacted sharply, "What army? India is a peace-loving country and doesn't want war. Our police is sufficient to protect us".

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's advice dated 7th November 1950, proved to be water off a duck's back. Patel had written, "We have practically been alone in championing the cause of China's entry into UN. In spite of this, China is not convinced about our disinterestedness, it continues to regard us with suspicion and the whole psychology is one, of scepticism mixed with a little hostility. In the background of this, we have to consider what new situation now faces us as a result of the disappearance of Tibet, and the expansion of China almost up to our gates".

Impervious to his colleague's advice, Nehru followed the socialist line propagated by his buddy Krishna Menon, choosing to befriend Chinese foreign minister Chou En Lai, going about warmly introducing him to his Asian counterpart heads of state and governments. The Bandung Conference of 1955 was an example when Nehru trotted around chaperoning Chou En Lai.

By the same year, Beijing (then Peking) had already built a highway connecting Tibet with



Xinjiang (then Sinkiang). When the Government of India came to know of this serious development, Nehru tried to explain it away to Parliament by stating that in Aksai Chin, "not a blade of grass grows". I wonder if Rahul Gandhi was referring to this loss of what he called "grazing land" and about which Prime Minister Modi had "not disclosed".

Nehru's pride did not permit him to change India's approach towards Chinese mischief although with Chou En Lai, he shifted from his charm to gradual animosity. The Chinese reacted by assaulting and killing ten Indian border patrol guards and apprehending another ten at Kongka Pass in the Tibetan region in 1959. This was the final portent, followed by Chou's visit to New Delhi in 1960, when he reportedly gave Nehru a 'final offer' of settlement: India should give up claims to Aksai Chin and China would renounce its 'rights' in Arunachal Pradesh, then called North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). The next time India and China met was on the battlefields of Ladakh in the West and Tawang in the east.

While our soldiers fought valorously, the leaders behaved like sissies. Nehru insisted on fighting the Chinese with the

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WHILE OUR SOLDIERS FOUGHT VALOROUSLY, THE LEADERS BEHAVED LIKE SISSIES. NEHRU INSISTED ON FIGHTING THE CHINESE WITH THE HELMSMANSHIP OF LT GEN BRIJ MOHAN KAUL, WHO HAD NEVER WITNESSED ACTION ON A BATTLEFIELD

helmsmanship of Lt. Gen. Brij Mohan Kaul, who had never witnessed action on a battlefield. The army that was expected to fight in the mountains did not possess a single mountain howitzer. Defence minister Krishna Menon wanted the country's ordnance factories to produce civilian items like coffee percolators rather than guns and ammunition.

Our jawans thus laid down their lives, having to make do with only the outdated .303 bolt action Lee Enfield rifles. Our troops that went up the hills had only brown canvas shoes and thin woollen pullovers and no warm clothing adequate for the Himalayas. From the distance of Kolkata, it appeared that the Indian high command in 1962 had never heard of anything like strategy. From the days Carl von Clausewitz, the grandfather of modern military science, it was a maxim that a commander should never depend only on terrain for defence, because the enemy, sooner or later, would circumvent it through alternate means of intrusion. This is what the Chinese did at Sela Pass, and Bomdi La had soon to surrender. It did not register on the highest command of our armed forces that an enemy intending to capture and occupy territory does not

invade in the autumn but usually in early spring. The Chinese opened fire on October 20, 1962. Every defending army prefers to fight on a level playing field, something that was ignored.

Our troops were ill-equipped, and therefore, adhering to the above strategy was all the more important. Instead of offering immediate resistance the border, had we withdrawn to the plains of Assam, it would have been much easier to fight the invading Chinese army, especially in our thin pullovers and canvas shoes.

In the event, the sorry saga of 1962 exposed the inept leadership of a Prime Minister who was so thoroughly alienated from the realities of both India and international geopolitics. The country's present leadership, if anything, has not only resolutely stood up to Chinese bullying but has also forced it to eat humble pie at Doklam and Galwan. It is important for us to learn of what led to the loss of territory for which the current generation of the dynasty responsible for it, is pointing accusing fingers at the present leadership.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

KOTA STUDENT SUICIDES

Sir — It refers to "Kota shaken by yet another aspirant's suicide." What an irony that a city which used to be known as a coaching factory has turned into the suicide capital. Thirty student suicides in the last eight months in Kota are both unfortunate and unprecedented. And sadly, this does not end here; we are witnessing suicides in IITs too. It clearly exposes the vulnerability of our young minds and the kind of undue pressure we have placed on them. There is no doubt that these young students will face intense cut-throat competition when they enter the corporate world, but that does not mean we put them under extreme societal peer pressure.

Initiatives like having mental health professionals available on call, encouraging light sports activities, and allowing family members to stay with students are good measures taken by a few coaching institutes in Kota. But we need to address this sensitive issue more comprehensively. We need to encourage our children to pursue their dreams and passions, as there is no shortage of other careers in today's time. IITs and medical courses are not the be-all and end-all of life. Ultimately, the mental well-being of our children should be our top priority. Simply chasing high salaries in the IT field will not help us and our children.

Bal Govind | Noida

BCCI: RICH, RICHER, RICHEST

Sir — The BCCI is the richest cricketing body. Asia Cup rules were framed to see India or Pakistan reaching the final stage. Pakistan was beaten soundly. Sri Lanka staged a great comeback but could not upstage India in an interesting encounter between the ball and bat. I fail to understand this reserve day policy, especially only for India vs. Pakistan. Give-and-take policies apply to others. The game of cricket has become highly biased, and there is no sportsmanship in handling international cricket matches. Thus, academic interest in cricket matches is being lost, thanks to ICC. This was reflected in attendance at matches during the initial stages of the Asia



BIJU DHARAMAPALAN

Moral compass in education is a must

Teachers' Day is the perfect occasion to take stock of our education system and where it is headed

Every year we celebrate Teachers' Day to commemorate the birth anniversary of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, who was a distinguished philosopher, scholar, and the second President of India. He was also a prominent educator and believed deeply in the value of education. The significance of Teachers' Day lies in appreciating the immense contribution of teachers to society. Teachers are the main pillar that keeps our nation moving forward. They not only provide knowledge to the students but also groom next-generation citizens. The quality of the society can be deciphered from the contribution of good teachers.



Teachers' Day is a time to reflect on the current education scenario in the country and the changing roles of a teacher.

The educational philosophy proposed by Dr Radhakrishnan was by deeply rooted in the belief that education is not merely a process of acquiring knowledge, but a means to cultivate a holistic and enlightened individual. Radhakrishnan believed in the holistic development of an individual. He emphasized that education should nurture not only intellectual growth but also moral, emotional, and spiritual development. He emphasized the importance of teachers in shaping the intellectual and moral character of students. This emphasis on character formation was central to his vision of education.

Unfortunately in today's education teachers have taken a back seat in delivering moral values to students.

The human touch between teacher and student is hardly seen in their relationship. There was a time when a teacher donned not only the role of a knowledge provider but also a parent. They could even remember the details of family members of their students. Even if a student bunks off the class, teachers used to catch these fellows from movie halls and parks. But with changing times, this culture has drastically shifted, mostly because of the attitudinal change that happened to parents.

Similarly, during earlier periods teachers not only discussed the syllabus but also many topics related to values in life. Most of the time these values got imbibed into the sub-conscious mind of the student that helps in grooming a good future citizen. Every student remembers these values taught by teachers till the end of life.

With the mushrooming of private educational institutions, even the management and teachers forget the importance of values. The only thing these institutions focus on is to make students suc-

cessful in competitive examinations and making money. Even teachers have become corrupted because of this. They act in a partisan manner to satisfy the needs of the management, fearing loss of jobs.

The hands of these teachers are tightly bound by the management and they don't enjoy the academic freedom their predecessors enjoyed two decades back.

The higher number of crimes that involve educated people, and increasing malpractices in every sector by the educated people point to our faulty education system. When someone points out a corruption charge in society, be it against a politician or a government employee, it indirectly points to a teacher who moulded them. Value-based education is the need of the hour. Education coupled with moral values empowers individuals to make ethical decisions, even in complex or ambiguous situations for the betterment of society.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore; views are personal)

Global biofuels alliance



Kudos to India for forming the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA) during the G20-2023 summit on September 9th. It's excellent that GBA comprises 19 countries and

12 international organizations, including India, Brazil, and the US as founding members. Here is a significant business opportunity and profits for India and its farmers, who are facing significant losses due to weather extremities.

A cautionary note should be sounded: limit biofuel production to 0% deforestation (i.e., avoid fresh agricultural expansion by cutting or burning forests). Forests contribute significantly to healthy oxygen levels in the atmosphere and help reduce unhealthy CO2 pollution, providing a double benefit. Deforestation leads to global warming and weather-related catastrophes.

Hence, the solution is to limit biofuels only to current farms' crop residues and stubble (left-over agricultural waste used as raw material to make ethanol). Some of these crops may have a low energy return, and it's important to note that 20% ethanol blended with petrol is not 100% clean energy, unlike solar, wind, and green hydrogen energy.

PV Madhu Niviriti | Secunderabad

Cup. The teams concerned are more important than the game itself. The World Cup in India is already tipped to favor the home team, and the resultant cup-winning performance is bound to follow the Indian rope trick, which generally takes place in all home series matches.

CK Ramani | Mumbai

OPPOSITION BOYCOTTS TV DEBATES

Sir — The Opposition in India has decided to stop sending its leaders and spokespersons to participate in debates conducted by certain Godi media television anchors, identifying sections of the media as "hounds" and "agents" of the ruling party. After a meeting of the India coordination committee at Sharad Pawar's residence in New Delhi on Wednesday evening, a joint statement said: "The coordination committee authorized the sub-group on media to decide upon the names of the (TV) anchors who are sold-out items

on whose shows none of the India parties will send their representatives. This is probably the first time the entire Opposition bloc has decided to pinpoint journalists who act as agents of power and boycott them. Some media houses would be completely shunned, while specific anchors on other channels would be avoided. There is a consensus among the parties that they should have no link with at least three media houses.

Among the India leaders, this is a stern stand, as they feel there is no scope for any change in their attitude. Godi media selects topics and events that can be used to create communal tension and run propaganda on a daily basis. This is not only about bias; this is unethical journalism that even the media should look into.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

YAMA AND NIYAMA: THE ETHICAL FOUNDATION

They provide moral compass to Ashtanga Yoga on which the entire system rests



SWAMI CHARANSHRIT

Maharishi Patanjali in his treatise Patanjali Yoga Sutra, wrote, Tado drash-tuhu swarupe avastham, (Sutra 3), implying that the seer then rests or remains in his/her own nature. This exalted state can be achieved by a disciplined mind. It would be worthwhile to perceive and comprehend Sutra 4; Ashtanga Yoga, often referred to as the Eight-Limbed Path, is a comprehensive system of yoga practice that encompasses various facets of life, ranging from physical postures (asanas) to meditation and spiritual realization. At its core, Ashtanga Yoga is built upon a solid foundation of ethical and moral principles known as Yama and Niyama. These principles provide practitioners with a framework for leading a balanced, harmonious, and spiritually fulfilling life.

Yama: The Five Moral Restraints

Yama, the first limb of Ashtanga Yoga, consists of five moral restraints or ethical guidelines that help individuals navigate their interactions with the external world. These principles are:

1. Ahimsa (Non-Violence): Ahimsa teaches us to cultivate a deep sense of non-violence, not only in our actions but also in our thoughts and words. It promotes compassion and empathy towards all living beings.
2. Satya (Truthfulness): Satya encourages us to be truthful in our words and actions. It involves not only speaking the truth but also being honest with ourselves and avoiding deception.
3. Asteya (Non-Stealing): Asteya teaches us to refrain from stealing or coveting what belongs to others, both materially and emotionally. It promotes contentment and gratitude for what we have.
4. Brahmacharya (Moderation and Self-Control): Brahmacharya emphasizes moderation and self-control in our physical and emotional desires. It encourages us to channel our energy towards spiritual growth rather than indulging in excessive sensual pleasures.
5. Aparigraha (Non-Possessiveness): Aparigraha teaches us to let go of attachments and possessiveness. By reducing our attachment to material possessions, we free ourselves from unnecessary burdens and distractions.



Niyama: The Five Observances

Niyama, the second limb of Ashtanga Yoga, consists of five observances or personal disciplines that guide our inner transformation. These principles are:

1. Saucha (Purity): Saucha emphasizes cleanliness and purity, both externally and internally. It involves maintaining a clean physical environment, as well as purifying the mind and heart through practices such as meditation.
2. Santosha (Contentment): Santosha encourages contentment and acceptance of the present moment. It teaches us to find joy and satisfaction in what we have rather than constantly seeking external sources of happiness.
3. Tapas (Austerity): Tapas involves cultivating self-discipline and inner strength. It includes practices like fasting, self-reflection, and intense self-study to remove impurities and distractions from the mind.
4. Svadhyaya (Self-Study): Svadhyaya encourages the study of sacred texts, self-reflection, and introspection. It guides us on a journey of self-discovery and self-realization.
5. Ishvara Pranidhana (Surrender to a Higher Power): Ishvara Pranidhana teaches us to surrender our ego and will to a higher power or divine consciousness.

The Importance of Yama and Niyama: In Ashtanga Yoga, the principles of Yama and Niyama are the moral and ethical cornerstones upon which the entire system is built. They provide a roadmap for individuals seeking to live a life of integrity, compassion, and inner fulfillment. By incorporating these principles into their daily lives, practitioners of Ashtanga Yoga can enhance their physical health and mental well-being.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher. The views expressed are personal)

Time for 100 per cent FDI in retail sector

One hundred per cent Foreign Direct Investment should be permitted to all retailers, online or offline, big or small, for the growth of this sector



UTTAM GUPTA

During discussions with representatives of e-commerce firms and a domestic traders' body viz. Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) held on August 2, 2023, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry made a presentation on the 'fundamentals' of the proposed e-commerce policy. The policy is being deliberated since 2018.

The DPIIT highlighted seven salient features of the proposed policy: unambiguous demarcation between the marketplace model where foreign direct investment (FDI) is allowed and inventory model where FDI is prohibited; making the policy congruent with the consumer protection rules; inclusive growth of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs); enabling free and informed choice by consumers; exports promotion; determining responsibilities of e-commerce entities; and stricter compliance to regulatory measures.

The government's main objective is to harmonize the interests of three key stakeholders viz. foreign investors, MSMEs and consumers. But, the manner in which various contours of the policy have evolved since the DPIIT made its first move on FDI in e-commerce in 2016, it is unlikely that this would happen.

E-commerce is the process of selling goods and services over the Internet. In early 2016, the government allowed 100 per cent FDI under the so-called marketplace model. The marketplace is a platform where vendors sell their products to consumers even as its owner merely acts as a facilitator by providing services such as booking orders, raising invoices, arranging the delivery, etc. She can't hold inventory or undertake direct selling.

The policy intent was abundantly clear. The foreign investor in the marketplace wasn't supposed to invest in inventory model. The 'demarcation' between the two models was intended when DPIIT came out with its Press Note (PN) in 2016. But, a clever bureaucrat blurred this demarcation while drafting the fine print. The PN (2016) prescribed two conditions. First, the foreign entity owning marketplace cannot permit more than 25 per cent of total sales on the marketplace from one vendor or its group companies. Two, it cannot directly or indirectly influence the sale price.

In the absence of specifying as to who that vendor should be, it made way for a company linked to the owner of marketplace to get in. The latter could set up four companies (call them subsidiaries or JVs) and control 25 per cent each of total sales on the platform. Contrary to the policy intent, which prohibited foreign investor in e-commerce, the fingerprint did just the opposite.

Having allowed its entities to control almost all of the sales made on the marketplace, the second condition that the latter can't directly or indirectly influence the sale price is laughable.

The MSMEs who were impacted the most by this backdoor entry of Amazon, Walmart/Flipkart etc in direct selling complained to the government. In response, on December 26, 2018, the DPIIT clarified "the owner of the marketplace or its subsidiary or its joint ven-



AFTER SUCCESSFULLY STEERING THROUGH THE TURBULENT TIMES CAUSED BY CORONA PANDEMIC IN 2020-21, THE GOVERNMENT KEPT UP THE MOMENTUM OF INVESTMENT IN THE FOLLOWING TWO YEARS TO LEAD GROWTH FROM THE FRONT

(The writer is a policy analyst)

ture (JV) with an Indian company can't have ownership of the seller." Further, "a seller on the platform can't source more than 25 per cent of its inventory from a firm connected with the latter." It is possible for foreign investors to circumvent the first rider by having less than 50 per cent shareholding in the seller firm and arguing that they have no control (majority) over the latter. The marketplace owner can also sell his 'own' product - albeit through its wholesale arm - on the platform. All that the wholesale arm needs to ensure is to restrict supplies to the seller within the 25 per cent threshold.

It isn't just a case of boundaries getting blurred. The official notes recognize and give legitimacy to the connection between marketplace owner and the seller. These don't prohibit foreign firms from keeping inventory and engage in direct selling to consumers. They are doing it at the cost of millions of small traders. For instance, only three dozen firms out of the 400,000 sellers on the Amazon platform account for 67 per cent of sales on it. In this backdrop, one wonders as to how the new policy will promote inclusive growth of MSMEs.

The government is keen on making the policy congruent with the consumer protection rules. In 2020, the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), in the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, issued the Consumer Protection (e-commerce) Rules, under Section 101 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. The rules bar affiliated entities from selling

e-commerce platforms, restrict 'flash sales,' and disallow sellers from using the name or brand associated with the marketplace e-commerce entities for the promotion of goods.

In 2021, DCA made amendments to restrict business-to-business, or B2B, sales in e-commerce and a provision to prevent an 'abuse of dominant position' by e-commerce firms. Making the new policy compatible with these rules would require establishing a total disconnect between the owner of the platform and the seller on it. In other words, the government wants to undo all that was done by the commerce ministry earlier. It will be tantamount to a retrospective change of policy and send a wrong signal to foreign investors. No wonder, large e-commerce companies are resisting the proposed changes.

A fourth feature of the proposed policy is to enable 'free' and 'informed' choice (albeit for consumers). This would have been possible only when a large number of entities were able to sell on the platform in a 'fair' and 'non-discriminatory' manner. But, this isn't happening as the foreign major controls all the levers. Apart from its subsidiaries or joint ventures dominating the platform, even amongst others, the foreign firm decides as to 'who gets how much space and visibility'.

As for exports promotion, the MNCs are here to avail of the ever-expanding opportunities in the Indian market and our policy makers have so far helped them by providing an enabling environ-

ment. The talk of promoting export through this route (read: e-commerce) doesn't pass muster.

Fixing responsibilities of e-commerce entities assumes significance in the backdrop of multiple instances of consumers being duped. The foreign majors often get away from their responsibility to protect consumer by saying that they are 'intermediaries', hence they are not liable if any consumer is duped. The extant vague rules (2016/2018 press notes) enable them assume the role which suits them depending on the prevailing situation.

Finally, as for stricter compliance to regulatory measures, to ensure this, the rules need to be crystal clear in the very first place. When, these are vague and susceptible to varied interpretations, it will be difficult to prove violation. That apart, so far the government hasn't even mooted the idea of setting up a regulatory authority.

The present mess owes it to the very idea of marketplace which is flawed. When, the government expects foreign company to do almost everything that a retailer does viz. booking order, raising invoice, arranging delivery, accept rejection and so on, how can the former deny the latter right to sell? The way forward is to shun this idea; instead allow 100 per cent FDI in retail.

In fact, the bureaucrats had already done it but in a 'subtle' way. The government should make it obvious and straightforward. Moreover, 100 per cent FDI should be permitted to all retailers, online or offline, big or small for a level playing field.

India's G20 presidency has shown the way forward

The G20 Summit in Delhi has definitely given an impetus towards resolution of almost all global challenges confronting humanity as of today

India's G20 Presidency has shown the Way forward. The G20 summit in New Delhi has been truly historic in many ways, for it paved the way for the African Union to be a permanent seat holder. Hence, G20 is no longer G20, but G21 now. This is the first time that an expansion of this nature has happened since 1990 when the intergovernmental forum was established. India has emerged as a nation with an ability to bring countries together to facilitate real change in the existing world order. The joint communique, which included 83 paragraphs and not a single note of dissent, speaks volumes of how remarkable India's presidency has been; something that global leaders are already reckoning with. The inclusion of the



UMANG KOHLI

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

African Union as part of the G20 has opened up possibilities for the growth of the Global South like never before. The forum has become more inclusive and multilateral emphasis on sustainability will help in giving a boost to balanced growth. Global initiatives in empowering women, digital landscape, strengthening emerging markets, green development have also been taken and will go a long way in progress of humanity and welfare of all. In a word that is highly polarised right now, this summit has helped in fostering consensus on vital subjects like climate change and war in Ukraine. India has shown remarkable astuteness in forging a consensus, something that many did not anticipate to come about during the sum-

mit. The noteworthy aspect about the summit was that it managed to throw up some important questions to the world community and humanity in general. Some of them were: Are we willing to walk the talk on sustainable development goals (SDGs)? Can the entire world work together to stop climate change, which for sure is one of the biggest challenges confronting humanity in the long run? Is the world ready to include the Global South in its policy making process? Can the entire world progress together and work with each other rather than working in silos to bring prosperity for its citizens? Will the new trade route enable countries to shun the debt trap of China? Will the transfer of technology

benefit the Global South? Have democracies across the world strengthened? And have the nations who propagate war become weaker? These are some of the questions that the G20 summit has not only raised, but also tried to address to some extent. At the G20 summit, Bharat called on leaders to work together ahead of the COP28 Summit to reduce their respective countries' carbon emissions and also support economies of the Global South to deal with the consequences of climate change. The formation of the Global Biofuel Alliance and the pledge to work together to achieve net zero carbon emissions will go a long way in dealing with climate change. The summit has definitely set the agenda for COP28. The US and the EU

have backed an ambitious plan to build an economic corridor, linking Europe with the Middle East and India via rail and sea. The launch of the corridor involving Saudi Arabia, UAE, the US and India is a long awaited trade route which works in the direction of One Earth. It will help counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and also the nation's effort to practice debt-trap diplomacy. The corridor will definitely help in connecting the Global South with the western world and it will also foster prosperity for the world. The inclusion of the African Union as a permanent G20 member has huge strategic and geopolitical ramifications. Africa is potentially the next global growth hub, however, it had little say at the glob-

al high table. It is this imbalance that has now been addressed. This is also a huge win for India, as it looks to counterbalance the Chinese outreach and influence in Africa. India also intends to transfer technology of digital payments to the African subcontinent. This looks like a giant step towards inclusion of Africa and the first step towards equitable distribution of resources among the various stakeholders. This statement is a vision for the future, a vision for a better world. Other SDGs like health and gender equality were also mullied over and direction to achieve them was deliberated upon. India's G20 Presidency focused on consolidating the existing digital health initia-

tives and fostering equity in healthcare by incorporating tools like telemedicine and artificial intelligence. As per the agenda of G20 Presidency, women must be at the centre of the development stories, as women are not just passive subjects, but agents, collaborators and decision-makers in the transformative socio-economic change. This is a change from the past. The G20 summit in Delhi has definitely given an impetus towards resolution of global challenges confronting humanity, even if many questions about their complete resolution remain unanswered. A roadmap has been given and the direction has been shown, it remains to be seen if the world is willing to walk on this road.

Kim concludes Russia trip

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is on his way home Sunday from Russia, ending a six-day trip that triggered global concerns about weapons transfer deals between the two countries locked in separate standoffs with the West.

Kim's armoured train departed to the sound of the Russian patriotic march song "Farewell of Slavia" at the end of a farewell ceremony at a railway station in Artyom, a far eastern Russian city about 200 kilometres (124 miles) from the border with North Korea, Russia's state news agency RIA reported.

Senior officials including Russia's Minister of Natural Resources Alexander Kozlov and Primorye regional Gov. Oleg Kozhemyako were present at the ceremony, which featured a Russian military band playing both North Korean and Russian national anthems.

Since entering Russia last Tuesday in his first overseas trip in more than four years, Kim had met President



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un, center, and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, left, inspect honor guards on the arrival of a military airfield in Vladivostok, Russian Far East on Saturday.

Vladimir Putin and visited key military and technology sites, underscoring the countries' deepening defence cooperation in the face of separate, intensifying confrontations with the West.

US and South Korean officials have said North Korea could provide badly needed munitions for Moscow's war on

Ukraine in exchange for sophisticated Russian weapons technology that would advance Kim's nuclear ambitions. UN Security Council resolutions — which Russia, a permanent member, previously endorsed — ban North Korea from exporting or importing any arms. Observers say Russia's alleged attempts to receive

ammunitions and artillery shells from North Korea suggest Moscow's desperation to refill its arsenal exhausted in the war with Ukraine.

"Military cooperation between North Korea and Russia is illegal and unjust as it contravenes UN Security Council resolutions and various other international sanctions," South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said in written responses Sunday to questions from The Associated Press. "The international community will unite more tightly in response to such a move."

In return for supplying conventional arms to Russia, experts say North Korea would seek Russian economic and food aid but also transfers of technologies to build powerful missiles, a nuclear-propelled submarine and a spy satellite. North Korea has publicly sought to introduce such high-tech weapons systems citing what it called intensifying US-led hostilities. Earlier Sunday, Kim was in a lighter mode, touring a university and watching a walrus show at a Russian aquarium.

S Korea's Yoon warns against Russia-N Korea military coop

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea's president said the international community "will unite more tightly" to cope with deepening military cooperation between Russia and North Korea, as he pushes to raise the issue with world leaders at the U.N. General Assembly this week.

Worries about Russian-North Korean ties have flared since North Korean leader Kim Jong Un traveled to Russia last week for a summit with President Vladimir Putin and to tour a slew of high-profile military and technology sites. Foreign experts speculate Kim could refill Russia's ammunition inventory drained in its 18-month war with Ukraine in return for economic aid and technologies to modernize his weapons systems targeting South Korea and the U.S.

"Military cooperation between North Korea and Russia is illegal and unjust as it contravenes U.N. Security Council resolutions and various other international sanctions," South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said in written responses to questions from The Associated Press before his departure to New York to attend the U.N. General Assembly.

"The international community will unite more tightly in response to such a move," he said. In his address Wednesday at the annual U.N. gathering, Yoon will speak about his assessment of the Russian-North Korean moves, according to his office in South Korea, which added it is discussing countermeasures with the U.S., Japan and other partners.

While Russian-North Korean cooperation is feared to fuel Russia's war efforts in Ukraine, it has also stoked security jitters in South Korea, where many think a Russian transfer of sophisticated weapons technologies would help North Korea acquire a functioning spy satellite, a nuclear-powered submarine and more powerful missiles. Some experts still say North Korea would end up receiving food and cash in return for supplying ammunition and shells because Russia closely guards its high-tech weapons technologies.



North Korea's advancing nuclear arsenal has been a major source of tensions in the region, with the North openly threatening to use nuclear weapons in potential conflicts with its rivals and conducting a barrage of missile tests since last year. In response, Yoon and U.S. President Joe Biden in April agreed to expand joint military exercises, increase the temporary deployments of U.S. nuclear assets and launch a bilateral nuclear consultative group.

"Our two countries (South Korea and the U.S.) reaffirmed that any nuclear attack by North Korea will be met with a swift, overwhelming and decisive response that will bring about the end of the regime," Yoon said.

"Going forward, (South Korea)-U.S. extended deterrence will develop into a joint system in which both countries discuss, decide and act together," he said. "We will also enhance the ability to deter and respond to any nuclear or missile threat from North Korea." Since entering Russia last Tuesday in his first foreign travel in 4 1/2 years, Kim has inspected some of Russia's most advanced weapons systems including nuclear-capable bombers, fighter jets, hypersonic missiles and a warship. During a summit with Putin at Russia's most important space launch center on Wednesday, Kim vowed "full and unconditional support" for Putin.

Some South Koreans call on their government to consider providing lethal weapons to Ukraine in retaliation against Russia's possible weapons technology transfers. But South Korean defense officials said its policy of not supplying weapons

to countries at war remained unchanged.

Yoon recently announced South Korea will provide an additional \$300 million to Ukraine next year, on top of the \$150 million promised this year. He said South Korea will prepare for a mid- to long-term support package worth more than \$2 billion.

South Korea has provided Ukraine with demining equipment, emergency evacuation vehicles, pickup trucks, medical supplies, tablet PCs and other items. Yoon said in the coming year South Korea will continue to communicate closely with Ukraine to send it what is truly needed.

Since taking office last year, Yoon, a conservative, has made a bolstered military alliance with the U.S. the heart of his foreign policy while pushing to move beyond history disputes with Japan — Korea's former colonial ruler — and expand a trilateral Seoul-Washington-Tokyo security cooperation. That has triggered concerns that South Korea's relations with China, its biggest trading partner, will be hurt.

Yoon dismissed such a notion, saying "the trilateral cooperation harbors no intention of marginalizing any particular nation or establishing an exclusive coalition."

Citing his meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping last November and Premier Li Qiang this month, both on the margins of regional gatherings, Yoon said he learned that "China also attaches importance to (South Korea)-China relations." During their November meeting, Yoon said Xi expressed his willingness to visit South Korea when the COVID-19 pandemic situation stabilized. Yoon said Li and Kishida had also expressed their support for resuming a trilateral Seoul-Beijing-Tokyo summit in South Korea for the first time in four years. "All three countries — the Republic of Korea, the United States and Japan — share a common understanding that it is important for China to play a responsible and constructive role not only in resolving pending issues on the Korean Peninsula and in the region but also in addressing global challenges," Yoon said.

Following the withdrawal, the Russian Defence Ministry said it would regard any vessels in the Black Sea that are headed to Ukrainian ports as military targets. Since then, Kyiv has sought to reroute transport through the Danube River, and road and rail links into Europe. But transport costs that way are much higher. Some European countries have balked at the consequential local grain prices, and the Danube ports can't handle the same volume as seaports.

Two cargo ships arrive in Ukrainian port after Russia's exit from grain deal

Kyiv (AP): Two cargo ships arrived in one of Ukraine's ports over the weekend, using a temporary Black Sea corridor established by Kyiv following Russia's withdrawal from a wartime agreement designed to ensure safe grain exports from the invaded country's ports.

Two Palau-flagged bulk carriers, Aroyat and Resilient Africa, docked Saturday at the sea port of Chornomorsk in the southern Odessa region, according to an online statement by the Ukrainian Sea Ports Authority. The vessels are the first civilian cargo ships to reach one of the Odessa ports since Russia exited the grain deal.

Oleksandr Kubrakov, Ukraine's deputy prime minister, said in an online statement Saturday that the two ships will be delivering some 20,000 tons of wheat to countries in Africa and Asia.

For months, Ukraine, whose economy is heavily dependent on farming, was able to safely export its grain from Black Sea ports under a deal brokered by the United Nations and Turkey to ensure safe shipments. But Russia withdrew from the deal on July 17, with Kremlin officials arguing their demands for the facilitation of Russian food and fertilizer shipments had not been met.

Following the withdrawal, the Russian Defence Ministry said it would regard any vessels in the Black Sea that are headed to Ukrainian ports as military targets. Since then, Kyiv has sought to reroute transport through the Danube River, and road and rail links into Europe. But transport costs that way are much higher. Some European countries have balked at the consequential local grain prices, and the Danube ports can't handle the same volume as seaports.

EU pledges crackdown on migrant smuggling

Milan: EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen pledged the swift return of irregular migrants and a crackdown on the "brutal business" of migrant smuggling Sunday during a visit with Italy's premier to a tiny fishing island overwhelmed with nearly 7,000 arrivals in a single day this week. "We will decide who comes to the European Union, and under what circumstances. Not the smugglers," von der Leyen declared after touring the island's hotspot. The Red Cross said 1,500 migrants remained in the centre built to accommodate hundreds.

Tensions have spiked on the island, which is closer to Tunisia than the Italian mainland, with residents expressing impatience with the constant flow of migrants trying to reach Europe from North Africa arriving on their shores — not just this week but for decades.

In the face of the new crisis, Italy's Giorgia Meloni has pledged tougher measures and is calling for a naval blockade of North Africa to prevent migrants on smugglers' boats from departing.

Von der Leyen's vow to crack down on "this brutal business" of migrant smuggling and help Italy to cope with the spike in arrivals as part of a 10-point plan appeared to stop short of a naval blockade, at least a quick one.

She instead offered support for "exploring options to expand existing naval missions in the Mediterranean, or to work on new ones." The plan also includes speeding funds to Tunisia as part of a deal with the EU to block departures in exchange for aid, helping Italy accelerate asylum requests and setting up humanitarian corridors in countries of origin to discourage illegal routes. She also pledged the Frontex border agency's support in ensuring "the swift return of migrants to their country of origin" who don't qualify to stay in the EU, working with the countries of origin.

Turkey may part ways with EU, says Erdogan

AP ■ ISTANBUL

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Saturday that Turkey may part ways with the European Union, implying that the country is thinking about ending its bid to join the 27-nation bloc.

"The EU is making efforts to sever ties with Turkey," he told reporters before departing for the 78th UN General Assembly in New York.

We will evaluate the situation, and if needed we will part ways with the EU," he was responding to a question about a recent report adopted by the European Parliament, which stated "the accession process cannot resume under the current circumstances, and calls on EU to explore a parallel and realistic framework for EU-



Türkiye relations."

Turkey applied to join the European Union in 1999, and accession talks began in 2005. Accession negotiations were frozen in 2018 because of "democratic backsliding," according to the European

Parliament.

Erdogan's statement on Saturday came more than a week after Turkey's foreign minister affirmed his country's resolve to join the EU and urged the bloc to take courageous steps to advance its bid.



Members of the Mexican Armed Forces march during the annual Independence Day military parade in the capital's main square, the Zocalo, in Mexico City, Saturday.

For divided Libya, floods have become a rallying cry for unity

AP ■ TRIPOLI (LIBYA)

Zahra el-Gerbi wasn't expecting much of a response to her online fundraiser, but she felt she had to do something after four of her relatives died in the flooding that decimated the eastern Libyan city of Derna. She put out a call for donations for those displaced by the deluge.

In the first half-hour after she shared it on Facebook, the Benghazi-based clinical nutritionist said friends and strangers were already promising financial and material support. "It's for basic needs like clothes, foods and accommodation," el-Gerbi said.

For many Libyans, the collective grief over the more

than 11,000 dead has morphed into a rallying cry for national unity in a country blighted by 12 years of conflict and division. In turn, the tragedy has ramped up pressure on the country's leading politicians, viewed by some as the architects of the catastrophe.

The oil-rich country has been divided between rival administrations since 2014, with an internationally recognized government in Tripoli and a rival authority in the east, where Derna is located. Both are backed by international patrons and armed militias, whose influence in the country has ballooned since a NATO-backed Arab Spring uprising toppled authoritarian ruler Moammar Gadhafi in 2011. Numerous

United Nations-led initiatives to bridge the divide have failed. In the early hours of September 11, two dams in the mountains upstream of Derna burst, sending a wall of water two stories high into the city and sweeping entire neighbourhoods out to sea. At least 11,300 people were killed and a further 30,000 displaced.

An outpouring of support for the people of Derna followed. Residents from the nearby cities of Benghazi and Tobruk offered to put up the displaced. In Tripoli, some 1,450 kilometres (900 miles) west, a hospital said it would perform operations free of charge for any injured in the flood.

Ali Khalifa, an oil rig worker from Zawiya, west of

Tripoli, said his cousin and a group of other men from his neighbourhood joined a convoy of vehicles heading to Derna to help out with relief efforts. Even the local scout squad participated, he said.

The sentiment was shared by 50-year-old Mohamed al-Harari. "The wound or pain of what happened in Derna hurt all the people from western Libya to southern Libya to eastern Libya," he said. The disaster has fostered rare instances of the opposing administrations cooperating to help those affected. As recently as 2020, the two sides were in an all-out war. Gen. Khalifa Hifter's forces besieged Tripoli in a yearlong failed military campaign to try to capture the capital, killing thousands.

Plane crash in Amazon rainforest kills 14 on board

Rio de Janeiro (AP): A small passenger plane crashed in Brazil's Amazon rainforest Saturday, killing all 14 people on board, Amazonas state Governor Wilson Lima announced. "I deeply regret the death of the 12 passengers and two crew members who were victims of the plane crash in Barcelos on Saturday," Lima said on X, formerly known as Twitter. The Embraer PT-SOG aircraft had taken off from Manaus, the Amazonas state capital and the biggest city in the Amazon, and was attempting to land in heavy rain when it crashed, local media reported. The passengers were Brazilian tourists on their way to fish, the reports said.

Video footage posted by the Globo television network showed plane lying on a muddy dirt track with front part of the aircraft in green foliage.

Case against Indian-origin lawyer in Singapore for slapping woman

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

An Indian-origin lawyer, already suspended from practising in connection with some other case, has been charged for four different offences under law by the State Courts for allegedly slapping a woman on her cheek at a Hindu temple here.

Ravi Madasamy, who is also known as M Ravi, faced one charge for voluntarily causing hurt, one for disorderly behaviour in public and two under the Protection from Harassment Act at a Hindu temple in downtown South Bridge Road after the incident on Friday, according to a report by The Straits Times on Sunday.

The 54-year-old lawyer had allegedly slapped the woman at Sri Mariamman Temple, where he is also accused of shouting vulgarities and using indecent language, the news report said, adding, he



then purportedly called another woman at the temple a prostitute, with the intention of causing harassment.

Prior to this incident, Ravi had allegedly used abusive words against a man along Pagoda Street in the temple vicinity by shouting a vulgarity in Tamil at him, also intending to cause harassment.

Ravi was remanded at the Institute of Mental Health on Saturday for medical examination, and will be produced in the court on September 29.

He has two other similar charges pending from July

2023. The lawyer is currently facing the suspension of five years, maximum in such cases, for making "baseless and grave" allegations that undermine the integrity of Singapore's justice system against the Attorney-General, prosecutors and the Law Society, the Straights Times said.

Those who are found guilty of disorderly behaviour in public can be fined up to Singapore Dollar (SGD) 1,000 and jailed for up to one month. If they are repeat offenders, they can be fined up to SGD 2,000, or jailed for up to six months, or both.

For voluntarily causing hurt, an offender can be jailed for up to three years, fined up to SDG 5,000, or both. Those who are found guilty of intending to cause harassment by using abusive words, can be fined up to SGD 5,000, jailed for up to six months or both, under the Protection from Harassment Act.

Yoga helping Ukraine people cope with Russia's constant shelling

AP ■ KRAMATORSK (UKRAINE)

In a basement in one of the front-line cities in Ukraine's Donetsk region, people gather three times a week in the morning for yoga to alleviate the stress caused by the constant shelling from Russian artillery. Soothing music fills the basement in Kramatorsk, where the humid air is tangible. "We let go of the external world," Serhii Zaloznyi, a 52-year-old yoga instructor, said in a serene tone. He gently leads people into a meditative state.

Occasionally, the sound of water rushing through the pipes of the multistory building disrupts the tranquil music, serving as a reminder that the yoga session unfolds in the basement. "Peace, tranquility and balance feel within the heart," Zaloznyi continues as

people calmly breathe with their eyes closed.

For the participants, the "external world" is life in a front-line city where sirens sound every few hours, and the noise of explosions disrupts their daily lives.

Kramatorsk is just 30 kilometres (around 20 miles) from the battle front in the Donetsk region, where some of the heaviest fighting in eastern Ukraine takes place.

In late July, a Russian missile hit one of Kramatorsk's most well-known restaurants, wiping out 13 lives, and shocked the city's residents.

But in this modest basement in a residential district, people come to find a feeling of safety and security by attending the yoga sessions, which happen according to schedule despite everything. "In the

beginning, the war overwhelmed people, and right here is where they found peace in their hearts and souls, tranquility, and simply solid ground beneath their feet," Zaloznyi said. One of those attending is Viktoria Omelchenko, 47, who initially left Kramatorsk but returned a few months later.

"Yoga brought me to emotional balance. Yoga classes gradually calmed me down, balanced me, taught me not to be afraid, to feel in harmony and balance," she said.

"That's why these classes are really very important, especially in our city. When it's restless, they help a lot."

When the war started, Zaloznyi taught online because most of the people who used to attend yoga had fled to safer regions. Later, people began to return, and he resumed in-person

sessions last spring. The gym they used before the war was converted into a shelter where families with children take cover. Now, instead of yoga mats, there are supplies of water for emergencies.

Zaloznyi quickly found a new space, which used to be a beauty salon. The owners left Kramatorsk and allowed the yoga sessions to be held there.

On the walls of the yoga studio, the photos from past hairdressing workshops can be seen. And in the improvised changing room, large bottles of professional care shampoo rest on the shelves, now covered in dust. Nonetheless, the yoga participants aren't troubled by this. They persist in following Zaloznyi's guidance, moving their bodies from one asana, or yoga position, to another with closed eyes.

Justice Isa sworn in as 29th Chief Justice of Pak

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Justice Qazi Faez Isa was sworn in as the 29th Chief Justice of Pakistan on Sunday. His term as Chief Justice in the Supreme Court will span 13 months, ending on October 25, 2024.

Justice Isa, 63, was sworn in by President Arif Alvi at a ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr in Islamabad, in the presence of caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir, ministers and other senior officials among others.

Justice Isa was flanked by his wife, Sarina Isa, as the notification of his appointment was read out. This was a deviation from the previous practice, as normally close family members, including spouses, are seated in the front row during such oath-taking ceremonies.

Sarina made headlines when TV channels showed



her walking with the help of a stick to face a probe by tax authorities in a case filed in 2019. It was alleged that properties belonging to Justice Isa's wife, Sarina, in London were actually his own.

Later, both Justice Isa and his wife were exonerated after

independent-minded and his 2019 judgment targeting the powerful establishment over a sit-in by a religious party at Faizabad, paralysing the city, landed him in trouble. A case of alleged corruption was filed against him, but later it was rejected by the Supreme Court.

His appointment comes at a time when Pakistan is facing serious constitutional, legal, and political challenges. His main test will be holding the general election within 90 days of the dissolution of Parliament on August 9. Another challenge is related to a case challenging the trial of civilians by military courts.

However, the biggest task for the Chief Justice may be to restore the prestige and neutrality of the apex court, at a time when his predecessor, Umar Ata Bandial, is accused of having a soft corner for former prime minister Imran Khan. Also, Justice Isa faces a mountain of over 56,000

pending cases in the Supreme Court. Some of those cases were filed years ago and have not been heard so far.

Congratulating the newly-appointed top judge, National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf congratulated Justice Isa and expressed hope that the institutions providing justice under his leadership will work in a more active manner.

"For the rule of law and provision of justice in the country, it is necessary for the legislature, judiciary and executive to work together," he said.

Justice Isa was born on October 26, 1959, in Quetta. His father, Qazi Muhammad Isa, was a prominent member of the movement for the establishment of Pakistan and a close associate of Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

He completed his primary education in Quetta and his A and O levels at Karachi Grammar School. He then

pursued law studies in London, where he completed the bar professional examination. Justice Isa began his legal career as an advocate in the Balochistan High Court in 1985 and later became an advocate of the Supreme Court in 1998. He practised law in the Balochistan High Court and the Supreme Court for over 27 years before being appointed as the Chief Justice of the Balochistan High Court in 2009. He served as chief justice of the high court from 2009 to 2014 and was elevated to the Supreme Court in 2014.

Justice Isa has recently been in the spotlight for his protest against the non-implementation of the Supreme Court Practice and Procedure Act, which was created during the Shahbaz Sharif era. As a form of protest, he has refrained from hearing any cases for the past five months and has chosen to work in his chambers instead.

Vivek Ramaswamy vows to end H-1B visa programme

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Describing the H-1B visa programme as a form of "indentured servitude", Indian-American Republican presidential aspirant Vivek Ramaswamy has vowed to "gut" the lottery-based system and replace it with meritocratic admission if he wins the race to the White House in 2024. The H-1B visa, much sought-after among Indian IT professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

Ramaswamy himself has used the H-1B visa programme 29 times. From 2018 through 2023, US Citizenship and Immigration Services approved 29 applications for Ramaswamy's former company, Roivant Sciences, to hire employees under H-1B visas, the Politico reported.

Yet, the H-1B system is "bad for everyone involved," the 38-year-old biotech entrepreneur was quoted as saying by Politico. "The lottery system needs to be replaced by actual meritocratic admission. It's a form of indentured servitude that only accrues to the benefit of the company that sponsored an H-1B immigrant. I'll gut it," Ramaswamy said in a statement, adding that the US needs to eliminate chain-based migration. "The people who come as family members are not the meritocratic immigrants who make skills-based contributions to this country."

Ramaswamy stepped down as chief executive officer of Roivant in February 2021 but remained the chair of the company's board of directors until February this year when he announced his presidential campaign. As of March 31, the company and its subsidiaries had 904 full-time employees, including 825 in the US, according to its Securities and Exchange Commission filings. When asked about the mismatch in the Republican pres-



idential hopeful's policy stance and his past business practices, his press secretary Tricia McLaughlin said the role of a policymaker "is to do what's right for a country overall: the system is broken and needs to be fixed." "Vivek believes that regulations overseeing the US energy sector are badly broken, but he still uses water and electricity," she said in a statement. "This is the same."

Ramaswamy, who is himself the child of immigrants, has captured headlines for his restrictionist immigration policy agenda.

He also said he would use military force to secure the border, and that he would deport US-born children of undocumented immigrants. H-1B visas are highly sought after, and the demand for these workers continues to increase. For fiscal year 2021, US businesses submitted 780,884 applications for just 85,000 available slots, jumping by more than 60 per cent. Ramaswamy acknowledged his own experience with immigration during his opening remarks at the first Republican debate in Milwaukee. "My parents came to this country with no money 40 years ago," he said.

"I have gone on to found multi-billion-dollar companies." Ramaswamy's stance on H-1B visas is reminiscent of the 2016 Trump campaign, when then-candidate Donald Trump, who has also hired a number of foreign workers under H-1B visas for his businesses, took a hardline stance on these foreign workers before later softening his rhetoric.

Balochistan crackdown on illegal Iranian fuel pumps

PTI ■ KARACHI

The caretaker government in Pakistan's Balochistan province has shut down around 500 petrol pumps illegally supplying cheap Iranian fuel to the people, adversely impacting local refineries amid the weakening economy and high inflation in the cash-strapped nation. Iranian fuel is considerably cheaper compared to the fuel products supplied by Pakistani refineries.

Balochistan's caretaker Information Minister Jan Achakzai told the media that these pumps were selling smuggled Iranian petrol and diesel to the people.

"A nationwide crackdown is being carried out on the supply of Iranian fuel products in the country," he said. The crackdown comes as Pakistan's caretaker government announced yet another hike in the prices of petrol and diesel, taking them to a historic high - over Rs 330 per litre - amidst double-digit inflation in the cash-strapped country.

The hike in prices was dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which bailed out Pakistan's weak economy this year with a support package of USD 3 billion.

Iranian fuel, however, is sold illegally in the country at approximately 220-230 rupees per litre.

Smugglers move the Iranian fuel in containers via the land border crossings in Balochistan with Iran and the fuel then travels to other big cities like Karachi and parts of the Southern Sindh province.

Iranian fuel products are mainly sold openly in the Balochistan province due to its proximity to Iran.

A source in the refinery industry said that the smuggled Iranian fuel into Pakistan was adversely impacting the sale of local refinery fuel products and in the weakening economy and high inflation they couldn't bear these drop in volumes.

'SC verdict won't affect Nawaz Sharif's return to Pak'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD/LONDON

Pakistan's former prime minister Nawaz Sharif planned return to the country from London on October 21 will not be affected by the Supreme Court's recent judgement on the amendments to the anti-graft laws, his legal team has said.

On his return to the country, the 73-year-old Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party supremo will face all cases in respect of the courts, Geo News reported on Sunday.

In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court on Friday scrapped the recent amendments made to anti-graft laws by the previous coalition government led by the PML-N and restored corruption cases against public office holders, including Nawaz, who was one of the major beneficiaries of the changes.

Nawaz, who is set to return on October 21, ending his self-exile in London, where he has lived since 2019, may see restoration of a Toshakhana case against him. In 2020, an accountability court declared



him a proclaimed offender in the Toshakhana vehicles case.

Sharif is accused of obtaining luxury cars from the treasury house by paying just 15 per cent of the price of these vehicles.

Nawaz left for London in November 2019 after the Lahore High Court granted him four-week permission allowing him to go abroad for his treatment. But he never returned to Pakistan where he was convicted of corruption and jailed.

He was convicted in the Al-Azizia Mills and Avenfield corruption cases in 2018. He was serving a seven-year imprisonment at Lahore's Kot Lakhpat jail in the Al-Azizia Mills case before he was allowed to proceed to London in 2019 on "medical grounds".

In a crucial meeting of the PML-N on Saturday, the party's legal team gave Nawaz Sharif a comprehensive briefing in the wake of the apex court's verdict striking down amendments to accountability laws, the Geo News reported.

The team - comprising former law minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, advocate Amjad Pervez, and PML-N Deputy Secretary General Attullah Tarar - gave Nawaz legal clearance for his return to Pakistan.

"No case is a hindrance in his way of return to Pakistan. Nawaz Sharif's return date remains the same. The date has been announced. He is coming back on the same date," Tarar said.

Former law minister Azam, who is currently in London, said upon returning

Nawaz will face all cases in respect of the courts.

"He will appear in the courts smiling and he will be vindicated on merit. There is no substance in the false cases made against him... We will not attack courts and we will not do anything to evade the course of justice as was seen recently. There will be open hearings and the truth will be established," he said, taking an apparent dig at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan.

According to the Geo News report, Nawaz has appointed Azam to work out the legal procedures for his smooth return.

Quoting sources, the report said Pakistan's former Attorney General Advocate Irfan Qadir will also be part of Nawaz's legal team that will execute follow-up actions. The team of counsel would take the ultimate decision on Nawaz's bail after consultations this week, the report said, quoting sources.

The coalition government led by Nawaz had made several changes in the National Accountability Bureau (NAB)

ordinance of 1999 through the National Accountability (Second Amendment) Act 2022, which PTI chief Khan challenged in June last year. These included reducing the term of the NAB chairman and prosecutor general to three years, limiting the anti-graft watchdog's jurisdiction to cases involving over Rs 500 million, and transferring all pending inquiries, investigations, and trials to the relevant authorities.

Besides Nawaz, the restoration of the old anti-graft law by the Supreme Court may have implications of varying levels for several politicians, including former president Asif Ali Zardari and ex-premiers Shehbaz Sharif, Yusuf Raza Gilani, Raja Pervez Ashraf and Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.

They all benefited under the new law as the trial of those accused with less than Rs 500 million of alleged corruption was stopped.

After the amendments were made, dozens of cases against powerful politicians and their relatives were sent back by the NAB courts last year.

Kakar: Govt committed to hold polls in Pak on time

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has said the interim government is committed to upholding the democratic process in Pakistan and it will not make any excuse to delay it.

Kakar's remarks come amid growing demand from various quarters for immediate announcement of the poll date by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), which has already said elections will be pushed beyond the constitutionally mandated period of 90 days following the dissolution of the National Assembly on August 9. His comments came ahead of his departure for New York to represent Pakistan at the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly

(UNGA). Kakar, who left for New York on Sunday, will be the first interim prime minister to represent Pakistan at the UNGA, according to the Dawn newspaper.

The ECP decided to conduct a fresh delimitation of Constituencies based on the new census, delaying the general elections. President Arif Alvi has proposed to the ECP to hold general elections by November 6, citing a constitutionally mandated time frame for the polls.

Kakar affirmed that measures would be taken to ensure that the election process proceeds smoothly without disruptions and emphasised the interim government's commitment to upholding the democratic process in the country. When asked about the reasons behind

the caretaker government's inability to end the "speculation surrounding elections, he said: "I don't believe that the caretaker government should intervene and address such speculation."

"Primarily, according to the law and Constitution, it (organising polls) is the Election Commission of Pakistan's job, and we are certain that they are performing this task with sincerity," Kakar said. "They have already initiated the process, and they are fulfilling some constitutional requirement, probably pertaining to delimitation ... and they will soon announce the (poll) date," he said.

Asked about the possibility of a delay in general elections due to the security situation at Pakistan's borders, he said, "I see no such possibility at present."

South Asian community members demand justice for Jaahnavi Kandula

PTI ■ SEATTLE

Demanding justice for Jaahnavi Kandula, members of the South Asian community here met the Mayor of Seattle and top city officials and also held a rally at the site where the Indian student was struck and killed by a speeding police patrol car.

Kandula, 23, was hit by a police vehicle driven by Officer Kevin Dave when she was crossing a street on January 23. He was driving at 74 mph (more than 119 kmh) on the way to a report of a drug overdose call. In bodycam footage released on Monday by the Seattle Police Department, Officer Daniel Auderer laughed about the deadly crash and dismissed any implication Dave might be at fault or that a crim-



inal investigation was necessary. Auderer can be heard making insensitive comments like she had "limited value" and laughing following the fatal crash. On Saturday, the leaders and organisations representing the South Asian community in Seattle met Mayor Bruce Harrell, Police Chief Adrian Diaz and other city leaders. "Effective public safety

is built on trust between City government and the communities we serve. When that trust is breached, it is the City's obligation to do the work necessary to restore and rebuild it," Mayor Harrell was quoted as saying by Komo TV. Statements by Mayor Harrell to date, that the offensive remarks represent an isolated incident, don't go far enough to deal with the system and police culture, community leaders said. Harrell further said that, "We want to express our extreme condolences for your loss. Many comments that have been made do not reflect the sympathy and the empathy and the condolences that we have." "I'm standing with our Chief of Police, Adrian Diaz and again with the Indian...the who's who in the Indian community in the

greater region, all coming together because of unfortunate and insensitive remarks that we believe were made. Making sure that our apologies as a city official are felt to your community and your family," Diaz further added that, "...I know that I talked to the brother and some of the other family. But we're here to continue to listen, because we're here. We want to stand with you. We want to figure out ways that you also feel in a situation. We want to work to ensure that that we value our human life that we do not dehumanise others."

More than 100 members of the Seattle area's South Asian community also gathered at Denny Park on Saturday and made their way to the intersection where Kandula was hit by speeding police vehicle.

Fire engulfs 18-storey tower block in Sudan's capital

AP ■ CAIRO

An 18-storey building in the centre of Sudan's capital was engulfed in flames Sunday as fighting between the military and a rival paramilitary force enters its sixth month. The Greater Nile Petroleum Oil Company Tower, situated in the centre of Khartoum, caught fire early Sunday during clashes between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces, according to Sudanese media. It's unclear how the fire started or if anyone was killed.

Online footage of the blaze showed clouds of dark smoke rising from the burnt-out glass-paneled tower, one of the tallest buildings in the Sudanese capital.

Sudan has been rocked by violence since mid-April, when tensions between the country's military, led by Gen Abdel Fattah Burhan, and the para-



military Rapid Support Forces, commanded by Gen Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, burst into open fighting. The conflict has reduced Khartoum to an urban warzone. In the Greater Khartoum area, RSF troops have commandeered civilian homes and turned them into operational bases, while the

military has responded by bombing the residential areas, rights groups and activists say. In the western Darfur region, the conflict has morphed into ethnic violence, with the RSF and allied Arab militias attacking ethnic African groups, according to rights groups and the United Nations.

Gunmen kill Iran's paramilitary force member, hurts 3

AP ■ DUBAI

Gunmen opened fire on a group of paramilitary forces in southern Iran, killing one of them and wounding another three, state media reported Sunday. Local media did not give a motive for Saturday's attack, which occurred on the anniversary of the death while in police custody of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini and the outbreak of nationwide protests. It was unclear if the attack was linked to the anniversary.

The official IRNA news agency said the attack targeting members of the paramilitary Basij occurred late Saturday in the town of Nourabad, some 630 km (390 miles) south of the capital, Tehran. In a separate incident, a man was shot and wounded by security forces

near the city of Saqqez, in Iran's western Kurdish region. IRNA said he was shot after entering an area under military restrictions, without elaborating on his condition. The Kurdish rights group Hengaw had earlier reported that he was in critical condition, while the semi-official Fars news agency said he was stable. The anniversary saw a heavy deployment of Iranian security forces in Tehran as well as Kurdish areas, where rights groups said there was a general strike. Amini, who was from the Kurdish region, died Sept 16, 2022, after being detained by Iran's morality police in the capital, Tehran, apparently for violating the country's strict dress code. Women are required to wear an Islamic headscarf, known as a hijab, in public.

UN committee votes to list ancient Jericho as World Heritage Site

AP ■ RIYADH

A UN conference voted Sunday to list the ancient West Bank city of Jericho as a World Heritage Site in Palestine, a decision likely to anger Israel, which controls the territory and does not recognise a Palestinian state.

Jericho is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities on earth, and is in a part of the Israeli-occupied West Bank that is administered by the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the UN World Heritage Committee in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, under the auspices of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO. Israel quit UNESCO in 2019, accusing it of being biased against it



and of diminishing its connection to the Holy Land. Israel also objected to UNESCO's acceptance of Palestine as a member state in 2011. But Israel remains a party to the World Heritage Convention, and it sent a delegation to the meeting in Riyadh.

Jerusalem, in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians want all three territories for their future state. Israel views the West Bank as the biblical and cultural heartland of the Jewish people.

There have been no serious or substantive peace negotiations in over a decade, and Israel is currently led by the most nationalist and religious government in its history, making any move toward Palestinian statehood nearly unimaginable.

The modern city of Jericho is a major draw for tourism to the Palestinian territories, both because of its historical sites and proximity to the Dead Sea. In 2021, the Palestinian Authority unveiled major renovations to one of the largest mosaics in the Middle East, in a Jericho palace dating back to the 8th century.

India, Brazil hold talks to resolve sugar trade dispute at WTO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India and Brazil have started talks to mutually resolve a sugar related trade dispute at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and as part of the solution the South American nation may share ethanol production technology with New Delhi, an official said.

Brazil is the largest producer of sugarcane and ethanol in the world. It is also a leader in the technology used for ethanol production. "Few rounds of talks have been held as part of our efforts to resolve the dispute. We have also held inter-ministerial meetings here. Brazil is saying that they will share with us technology for ethanol (production). It is a positive thing," the official said.

Ethanol is used to blend with oil to power vehicles. Use of ethanol, extracted from sugarcane as well as broken rice and other agri produce, will help the world's third largest oil consumer and importing country cut its reliance on overseas shipments. India currently is 85 per cent dependent on imports for meeting its oil needs. Also, it cuts carbon emissions. There



is a target of 20 per cent ethanol blended petrol by 2025. India would also have to offer something as part of the mutually agreed solution (MAS) to resolve the dispute at the Geneva-based multi-lateral body. Recently India and the US have ended six trade disputes and have also agreed to terminate the seventh case. As

part of the solution, while New Delhi removed retaliatory duties on 8 American products like apples and walnuts, the US is providing market access to Indian steel and aluminium products without levying extra duties. The official said that India is also following a similar process for other complainants of the sugar dispute

at the WTO. In 2019, Brazil, Australia and Guatemala dragged India into the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism alleging that New Delhi's sugar subsidies to farmers are inconsistent with global trade rules. A WTO dispute settlement panel on December 14, 2021, ruled that India's support measures for the sugar sector are

inconsistent with the global trade norms. In January 2022, India appealed against the panel's ruling at the WTO's appellate body, which is the final authority to pass rulings against such disputes.

The appellate body, however, is not functioning due to differences in the countries on appointments of members of the body. Brazil is the largest producer and exporter of sugar in the world. India is the world's second-largest producer.

Brazil, Australia and Guatemala, which are members of the WTO, had complained that India's support measures to sugarcane producers exceed the de minimis level of 10 per cent of the total value of sugarcane production, which according to them was inconsistent with the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture.

They had also flagged India's alleged export subsidies, subsidies under the production assistance and buffer stock schemes, and the marketing and transportation scheme. According to WTO rules, a WTO member or members can file a case in the Geneva-

based multilateral body if they feel that a particular trade measure is against the norms of the WTO.

Bilateral consultation is the first step to resolve a dispute. If both sides are not able to resolve the matter through consultation, either can approach the establishment of a dispute settlement panel.

The panel's ruling or report can be challenged at the World Trade Organization's Appellate Body.

Interestingly, the appellate body of the WTO is not functioning because of differences among member countries to appoint members in this body. Several disputes are already pending with the appellate body. The US has been blocking the appointment of the members.

The bilateral trade between India and Brazil increased to USD 16.6 billion in 2022-23 as against USD 12.2 billion in 2021-22. Trade gap is in the favour of India.

During the 2021-22 sugar marketing year (October-September), India exported 110 lakh tonnes of sugar and became the second largest

exporter of sugar in the world and earned about Rs 40,000 crore worth of foreign exchange. For the current 2022-23 marketing year ending this month, the Centre allowed export of 61 lakh tonnes of sugar. Mills have already shipped 60 lakh tonnes. The Centre is yet to decide on exports for the next 2023-24 marketing year, starting next month.

As the current sugar season (October-September) 2022-23 is coming to an end, India has already crossed sugar production of 330 lakh tonnes, excluding the diversion of about 43 lakh tonnes for ethanol production.

The blending of ethanol with petrol has increased to 10 per cent in 2021-22 marketing year from just 1.53 per cent in 2013-14. To achieve the target of 20 per cent by 2025, about 1,016 crore litres of ethanol would be required. About 334 crore ethanol would be required for other usage.

WTO member countries can resolve disputes outside the dispute settlement mechanism and later inform the multi-lateral body about the same.

'Production of 40 C295 transport aircraft in India will be game-changer'

PTI ■ SEVILLE (SPAIN)

The production of 40 Airbus C295 medium tactical transport aircraft in India will be a "game changer" as it would facilitate the creation of a world-class aerospace ecosystem in the country that would help in manufacturing other planes in the long-run, Indian Ambassador to Spain Dinesh K Patnaik said here.

The Indian Air Force received the first C295 aircraft on Wednesday, two years after New Delhi sealed a Rs 21,935-crore deal with Airbus Defence and Space to procure the planes.

Under the deal, Airbus will deliver the first 16 aircraft in 'fly-away' condition from its final assembly line in Seville by 2025 and the subsequent 40 aircraft will be manufactured and assembled by Tata Advanced Systems (TASL) in India as part of an industrial partnership between the two companies.

"The C295 project will be a game-changer project as it will create a world-class aerospace ecosystem in India," Patnaik told PTI in an interview.

The first 'Make in India' C295 is set to come out of a production facility in Vadodra in September 2026 and the final aircraft is expected to be delivered to the IAF by August 2031.

It will be the first military aircraft to be produced in India by a private consortium. Officials said India is looking at procuring more C295 aircraft to replace the Indian Air Force's ageing transport fleet.

After Airbus handed over the first plane to the IAF, Patnaik said the C295 project is not only about procurement of the aircraft but it carries much more significance in terms of the creation of an aerospace ecosystem in India. "We still do not have a private aerospace ecosystem in India whereas all major countries have such ecosystems."

Finance Ministry invites applications for post of whole time member IRDAI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The finance ministry has invited applications for the post of Whole Time Member (Distribution) at insurance regulator Irda. The applicant should preferably have at least 25 years of experience in the relevant area with a minimum of three years experience at a senior level, the Department of Financial Services said in an advertisement.

The applicant should not be below the rank of a Chief General Manager of the Reserve Bank of India or equivalent that place in other financial institutions or regulatory bodies, it said.

The department, under the finance ministry, said the applicant should have a minimum of two years of residual service as of the date of vacancy, that is March 4, 2024, and the applicant's age should not exceed 60 years on the said date. The term of the office of the member will be in accordance with the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act. No person will hold the office of the Whole Time Member after attaining the age of 62 years, it added.

Currently, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) Member (Distribution) is S N Rajeswari.

Diesel sales fall in September, petrol up

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Diesel sales in India fell for the second straight month in September as rains dampened demand and slowed industrial activity in some parts of the country, preliminary data of state-owned firms showed.

While diesel sales by three state-owned fuel retailers fell year-on-year in the first half of September, petrol sales were up marginally. Consumption of diesel, the most consumed fuel in the country accounting for about two-fifths of the demand, fell 5.8 per cent to 2.72 million tonnes between September 1 and 15, compared to the year-ago period.

Consumption had fallen by a similar proportion in the first half of August. Month-on-month sales were up 0.9 per



cent, when compared with 2.7 million tonnes of diesel consumed in the first half of August. Diesel sales typically fall in monsoon months as rains lower demand in the agriculture sector which uses the fuel for irrigation, harvesting and transportation. Also, rains slow vehicular movements. Consumption of diesel had soared 6.7 per cent and 9.3 per cent in April and May,

respectively as agriculture demand picked up and cars yanked up air-conditioning to beat the summer heat. It started to taper in the second half of June after the monsoon set in. It fell in the first half of July but picked up in the second fortnight of that month.

Petrol sales were up 1.2 per cent to 1.3 million tonnes in the first fortnight of September, when compared with the same

period last year. Consumption had dropped 10.5 per cent in the first fortnight of July but picked up in the latter half. It had fallen by 8 per cent in the first half of August. Sales in the first half of September were up 8.8 per cent month-on-month, the data showed.

India's economy has demonstrated remarkable resilience and is likely to have surpassed the performance of most major economies during the first half of 2023. This is helping fuel demand grow.

Consumption of petrol during September 1-15 was 29.2 per cent more than in the COVID-marred first half of September 2021 and 20.8 per cent more than in pre-pandemic September 2019. Diesel consumption was up 26 per cent over September 1-15, 2021 and 36.4 per cent when compared with September 1-15,

2019. With the continuing rise in passenger traffic at airports, jet fuel (ATF) demand rose 6.8 per cent to 2,92,500 tonnes during the first fortnight of September as compared to the same period last year.

It was 53.9 per cent more than in September 2021, but 5 per cent lower than pre-COVID September 2019. Month-on-month jet fuel sales fell 1.8 per cent when compared with 2,98,000 tonnes in August 1-15, 2023.

Cooking gas LPG sales were up 10.2 per cent year-on-year to 1.36 million tonnes in September 1-15. LPG consumption was 15.5 per cent higher than in September 1-15, 2021 and 35 per cent more than pre-COVID September 1-15, 2019. Month-on-month, LPG demand soared 12 per cent compared to 1.21 million tonnes of LPG consumption.

IBC not a recovery mechanism: NCLAT

Dismisses insolvency petition against United Telecoms

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code is "not a recovery mechanism", observed the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal, while dismissing a plea against United Telecoms Ltd filed by one of its operational creditors.

This is the second such observation from the Chennai bench of the insolvency appellate tribunal this month, after declining to entertain the petition from operational creditors.

Earlier, it had refused to entertain an insolvency petition against Wipro Ltd after observing that the bankruptcy law cannot be used as a means to recover debt against solvent companies. Again, while rejecting a plea against United Telecoms last week, a two-member bench comprising justices M Venugopal and Shreesha Merla said: "Time and again, the apex court in a cate-



na of judgments held that the IBC is not a 'recovery mechanism'.

The appellate tribunal upheld the order by the Bengaluru bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), which had dismissed the plea moved by an operational creditor claiming a default of Rs 8.46 crore against United Telecoms Ltd, which is an ICT and social infrastructure company.

According to the petitioner, it had entered into a settlement agreement with the company on its request and had signed a MoU (memorandum of understanding). Some amount was paid, however, a larger payment was due. Counsel for the appellant vehemently contended that the MoU was duly signed by the parties and therefore United Telecoms is bound by the terms

of the 'settlement agreement'.

He further submitted that the amounts which are balanced and due and payable fall within the definition of 'Operational Debt' and therefore NCLT has erred in dismissing its plea. However, United Telecoms had categorically denied any agreement entered into and evidenced that there was a pre-existing dispute prior to the issuance of the 'demand notice'.

After going through the pleadings, NCLAT said: "The first MoU is dated 10.09.2005 and any amount due and payable under it is barred by limitation. The 'Settlement Agreement' dated 01.11.2018 cannot be taken into consideration for establishing any debt due and payable as it is antedated."

It is evident that the petition filed in respect of claims arising under the aforementioned settlement agreement does not come within the definition of 'operational debt', it said. "For all the forementioned reasons, this appeal fails at the threshold and is accordingly dismissed," it said.

Circular Design Challenge announces worldwide expansion

New Delhi: With the aim to give a global platform to fashion design talent across world, Circular Design Challenge (CDC) has announced its worldwide expansion that culminates at the upcoming season of Lakmé Fashion Week in association with FDCI (Fashion Design Council of India).

"Presented by R|E|lan, the next-gen fabric brand of India's largest conglomerate Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), in association with United Nations in India, CDC aims towards a greener and more sustainable future globally by promoting eco-conscious creatives of fashion industry," a company statement said.

Five years ago, RIL pioneered concept of Circular Design Challenge, driven by a vision to raise consciousness for sustainability and circular practices across every facet of fashion industry. This endeavour saw partnership between RIL, the UN in India, and Lakmé Fashion Week which

strive to champion transformative ideals within realm of fashion. Since then, Circular Design Challenge has been pivotal in driving India's fashion industry towards eco-consciousness.

This year, CDC aims to be a global phenomenon with the competition spanning across the UK, EU, and APAC regions, extending invitations to designers around the world.

Hemant D Sharma, Sector Head - Polyester, RIL said, "The CDC has nurtured, mentored, and promoted environmental champions leading circular and innovative collections using sustainable and recycled materials."

The Challenge has established itself as largest sustainable fashion award in India. The initiative has played a crucial role in promoting circularity and sustainability in fashion industry, and after four editions in India, we are now going international to promote sustainability, and circular economy adoption globally."

Sidbi to raise ₹10,000 crore from rights issue next fiscal

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Small Industries Development Bank of India (Sidbi), which refinances SME loans, plans to float a Rs 10,000-crore rights issue next fiscal to expand its equity capital as it expects to grow assets to Rs 5 lakh crore by March 2024 from about Rs 4 lakh crore in March 2023, a top official has said.

The central government owns 20.8 per cent in Sidbi, while State Bank of India holds 15.65 per cent and Life Insurance Corporation 13.33 per cent. The rest of the equity is held by other public financial institutions and banks. The shareholders will subscribe to the proposed rights issue.

The lender's loan growth optimism comes from the demand for direct financing that is growing by leaps and bounds, which two years ago was only 7 per cent of its book but is now 14 per cent. Sivasubramanian Ramann, chairman and managing director, said the proposed rights issue will be carried out in two tranches of Rs 5,000 crore each



next fiscal to expand its capital base by Rs 10,000 crore and support the growing balance sheet, which is expected to rise by a quarter from the present.

"We recently had moved the department of financial services seeking to raise capital. Following this they moved the standing committee of Parliament which has suggested a capital support of Rs 10,000 crore to us next fiscal so to provide us with more lending support to SMEs," Ramann said here over the weekend.

Sidbi's capital adequacy ratio (CAR) came down to 19.29 per cent in FY23 from 24.28 per cent in FY22, according to the annual report which explained the fall to the effective capital utilisation to increase the portfolio of the

bank. This again fell to 15.63 per cent as of the June 2023 quarter. However, according to rating agency Icr, this capitalisation level is comfortable as it is supported by lower risk weights for the refinance book.

The asset base grew 63 per cent from Rs 2,47,379 crore in FY22 to Rs 4,02,383 crore in FY23, while its income rose a full 102 per cent in the year to Rs 18,485 crore, from which it booked a net income of Rs 3,344 crore, which was 71 per cent more than the year-ago number. According to the rating agency, given sharp growth partly driven by higher refinancing requirements due to tightening liquidity conditions, Sidbi's leverage rose to 14.36 times as of March 2023 from 9.22 times as of March 2022.

Indian entrepreneur's UK start-up using AI to transform services

PTI ■ LONDON

An Indian entrepreneur's new start-up is sparking worldwide investor interest as among the first companies of its kind globally to offer consumers the option to book plumbers, electricians and other services using its unique conversational artificial intelligence (AI) software.

Opened for a funding round recently, Anuj Gupta's GreenVan uses a simple WhatsApp interface. It is designed as an 'Amazon of

Services' offering that intends to transform the way people book essential tasks online.

It was born out of Gupta's own experience of relocating from the US to the UK around five years ago and finding the experience of sourcing reliable trade people a rather cumbersome word-of-mouth process.

"We were often left in the lurch when chasing trades people and were hit with a system that was too idiosyncratic," Gupta, in his mid-40s, told PTI in an interview.

SBI to send chocolates to borrowers likely to default EMIs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The nation's largest lender State Bank of India is adopting a novel way to ensure timely repayments, especially by its retail borrowers, by greeting those likely to default on monthly installments with a pack of chocolates.

According to the bank, it has been found that a borrower who is planning to default will not answer a reminder call from the bank. So the best way is to meet them at their homes unannounced.

The move, aimed at ensuring better collections, comes amidst rising level of retail lending in the system coupled with increasing delinquency



levels on the back of the upward movement in the interest rates. SBI's retail loan book

grew over 16.46 per cent to Rs 12,04,279 crore in the June 2023 quarter from Rs 10,34,111

crore in the year-ago period, making it the largest asset class for the lender whose total book stood at Rs 33,03,731 crore, growing at 13.9 per cent on-year. In fact for the entire system, the double-digit loan growth of around 16 per cent has been led by retail loans only.

"With two fintechs which use artificial intelligence, we are piloting a novel way of reminding our retail borrowers of their repayment obligations. While one is doing conciliation with borrowers, the other is alerting us on the propensity of a borrower to default.

And to such borrowers who are likely to default, the representatives from this fin-

tech will visit them, carrying a pack of chocolates for each of them, and remind them of the forthcoming EMIs," Ashwini Kumar Tewari, managing director in-charge of risk, compliance and stressed assets at SBI, said here over the weekend.

According to Tewari, this novel method of carrying a pack of chocolates and personally visiting them is adopted because it has been found that a borrower who is planning to default will not answer a reminder call from the bank. So the best way is to meet them at their own homes unannounced and surprise them. And so far, the success rate has been overwhelming, he said.

Tewari refused to name the fintechs saying the move is just at the pilot stage and has been put into place just about 15 days back and "if successful, we will formally announce it." "We are also talking to a few other fintechs to improve our collection efficiencies and hopefully by the end of the year, we will have formally tied up with at least half of them," he said, adding, "we want to continue the pilot for at least four to five months."

"SBI's over Rs 12 lakh crore of retail book consists of personal, auto, home and education loans. With a home loan book of over Rs 6.3 lakh crore as of June, SBI is the largest mortgage lender too.

FAIRYTALE FAREWELL FOR BOPANNA

Rohan logs win in farewell tie, India advance to World Group I play-offs

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Rohan Bopanna brought the curtains down on his Davis Cup career with a comfortable straight sets win alongside Yuki Bhambri before Sumit Nagal won his reverse singles as India advanced to the World Group I play-offs with a 4-1 triumph against Morocco here on Sunday.

The 43-year-old Bopanna, coming out to play his 33rd and final tie, and Bhambri raced to a 6-2 6-1 win over Elliot Benchetrit and Younes Lalami Laaroussi in one hour and 11 minutes at the Mini Stadium.

India's number one singles player Sumit Nagal outgunned Yassine Dlimi 6-3 6-3 in the first reverse singles to seal the World Group II tie.

It is only the second time that Nagal has won both his singles matches in a Davis Cup tie. He had got a similar result under his belt while playing against Pakistan in Kazakhstan in 2019.

Nagal earned early breaks in both the sets, leaving Dlimi playing catch-up in the contest that ended in one hour and 43 minutes.

Rookie Digvijay Pratap

Singh, who ended runner-up at the Fenesta Nationals last year, won the inconsequential fifth rubber against Walid Ahouda 6-1 5-7 10-6 on his debut.

The 23-year-old trains at National Tennis Centre (NTC) in New Delhi and needs to work hard on his game to compete at a high level.

Morocco won only one rubber in the tie when Sasikumar Mukund conceded the opening singles against Dlimi due to cramps.

An emotional Bopanna rested his India-shirt on the court, marking the end of his Davis Cup career in which he played 50 matches in 33 ties, winning 23 rubbers, including 13 in doubles.

Watched by his family and friends, Bopanna, who made his Davis Cup debut in 2002, acknowledged the fans' appreciation and blew kisses towards the spectators stands.

About 50 of Bopanna's family and friends flew to Lucknow to watch the Coorg player in action one last time in Davis Cup. They were wearing T-shirts that had a tri-colour-waving Bopanna picture printed.

As one of the most powerful servers of the game makes



the exit, the next generation players will have to up their game. Bopanna will continue playing on the ATP Tour.

Asked why he has decided to quit Davis Cup when he will still be active on Pro Tour, Bopanna justified his decision.

"The number one thing is that there is another Indian who takes my spot. On the tour, that's not going to happen," Bopanna told PTI.

"And over the years, a week off here and there before big events has made that difference. So if I stop Davis Cup and get those two weeks off, it makes such a big difference in terms of how my body is feeling and everything."

"And one of the major reasons, also is that we have a daughter who's four years old. I would like to spend time also at home. It has been a fantastic journey, everything has to come to an end," he added.

Younes could not hold his serve even once in the match while the Indians faced just one break point when Bhambri served and saved that too.

The Indians drew first blood when they broke Younes. On a Bhambri backhand return at 30-15, Younes netted the volley. Bhambri smashed a volley

winner on Younes' return to earn the first breakpoint.

Benchetrit went for an angled volley winner on a Bhambri return but the ball went out as Indians led 3-1. Bopanna came out serving the next game at love to make it 4-1.

Younes' serve came under attack once again in game eight. Bopanna found a winner at 15-15 and the Morocco player served a double fault to be down by two break points.

Bhambri converted the set point with a volley winner on a feeble Younes return. The first set ended in a jiffy, just 34 minutes as the Indians lost five point on their serve.

Bopanna's big serve was at work in the second set too as he began the proceedings with a comfortable hold but Bhambri's serve came under pressure in the third game when at 30-all, his half-volley pick up flew out of the court.

The Indians, though, saved the break point.

Younes was up 40-0 on his serve in game four but lost his way, serving double fault and making a lot of unforced errors to lose his serve for the third time in the match. Bhambri served out the match.

Certain elements stopped us from taking best team to Asiad: Stimac

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India football team head coach Igor Stimac, on Sunday, lashed out at the Indian Super League (ISL) organisers FSDL and clubs for not releasing players for the Asian Games as the national federation was unable to stitch an under-strength ragtag side at the last moment after hectic parleys.

While Stimac did not take names while addressing a virtual press conference ahead of team departure but dropped enough hints about who all scuppered his and AIFF's plan to field a strong squad, comprising players from current senior national side.

"If I knew that certain elements will stop us from going with the best possible team, I would have rather picked all the players from the I-League and request to train with them for two months and prepare with them for the Asian Games," a fuming Stimac said during media interaction.

"It would not have been much different," he added, making clear what he thinks about the third-string players that ISL clubs have released.

As the squad was stitched at the eleventh hour after the ISL clubs refused to release their players and organisers Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL) did not entertain a request to delay the start of the league by a few days, Stimac informed that the team will play its first match on Tuesday against China without a single session.

"Players are arriving at Delhi airport at 5-6pm today. We are going to meet there and we have a flight at 10 pm to Hong Kong. We will wait (at Hong Kong airport) for another 5-6 hours for another flight which will take us to Hangzhou," Stimac's caustic comment wasn't lost on anyone.

Such has been Indian team's plight that it faces a formidable Chinese team on



Tuesday after reaching Games Village on Monday.

"We will reach there (Hangzhou) at 5pm (on Monday) and there will be no single training session prior to the game (next day). We have to do tactical preparation with the players at the airport and during flight so that they take rest as soon as possible after reaching there and have some good sleep prior to the match."

It has been a complete mess, not seen often in Indian sports. And certainly not expected after the sports ministry gave a special exemption to field the team in the Asian Games despite not fulfilling the eligibility criteria.

The AIFF named a 22-member squad, which was more or less the near full strength senior national team with the likes of Sunil Chhetri, Sandesh Jhingan and Gurpreet Singh Sandhu in it.

Thirteen players were not released by their respective ISL clubs, including Jhingan and

first-choice goalkeeper Gurpreet. A 17-member team with Chhetri as the only notable face was named initially.

On Friday, the AIFF announced a revised squad of 22 after hectic parleys with Jhingan in it, besides two more senior players in Chinglensana Singh and Lalchungnunga.

Stimac is not sure of the results from the team but remained optimistic and said there is a possibility to make it to the knock-out round.

"There is a question mark on how much we can do with this team without spending one single day together to prepare. Five-six of these players are not involved in the ISL matches and most of them never worked with me."

"We will look at the tournament as a hope and yes there is a possibility to qualify from the group but to do that some luck need to be there in our side. Also, the boys need to produce the best performance of their lives."

PTI ■ EUGENE

Olympic and world champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra failed to defend his Diamond League champion's title, finishing second with a modest effort of 83.80m in the grand finale here.

The 25-year-old Chopra, who clinched his maiden World Championships gold last month, struggled to produce his best in the winner-takes-all Finals of the 13-leg one-day meeting series at the Hayward Field on Saturday night.

He fouled his two attempts and his best effort of the day came in the second throw, with the series reading foul, 83.80m, 81.37m, foul, 80.74 and 80.90m.

This was Chopra's first below-85m throw of the season. He had qualified for the DL Finals at the third spot. He had won the 2022 DL Finals in Zurich with a throw of 88.44m.

No competitor could touch 85m under 25 degree Celsius

Chopra misses Diamond League trophy, finishes 2nd in grand finale

temperature and 45 per cent humidity. Other field events held simultaneously showed wide variation in wind speed readings, though they are not known for javelin throw.

Jakub Vadlejch of Czech Republic became the Diamond League champion for the third time with a best throw of 84.24m which came in his sixth and final attempt. He was leading the six-man field from the beginning following his first round effort of 84.01m. Vadlejch, who won bronze in Budapest World Championships in August and silver in Tokyo Olympics behind Chopra, had also clinched the DL title in 2017 and 2018.

Oliver Helander of Finland took the third spot with a best throw of 83.74m.



Two-time world champion Anderson Peters' wretched season continued as he finished last with a throw of 74.71m.

Vadlejch won the DL Trophy and \$32,000 while Chopra pocketed \$12,000 prize

(World Championships), I won gold there, and it will also change something in Indian athletics."

This was the same venue where Chopra had finished second in the 2022 World Championships.

The Indian, who has a personal best of 89.94m and season's best of 88.77m, won two individual DL meetings in Doha on May 5 and Lausanne on June 30 before clinching a historic gold in the World Championships last month.

He had become only the third javelin thrower in history to hold both the Olympic and World Championships crowns after winning the world title in Budapest with a throw of 88.17m.

Felix & Cancelo strike in Barca's win

AP ■ BARCELONA

New arrivals Joao Felix and Joao Cancelo struck their first goals for Barcelona in an impressive 5-0 rout of Real Betis on Saturday in La Liga.

Earlier Atletico Madrid were hammered 3-0 by Valencia at Mestalla with coach Diego Simeone labelling it the "weakest" performance during his time at the club.

Barcelona's five-star display was inspired by Felix, who netted the opener, with further goals from Robert Lewandowski, Ferran Torres and Raphinha and Cancelo.

The emphatic victory places the Catalans provisionally top of the table, a point clear of rivals Real Madrid who host Real Sociedad on Sunday.

Barcelona played with a vibrancy they lacked at times last season, even as they lifted La Liga, warming up for their Champions League opener on Tuesday against



Royal Antwerp.

Xavi handed Felix and compatriot Cancelo their first starts for the club and they quickly impressed home fans and their coach.

"We're talking about two players there are absolutely no doubts about in terms of individual quality," Xavi told reporters.

"The two bring something

Inter win Milan derby

AP ■ MILAN

Inter Milan laid down an early title marker on Saturday by handing out a 5-1 derby hammering to AC Milan and going it alone at the Serie A summit, while champions Napoli were held 2-2 at promoted Genoa.

Four wins from their opening four matches have Inter leading the pack with a perfect 12 points, two ahead

of their other fierce rivals Juventus who beat Lazio 3-1 in the day's early match.

Milan sit a further point back in third after a humiliating first defeat of the season before they welcome Newcastle United in the Champions League on Tuesday.

Spurred on by the majority of a heaving and raucous San Siro crowd, Inter claimed their fifth straight derby win in all competitions thanks to

a Henrikh Mkhitaryan brace, Marcus Thuram's rocket and two late strikes from Hakan Calhanoglu and Davide Frattesi.

Simone Inzaghi's side claimed the points with a display which showed why they got past Milan to reach last season's Champions League final and confirmed their status as early favourites to beat their local rivals to a 20th Scudetto.

I perform best when coach Rana around, says Bhaker

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As Indian pistol shooter Manu Bhaker on Sunday indicated that not being allowed the freedom to take her personal coach Jaspal Rana in major international competitions could be holding back her performance, and requested the NRAI to resolve the issue.

Legendary pistol shooter Rana recently reunited with Bhaker after the much-publicised split two years back ahead of the Tokyo Olympics. Rana is now working with the multiple-time World Cup gold medalist to help her bag a 2024 Paris Olympic quota place and win medals at the Asian Games in Hangzhou.

But the National Rifle Association of India's (NRAI) policy of not allowing personal coaches to accompany shooters at international competitions is something which has been a sore point with several marksmen for long.

"I'm hoping that this situation gets sorted soon. I've put in a request that he (Rana) accompany me for major competitions, like the quota competitions or the World Championships and all these...Major events at least,"



Manu said.

The Hangzhou Asian Games are scheduled to commence on September 23.

Manu, who missed Rana during the World Championships in Baku recently, however, hoped the issue will be resolved soon.

"Most likely it will be sorted. I think Kalikesh (Singdeo, NRAI president) is really supportive of me and he's been helping me out and in certain situations."

"Even the team coaches are very coordinating (co-operative) but, I believe, my best performance lies with my (personal) coach only, which is why we have reunited," added Manu, the winner of nine World Cup gold medals in individual and team events.

Messi-less Miami crushed 5-2 in Atlanta

AP ■ ATLANTA

Inter Miami rested Lionel Messi and suffered their first defeat since the Argentine joined the club, with a 5-2 hammering at Atlanta United damaging their playoff hopes on Saturday.

Messi had not made the trip to Atlanta, after a busy run of games since making his Miami debut in late July.

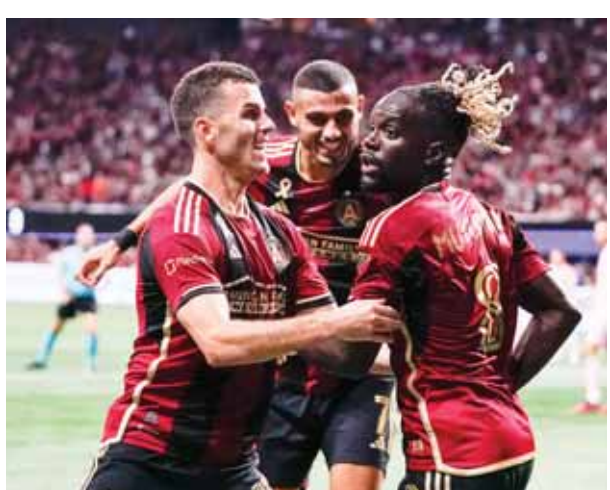
Miami coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said after the loss that Messi and had been suffering from "muscle fatigue" and that it would have been "very reckless to bring him to play this game".

The 36-year-old had sat out Argentina's World Cup qualifier against Bolivia in La Paz on Tuesday but watched his teammates from the bench.

Messi was substituted in the final minutes of the 1-0 win over Ecuador on September 7, after scoring the winner, but there have been no reports of an injury.

With no Messi last week, Miami defeated Sporting Kansas City 3-2 but this time it was a very different story for Martino's team.

Miami went ahead in the 25th minute with a superbly taken goal from in-form striker Ecuadorean striker



Leonardo Campana.

But the response from Atlanta, sixth in the Eastern Conference, was emphatic with three goals in the space of eight minutes.

The blitz of goals left Miami with plenty to ponder at the interval and they came out strongly, pulling a goal back in the 54th minute.

Miami have made a habit of second-half comebacks in the club's Messi era but lacking the impact of the former Barcelona star they were unable to build sustained momentum.

As they pushed forward in search of an equalizer, Atlanta

caught them on the counter.

The break ended with Georgian substitute Saba Lobjanidze squaring to Greek striker Giorgos Giakoumakis who slotted home his 14th goal of the season, bringing him level with Nashville's Hany Mukhtar joint top scorer in MLS.

Another well-worked swift break resulted in the fifth in the 89th minute with Lobjanidze again the creator, setting up Tyler Wolff to blast home.

Miami remain next to bottom of the Eastern Conference, six points behind D.C United who occupy ninth place, the last playoff spot.

BEST IN ASIA

List of records that tumbled as India decimate Lanka

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Records tumbled as India prevailed over hosts Sri Lanka by 10 wickets in the final of the Asia Cup to lift the title after a gap of five years.

Batting first, Sri Lanka were shot out for a paltry 50, thanks to pacer Mohammed Siraj's magical six-wicket haul. In reply, India got the job done easily in 6.1 overs.

Here is a look at the records that were scripted during the match.

- Sri Lanka registered its lowest ODI score against India after the fall of its fifth wicket (12 for 5).

- At 12 for 6, Lanka recorded the lowest ODI score at the fall of the sixth wicket by an ICC full-member nation.

- Siraj scalped his 50th ODI wicket in this game, which arrived in 1,002 deliveries, the second fastest by any bowler in the format. The record is held by Ajantha Mendis (847 balls).

- India grabbed six wickets in the opening ten overs of the contest, which is the most for the side in the format till date.

- Siraj is only the second bowler after Mendis to grasp a six-for in an Asia Cup ODI.

- Lanka's total score of 50 in this fixture is the lowest versus India in the format. Also, it is the lowest in any ODI final to date.

- Siraj's figures of 6 for 21 is the best by any bowler against Lanka in ODIs.

- It was only the second time in the competition's ODI history that the pacers held all ten wickets in a clash. The other instance also happened in this edition when Pakistan seamers achieved the feat against India in a washed out group match.

- Sri Lanka has become the full-member Asian side to be dismissed in the fewest overs of an ODI (15.2).

- Siraj's figures are also the best by any Indian pacer in an ODI final, besides being the second best after Anil Kumble's 6 for 12 in the 1993 Hero Cup Final.

- Siraj also became the first Indian to get four wickets in an over in international cricket.

- Siraj took just 16 balls to seize his fifth wicket of the encounter, the least by any bowler in an ODI.

- Siraj is only the second man after Ashish Nehra to clutch a six-for in an ODI versus Lanka.

- India has become the only team to win an ODI final by ten wickets on two occasions, with the other being against Zimbabwe in Sharjah in 1998 (197 for 0).

- It is also the biggest ODI win for the Indians in terms of balls to spare (263), besides also being the biggest in an ODI final.

- It is the briefest ODI involving India, with only 129 deliveries being bowled.

Performance like this will be cherished for very long time: Rohit

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Indian skipper Rohit Sharma on Sunday hailed his team for an emphatic performance in the Asia Cup final against Sri Lanka, saying the effort will be "cherished for a very long time".

Mohammed Siraj bowled one of the most devastating spells by an Indian fast bowler, taking six for 21, as Sri Lanka were bowled out for 50. The visitors knocked off the runs in 6.1 overs without losing any wicket.

"It was a great performance, especially to come and play like that in a final. Shows the mentality of the team. Very clinical. A performance like that will be cherished for a very long time," Rohit said at the post-match presentation ceremony.

However the skipper was astonished to see the kind of movement that his bowlers, especially Siraj, got off the surface.

"Our seamers are actually working really hard for many years, so it's pleasing for the side to see them get rewarded like that. I never thought the ball was going to be doing that much," the skipper said.

The conditions must have been helpful but it also takes high level of skill to put up a performance like that in a summit clash.

"Again, it comes back to the skill-set of individuals. That's



very rare, you don't see many guys (like Siraj), who can move it in the air and off the pitch. And the other guys also who took part at various stages, they all played their part."

With three match series against Australia and two more warm-up games before the World Cup opener, Rohit feels that the team is moving in the right direction.

"We took all we can from this series, quite pleasing to move in this direction with this kind of confidence"

Having ticked most boxes

that they wanted to tick, Rohit looked back at the team's run over the past couple of weeks.

"The first game against Pakistan under pressure, four down, how Hardik (Pandya) and (Ishan) Kishan batted in that pressure got us to that total. And then KL and Virat getting that hundred was brilliant to see."

"Also Gill, he's in terrific form, he's a batting freak. He likes to keep batting and it's something that works for our team. A lot of the guys at various stages bailed the team out in pressure situations," the skipper

added.

SHREYAS 99% FIT

India captain Rohit Sharma on Friday said left-arm spinner Axar Patel is likely to miss the first two ODIs against Australia next week while middle-order batter Shreyas Iyer is "99 percent" match-fit.

Axar had suffered a left quadriceps strain during the inconsequential Super 4 match against Bangladesh on Friday and was ruled out of the Asia Cup. Washington Sundar was drafted in as Axar's replacement

in India's Asia Cup squad.

"Axar had a small tear. It looks like maybe it will take a week or 10 days (to heal), I don't know. We have to see how that injury progresses. Some guys recover quickly, and I hope that's the case with him," skipper Rohit didn't seem too confident about the speed of recovery for the Gujarat all-rounder.

"I am not sure whether he will be able to play the first two games against Australia at home. But we will wait and see," said Rohit, who didn't want to fully commit.



Injuries close to World Cup could really cost you: Dravid

PTI ■ COLOMBO

India head coach Rahul Dravid on Sunday hinted that injuries to the likes of Shreyas Iyer and Axar Patel could cost his team going into the ODI World Cup and makes the task of managing players "trickier".

Iyer could only play the first two games of the Asia Cup due to a back spasm and this was after a six-month injury lay-off.

Left-arm spinner Axar was ruled out of the Asia Cup final due to a left quadriceps strain. Both the players are in India's World Cup squad.

"All teams are in a similar position, injuries so close to the World Cup could really cost you. We just need to keep our fingers crossed, trust our processes."

"We are in a tricky situation where some guys need to be



rested, while some guys need some cricket. It is a tricky balance to achieve," said Dravid before the start of the Asia Cup final.

Besides Iyer, K L Rahul had also made a comeback from injury in the Asia Cup and went on to do well.

India's opponent in the final, Sri Lanka, are also grappling with injuries to their key players. Mystery spinner

Maheesh Theekshana ended up missing the title clash having torn his oblique muscle.

Star player Wanindu Hasaranga, Dilshan Madushanka and Dushmantha Chameera missed the whole of Asia Cup due to injuries.

Pakistan are also fretting over the fitness of pacers Naseem Shah and Haris Rauf ahead of the World Cup beginning in India on October 5.

You get what is in our destiny: Siraj

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The complex questions that Mohammed Siraj asked during his dream spell of 6 for 21 was mostly due to the simple things that he was able to do perfectly on what turned out to be a Super Sunday for the Indian cricket team.

Perhaps, he was destined to have a day like this, said the Hyderabad as India geared up to the World Cup by winning the Asia Cup for a record eighth time.

"Jitna naseeb mein hota hai wahi milta, aaj mera naseeb tha (You get what's in our destiny, today it was my destiny)," Siraj summed up the mood while talking to the broadcasters in the mid-innings break.

He was particularly referring to the third ODI in

Thiruvananthapuram during Sri Lanka's tour of India where he got four wickets early but could not manage a five-for as Sri Lanka folded for 73 while chasing a stiff 391.

"Last time, I did the same against Sri Lanka at Trivandrum. Got four wickets early, couldn't get the five-for."

"I've been bowling well since a long time but missing the edges and finally got them today. I did not try too much today. I have always looked for swing in white-ball cricket and did not find much in the previous games."

"But today it was swinging, and I got more wickets with the outswinger. Such was the swing I was getting on this wicket that I tried to entice the batter to go on the front foot and make them drive."

South Africa post 315 in decider

AP ■ JOHANNESBURG

There was redemption for Australia's leg-spinner Adam Zampa but Aiden Markram and David Miller hit half-centuries as South Africa posted 315 for nine in the series-deciding fifth one-day international at the Wanderers Stadium on Sunday.

Zampa bounced back from conceding a world record-equaling 113 runs in the fourth match in Centurion on Friday when he bowled Heinrich Klaasen for six. Klaasen slammed 174 off 83 balls in Centurion and was particularly harsh on Zampa but on Sunday he was beaten by a quicker ball from Zampa which deceived the batsman.

Zampa took two more wickets in the 48th over to finish with three for 71.



Australian captain Mitchell Marsh sent South Africa in for the third match in a row despite his team having lost the previous two - but his reading of conditions proved correct as his pace bowlers extracted movement from the pitch for most of the innings.

Markram (93) and Miller (63) put on 109 for the fifth wicket and lower order batsmen Marco Jansen and Andile Phehlukwayo took the total past 300 with some big hitting towards the end.

Jansen hit three sixes in scoring 47 off 29 balls and Phehlukwayo cleared the boundary four times in his unbeaten 39 off 19 deliveries.

Brief scores: South Africa 315-9 (H. van der Dussen 30, A. Markram 93, D. Miller 63, M. Jansen 47, A. Phehlukwayo 39 not out)

Brook replaces Roy in England's ODI WC squad

AP ■ LONDON

Jason Roy has been axed from England's World Cup squad, with Harry Brook drafted in in his place, after the selectors made a dramatic late amendment to their 15-man squad for the tournament in India which gets underway in just under three weeks' time.

Roy, 33, was an integral member of the England squad that won the World Cup in 2019, and had been named in England's provisional squad for the defence of their title, ahead of their four-match series against New Zealand this month.

However, he was unable to feature in any of the four games after suffering a series of back



spasms. In his absence, Roy's rival for the opener's role, Dawid Malan, made an unequivocal case for a starting role in the tournament, finishing as Player of the Series with 277 runs at 92.33 in three games, including a match-winning century at Lord's.

Consequently, it will be Malan and Jonny Bairstow who will open the batting for England when their tournament gets underway against New Zealand on October 5.

Australia ODIs crucial for Shreyas, Surya

PTI ■ COLOMBO

India's three-match ODI series, starting with the first match on September 22 at Mohali, will be a litmus test for Shreyas Iyer and Suryakumar Yadav albeit for different reasons.

The fitness of Shreyas will be watched closely, while Suryakumar will have to produce an impact innings to vindicate his inclusion in the World Cup squad.

However, Shreyas' progress will be more pressing from the management perspective.

The middle-order batsman spent about half an hour at nets and then engaged in fielding drills for around 15 minutes, heightening hopes around him playing the Asia Cup final against Sri Lanka here on Sunday.

But Iyer was not included in the playing 11. It might be an



indication that the team think tank felt the need of giving him more time to recuperate from the back spasm that forced him to sit out of India's Asia Cup Super Four match against Pakistan.

Iyer had made his much-anticipated return to international cricket during India's Asia Cup league match against Pakistan at Pallekele, and he made 14 before getting out. He also played against Nepal but didn't get chance to bat.

"It will be an important

series for him as he needs to bat and field for the full duration of the match, something he has not done since his return. He has made a good recovery but maybe the team does not want to rush him."

"We have some more days for the Australia ODIs, and he can make proper recovery before that series," a source following the development told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Suryakumar offers a different case. The team management has placed a lot of faith in him to replicate his T20I explosiveness in ODIs. However, Suryakumar has not been able to live up to the expectations so far in the one-dayers.

The Mumbaikar failed to build on the start against Bangladesh in the Super Four match on Friday, making a 34-ball 26.

Smith, Maxwell, Starc return for India ODIs

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia has brought back Steve Smith, Glenn Maxwell and Mitchell Starc in its 18-man squad for the forthcoming three-match ODI series in India.

The trio were nursing injuries and missed their recent tour of South Africa.

Travis Head missed out after suffering a fracture on his left hand in South Africa and has been replaced by Matthew Short, who is yet to make his ODI debut. Aaron Hardie, Tim David and Michael Neser also missed out, while all-rounder Ashton Agar is on

paternity leave.

While pacer Spencer Johnson retains his place, Marnus Labuschagne also finds himself in the squad, having scored an unbeaten 80 and 124 in the opening two ODIs against the Proteas.

The three ODIs will be played in Mohali, Indore and Rajkot on September 24, 28 and October 1.

Squad: Pat Cummins (c), Sean Abbott, Alex Carey (wk), N Ellis, C Green, Hazlewood, Josh Inglis, S Johnson, Labuschagne, M Marsh, Maxwell, Tanveer Sangha, Matthew Short, S Smith, Starc, M Stoinis, D Warner, Zampa.

ACC, SLC announce \$50,000 award for curators, groundsmen

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The entire team of ground-staff, who worked tirelessly to get the grounds in Colombo and Pallekele match-ready for the Asia Cup in midst of full-blown monsoon season, will be rewarded with a prize money of USD 50,000, Asian Cricket Council chairman Jay Shah announced on Sunday.

"Big Shoutout to the Unsung Heroes of Cricket! The Asian Cricket Council (ACC) and Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) are proud to announce a well-deserved prize money of USD 50,000 for the dedicated curators and groundsmen at Colombo and Kandy," Shah wrote on 'X', formerly twitter.



USD 50,000 will roughly be 16 million in Sri Lankan rupee.

"Their unwavering commitment and hard work made the Asia Cup 2023 an unforgettable spectacle. From pitch perfection to lush outfields, they ensured the stage was set for thrilling cricket action."

"This recognition highlights the critical role these

individuals play in cricket's success. Let's celebrate and honour their yeoman services!" added Shah.

The tournament was originally supposed to be hosted by Pakistan before India's reluctance to play in the neighbouring country, forced ACC to organize the event in 'Hybrid Model' with nine games allotted to Sri Lanka.