

OPINION 6
G20 IMPETUS AGAINST
CLIMATE CHANGE

WORLD 8
IMF CHIEF TELLS PAK TO
'TAX RICH, PROTECT POOR'

MONEY 10
RBI CAN SPEND \$30 BN OF FOREX
RESERVES TO DEFEND RUPEE: REPORT

Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 33 Issue 262
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

NEW DELHI, FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 22, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹ 3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



CHHETRI KEEPS
INDIA'S ASIAN
GAMES HOPES
ALIVE 11 SPORT

KHALISTANI FRANKENSTEIN STUNS TRUDEAU

India suspends visa services for Canadians; another Khalistani terrorist killed in Canada gang war

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/
AGENCIES ■ UNITED NATIONS/
TORONTO/ NEW DELHI

Hardening its stand against unsubstantiated allegations levelled by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, India on Thursday suspended issuance of visas to Canadian citizens "due to security threat to its embassy and consulates there". At the same time, Canada has sought adequate security for its diplomatic staff in India, claiming that some of them have received threats on various social media platforms.

India has apprised its key Western partners and friends about its concerns over increasing activities of anti-India elements from Canadian soil, sources said on Thursday.

Trudeau Thursday reiterated that there are "credible allegations" that should be taken "extremely seriously" as he urged the Government of India to work with his country to allow justice to follow its course in the killing of a Khalistani extremist leader.

"We call upon the government of India to take this matter seriously and to work with us to shed full transparency and ensure accountability and justice in this matter," he said while responding to questions on the diplomatic row between India and Canada.

"We are a country of the rule of law. We are going to



High Commission of India in Ottawa

AP/PTI

continue to do the work necessary to keep Canadians safe and to uphold our values and the international rules based order. That's our focus right now," Trudeau said when asked whether his government will take any retaliatory measures following India's suspension of visa services for Canadians.

Earlier, Trudeau refused to take questions in the United Nations (UN) in New York on his allegations about a "potential" involvement of Indian Government agents in the killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June.

Enunciating India's stand on the issue in New Delhi, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said on Thursday "India is temporarily unable to process visa applications" from Canada because of "security threats faced by our High Commissions and Consulates" in that country.

"You are aware of the security threats being faced by our High Commissions and Consulates in Canada... This has disrupted their normal functioning. Accordingly, our High Commissions and

Consulates are temporarily unable to process visa applications," Bagchi told reporters.

"We will be reviewing the situation on a regular basis," he said, adding the Government has also suspended the issue of electronic visas. Bagchi also said the issue is about "discrimination in how visas are granted by the Canadian side."

"All categories of visas are suspended. Issue not about travel to India... those who have valid visas (issued before this suspension order) are (cleared) to travel to India. The issue is the creation of an environment

that disrupts functioning of our consulates and high commission," he said.

Bagchi dismissed claims Indian "agents" had killed Nijjar and called them "politically driven". He pointed out that "no specific information" had been shared by Ottawa on the alleged killing.

"We are willing to look at specific information if provided... from our side, we have very specific information on particular individuals in Canada and all these have been shared with them."

"But Canada hasn't acted on them," he said adding that Canada's inaction was a huge concern.

"From our side, specific evidence about criminal activities by individuals based on Canadian soil has been shared with Canada but not acted upon... Yes, I do think there is a degree of prejudice here. They have made allegations and taken action on them. To us, it seems that these allegations by the government of Canada are primarily political driven," he added.

On India expelling a senior diplomat — after Canada ordered a top Indian diplomat to leave its borders — Bagchi said the other side had been asked to downsize its diplomatic presence in India citing "interference of Canadian diplomats in Indian affairs".

Continued on Page 2

Khalistanis named, shamed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday released pictures of 10 Khalistanis involved in attacking Indian consulate in San Francisco in the USA in March and has sought information about them from the public.

The NIA issued three separate "request for identification and information" notices issued against the wanted accused, the agency has sought information of importance that could lead to their arrest or apprehension. While two of the notices carry photographs of two accused each, the third notice shows pictures of the other six accused in the case. The agency has promised to keep the identity of the informants secret.

According to the NIA, the case was registered following an attack on the Indian Consulate in San Francisco during the intervening night of March 18 and 19 when some pro-Khalistani entities allegedly trespassed into the consulate and tried to burn it down. The same day, Khalistani supporters had broken through the makeshift security barriers and put up two so-called Khalistani flags on the consulate premises, damaged the building and assaulted and injured the officials, the NIA said.

In the intervening night of July 1 and 2, some accused persons trespassed into the Consulate and attempted to set it on fire while officials were inside the building, the agency said.

Meanwhile amid the strained Indo-Canadian relationship over the killing of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, reports suggested gangster Sukhdul Singh, alias Sukha Duneke, one of most wanted criminals in Punjab, was gunned down in the Canadian city of Winnipeg by unidentified gunmen.

Duneke had at least 18 cases against him, including those relating to murder, attempt to

Request for Identification & Information

On 19th March 2023, the persons shown in the pictures below were involved in an attack on the Consulate General of India (CGI), San Francisco (USA), causing injuries to the CGI officials and damage to property.



If you have any information about them, please share via WhatsApp/Telegram/Signal @77430-02947 or send through email at info-ctd.nia@gov.in

Please share the following details:-
1. Name 2. Phone no. 3. Address (Village & District)
4. Passport details 5. Nationality

The identity of the informant shall be kept secret

murder and robbery. Hailing from Duneke Kalan village in Punjab's Moga district, the gangster fled to Canada in December 2017.

An active member of the Davinder Bambiha gang, Duneke was closely associated with Canada-based gangster-turned-terrorist Arsh Dalia, gangster Lucky Patial, Malaysia-based gangster Jackpal Singh, alias Lali. A lookout circular was issued against Duneke in 2022.

His name had also cropped up in the killing of international kabaddi player Sandeep Nangal Ambian in March last year.

Gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, who is lodged in Tihar Jail, has claimed the responsibility for the killing of Duneke.

Women's Reservation Bill gets Rajya Sabha nod

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Parliament on Thursday passed the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, commonly known as Women's Reservation Bill. The Bill was passed unanimously in the Rajya Sabha late on Thursday after over 11 hours of debate that saw participation from members across party lines and the thanksgiving by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Bill was passed by 215 votes in favour, and zero against it. The Bill was moved by Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal.

Concluding the discussion on the Bill — the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2023 — Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "This Bill will lead to a new confidence in the people of the country. It also shows the positive thinking of all the political parties which will give new energy to women's empowerment."

"Delighted at the passage of The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2023 in the Lok Sabha with such phenomenal support. I thank MPs



across party lines who voted in support of this Bill. The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam is a historic legislation which will further boost women empowerment and will enable even greater participation of women in our political process," said Modi making another history as the house passed its first Bill in the New Parliament building unanimously.

Leader of the Opposition and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said, "We are giving our unconditional

support to the Bill and it will be passed (in the Rajya Sabha) but make sure this doesn't turn into an election 'jumla'." Before that Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the Government convened the Special Session to give a good start to the new building of Parliament by pushing one of the best Bills — the Women's Reservation Bill.

Making intervention in the discussion on the Constitution (128th Amendment) Bill in the Rajya Sabha, she asserted

that the BJP does not play politics in matters related to women.

The Bill, which seeks to provide 33 per cent reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and Assemblies, was cleared by the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

Sitharaman said the Bill was "long overdue" and it was important to pass the proposed legislation with consensus.

On why the Government has convened a Special Session of Parliament, Sitharaman said, "We have come into a new complex, new building for Parliament, new India. We would like this Parliament to deal with one of the best Bills that it can deal with."

The Finance Minister said Parliament has taken up this bill for passage and it is a "very good start" to the building which will be constructed for the next 100 years.

Sitharaman said the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam has been thoughtfully crafted, especially considering that "we are at a critical stage of development."

"It is important that we build consensus and also show that we are committed to the

economic and social empowerment of women," she said and urged the Rajya Sabha members to unanimously approve the Bill.

Responding to the "well-meaning" suggestion for reservation for women in the Rajya Sabha and State councils, she said it would not be workable because the members are elected through indirect elections.

"What this Bill provides for is reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha. I have heard some members saying that reservation should also be given in the Upper House (Rajya Sabha). With the indirect election process and the way in which preferences (are) shown in the voting, it is just not going to be possible to do any reservation," she said.

Responding to the charge that the Bill was brought in with an eye on elections, she stated that the Bill stood as an article of faith, "now or whenever it was brought up".

Recalling the chronology of the Women's Reservation Bills since 1996, she stressed the BJP had consistently supported the Bill whenever it was introduced.

BJP's Chanakya gets master room

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Astrologers have analysed the significance of the room numbers allocated to the key Union Ministers in the new Parliament building and have generally predicted auspicious outcomes for the occupants.

For Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who has been allocated room number G33 on the upper ground floor in the new Parliament building, astrologers consider the number 33 as a master number or the "master teacher" in numerology.

"This master number 33 is a combination of both master number 11 and 22, which means that it holds significant power in terms of the experiences, dreams, and intuitions it can reveal," said Acharya Dr Sheesh Narain Vajpayee, an astrologer, adding that the number of opponents will also increase.

beneficial for carrying out schemes or projects related to economic development. This implies that decisions regarding economic development schemes/projects should be made here," he said.

Union Minister Smriti Irani has been assigned room number 8. "In astrology, the number 8 is ruled by Saturn and is highly influential. This number holds great importance since its shape resembles the sign of infinity. By virtue of it, people associated with this number encounter infinite opportunities and blessings in life. Moreover, this number also maintains a balance between the spiritual and materialistic aspects of life," Vajpayee said.

The number 8 is likely very favorable from a health perspective.

"Decisions made here can lead to increased stress, so they should be made with special caution," he said. Defence Minister Rajnath



Singh, Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, Foreign Minister S Jaishankar, Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda, Women & Child Development Minister Smriti Irani, Minister of Education Dharmendra Pradhan, and Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnav have been allotted rooms on the upper ground floor. The Ministers will shift to their new

rooms during the Special Session of Parliament on Tuesday.

Rajnath has been given room G34. Regarding the numerology essence of room number 34, it generally indicates comfort in interacting with others, although the occupant may not actively seek such opportunities. "Sitting in this room will considerably increase happiness and occupancy," Acharya Vajpayee said. Regarding room number 31, allocated to Gadkari, Vajpayee said that decisions made while sitting here will cost more than expected.

"But the completion of the work will be so easy that it will not allow any special tension in the mind towards the work," he added.


As for Goel's room number 30, decisions made here will be moderately successful. "Although you will have to face more opposition in the workplace," the astrologer said. The office number of

Rijju, which is F17, indicates that this place will increase position and prestige and will lead to more success even with less effort.

RK Singh, who has been allocated F16 as an office, indicates that whatever work is taken up, one will not have to struggle much for it, and the work will be completed with less effort than expected.

Vajpayee said each number has specific characteristics associated with it and symbolizes a specific vibration. "They influence our lives and the decisions we make from the moment we arrive in the world. This happens because our birth date governs our complete course of life," he added.

The old Parliament House has seating for 545 MPs in the Lok Sabha and 245 in the Rajya Sabha. However, the new building will accommodate 888 MPs in the Lok Sabha chamber. In case of a joint Parliament session, 1,272 MPs will be able to sit.



VIT-AP UNIVERSITY
www.vitap.ac.in



WELCOME TO THE 3rd ANNUAL CONVOCATION



Chief Guest
Hon'ble Dr. Justice B. Siva Sankara Rao
Judge (Rtd)
Chairman
The Judicial Preview Committee
Government of Andhra Pradesh



Guest of Honour
Sri. Ashish Sharma
Director, Microsoft
Bengaluru, Karnataka



Presided by
Dr. G. Viswanathan
Founder & Chancellor

Date & Time : 23rd September, 2023 (Saturday) at 10:00 AM
Venue : Sri. Tanguturi Prakasam Auditorium,
Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Block (AB-2)
Watch Live on www.youtube.com/c/VITAP

RANKED #1 AMONG EMERGING STATE PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA
(OUTLOOK UNIVERSITY RANKINGS 2022 & 2023)

VIT-AP University, Beside AP Secretariat, Near Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh - 522241
admission@vitap.ac.in 08632370444 7901091283
vitap.university vitap.university vit-ap VITAPUniversity VITAP
Apply Knowledge. Improve Life!®

Choksi's challenge against fugitive economic offender tag rejected

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday rejected petitions filed by absconding businessman Mehul Choksi challenging the move by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to declare him a Fugitive Economic Offender (FEO), after holding that the ED had complied with section 4 of the Fugitive Economic Offenders (FEO) Act and rule of the FEO rules in his case.

Pronouncing his verdict on four petitions filed by Choksi drawing the court's attention to the ED's procedural

lapses in making a case for declaring him as an FEO, Single-judge Justice SV Kotwal that he found substance in the submissions made by the central investigating agency and that "there is sufficient compliance with the requirement of Section 4 of the FEO Act".

"Looking at all these aspects of this matter, firstly I do not find any infirmity in the verification (carried out by the ED) and even otherwise I find that all the requirements under Section 4 of the FEO Act and under Rule 3 of the FEO rules are properly complied with in this case," Justice Kotwal noted.

While rejecting the four



petitions filed by Choksi, the judge ruled, "I do not see any reason to interfere with the impugned order and hence

the application is rejected.

The interim relief stands vacated.

In view of disposal of the main Application, nothing survives in the pending Interim Applications and the same are also disposed of."

The ED had earlier approached the special court set up under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) with an application under Sections 4 and 12 of the FEO Act to declare Choksi an FEO and confiscate his properties.

As per the FEO Act, 2018, a person can be declared FEO if a warrant has been issued against him for an offence

involving an amount of Rs 100 crore or more and if the person has left the country and refuses to return.

Choksi is an accused in the Rs 14,500 crore Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud case. In January 2020, the High Court had granted a stay on the final order to be passed by the Special Court proceedings.

The ED had moved the Bombay High Court in August this year, seeking a review of this stay claiming Choksi had already fled the country.

Advocate Hiten Venegaonkar, who appeared for the ED, had argued that Choksi is an accused under the PMLA Act and prosecution

against him was pending due to the stay order of the High Court.

He had argued that the special judge was not proceeding to hear the matter afresh as was required after an efflux of 3 years because of the High Court stay.

Hence, Venegaonkar urged the high court to review its stay order.

Among other things, Advocate Vijay Aggarwal, appearing for Choksi had earlier argued that Choksi left the country much before the registration of any FIRs against him and it was not to avoid any criminal prosecution.

He also told his medical

condition was impeding his travel to home country.

Advocate Agrawal had told the court that Choksi (64), who is now a citizen of Antigua and Barbuda in the Caribbean Isles, had been granted bail two years ago to seek specialised medical attention for his neurological issues.

In his order, the Judge noted that the ED had rightly followed FEO Act which will not get affected by Cr PC.

"In this context, the preamble of the FEO Act is significant.

"It states that this is an Act to provide for measures to deter fugitive economic offenders from evading the process of

law in India by staying outside the jurisdiction of Indian courts, to preserve the sanctity of the rule of law in India and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto"

Dismissing that the contention by Choksi's lawyers that there were procedural lapses in matters relating to ED's plea seeking declaration of the absconding lawyer as an FEO, the Judge observed, "...section 4 of the FEO Act and Rule 3 of the FEO Rules are made to further the objective of this act and they cannot be bypassed by taking recourse to other provisions of Cr.P.C. to contend that the affidavit was not proper".

Bombay HC grants bail to Raut in 2018 Bhima-Koregaon case

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday granted bail to Mahesh Raut, one of the accused in the 2018 Bhima Koregaon-Elgaar Parishad conspiracy case, but stayed the implementation of its order for a week to facilitate the NIA to file an appeal against the order before the Supreme Court.

Raut is the sixth accused in the Bhima Koregaon case to have been granted bail. In the case, Earlier, Sudha Bharadwaj, Varavara Rao, Anand Teltumbde, Vernon Gonsalves and Arun Ferreira had been granted bail. Of them, Rao was granted bail on medical grounds.

Following a Supreme Court order, another accused Gautam Navlakha is currently under house arrest instead of being lodged in jail.

While granting bail to Raut, a HC bench of Justices AS Gadgarkar and Sharmila Deshmukh was of the view that several Unlawful Activities



(Prevention) Act (UAPA) provisions under which Raut was charged are prima facie inapplicable.

However, the HC bench has not made available a detailed copy of the order.

Raut was arrested on June 6, 2018 in the case for his alleged links with Maoists and has been in jail since then.

Contesting the NIA's claims, Raut's senior Advocate Mihir Desai told the court that his client was not a member of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) "He is a TISS graduate, a recipient of the Prime Minister's Fellowship, and has been working with the state government for the tribals in Gadchiroli in east Maharashtra," Desai told the high court.

Attitudinal changes towards divyangjan stressed upon

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

India may have been basking in the glory of the remarkable success of Chandrayaan 3 Lunar mission, people with disabilities (PwDs) in the country continue to face barrier even for day-to-day survival, Rajesh Aggarwal, Union Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment said on Thursday as he emphasised on the need to change the way the society view the sector.

"India has reached the moon but there are many challenges that persons with disabilities are facing today. In India, our attitudes are inclusive but infrastructures are yet to be inclusive," the senior official minced no words as he echoed sentiments of the sector which is faced with discrimination, stigma and stereotyping, forcing most of them to confine themselves in the four walls of their homes.

Aggarwal also stressed upon the attitudinal changes of the society at large towards divyangjan.

The officer immediately

struck the chord with the disabled people as he opened up the conversation for supporting Divyangjan through various initiatives to empower the sector and help them lead a dignified life. The senior officer was speaking at a roundtable meet for corporate to 'Support, Activate and Build Assured Livelihoods (SABAL) for Persons with Disabilities under CSR Actions' organized by the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), in collaboration with the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.

He underscored the need for funding through CSRs in providing aids and assistive devices, up skilling, providing loans and mentorship to PwDs, mapping of jobs following the 'cool ability factor', providing reasonable accommodation, providing leaves for health issues and spreading the message across distribution networks of the companies and hiring PwDs.

The workshop held at Gujarat was attended by many senior officials from DEPwD as

well as National Institutions under DEPwD and CSR leaders from leading corporate entities including PNB, XIAOMI, NHPC, Delhi Metro, BHEL among others.

At the meet, some of the activities identified to achieve the goal of creating 3000 PwD led enterprises through awareness campaigns to ensure community integration of PwDs and immersive life skills for adolescents with disabilities, sourcing business opportunities for PwDs among others.

Kishor B. Surwade, Deputy Director General DEPwD spoke about various initiatives and schemes of the Department including National Action Plan for Skill Development of PwDs, Assistive devices, Scholarship to Divyangjan and rehabilitation services while Dr. Sunil Shukla Director General, EDII emphasized upon the need to think about inclusive development wherein empowering PwDs must be high on our priority.

On a regular basis, we need to curate sustainable business opportunities, viable entrepreneurial prospects and ensure that the PwDs get suitably trained and handheld.

Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar announced for scientific community

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Close on the heels of the stupendous success of the Chandrayaan 3 Lunar mission which is being attributed to the calibre and hard work of the ISRO scientists, the Government on Wednesday announced a new set of national awards "Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar", aiming to recognize achievements of scientific community at the highest level in the field of science, technology and technology-led innovation.

The awards which are on the lines of the highest civilian awards such as Bharat Ratna and Padma Shri will commence from next year. At the same time, the Union Science and Technology Ministry has scrapped nearly 300 awards by various science departments.

The awards shall be given in four categories with topmost being Vigyan Ratna (VR) award which will recognize lifetime achievements & contributions made in any field of science and technology; Vigyan

Shri (VS) award will recognize distinguished contributions in any field of science and technology; Vigyan Yuva-Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (VY-SSB) award will recognize and encourage young scientists up to the age of 45 years who made an exceptional contribution in any field of science and technology.

Then there will be a Vigyan Team (VT) award to be given to a team of three or more scientists/researchers/innovators who have made an exceptional contribution working in a team in any field of science and technology.

An official from the Union Science and Technology Ministry said that scientists/technologists/innovators working in government, private sector organizations or any individual working outside any organisation, who have made distinguished contributions in terms of path-breaking research or innovation or discovery in any field of science, technology, or technology-led innovation shall be eligible for the awards.

Delhi for free spraying of bio decomposers in farms

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In order to curb air pollution in the national Capital due to stubble burning, the Delhi Government has announced to start preparations for free spraying of bio-decomposer in farms to prevent stubble burning.

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Thursday said free bio-decomposers will be sprayed by the government in all the Basmati and non-Basmati paddy fields over 5000 acres of agriculture land inside the city.

"Instruction has been issued to the Agriculture Department to survey the fields regarding the spraying of bio-decomposer at the earliest.

"He said that the city Government has formed 11 teams for spraying bio-decomposers," Rai said after meeting with the officials of the Agriculture Department regarding free bio-decomposer spraying in the national Capital.

DGCA suspends Air India's flight safety chief for 1 month over lapses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), has suspended Air India's Flight Safety Chief for a month due to identified lapses in the airline's safety procedures.

Aviation watchdog DGCA on Thursday said it has suspended the approval of Air India's Flight Safety Chief for one month for certain lapses.

The action follows a thorough surveillance operation carried out by a DGCA team on July 25th and 26th, 2023, which examined various aspects of Air India's safety protocols, including internal audits, accident prevention measures, and the availability of necessary technical manpower.



power.

On July 25 and 26, the regulator's team carried out the surveillance of Air India in the areas of internal audit, accident prevention work and availability of required technical manpower. During the inspection, the DGCA surveillance team uncovered several deficiencies in Air India's accident prevention procedures.

They also found that the airline was lacking the requisite technical manpower as specified in the approved Flight

Safety Manual and relevant Civil Aviation Requirements.

"The approval of Chief of Flight Safety of Air India has been suspended for a period of one month for the lapses established."

This suspension of the Flight Safety Chief's approval serves as a stern reminder of the critical role played by airlines in ensuring the safety of passengers and crew," it said.

World Stroke Angels Diamond tag

Faridabad: Fortis Escorts Faridabad's Neurology department has achieved the 2023 World Stroke Organization Angels Diamond status, becoming Faridabad's first hospital to get this distinction. Nationally, it ranks among the top 25. "Post-Covid, we have seen an upsurge in stroke-related cases, thus there is a dire need to have the best of stroke response services," Dr Kunal Bahrani, Neurology Director.

'Influential people trying to scuttle cash for job probe'

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In what could now bring some "persons sitting on constitutional posts" in Kolkata on its radar the Enforcement Directorate investigating the cash-for-job case on Thursday made an explosive submission before the Calcutta High Court and alleged some influential persons sitting on constitutional posts were trying to scuttle the probe process by getting the Kolkata Police to harass the ED officials.

Stopping short of naming the Home Department and its handlers the ED told the Court that ever since the central agency had made public the name of Leaps and Bounds a private limited company owned by Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee



and his close kin "the powers that be in the State are harassing the ED officials."

The Police however, pleaded that they were well within their jurisdiction in demanding the names of the ED officials as "of late many fake officials have been entering different premises."

Following directions of the High Court the ED on Thursday submitted the list of properties of the TMC second-in-command along with those of other officials of the said company.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, wearing the porters' trademark red shirt and badge, carries luggage over his head during an interaction with porters at Anand Vihar railway station, in New Delhi, on Thursday

—MERI MAATI MERA DESH CAMPAIGN— Ex-Min Goel to collect soil from memorials of great personalities

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister Vijay Goel will collect soil from the memorials of great personalities, including Mahatma Gandhi and former prime ministers Jawahar Lal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, in Delhi as part of the 'Meri Maati-Mera Desh' campaign.

Goel, the vice-chairman of Gandhi Smriti and a former

chief of the BJP's Delhi unit, said there is no politics in it.

"Even Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to all former prime ministers in the new Parliament building. We are just carrying forward his message of unity of all to make India a strong and vibrant nation," Goel said.

Addressing a press conference, Goel said the soil collection will begin with Mahatma Gandhi's memorial at Rajghat on September 23.

Soil from the memorials of other great personalities, including former prime ministers Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Chaudhary Charan Singh, Chandra Shekhar and Atal Bihari Vajpayi and Socialist leader Jagjivan Ram, will be collected, he said.

Modi in July announced the 'Meri Maati-Mera Desh' campaign in the run-up to Independence Day to honour martyred bravehearts.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Urooj Fatima D/o S.A. Hussain W/o Syed Tauseef Hussain R/o 399/149-A, 3rd Floor, Street No-15, Ghaffar Manzil, Jamia Nagar New Delhi-110025 hereby declare that S.A. Hussain, Syed Anwar Hussain, Sayed Anwar Hussain Rizvi, Syed Anwar Hussain Rizvi, are the same name of one person and that's my father. Henceforth in future my fathers name is S.A. Hussain for all purposes.

PD(164)C I, Syed Tauseef Hussain S/o Syed Ishrat Hussain, R/o 399/149-A, 3rd Floor, Street No. 15, Ghaffar Manzil Jamia Nagar, New Delhi-110025 hereby declare that both the name Ghazala Hussain & Ghazala Hussain are the same name of one person that's my mother. Henceforth in future my mother's name is Ghazala Hussain for all purposes.

PD(165)C I, Urooj Fatima D/o S.A. Hussain W/o Syed Tauseef Hussain R/o 399/149-A, 3rd Floor, Street No-15, Ghaffar Manzil, Jamia Nagar New Delhi-110025 hereby declare that both the name Hakima Hussain, Haqima Hussain & Hakima Rizvi are the same name of one person and that's my mother. Henceforth in future my mother's name is Hakima Rizvi for all purposes.

PUBLIC NOTICE
My client, Smt. Rajni Yadav and Smt. Sarita Yadav both D/o Sh. Ram Babu Yadav R/o H.O. C-152 Gali No. C-3 Block Ph-III, Shiv Vihar, Karawal Nagar, Delhi-110094 are Registered Owners of Prop. No. C-112-B, Old Plot No. C-55/2-56 & C-152 out of Khata no.14/22, Village Karawal Nagar, Gali no. 3, Shiv Vihar Delhi-110094 vide Registered Gift Deed dated 04.08.2023 Document no.2418 at SR V Delhi. The previous original documents notated GSA, MS and Registered Receipt no. 13/05 dated 15.06.1886 & Registered Will document, no.30/050 dated 04.12.1991 executed by Sh. Ram Babu Yadav in favour of Smt. Sarita Devi w/o Sh. Ram Babu Yadav has been lost and in this regard NCR No. 318708/2023 has been filed. Above-mentioned property is going to be mortgaged with HFL Home Finance Limited. Any person/bank/financial institution having any claim/right, lien any objection whatsoever in regard to above property, should notified to the undersigned / Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karakoram Court, Delhi-110092, alongwith documentary evidence under address through Registered A/c within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived.

Bhopal Municipal Corporation
Swachh Bharat Mission (Civil)
11nd Floor, Kushabhau Thakre Inter-State Bus Terminal (ISBT) Campus, Ambedkar Marg, Near Chetak Bridge, Bhopal (M.P.)
Bhopal, Date. 20.09.2023
Tender for online submissions are invited on website www.mptenders.gov.in under "Live Tender" and Department Name "Bhopal Municipal Corporation" for following work. Detailed NIT, Tender Schedule and other information can be seen on the website www.mptenders.gov.in.

S. No.	Tender ID	Name of Work	Tender Cost Rs.	Tender Document Cost Rs.	EMD Cost Rs.
1	2023_UAD_295006_2	Supply, Installation, Commissioning, operation & Maintenance (for one year after successful commissioning) of Weighing Bridge (Pitless) Having Capacity of 16 Tonne Including the solution of software of weighing mechanism and Boom Barrier System with RFID tags at various locations of Garbage Transfer Station of Bhopal City (Second Call)	1.93 Cr.	12,500/-	96,500/-

Corrigendum and Amendment for above NIT shall not be issued separately in newspaper & correction if any, would be Published on website only.

Superintendent Engineer (SBM)
Municipal Corporation, Bhopal

T.N.1053/023/024

Clarion call for climate action

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The 5th International Conference on Sustainability Education (ICSE) themed "Educating for Climate Action and Sustainability," witnessed a convergence of over 600 global thought leaders, educators, policymakers, and environmentalists rallying for concerted efforts against climate change.

India organised the event in partnership with UNESCO, United Nations Environment Programme, Centre for Environment Education TERI, and others three dozen national and international organisations. Atul Bagai, UNEP India country head was chief guest, while Jadav Payeng, Forest Man of India, and the Mountain Man Anil Prakash Joshi attended the event.

Rajendra Singh, Water Man of India, gave a video message urging the delegates to take urgent climate action.

KHALISTANI...

From Page 1
"Canadian diplomatic presence in India is larger than what India has (in Canada)... accordingly needs to be downsized. There should be parity, their numbers are much higher," Bagchi said.

In another development, Canadian MP Chandra Arya alleged that the extremist elements are "attacking" and "threatening" Hindu-Canadians to go back to India. He has also urged all the Hindu-Canadians in the country to stay calm, and vigilant and report any untoward incident to law enforcement agencies. Arya is an Indo-

Canadian who comes from the Liberal Party of Canada, the same party as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. "I have heard from many Hindu-Canadians who are fearful after this targeted attack. I urge Hindu-Canadians to stay calm but vigilant. Please report any incident of Hinduphobia to your local law enforcement agencies," Arya added.

He further said the Khalistan movement leader is trying to "provoke" the Hindu Canadians to react and "divide the Hindu and Sikh communities" in Canada. However, Arya also clarified that a majority of

Canadian Sikhs do not support the Khalistan movement. "Let me be clear. Vast majority of our Canadian Sikh brothers and sisters do not support the Khalistan movement. Most Sikh Canadians may not publicly condemn the Khalistan movement for several reasons but they are deeply connected to the Hindu-Canadian community. Canadian Hindus and Sikhs are connected through family relationships and shared social and cultural ties," he further said.

Few days back, Khalistan movement leader in Canada and president of Sikhs for Justice, which organised the so-called referendum, Gurpatwant Singh Pannun

attacked Hindu-Canadians asking them to leave Canada and go back to India.

"I can't understand how the glorification of terrorism or a hate crime targeting a religious group is allowed in the name of freedom of speech and expression. There would be an outrage in Canada if a white supremacist attacked any group of racialized Canadians asking them to get out of our country. But apparently, this Khalistani leader can get away with this hate crime," Arya said.

Arya added that the Hindu Canadians keep a low profile, are considered soft targets, and the "anti-Hindu elements" cannot digest the success of Hindu-Canadians.

ELECTION FEVER GRIPS DELHI UNIVERSITY

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Students of Delhi University (DU), especially the first-time voters, are brimming with joy and excitement as the varsity is set to hold the much-awaited students union elections on Friday after a gap of three years. Students of day classes will cast their votes from 8.30 am to 1 pm and those attending evening classes from 3 pm to 7.30 pm, according to the university administration.

Counting of votes will take place on Saturday. The Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) elections were last held in 2019. The polls could not be held in 2020 and 2021 due to Covid-19 while possible disruptions to the academic calendar prevented their conduct in 2022.

According to DU, 24 candidates are in the fray for the students body elections this time.

While there were 27 nomination papers filed for the post of president, only eight candidates remain in the fray. Of the 24 nominations for the vice-president's post, five will contest the elections, according to the final list.

The chief election officer received 24 nominations for the post of secretary and 20 for joint secretary. Following the withdrawals, six and five candidates remain in contention, respectively.

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the National Students' Union of India (NSUI), CPI(M)-backed Students' Federation of India and CPI-ML(Liberation)-affiliated All India Students'



Association (AISA) have fielded candidates for all four posts. The ABVP had won three of the four seats in the 2019 DUSU elections.

While the NSUI promised to take up issues like menstrual leave, no fee hike and violence-free campus, the ABVP promised to work for more scholarships to the marginalised, including transgenders and fairness in education cost. The NSUI's manifesto includes issues such as 12 days menstrual leave per semester, a violence-free campus,

Grievance Redressal Cell, no fee hike, hostel for all, free metro pass, a library that functions round the clock, railway reservation counter on the campus, active placement cell, free WiFi and better infrastructure.

ABVP, on the other hand, pitched for the implementation of dedicated university special buses and the construction of new hostels and girls' hostels in every college. They also promised to introduce an 'Earn While Learn' policy to provide students with opportunities to earn while pursuing their education.

Meanwhile, blame-game erupted between the NSUI and the ABVP as both the students' group accused each other for creating ruckus and violence in the campus. ABVP's Ashutosh Singh alleged, "the NSUI has been creating violence and dis-

turbance on campus. They entered college campus disguised as female students by covering their faces and also attacked the car of Tushar Dedha who is an ABVP candidate for the DUSU elections."

ABVP also appealed to all Delhi University students to make the mandatory use of their voting rights. It also urged students to seize this opportunity to understand their rights and contribute to becoming responsible citizens.

Tushar Dedha is running for the position of President, Sushant Dhankad for Vice President, Aprajita for Secretary, and Sachin Baisla for Joint Secretary. Shivangi Kharwal, the former Joint Secretary of DUSU and the girls' coordinator of ABVP Delhi, said in the past 10 DUSU elections, ABVP emerged victorious in

29 out of 40 seats, securing over 72% of the results. Between 2010 and 2019, ABVP dominated the Delhi University Student Union elections, winning 29 out of 40 positions, including president, vice president, secretary, and joint secretary.

Charging the ABVP with indulging in "brazen violence," Congress leader Kanhaiya Kumar alleged that police and administration also aided the ABVP as it indulged in "rampant violence".

"The scenes seen in Delhi University are very concerning. It is a prestigious university where not only students from the country but all over the world come and study. On social media, videos of violence are going viral which is very concerning for parents," Kumar, who is also the AICC's NSUI in-charge, said.



500 security personnel to man North Campus

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Around 500 security personnel will be deployed at Delhi University's North Campus for the students' union elections on Friday. According to officials, more than 10 Station House Officers (SHOs) have been deployed to ensure security at the colleges while 25 police motorcycles are patrolling the area.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (North) Sagar Singh Kalsi said the local police, central paramilitary forces and reserve staffers will be deployed to provide adequate security during voting and on the counting day.

"More focus will be on the security of strong rooms, counting centres and colleges. We have certain priority areas... There

should be no inconvenience to the public and traffic movement should not be hampered. The police will take measures to ensure that there is no crime against women," Kalsi said. He said that several pickets have been put in place, round-the-clock vigil has been increased and social media is being monitored.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (southwest) Manoj C said picket checking and patrolling are underway. "Outsiders will not be allowed (on the campus) during the election. We are also in touch with the administration of the colleges. Adequate security arrangements have been made for the election in South Campus. Patrolling on vehicles as well as on foot is underway," the DCP said.

CM house renovation row: HC allows PWD officials to move CAT against show-cause

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday granted six employees of the Public Works Department (PWD) officials the liberty to approach the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) against issuance of show cause notices to them over alleged "gross violation" of rules in the renovation of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's official residence.

A bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Sanjeev Narula disposed of an appeal by the Delhi government's Directorate of Vigilance and Special Secretary (Vigilance) challenging a single judge bench order of no coercive action against the PWD officials who were issued show cause notices. The high court relied on a judgment of the constitution bench of the Supreme Court and said it is very clear that in respect of a service dispute, an application has to be preferred under Section 19 of the Administrative Tribunals Act at the first instance. Therefore, the writ petition by the PWD officials before the single judge



was not at all maintainable and it should have been dismissed at the threshold, the division bench said.

It said, "The fact remains that the Constitution bench... has arrived at a conclusion that the tribunals will continue to act like courts of first instance in respect of the areas of law for which they have been constituted. It is not, therefore, open for litigants to directly approach the high courts even in cases where they question the vires of statutory legislations (except where the legislation which creates that particular tribunal is challenged) by overlooking the jurisdiction of the tribunal concerned."

The division bench disposed of the petition pending before the single judge and granted liberty to the six PWD

officials to approach the CAT by filing an Original Application under the Administrative Tribunals Act. "It is made clear that this court has not observed anything on merits, except the issue of maintainability of the writ petition in the LPA. With the aforesaid observations, the present LPA stands disposed of," it said.

An appeal by a petitioner against a decision of a single judge before a different bench of the same court is known as Letter Patents Appeal (LPA). The Directorate of Vigilance, in its appeal, sought setting aside of a September 15 interim order of a single judge of the high court which said no coercive steps shall be taken by any authority against the petitioner PWD officials till October 12. The appellants raised a preliminary objec-

tion, saying the writ petition was not at all maintainable as the officials are central government employees and for the challenge in respect of disciplinary action, they have to approach the CAT.

The single judge had passed the interim order after taking serious exception to the city authorities failing to exercise restraint and taking contravening steps despite an undertaking given by its counsel that no coercive steps will be taken against the officials. Senior advocate Rahul Mehra and Delhi government standing counsel Santosh Kumar Tripathi had given the undertaking before the single judge. However, the Directorate of Vigilance, in its appeal filed through advocates Yoginder Handoo and Mananjay Mishra, contended the assurance was without authorisation by the competent authority.

The Directorate of Vigilance had issued show cause notices to six PWD officials over alleged violation of rules in the renovation of Kejriwal's official residence. The notices issued to the chief engineers concerned and other PWD officials asked them to explain their actions.

LG launches portal for speedy action on graft complaints

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Thursday launched the much-awaited unique Vigilance Complaint Information Management System (VCIMS) portal at Raj Niwas. This is the first of its kind online portal in the country, and will help in speedy action with transparency and secrecy in dealing with and monitoring complaints on corruption.

Speaking on the occasion, Saxena said that VCIMS will serve as a single window portal to enable the common man to file vigilance complaints at any time from anywhere against an employee of Delhi Government, MCD, NDMC, DDA, Delhi Police and other Autonomous Organizations and Institutions of Delhi Government and also deter vexatious complaints by the time-wasters.

"I hope that this first of its kind initiative in the country, will prove to be an effective tool to achieve the goal of zero tol-



erance to corruption by ensuring faceless interface between the Government and the general public, who avail government services," Saxena said. With the launch of this portal today, complaints against corruption received in physical form will not be accepted/taken cognizance of.

The launch of the VCIMS portal assumes significance as it will help in curbing scams and cases of corruption like classrooms and excise scam and fake billing in the PWD by individuals / contractors, witnessed recently in Delhi.



(L-R) Marc Marquez (Repsol Honda Team), Fabio Quartararo (Monster Energy Yamaha MotoGP Team), Aleix Espargaro (Aprilia Racing Team), Augusto Fernandez (GASGAS Factory Racing) and Franco Morbidelli (Monster Energy Yamaha MotoGP Team) during a pre-event Press conference ahead of Indian Oil Grand Prix of India at the Buddh International Circuit, in Greater Noida, on Thursday

HC: Continue services of fellows engaged by Delhi Assembly, pay stipends

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday directed that the services of professionals engaged as fellows with the Delhi Assembly Research Centre, whose contracts were terminated by the Assembly Secretariat, shall continue in their positions till December 6 and stipends paid to them.

Justice Subramonium Prasad sought the stand of the Delhi legislative Assembly Secretariat as well as services, and Finance Departments on a petition by 17 such fellows assailing the termination of their contracts.

"Till the next date of hearing, let services of the petitioners be not discontinued and petitioners be given stipend. Replies be filed within two weeks. List on December 6," the court directed. The court noted the assembly speaker had earlier said the reasons for termination were not applicable to the services of the petitioners, and sought an explanation on the change in the stand.

"Issue notice to respondents to explain why this sudden change in attitude of respondent no 1 (assembly secretariat)," the court said.

The counsel for the petitioners contended that the services of the fellows, who were appointed after following due procedure, were terminated prematurely in an unceremonious, arbitrary and illegal manner in the aftermath of a letter issued by the services department on July 5.

"The Petitioners were



engaged as "Fellows" / "Associate Fellows" and as "Associate Fellows (Media)" for the Delhi Assembly Research Centre which was constituted pursuant to a recommendation of the General Purposes Committee of the Assembly in February, 2019 to create a dedicated research centre and team for the members of the Legislative Assembly of the NCT of Delhi," their plea said. The petition said the July 5 letter directed that the engagement of the petitioners, for which prior approval of the lieutenant governor had not been sought, be discontinued and disbursement of salary to them stopped.

The letter was kept in abeyance and the Assembly Speaker "informed the LG that he had directed officers of the Secretariat not to take any action in the matter without his approval" but they were not paid their stipends, it added.

"However, around the first week of August, 2023 they were prevented from marking their attendance by certain Departments. Thereafter, their engagement was discontinued vide the impugned order dated 09.08.2023," the petition said.

Woman attacked with acid, in-laws on run

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 22-year-old woman was allegedly attacked with acid by her in-laws in northeast Delhi's Usmanpur area, police said on Thursday.

The woman suffered 25 per cent burn injuries and is currently hospitalised, they said.

An FIR has been registered against the victim's mother-in-law, father-in-law and sister-in-law and have started an investigation into the matter. No arrest has been made so far, they added.

"We received information that a woman had received nearly 25 per cent burn injuries after her in-laws threw acid on her. The police team recorded her statement and registered an FIR into the matter," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northeast) Joy Tirkey said. The accused are abscond-

ing and will be arrested soon, he said.

The victim's husband was not at home when the incident happened, police said.

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) also issued a notice to the Delhi Police seeking an action-taken report in the matter, along with a copy of the FIR.

"The commission received a complaint from the woman who informed that she was married two years ago and has a six-month-old daughter. After two to three months of her marriage, her husband and in-laws started harassing her. She even had a miscarriage due to her husband's torture. She has informed that her mother-in-law threw acid on her on September 20 and an FIR has been registered at New Usmanpur," DCW Chief Swati Maliwal said.

Last-mile connectivity with e-vehicles

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Aiming to ensure last-mile connectivity with public transportation, the Delhi Government has invited proposals for the deployment of high-speed e-scooters, low-speed e-scooters, and e-cycles. This move is part of the Public E-Scooter Sharing (PeSS) System and Public E-Cycle Sharing System (PeCS) initiative, aimed at providing a cost-effective and eco-friendly mobility solution for the residents of the national capital.

Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said the Government has embarked on an innovative journey to introduce a Public E-Scooter Sharing (PeSS) System and Public E-Cycle Sharing System (PeCS) in the



Dwarka sub-city.

"The heart of this initiative lies in our commitment to providing affordable, eco-friendly, and efficient last-mile connectivity options to complement our existing public transport infrastructure, including the Metro and buses. We understand the importance of last-mile connectivity in making public transportation more accessible

and convenient for everyone. With this in mind, we have invited proposals from potential service providers for the deployment of high-speed e-scooters, low-speed e-scooters, and e-cycles," he said.

As per the report, the project envisions the deployment of a total of 3,000 electric vehicles (EVs) across 90 locations in the Dwarka sub-city in three phases. Phase 1, set to launch with 1,500 vehicles, will include high-speed e-scooters, low-speed e-scooters, and e-cycles. Phase 2 will introduce an additional minimum of 750 vehicles, while Phase 3 will complete the deployment of the remaining 750 vehicles, with the condition that they be offered for long-term hiring or rental.



सुनियोजित सतत्
विकास के लिए प्रतिबद्ध



DELHI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY GOVT. OF INDIA

OFFERS

AN AMAZING BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY FOR OPERATING

TWO FOOD PLAZAS AT DWARKA ON ANNUAL LICENCE FEE BASIS THROUGH E-AUCTION



AMRIT DHARA



AMRIT RAS

Amrit Dhara
Ambient Open Air Sitting

- 30 Outlets • Opposite Bharat Vandana Park
- Near Sector 9 Metro Station, Dwarka



Scan for Location



Scan for Details

Amrit Ras
In the Lap of Serenity

- 20 Outlets • Right Next to Reliance Mart
- Opposite Sector 13 Metro Station, Dwarka



Scan for Location



Scan for Details

IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS

22.09.2023 (Friday) from 10:00 AM
Opening of Helpdesk, Commencement of Registration & EMD Submission

20.10.2023 (Friday) up to 06:00 PM
Closing Time of Registration & EMD Submission

31.10.2023 (Tuesday)
E-Auction for Food Plaza and Sites

For details about plots/properties and procedure, kindly visit our e-auction website <https://ddeauction.ewizard.in> or click the e-auction link available on our site www.dda.gov.in and download the same through "E-AUCTION OF PROPERTIES" link available at home page of e-auction website

Intending bidders may register themselves/their firms online at the above site through "REGISTER WITH US" link. Kindly note that digital signature of all the intending bidders are mandatory to participate in e-auction of DDA

For obtaining digital signatures and registration/training of prospective bidders and for any other clarification on e-auction process, please contact our help desk no. 011-49606060/9355030617/9355030616/9355030630/9355030621/8448288980/8448288988 from 11.00 am to 5.00 pm (all working days) or e-mail at: ddeauction@ewizard.in

For further details contact: **Commissioner (LD), Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi - 110023**

The detailed terms and conditions are available at
DDA website: www.dda.gov.in or www.ddeauction.ewizard.in



Scan for Detailed Terms & Conditions

For more information dial Toll Free No. 1800110332

Follow us: [@ddaofficial](https://www.facebook.com/ddaofficial) [@official_dda](https://twitter.com/official_dda)

Unanimous support for Women's quota Bill in RS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Members cutting party lines in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday supported the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2023, which seeks to provide 33 per cent reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.

However, several Opposition parties asked the Government to implement it as soon as possible and not wait for census and delimitation exercise and claimed the ruling dispensation was trying to gain political mileage. The Lok Sabha passed it on Wednesday.

Leader of Opposition Malliarjun Kharge demanded early implementation of the proposed law and quoted a couplet by Kabir to drive home his point.

Brushing aside this allegation, the BJP said the government functions through rules and constitutional system and cannot rush through the proposed law. Making this assertion party president JP Nadda said the procedure being followed by the government for the bill is the "only way, the shortest way, the correct way."

Introducing the bill, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said it is part of a series of measures the government has taken for the empowerment of women. Home Minister Amit Shah was present during the debate in the Upper House.



Earlier, Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar said he has dispensed with the provision of giving a two-day notice before the introduction of a bill so as to allow the women's reservation bill to be tabled and discussed in the Upper House the very next day of its passage in the Lok Sabha.

Dhankhar also named several women MPs, including P T Usha, Jaya Bachchan (SP), Fauzia Khan (NCP), Dola Sen (TMC) and Kanimozhi NVN Somu (DMK), as vice-chairpersons who would take turns to conduct the House proceedings during the discussion on the bill.

Initiating the debate on the bill, Ranjeet Ranjan (Congress) asked why President Droupadi Murmu, a woman and the first person from the tribal community to hold the high office, was not invited for the opening of the new Parliament building.

The Congress leader also sought know why it took the BJP nine-and-a-half years to bring the bill despite promising

it in the party's election manifesto in 2014.

BJP President and a member of Rajya Sabha JP Nadda criticised Congress for demanding an OBC quota within the reservation for women lawmakers, saying it was the BJP-led NDA that gave the country its first prime minister from the Other Backward Classes. The BJP leader also claimed Congress did not bother about the OBCs while it was ruling the country.

In an apparent reference to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's remarks regarding the presence of only three OBC secretaries at the Centre, the BJP leader said the OBC reservation in services was implemented only after the Supreme Court asked for it in 1992. He said the cut-off for the current panel of secretaries is 1992 and asked the Congress about the number of OBC secretaries during the 2004-2014 period, when the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) was in power at the Centre.

'Confident to discuss Indo-China standoff'

Rajnath praises success of Chandrayaan 3 mission, asserts he is ready for discussion on border standoff in Lok Sabha

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said he has the courage to discuss in the Lok Sabha the issue of the border standoff between Indian and Chinese militaries. "Puri Himmat Hain (I have full courage). I am ready for a discussion, I have the confidence to discuss it," he asserted while initiating a discussion on the success of the Chandrayaan-3 mission and other achievements in the space sector in the House.

The comments came when Rajnath was referring to the country's border security and the role of science in protecting the nation's frontier.

At this point, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury drew his attention to the border standoff with China.

To that the defence minister responded that he has the "courage to discuss the issue."

The ties between India and China have been under severe strain since the deadly clashes in Galwan Valley in June 2020.

Speaking on the success of Chandrayaan-3 mission and other achievements of the nation in the space sector, Rajnath said the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam', which will provide 33 per cent reservation for women in Lok Sabha and state assemblies, is a gift by a grateful nation to



the women scientists of space agency ISRO.

He said that of the 424 foreign satellites launched by India so far, 389 have been launched in the last nine years of the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He said that with the successful launch of foreign satellites, India's space sector is rapidly gaining a prominent place in the world.

"This special session of Parliament is dedicated to the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam'. In such a situation, I consider the bill as a gift presented by a grateful nation to the women scientists of ISRO, and along with them the entire female scientific community of India," he said amid thumping of desks by members.

He said the House and the nation salute, appreciate and express gratitude to the women scientists of ISRO and every Indian daughter.

The defence minister emphasised that while science is crucial for the development of a nation and humanity at large, culture holds equal importance. He voiced the government's resolve to provide equal importance to both aspects.

"Science is value neutral. It can give us knowledge of nuclear power, but it is our culture which tells us whether we use that power in the form of energy for our own development or in the form of a weapon to destroy others," he said. The defence minister said the entire nation is proud of these scientists.

"If Chandrayaan-3 has set foot on the Moon, then not only is it a success for ISRO, it is also an indication of the scientific eco-system of our country, in which crores of Indians have contributed," he said.

Singh said that after Independence, the country has moved forward step by

step to reach this stage. "Therefore, if today we reach any achievement, then all those who gave any kind of support in this journey and gave birth to scientific temperament within the nation are equally deserving of congratulations," he said.

Singh said it is a natural development of the country's social, cultural and scientific trend that has been going on for thousands of years.

"In the coming times we will reach Mars and Saturn and our country will wave its flag even from those places where no one has been able to reach till now," he said.

Joining the discussion, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on said the watershed moment of India landing a spacecraft on the Moon was the culmination of the efforts put in by all governments over the past six decades, starting from the days of Jawaharlal Nehru.

Twenty per cent of the key personnel in ISRO are women and they did not need reservation to be in the field of science and technology, he said, referring to the women's reservation bill passed by the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

Tharoor said that today some in the government seek to make this rare moment to bask in glory and "polarise" the country by speaking as if all space endeavours only began in 2014.

The Chandrayaan-3 triumph is that of across the

political divide and it does not belong to any one person or one party, he said, adding, "Who can deny India owes its remarkable progress in space exploration in large part to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's dedication to developing a scientific temper among Indian people."

Taking a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, TMC MP Saugata Roy said Chandrayaan-3 is not the result of one particular individual's efforts but of 50 years of scientific work done by hundreds of scientists throughout the country.

Roy credited the likes of India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, former prime minister Indira Gandhi, ace Indian scientists Vikram Sarabhai, Satish Dhawan and U R Rao for the advancement of India's space programme, claiming that the BJP had "no role" in it.

NCP leader Supriya Sule also lauded the likes of Nehru, Sarabhai, Rao and EV Chitnis for India's space programme.

DMK member A Raja asked the government not to give any "unscientific colour" to the Chandrayaan mission and said the effects of India's growing scientific prowess should percolate down to society.

"By putting the Chandrayaan in the correct orbit the mythological illusion has been removed and that is the success of Dravidian concept," Raja said.

Overcrowding in prisons, delayed justice a pressing concern: Parliamentary panel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A Parliamentary panel has observed that overcrowding in jails and delayed justice have become a pressing concern, leading to a series of consequences for both the prisoners and the criminal justice system as a whole.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs, headed by BJP MP Brijlal, also recommended that special attention should be given to pregnant women on the line of a judge-

ment of the Supreme Court where it was observed that a jail must have adequate facilities for prenatal and post-natal care for female prisoners as well as their children.

The panel recommended that the babies born in prison be allowed to stay with their mothers until the age of 12 in order to provide a nurturing environment during their early years while ensuring their well-being and development.

According to guidelines, emphasis should be given towards proper care of children relating to food, shelter,



medical care, education, and physical growth, it further said.

Apart from this, sports and entertainment facilities are also to be provided to these children.

The committee said transgender prisoners are to be provided the same standards of healthcare available to other inmates and should have access to necessary healthcare services without discrimination on the grounds of their gender identity.

It observed that the overcrowding in Indian prisons

has long plagued the country's criminal justice system. Despite various steps to reduce the number of inmates from jails, the total inmates in India stands at 5.54 lakh against the total prison capacity of 4.25 lakh.

The national average occupancy rate in prisons across India is 130.2 per cent and the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab and Haryana together make up for more than 50 per cent of the total prisoner population in the country.

In four of these six states,

the occupancy rate in prisons is more than the national average. Further, the state of Uttarakhnad has reported the highest occupancy rate of 185 per cent.

Delhi with the highest crime rate in the country of 1479.9 has an occupancy rate of 182 per cent.

The committee observed that the problem of overcrowding in the Indian prisons is mostly because of a very large number of under-trial prisoners. Of all the prisoners in the country, more than 50 per cent being under-trials.

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

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

Whereas The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Mohammad Salahuddin Khan/ Shaheen Begum/ LBLUC0002349584	Flat No. 1403, 14th Floor, Sears Tower, Omaxe Twins Tower, Situated At Plot No. F 021, Secotr 50 Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh Noida- 201303/ September 19, 2023	March 24, 2023 Rs. 27,99,936/-	Noida/ Ghazipur

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantor(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date : September 22, 2023 Place : Noida Authorized Officer ICICI Bank Limited

Linking Aadhaar to Voter IDs not mandatory: ECI to SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India has told the Supreme Court that linking Aadhaar numbers with electoral rolls is not mandatory under the Registration of Electors (Amendment) Rules 2022. The ECI in an affidavit informed the bench, headed by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud, comprising Justices JB Pardiwala, and Manoj Misra that over 66.23 crore Aadhaar numbers have already been uploaded in the process of finalising electoral rolls. The ECI was responding to the petition, which said the



forms of the poll body mandated the declaration of Aadhaar number which was against the various judgments of the courts.

The ECI also submitted

before the top court that it is looking into issuing "clarificatory changes in the forms" as submission of the Aadhaar number is not mandatory under Rule 26-B of the 2022

Rules. A plea was moved by the Congress' Telangana unit Senior Vice President G Niranjan seeking direction to the EC to amend the Form-6 (Application Form for New Voters) and Form-6B (Letter of Information of Aadhaar Number for the purpose of Electoral Roll Authentication). The petition said that the present forms compel the voter to provide Aadhaar though the EC claims that the submission of Aadhaar particulars is voluntary.

The writ petition filed under Article 32 pointed out that EC has been insisting its officials to collect Aadhaar numbers of voters and the

state officers are forcing the village, and booth level officials to collect Aadhaar numbers from voters. It claimed that "the ground level officials are forcing the voters to submit their Aadhaar numbers and threatening the voters that if the Aadhaar card number is not provided then the voter will lose the vote".

Based on the undertaking by the Election Commission, the apex court disposed the writ petition. Advocate Narender Rao Taneer and Shrawan Kumar argued on behalf of the petitioner G Niranjan, Vice President of Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee.

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

(See proviso to rule 8(6))
Notice for sale of immovable assets

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

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Limited will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis as per the brief particulars given hereunder;

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Vibhore Kumar (Borrower), Anuradha Jasuja (Co-Borrower) Lan No. LBGUR00044983636	Unit No G-68, Ground Floor, Spaze Palazo Sector 69, Village Fazilpur Jharsa, Haryana Gurgaon-122001 Admeasuring an area of 394 Sq. fts.	Rs. 94,37,837/- as on September 07, 2023	Rs. 84,55,000/- as Rs. 8,45,500/-	October 07, 2023 From 12:00 Noon to 02:00 PM	November 03, 2023, From 12:00 Noon onwards

The online auction will take place on the website of e-auction agency M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited (URL Link-https://disposalhub.com) The Mortgagors/noticees are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till November 02, 2023 before 05:00 PM failing which, this/these secured asset/s will be sold as per schedule.

The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005 on or before November 02, 2023 before 05:00 PM and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before November 02, 2023 before 05:00 PM along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, in case prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005 on or before November 02, 2023 before 05:00 PM. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/Scheduled Bank in favour of "ICICI Bank Limited" payable at Delhi.

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the e-auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Bank Limited on 8126013708/ 8584874809

Please note that Marketing agencies 1. M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited 2. Augoe Asset Management Pvt Ltd 3. Hecta Proptech Pvt Ltd have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.

The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/n4p4s

Date : September 22, 2023 Place : Delhi/ NCR Authorized Officer ICICI Bank Limited

Fourth edition of 'Nadi Utsav' to commence at IGNCA today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The fourth edition of 'Nadi Utsav', organised by the National Mission on Cultural Mapping (NMCM) of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and the Janpada Sampada Division is commencing on Friday.

The three-day event 'Nadi Utsav' will be hosted in Delhi on the banks of River Yamuna. The event includes a variety of programmes, including scholarly discussions with environmentalists and scholars on various subjects, screening of films, presentations by eminent artists, puppet shows, discussions on various books, the IGNCAsaid at a press conference here on Thursday.

The chief guest of this event will be Justice Prakash Shrivastava, Chairperson of the National Green Tribunal, the guest of honour will be the famous philosopher and scholar Acharya Shrivatsa Goswami and the head and spiritual guru of Parmarth Niketan, Swami Chidanand Saraswati



and the special guest will be renowned environmentalist Padma Bhushan Dr. Anil Prakash Joshi.

The chief patron of the program will be IGNCAs President Padmashree Ram Bahadur Rai and Dr Sachchidanand Joshi, Member Secretary, IGNCAs.

According to Anurag Punetha, Controller, Media Centre, IGNCAs, this three-day event will begin on September 22 at 10.30 AM at Umang Conference Hall, IGNCAs.

Discussion sessions will be organized on many topics including mention of rivers in ancient texts, cultural heritage along the rivers, rivers in folk

and cultural traditions. 18 films will also be screened in these three days, out of which six films have been produced by IGNCAs. As part of the puppet show, 'The Yamuna Gatha' will be performed by famed artist Purnan Bhat, Punetha added.

Abhay Mishra, Assistant Director, NMCM, IGNCAs said 'Nadi Utsav' is an attempt to document riverine culture, its tradition, rituals and water wisdom.

Mishra said filmmakers from various States of India had sent films for the Documentary Film Festival, out of which 12 were selected for screening. These include films from Northeast India, South India, Kashmir, Uttarakhand and Rajasthan among others. A discussion session will also be organized after every film, in which the film's director will also participate. The screening will begin with the film 'Mahanadi'.

The event will be marked by exhibitions on films, photography and paintings besides cultural programmes.

Indian medicos can now practise abroad post NMC recognition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With the National Medical Commission (NMC) being awarded the coveted World Federation for Medical Education's (WFME) recognition status, Indian medical graduates can now practise or pursue post-graduation in countries like the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

All 706 existing medical colleges regulated by the NMC will now be WFME accredited, while the new colleges that will be set up in the next 10 years will automatically become WFME accredited, according to an official from the Union Health Ministry.

The WFME is a global organisation dedicated to enhancing the quality of medical education worldwide.

As part of the recognition, the NMC will get an official award letter and a recognition

certificate. "The WFME accreditation will enhance the quality and standards of medical education in India by aligning them with the global best practices and benchmarks. The accreditation will enable Indian medical graduates to pursue post-graduate training and practice in other countries that require WFME recognition, such as the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand," the official said.

He said the development will firm up the international recognition and reputation of Indian medical schools and professionals, and facilitate academic collaborations and exchanges.

It will also promote continuous improvement and innovation in medical education and foster a culture of quality assurance among medical educators and institutions.

BJP leaders review preparations for PM's visit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In view of the arrival of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to his parliamentary constituency on September 23 to lay the foundation stone of the International Cricket Stadium at Ganjari under Sewapuri assembly constituency and address a public meeting, senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders and public representatives visited the meeting venue on Thursday to see the arrangements, including seating capacity on the stage, parking lots, drinking water, toilets etc. Regional (Kashi Region) president of BJP Dilip Singh Patel, UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal, former state general secretary and MLC Ashwani Tyagi, MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari, district president and MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma along with BJP office-bearers reached the public meeting venue Ganjari, where they inspected all the arrangements.

Separate parking spaces have been earmarked for all types of vehicles coming from all directions. They said that there should be a complete arrangement for mobile toilets,



Senior BJP leaders inspecting preparations at PM's meeting site at Ganjari in Varanasi on Thursday.

including drinking water, at the meeting place and no visitors should face any kind of problem. Regional BJP chief Dilip Singh Patel, while giving necessary guidelines to the workers engaged in the arrangements there, said that the main goal of all our workers is to make the public meeting of the PM historic and unprecedented. He said that separate parking zones have been created for

small and big vehicles coming from all directions. A German hangar pandal has been built for proper seating arrangement for people and protection from rain. Besides, he added that arrangement of water tankers and mobile toilets should be ensured in the parking area. Uttar Pradesh Minister Ravindra Jaiswal said that the PM is the MP of the city and this time he is coming

to gift the international cricket stadium to Kashi. He said that the construction of an international cricket stadium in Kashi will strengthen the economic development of Kashi. Meena Chaubey, Manish Kapoor, Nagendra Raghuvanshi, Ashok Chaurasia, Rajesh Rajbhar, Dr Ashok Rai, Devendra Singh, Navratan Rathi, Sandeep Keshari, Shailendra Mishra etc

were also present. Earlier, the regional president invited more than 25 gram pradhans of Sewapuri and Rohania assembly constituencies to attend the PM's public meeting. He said that whenever the PM comes to Kashi, he gives a gift of thousands of crores to the people of the parliamentary constituency through the inauguration and foundation stone laying of various projects. It is a matter of great pride for us that this time the prime minister is going to give a big gift to the people of the parliamentary constituency by laying the foundation stone of the international cricket stadium which will change the face of the city and create employment opportunities. District general secretary Sanjay Sonkar, district vice president Suresh Singh, Praveen Singh Gautam, Surendra Patel, Arvind Patel and many others were also present.

BIRTH ANNIVERSARY: To mark the 118th birth anniversary of former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh Pt Kamalapati Tripathi, the Sampurnanand Sanskrit University (SSU) organised a function at Yog Sadhana Kendra on its campus here late Wednesday afternoon.

Implementation of disaster-related government schemes reviewed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The meeting of the Disaster Management Inquiry Committee of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council on natural calamities was held under the chairmanship of committee's chief Umesh Dwivedi at Circuit House here on Thursday in which an in-depth review was conducted regarding the implementation of disaster-related government schemes in the district. In the meeting, committee members Satyapal Singh, Lal Bihari Yadav and Dr Babulal Tiwari reviewed the detailed information received from all the top officials of the district regarding the situation of flood in the rivers, boat accidents, lightning, weather, half storm etc. At the beginning of the meeting, ADM (Finance and Revenue) Vandita Srivastava gave detailed point-wise information regarding disaster management in the district before the committee through a power point presentation and gave her presentation on the innovations made in the district. The chair-



man of the committee said instructions were given to put signages in the rivers regarding their depth etc so that people take caution and they can be saved from drowning. He asked the CMO to make general public aware about prevention from snakebite, create awareness about mandatory post-mortem in case of death due to snakebite and provide permissible government funds. He also instructed the CMO to ensure adequate availability of anti-snake bite medicines and other medicines at CHCs/PHCs and get the same displayed there also. When he asked for information regarding the availability of doctors, the CMO informed that there is 92 per cent medical availability in Varanasi and ultrasound is being done at three

places in the rural areas and Banaras is at first place in tele-consultancy. The committee members also sought information about cleanliness and waterlogging in the city from the Municipal Corporation, on which the additional municipal commissioner said some places have been identified where in case of waterlogging, water is immediately removed through pumps and the pump is going to run continuously to remove silt at Assi Ghat. The committee directed to relocate the meat shop located near the school in Babatpur. Regarding pending e-KYC of some eligible people in Kisan Samman Nidhi, the district agriculture officer, Varanasi was instructed to complete it within 15 days and inform the committee.

ISARC scientist Swati Nayak honoured

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Dr Swati Nayak, scientist at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) South Asia Regional Centre (ISARC), Varanasi, has been honoured as the recipient of the 2023 Borlaug Field Prize by the prestigious selection jury of the World Food Prize. Supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, the Borlaug Field Prize, named in honour of renowned agricultural scientist and Nobel laureate Dr Norman Borlaug, is awarded annually to individuals under the age of 40 whose pioneering and extraordinary science-based work has greatly improved the world's cuisine production and helped reduce hunger and malnutrition. The recipient is awarded USD10,000 and an award diploma. In her career spanning 13 years,



announced on September 19 during an event hosted by CGIAR at New York City Climate Week. Dr Swati Nayak is set to formally receive the award during the Borlaug Dialogue on October 24 in Des Moines, Iowa. Expressing her deep gratitude for receiving this prestigious award, she said, "I am extremely grateful to the World Food Prize Foundation for this honour, which reflects our joint pledge to build a resilient food system and a better world for all." Dr Swati has

made outstanding contributions in the field of bridging the gap between scientific knowledge and practical applications. Apart from being the Head of Seed Systems for South Asia under IRRI, she also serves as the Head of the Cereal Seed Systems Group under CGIAR's flagship initiative SeEdQUAL. Throughout her career, Dr Swati has conducted over 10,000 on-farm and comparative trials and participatory evaluations for over 500 rice varieties through seed systems and scaling up channels in multiple countries and over 20 critical pathways. One of her important achievements includes her role in positioning and creating early entry points for many potentially drought-tolerant varieties in India. Dr Swati and her team devised a strategy to introduce the drought-tolerant rice variety Shabbhagi Dhan in

Mayurbhanj, one of the most populous, mostly tribal districts of Odisha, India. Eight years after Dr Swati's initial intervention, participatory wealth remains one of the most sought-after products in Odisha and the rest of India.

Pankaj Yadav, Joint Secretary (Seed), Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, said on her achievement, "Dr Swati is supporting various rural innovation models focusing on agricultural technology transfer, extension and enterprise development. Her leadership in pioneering various participatory field research and extension models is highly appreciated and widely replicated in the national system. From 2021 to 2022, through the efforts of Dr Swati and her seed system team, the women-led seed enterprises were able to produce, distribute and sell

approximately 8.5 metric tonnes of quality seeds. Additionally, she helped empower women in agriculture through her work with the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) led by the Government of India and the World Bank. Dr Ajay Kohli, Interim Director General of IRRI, said, "Dr Swati has made a significant and quantifiable impact on sustainable rural livelihoods, agricultural extension and food security. Dr Sudhanshu Singh, Director, ISARC (Varanasi) said, "It is a proud moment for me and our entire organisation to celebrate this well-deserved addition to Swati Nayak's suite of achievements. An epitome of women empowerment and leadership skills, she has made significant contributions to strengthening seed systems and agricultural extension in South Asia in her journey with IRRI."

Prof Tandon made V-C of Dr Rajendra Prasad NLU

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Prof Usha Tandon has been made the first Vice-Chancellor of Dr Rajendra Prasad National Law University (NLU). She will assume charge by October. After its construction being built on 24 acres in Jhalwa, the Law University will run in the BBS Engineering College campus. Governor Anandi Ben Patel has appointed her as the first V-C of Law University. She is expected to take charge by the first week of October. Prof Tandon is a senior professor in the Department of Law, Delhi University. She is also the chairperson of the Law department. Prof Tandon will try to start the work of the university soon. Here admission is to be done

on 80 seats of BALLB. On September 11, 2021, the then President Ram Nath Kovind laid the foundation stone of this law university. Now after two years the V-C has been appointed. In 2003 a special session of the Legislative Assembly was held at Chandrashekhar Azad Park. In 2003, Law University was announced in Prayagraj.

FLIGHT TIMINGS: The timing of all flights arriving and departing from Prayagraj airport will change from October as the winter schedule will be implemented by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). The winter schedule will be effective for five months — from October 29 (Sunday) till March 30 (Saturday). This time, no new

flight has been mentioned in the timetable released for winter schedule. The Prayagraj-Mumbai flight will now take off an hour earlier at 1.30 pm instead of 2.30 pm and its arrival here will now be at 12.55 pm instead of 2 pm. The flight for Bengaluru which is currently scheduled at 11.25 am, will take off at 3.55 pm, and its arrival here will be at 10.40 am instead of 10.55 am. The flight coming from Lucknow will now arrive at 11.15 am instead of 8.45 am. Its departure time will be 4.50 pm, which is currently 5 pm.

The Dehradun-bound flight will take off at 12 pm instead of 9.05am. Similarly, Alliance Air has also changed the timing of its Delhi and Bilaspur flights.

Suraksha sammelan organised



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

On the occasion of RPF Raising Day on Wednesday different activities were organised in NCR. Suraksha sammelan was held in the auditorium of RPF Zonal Training Centre/Prayagraj in which Principal Chief Security Commissioner (PCSC)/NCR addressed about 150 officers and members of the force. The PCSC distributed awards and merit certificates to best performers in crime prevention and detection. A tree plantation programme was organised in the campus of RPF Zonal Training Centre in Agra Division. A blood donation camp was organised by Jhansi division in which Sr DSC donated blood along with other members of the force. A cleanliness drive was organised



by Prayagraj division in offices and barracks. These activities are part of one week RPF Raising Day celebrations. **HURT:** Four children sustained injuries after the school van ferrying them turned turtle near Kathauli village under Meja police station. The incident, as per police, took place when the kids were going back to their home once the school was over. On hearing cries of children, locals rushed the spot and carried out rescue operation. In being alerted a team of police also arrived at the spot and brought injured children to a hospital. Initial police investigations claimed that the driver of the van failed to maintain control over steering and resulted in the road mishap.

by Prayagraj division in offices and barracks. These activities are part of one week RPF Raising Day celebrations.

HURT: Four children sustained injuries after the school van ferrying them turned turtle near Kathauli village under Meja police station. The incident, as per police, took place when the kids were going back to their home once the school was over. On hearing cries of children, locals rushed the spot and carried out rescue operation. In being alerted a team of police also arrived at the spot and brought injured children to a hospital. Initial police investigations claimed that the driver of the van failed to maintain control over steering and resulted in the road mishap.

'Clean Train Day' observed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The 'Clean Train Day' was observed under the ongoing eighth 'Cleanliness Fortnight' (from 16th September to 2nd October) on Wednesday on the directions of Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Vineet Kumar Srivastava and Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (Environment and Housekeeping Management) Apoorva Swarnkar at different originating/terminating stations of Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER). On the occasion, the trains were properly made clean and onboard inspection of trains was done by the nominated officers.

Cleanliness campaign was conducted and awareness was created. In this direction, the SDME (EnHM) Apoorva Swarnkar inspected the cleanliness and hygiene of linen in Shivganga Express, Anand Vihar Terminal-New Delhi Superfast Express and Kashi Vishwanath Express trains at Banaras Coaching Depot. In the same sequence, Coaching Depot Officers of Chhapra and Mau and Assistant Safety Officer also inspected the trains at different originating/terminating stations like Chhapra Junction, Mau and Ballia and took action after taking feedback from the passengers.

The nominated officers of Varanasi Division conducted comprehensive inspection to check cleanliness in many mail/express trains passing through terminating and originating stations like Banaras, Azamgarh, Prayagraj Rambagh, Mau, Bhatni, Ghazipur City, Ballia, Chhapra, Siwan, Thawe, Kaptanganj and Varanasi City stations. During this period, intensive inspection of the special trains was also done by the team of officers/supervisors and on-board housekeeping service employees. The conditions of cleanliness of trains, availability of equipment, number of cleaning personnel, arrangements for garbage disposal, availability of dustbins, cleanliness of trains in washing line, etc were examined.

Closing ceremony of Hindi Diwas held at IFFCO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The closing ceremony of Hindi Diwas week-long programme was celebrated in the community centre of IFFCO Phulpur. Senior Executive Director (Unit Head) Sanjay Kudesia said, "we should use Hindi only in our everyday life because when we go to other areas, people use their mother tongue and are proud of it. Knowledge of English is necessary but our value increases only with Hindi". The programme was conducted by Rekha Mishra while the vote of thanks was proposed by PRO Sonu Tiwari. Vineeta Kudesia, JGMs respectively Sanjay Vaishya, MD Mishra, HOD Human Resources Shambhu Shekhar, IFFCO Employees' Union president Pankaj Pandey and general secretary Vinay



Yadav and a large number of employees, women and children were present. During this period various competitions were organised on Hindi Week, the winners of which were awarded. They include-- **ESSAY COMPETITION:** Students of class VI-VIII (Topic-Importance of Mother Tongue): Shivansh Tiwari,

Devanshi Pandey, Arjiki Khandelwal, Srijan Pandey, Bhavya Verma. Students of class IX-XII (Topic-Hindi Our Identity): Vanshika, Ayushi Yadav, Anushree Yadav, Anvesh Mishra, Yashita Sharma. **Women's category** (Topic-Hindi is essential in everyday use): Pratibha, Vandana Verma, Radha Yadav, Dr. Madhu

Srivastava, Vandana Pandey. **Employees' category** (Topic-Sustainable Development: The need of the Time): Amarnath Mishra, Adarsh Sharma, Ankita Kumari, Sarvesh Singh, Santosh Kumar Singh. **Slogan competition** (Topic-Hindi Official Language) **For students:** Ayushi Yadav, Ananta Sharma, Devanshi Pandey, Bhavya Verma, Srijan Pandey. **Women's category** (Topic-Hindi Official Language): Dr Madhu Srivastava, Vandana Verma, Alka Tiwari, Seema Asatiya Verma, Anamika Mishra. **Employees' category** (Topic-Hindi Official Language): Santosh Kumar Shukla, Dharamraj Pal, AK Srivastava, Subodhna Sharma and Gautam Kumar.

Hindi speech competition held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A Hindi speech competition was organised for railway employees on the topic 'Social and Economic Impact of G-20 on India' or 'Role of Indian Railways in the promotion of Hindi' in Bharatendu Conference Hall (DRM Office) from 4 pm here on Wednesday under the ongoing Rajbhasha Week being organised under the auspices of the Rajbhasha department of North Eastern Railway (Varanasi Division) on the instructions of Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Vineet Kumar Srivastava and Senior Data and Resource Manager and Rajbhasha Officer Navneet Kumar Verma. A total of 23 employees working in different departments and stations of Varanasi division of NER participated enthusiastically. In this competition the jury included Divisional Personnel Officer (DPO) Vivek Mishra, Assistant Divisional Finance Manager (ADFM) SRK Mishra and Assistant Commercial Manager (ACM) Prashant Kumar. In this competition Pragati Kumari, TCM (Varanasi) won the first position while Neeru Awasthi, office superintendent (Personnel) and Dheeraj Pandey, helper (Senior Section Engineer/ C&W Chhapra)



were placed second and third respectively. The consolation prizes were given to Shivani Singh, senior clerk (Personnel) and Surendra Yadav, junior clerk (Operations). On the occasion there was a notable presence of railway employees, including junior translator Ajay Kumar Singh, senior translators, Poonam Tripathi and Mamta Yadav. The competition was conducted by Divisional Personnel Officer (DPO) Vivek Mishra, who also proposed the vote of thanks at the end.

BHU ADMISSION: The Central Admission Committee of BHU has informed that applicants who have deposited the Commitment fee in BA Arts & BA Social Sciences (Code 131 and 132) and BSc Mathematics (181) and BSc Biology (182) have been asked to fill their online preference for allotment of combinations by logging in to their portal. The last date for filling up the combination was originally September 20 but has now been extended till 5 pm of September 22. If the appli-

cants do not fill their preference for combination, it will be considered that they are not interested in confirming admission and their candidature will be cancelled. After the allotment of combinations, these applicants will be asked to pay the balance fee and report to respective faculties for document verification and classes.

For all other UG courses (where combinations are not allotted ie B Com, BPA, BFA, BSc AG, B Tech Food Tech, B Tech Dairy Tech, BA LLB, Shastri etc.), students are advised to deposit the balance fee by logging in to their portal. The last date for submission of balance fee was originally September 21 but on the request of students it has been now extended till 5 pm of September 23. After submission of fees these students are required to report to their respective faculties from September 23 to 26 for physical verification of documents. Classes will start immediately after verification of documents.

Revenue realisation reviewed

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Divisional Commissioner (DC) Dr Muthukumarasamy B while reviewing the priority schemes of the government, recovery the revenue and law and order situation of the division on Wednesday warned the irresponsible officers to mend their ways otherwise remain prepared to face the music.

In the meeting adverse entry was awarded to five officers for bad ranking on the CM dashboard and show cause notices were issued to eight officers for laxity. Reviewing the priority points the DC asked the AD (Health) to ensure availability of all medical facilities at the CHCs and PHCs, including the medical staffs and medicines. On a complaint related to the Medical department at Madihan the DC ordered to form a team led by SDM Madihan to inquire into the matter and submit a report without inordinate delay with recommendation for action. The BSA was taken to task for not providing the information related to RTE. The DC warned the officer to attend the meeting in future with proper

information. He directed the BSA that distribution of MDM was a must and all arrangements should be done in advance. The DC asked the officials to establish minimum one cow shelter home at each block headquarter. While reviewing the revenue realisation the DC made it clear that any kind of laxity will not be tolerated and on laxity in recovery show cause notices were issued to eight officers. The DC reviewed the disposal of revenue cases and asked to dispose old cases on priority basis. Reviewing law and order the DC expressed his dissatisfaction with the working of the police as a case of loot and murder near Axis Bank had not been worked out yet. The meeting was conducted by Joint Development Commissioner Suresh Chandra Mishra and was attended by all DMs, SPs, CDOs of the division, divisional officers and other officials concerned.

INSPECTED: In view of the beautification of the main temples of Vindhyachal, Kalikoh, Ashtabhuj and Vindhyavasini MLA (City) Ratnakar Mishra and DM Priyanka Niranjani inspected

the Trikon route interconnected to Ashtabhuj Kalikoh and Vindhyachal on Wednesday. During the inspection the DM asked the City Magistrate Vinay Kumar Singh to prepare a detailed plan in coordination with the departments concerned to make the places more attractive. On the issue of widening of roads the DM asked the city magistrate to remove the encroachments first and then chalk out the plan to make the Trikon route attractive and convenient for the devotees. The city magistrate was directed to propose the widening of roads if it was necessary under the beautification plan. The officials were directed to find out spots for vehicle parking with adequate area. During the inspection SDM (Sadar) Chandrabhanu Singh and other officials concerned were also present.

SUICIDE: A woman committed suicide by hanging herself in an area under City Kotwali police station on Wednesday. Triloki Nath of Purana Bairahna, Prayagraj city, had married his daughter Kaishma with Gaurav Vishwakarma of Ramaipatti locality of Mirzapur city in the

year 2020. Gaurav is working in Mumbai and Kaishma was living in Mirzapur with a son and a daughter. She was declared as brought dead in the hospital. The father of the deceased Triloki Nath alleged that the daughter was being tortured by her in-laws for dowry which ultimately caused her death. SHO Bal Mukund Mishra said a case has been registered on the application of the father of the deceased and investigation is on.

ARRESTED: The Jirga police on Wednesday arrested an accused of cheating. A case against three persons at the police station a few months ago for allegedly cheating a family by selling a yellow metal saying it was gold Ginni. Later the metal was found to be brass and the case was registered. During investigation two accused had been arrested but one was at large. SO Ravi Kant Mishra directed the cops to nab him. On being tipped off by an informer the SO raided the place along with the police team and nabbed Ram Asarey alias Bhuttan of Baghaura under Manda police station, Prayagraj. The police sent the accused to jail.



www.dailypioneer.com

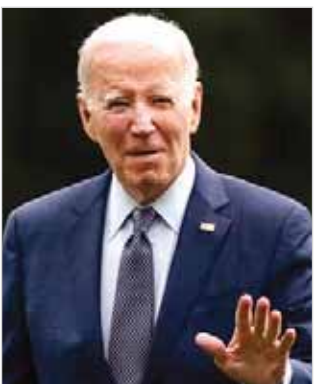
facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Mojo of Mo-Joe

US Prez makes all the right sounds after bolstering India ties, may be R-Day guest

Though the New Delhi G20 Summit held earlier this month ran into some anxious moments when Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping announced their decision to stay sway, US President Joe Biden has hailed its success repeatedly from multiple platforms for showcasing India's diplomatic success, vision and the ability to take all countries together without acrimony. Biden took to social media to express his optimism, emphasising that the G20 remains a driving force for addressing global challenges. At a time when global economy was grappling with overlapping shocks of climate crisis, fragility and conflict, this year's Summit demonstrated that the G20 could still drive solutions to the most pressing issues, he said. Last Saturday, President Biden underscored the importance of the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor and reaffirmed his country's promise of collaborating with allies in fostering sustainable and robust infrastructure. Speaking at the Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII)



and India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor programme, Biden stated that the G20 Summit's focus was on building resilient infrastructure, making quality infrastructure investments and creating a better future representing greater opportunity, dignity and prosperity for everyone. Demonstrating unity, the leaders of the US, India, Brazil and South Africa have reaffirmed their shared commitment to the G20 and their dedication to delivering solutions. Earlier, during their meeting ahead of the G20 Leaders' Summit in New Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Joe Biden reaffirmed strong bilateral ties and their commitment to developing robust global semiconductor supply chains. Biden also lent support to India's longstanding demand for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and backed India's candidacy for another term as a non-permanent member in 2028-29.

In an attempt to keep these relations close and warm, the US President may attend the Republic Day parade next year as the chief guest. This development is basically a direct result of the increasing bonhomie between these nations. Their defence cooperation received a significant boost during Prime Minister Modi's State visit in June to the US. An essential milestone was reached when General Electric and Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for manufacturing GE F-414 jet engines in India. This collaboration is expected to involve a substantial transfer of technology to India, further strengthening their strategic partnership. This was the first time ever that the G20 Summit was hosted by India. During its presidency, India focused on various issues like inclusive growth, digital innovation, climate resilience and equitable global health access. The G20 member countries represent around 85 per cent of the global GDP, over 75 per cent of the global trade and about two-thirds of the world population. Brazil is slated to hold the presidency after India in November.

During its presidency, India focused on various issues like inclusive growth, digital innovation, climate resilience and equitable global health access. The G20 member countries represent around 85 per cent of the global GDP, over 75 per cent of the global trade and about two-thirds of the world population. Brazil is slated to hold the presidency after India in November.

PICTALK



The 108 feet tall statue of saint Adi Shankaracharya, named 'Ekamata Ki Pratima' after it was unveiled in Khandwa

G20 impetus against climate change

Delhi Declaration gave an inclusive and egalitarian vision for combating climate change as it takes into account the local circumstances



SMITA AGARWAL

India's G20 presidency slogan of 'Vasudaviah Kutumbakam' 'One Earth One family' has outlined its commitment towards inclusivity and an equal world for all. The opening of the summit on 9th September 2023 laid down New Delhi Leaders' Declaration. The chair of the summit; the Prime Minister of India aimed at bridging the trust deficit that has engulfed the whole world that is leading to both man-made and natural calamities that are being faced by different parts of the world. This declaration ingrains the fundamental value of inclusivity that is intrinsic to Indian civilization and has again stressed building consensus that comes through trust.

Amidst the conundrum of the Russia and Ukraine war had seen tense and heated moments that might have led to World War III, bridging of trust deficit is vital for the survival of human beings. This was further attuned when India passed a resolution and admitted the African Union as a permanent member of the G20 forum. This opens up two new vistas in G20 history. First, it wipes out the image that G20 is the forum for the globally rich countries only thereby moving a step towards inclusivity and instilling equality by bridging the north and south divide thereby making the forum G21; secondly, it opens a new chapter of admitting a regional forum in a multilateral organization. In this process, it aims to lessen the trust deficit that is posed by the narrow nationalism of the countries leading to ethnic conflict, especially in Africa. New Delhi's leaders' declaration has strongly affirmed strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth for all. It has categorically pointed to at focused commitment to achieving sustainable development goals by all the countries together.

This emphasis has moved away from the north-south divide and it now focuses on sustained collaborative commitment from the whole world through cultural invigoration to fight the demons of



inequality, hunger, health crisis etc. that are plaguing the whole world. The aspect of financial inclusion reiterates its demands for bridging the economic inequality that has infested the world. This is one of the major hindrances that are posed for the slow attainment of sustainable development goals.

The New Delhi leaders' Declaration has a special mention of the attainment of gender equality and bridging the gender divide. It highlights those sectors where women are either 'invisible' or are missing. This declaration has especially focused on bridging the digital divide between men and women. As per the latest report of the International Telecommunication Union, an allied agency of the United Nations, there is a huge digital divide between the two sexes that inhibit women's financial inclusion and progress. Along with this, there is an increasing stress on mitigating the adverse effect of climate change on women which is in turn affecting their health and nutritional needs. An increase in climate adversities is affecting the rainfall and cropping patterns leading to less production of food grains. As per the



THERE IS STRESS ON COMBINED EFFORTS TO 'TRIPLE' RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES GLOBALLY KEEPING IN LINE WITH THE NATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF EACH COUNTRY

report by the United Nations and other researchers soaring prices of food due to less production leads to food insecurity that affects women more than men.

Therefore by highlighting this precarious situation, this declaration has again brought them to the centre stage for policy formulation and inclusion. This declaration has stressed building a multilateral institution by announcing the setting of the 'Global Bio-fuel alliance'. This alliance is open to all. It aims to adopt a collaborative approach to combat the dependence on fossil fuels and lessen the emissions that are a major factor for climate change.

This endeavour can remove the inhibitions of developing countries who had opposed the targeted emission cuts envisaged in various documents and declarations of climate change. At the same time, it can strategize, plan and collaborate on producing biofuels that can be used for the benefit of the human population. Thus adoption of this declaration has opened new vistas to tackle the climate crisis. This declaration has given the clarion call towards facilitating low-cost alternatives to support the develop-

ing countries' smooth transition to alternative energy sources thereby not slowing their development agenda.

There is a stress on combined efforts to 'triple' renewable energy sources globally keeping in line with the national circumstances of each country. Thus it is aiming to scale sustainable sources through combined efforts keeping in mind local needs and circumstances. This declaration has outlined the need for \$ 5.8-5.9 trillion that is required to meet 2030 targets by developing countries to switch to alternative sources. Thus this declaration calls on collective quantified transparent financial commitment to meet this target. This declaration has therefore been able to identify the main deficit that is plaguing the world's effort to accelerate its endeavour to attain cooperation in tackling climate change. Taking into consideration the present circumstance this declaration has also asked for co-operation by the whole world keeping in mind their respective local circumstances.

(The writer is an assistant Professor, the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WOMEN RESERVATION BILL

Sir — The "Nari Shakthi Vandan Adhiniyam," also known as the Women's Reservation Bill, may appear to be a positive step, but it is riddled with uncertainties. Despite its potential passage in Parliament, the bill's implementation hinges on a future delimitation exercise. The delimitation census is scheduled for 2031, and full implementation may not occur until 2039. This means that the bill cannot be put into effect before the Lok Sabha elections and may not become law until at least 2027 to 2029. The BJP government, holding a majority in both houses, could implement the Women's Reservation Bill immediately, raising questions about their delay.

Furthermore, the bill lacks representation for OBCs and Muslim women, a significant concern. Without specific reservations for minorities and OBCs, it's challenging to support this bill. It's worth noting that the bill was introduced in 2010 when the Rajya Sabha passed it, but it failed to pass in the Lok Sabha. Now, with elections in mind, the Modi government has reintroduced this partially developed bill. Unfortunately, it seems that women may gain little from this bill for at least a decade, as it doesn't provide reservations for women from marginalized communities. This bill appears to be a political manoeuvre and a disservice to women.

Zakir Hussain | Kazipet

WORLD HERITAGE SITES

Sir — The recent UNESCO declaration of the three Hoysala temples at Belur, Halebid, and Somanathapur in Karnataka as "World Heritage Sites" is a momentous recognition of our ancient heritage and a testament to our national heritage. This accolade is expected to significantly boost tourism to these historically and architecturally significant sites.

These temples are exquisite examples of Hindu temple architecture, showcasing the wealth and power of the Hoysala

India-Canada relations



Canada's Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, has made shocking allegations in his Parliament regarding a potential Indian government role in the assassination of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. Nijjar, one of India's most-wanted terrorists, was killed on June 18, leading to escalating tensions in bilateral relations. While PM Trudeau didn't directly accuse India of involvement, Canada's foreign minister used more cautious language, stating that the allegations would be unacceptable "if proven true."

The Modi government promptly rejected Trudeau's claims as "absurd and motivated." Despite Trudeau's request, the United Kingdom, United States, and Australia expressed concerns over these allegations and are closely monitoring the situation. It's well-known that Canada has a significant Sikh population, and the country has seen numerous demonstrations that have strained its relations with India. Trudeau's claim, made without prior consultation with India, has further strained diplomatic ties, with reciprocal expulsions of diplomats and a travel advisory for Canadians visiting India. Trade negotiations have also been frozen.

It's important to note that both Canada and India have elections scheduled for 2024, and Canadian Sikhs hold political significance for Trudeau's government. With 15 Sikh members in the Canadian parliament, their support is crucial for Trudeau's political survival. It appears that Trudeau's actions are aimed at keeping Canadian Sikhs satisfied and ensuring victory in the upcoming elections, which is the underlying motive behind his recent move.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

ble viral mutation rendering the vaccine ineffective. This marks the first occurrence of a Feline panleukopenia outbreak at Bannerghatta National Park. While the exact source remains unknown, authorities suspect that it may have spread from animal keepers who have pet cats. In response to the outbreak, comprehensive sanitization measures have been implemented, alongside precautionary measures for animal keepers and medical staff. Similar to COVID-19, social distancing measures are crucial in managing the situation. Sen, the park's spokesperson, reassured that the situation is now under control.

Tauqueer Rahmani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Why do audiences relate to influencers?

People search for inspiration and connection on social media. They look up to people with a track record and authority



SAHIL CHOPRA

On average, people spend about 30 minutes on Instagram daily, which is double the time spent on the platform in 2019. But what exactly is it that hooks us into scrolling through our Instagram feeds? What is it about influencers that make us follow them? Is it their influencer status, or is it the relatability of their content? We've been hearing, 'Content is king,' since forever. However, it is the relatable content that wins the hearts on social media.

Adding to that, it's important to reflect on how influencers have become the new-age celebrities of our digital world, even redefining the metrics by which we measure fame and success. As thought leaders across genres — fashion, lifestyle choices, and even moral and social issues, these social media voices go beyond social media.

They interact, engage, and create a sense of community among followers, setting them apart from traditional celebrities. This relational dynamic acts as a strong pull that keeps us scrolling, liking, and, importantly, coming back for more.



The influencer effect:

In the digital era, people see influencers as their role models and aspire to become like them. From travel enthusiasts to lifestyle fashionistas, influencers live fancy lives, making it look like they're successful.

Specialised influencers, particularly those rooted in niches like tech, beauty, or health, often command a huge following not just for their glamorous lifestyles but also for their deep-seated expertise in their fields.

They share their wisdom with every post or reel, lending them an air of authority that makes them stand out from the sea of digital content creators. Influencers offer a carefully curated glimpse into a life that appears perfect. Who wouldn't want to be part of that ideal world, even if it's just through a screen?

The Relatability Quotient

Relatable influencers share more than just their highlight reels. It's the messy kitchen, the skincare routine, and the real talk about mental health that make them feel like friends rather than distant celebrities. Truthfulness in storytelling is what makes content more relatable.

A relatable influencer doesn't just talk at you; they talk with you. They respond to comments, engage in conversations, and make you feel like you're part of a tribe. This humanising effect creates a ripple impact, encouraging followers to embrace their imperfections and live authentically. It's a two-way street: as the influencer opens up, it creates a space for the audience to do the same.

The Right Balance

The most successful influencers strike a balance. They make their successful lives seem within reach, making you feel like with the right skincare product, you too can glow, or with the proper workout routine, you too can be fit. This art of curating relatable content juxtaposed with aspirational living that sets them apart from the rest.

Influencers who go the extra mile to create content for people by sharing life hacks, tips, and tricks in a friendly and relatable manner become more than just social media personalities. People start seeing them as go-to experts, the kind of people with whom you'd not only entrust your most pressing questions but also love to grab a casual coffee. The gold standard of influencing isn't just about mesmerising audiences with beautiful photography or compelling storytelling. It's about cultivating a level of authentic engagement that seamlessly blends aspiration with relatability, creating a powerful formula for lasting impact.

In the captivating world of influencers, it's not just the face or the relatability that counts. It's often the right mix of both. As we navigate the crowded space of social media, flooded with countless profiles, it's those influencers who master this delicate balance who truly stand out. People search for inspiration and connection in a digital era of constant highlight reels.

(The writer is Founder & CEO, iCubes Wire)

FIRST COLUMN

INDO-CANADA RELATIONS SOUR

The bitterness between India and Canada is only increasing



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Canadian PM Justine Trudeau has been a very angry man for the past few weeks. He came to New Delhi last week to attend the G20 summit, but his comments regarding foreign interference in domestic politics, a reference to genuine Indian concerns regarding Khalistani separatist forces operating from Canadian soil, ensured an extremely cold welcome for the delegation in India. In a strong message, Prime Minister Modi conveyed to his Canadian counterpart "concerns about continuing anti-India activities of extremist elements in Canada.

They are promoting secessionism and inciting violence against Indian diplomats, damaging diplomatic premises, and threatening the Indian community in Canada and their places of worship. The nexus of such forces with organised crime, drug syndicates and human trafficking should be a concern for Canada as well. It is essential for the two countries to cooperate in dealing with such threats." Then, an invisible hand of destiny prevailed and the Canadian PM along with his entire delegation got stuck in New Delhi for 36 hours, due to a reported technical snag in his VIP aircraft.

Canadian PM on return to his country and this week, accused India of choreographing the killing of a Khalistani terrorist in his country. Mr



Trudeau's statement however carefully replaced the word terrorist with citizen. This led to the escalation of the diplomatic standoff between India and Canada. New Delhi retorted "Such unsubstantiated allegations seek to shift the focus from Khalistani terrorists and extremists, who have been provided shelter in Canada and continue to threaten India's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The inaction of the Canadian Government on this matter has been a long-standing"

In diplomatic tit-for-tat, Canada first expelled a senior Indian diplomat while it faced similar retaliatory action back in New Delhi. This sets the stage for a chilly Indo-Canadian relationship, which has been going through its lows for some time now. India and Canada had been in active trade negotiations towards what was termed as Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

The CEPA was to provide the much-needed economic strength to frail partnerships, even though political concerns on either side were gnawing vigorously. Many sources pointed out that Canada had put a halt to the proposed CEPA negotiations a few months back, without providing any official word to India, New Delhi officials meanwhile, confirmed about the pause in the negotiations.

India is one of the important trade partners for Canada albeit, a shadow compared to China which has taken a large chunk. In a significant move, Canada and China a few months back expelled each other's senior diplomats, citing interference in each other's domestic politics and policies. China and India have comparable migrant populations in Canada and this has led to allegations on both countries of using their migrant population to influence domestic politics.

However, Canada has a softer attitude towards China and doesn't go beyond lecturing the latter over its human rights violations. Canada in its Indo-Pacific policy released last year, recognised China as a key disruptive player in the Indo-Pacific and therefore advocates a balanced approach towards the dragon keeping its domestic interests in mind. It is noteworthy that Chinese state-run companies have stakes in the three largest mining companies in Canada, involved in critical metals exploration.

Even though there is frostiness in China Canada relationship, the recent chill coming in from New Delhi is most likely to make The Prime Minister scout for newer allies in Asia to save face with his domestic constituency.

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

Shun development at the cost of environment

Manmade plantations outside recorded forests do serve economic purposes but their long-term sustainability is questionable



BKP SINHA



ARVIND JHA

When one thinks of a forest, the spotlight shines on the preservation of genetic diversity, untapped medicinal potentials of flora, and the aesthetic appeal of a multi-hued ecological entity. For scientists, conservationists, and the public at large, the debate between monoculture and biodiversity in forest plantations isn't just academic. A forest ecosystem is not just a collection of organisms; it's a meticulous web of interactions influenced by the environment. The forest floor and its vegetation play a pivotal role in recycling nutrients, thus ensuring the system's post-disturbance resilience. At its core, the crux of the matter remains sustainability. A sustainable forest retains its ecological services and maintains its ecosystem, despite human interference.

As per the Forest Survey of India's 2021 report, India has recorded a slight increase of 31 sq. km. forest cover within its recorded forest area. The qualitative analysis, however, reveals that within the total recorded forest area of the country, there has been an alarming decline of 1582 sq. km. in moderately dense forests and an increase of 2621 sq. km. and 5320 sq. km. respectively in the categories of open forest area and scrub area. An increase of 1509 sq. km., however, is reported outside recorded forests. Agricultural land diverted for forest plantations often gets rich in terms of ecological niches. In stark contrast, natural forests degraded or converted into monoculture plantations lose their rich tapestry of life. India has seen a rise in plantations along roads, rails, and canals, sometimes replacing indigenous vegetation. One also finds instances of grassland ecosystems planted up under various Government programmes while riding the wave of greening, to create a record in tree planting.

Outside recorded forest areas, plantations are generally characterized by the cultivation of a single or selected few species primarily for commercial purposes such as timber, pulp, fuelwood, fodder, etc. While these monocultures can bring economic benefits, they come with significant environmental implications, especially concerning biodiversity. One of the immediate impacts of establishing such plantations is the loss of native plant species although there are some cases reported where many native species do spring up with time albeit in smaller quantities. Plantations often fragment existing natural habitats and significantly impact species that require larger territories or specific migratory routes or rely on a varied diet and nutritional diversity provided by biodiverse environments. Monocultures can become breeding grounds for pests and diseases specific to the planted species and with no natural predators or competitors, these pests can thrive, often leading to the use of chemical pesticides, which further harm the ecosystem. Further, monoculture can deplete specific nutrients from the soil, reducing its fertility over time, impacting the regulation of the water cycle, and disrupting local water tables. Carbon sequestration by monoculture plantations is also less as compared to biodiverse areas.

The history of forest management in India shows that well-developed principles



SUSTENANCE OF FORESTS AND BIODIVERSITY TO ADDITIONALLY MAINTAIN THE RELATED ECO-SERVICES FOR A MUCH WIDER SET OF STAKEHOLDERS REQUIRED A HIGHLY RESEARCHED AND UPDATED ROBUST FOREST MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

(The writers are Former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, UP and Maharashtra, views are personal)

of silviculture aided its conservation strategy. Harvestable volume from the area under management was kept equal to the annual increment put on by the forest. Well-established silvicultural systems provide the choice of management tool depending on the selected objective of management duly considering the species, nature density of crop and requirement of produce for feeding the economy as well as for meeting local people's needs. Respecting the carrying capacity of forests was non-negotiable.

The calculations prescribing yearly outturns presumed that the forests will be well protected with no illegal removals of forest produce. Plantations were taken up in the forest areas to supplement natural regeneration and improve the productivity of degraded patches. The domestic requirements of tribal and poor people being the first charge on forest produce as per the Forest Policy 1988, any deficit of such material was prescribed to be met by raising plantations outside forest areas. The system sustained till the ever-increasing population's anthropogenic impact went beyond the carrying capacity of forests. The demands on the forests to meet economic as well as local people's needs coupled with a fast attrition of control systems, however, marred the success of scientific forestry principles on the ground. Insistence on professional management of forests and wildlife and strict application of control systems were touted as attempts to continue its hegemony by the forestry sector even though it was an attempt to address the issues of Human-forests and human-wildlife interfaces becoming

increasingly complex with time. Sustenance of forests and biodiversity to additionally maintain the related eco-services for a much wider set of stakeholders required a highly researched and updated robust forest management system. The response, however, came in the form of a move towards the democratisation of forestry. During the 1990s the concept of participatory forest management was mooted and later, the idea of getting management done solely by village communities was brought in through the Forest Rights Act 2006 and state-specific Rules under the PESA 1996. The management of forests, wildlife, and minor forest produce along with management plan preparation for the areas in their vicinity is mandated to be done by village communities and overseen by Gram Sabhas. The Forest Rights Rules 2012 notified by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs precludes the forestry sector's participation in the matter.

In effect, India's erstwhile landscape-based forest and wildlife management that supported widespread ecosystems, large-range wildlife and biodiversity continuums, watersheds, and mega catchments is getting converted into a collage of village-specific micro-units of forest management as decided by the local communities. The legislation and guidelines by some state tribal departments have gone to direct that the village-level micro-plans shall override the provisions of landscape-based working plans of the forestry sector. Even though a majority of the current recognized management rights are not in compliance with provisions, the conditions created by such changes are likely to be detrimental to biodiversity con-

servation. Intensive silviculture can coexist with enhanced biodiversity but that demands an evolved silvicultural system, ecosystem-specific goals, and a landscape-level approach. These requirements unfortunately are not fulfilled by the latest framework prescribed for forest management in the country.

Man-made plantations outside recorded forests serve essential economic purposes, but their long-term sustainability is questionable given their detrimental impact on biodiversity and ecosystems. However agroforestry, biodiversity corridors within plantations, opting for mixed-species, interspersing long-rotation crops between short-rotation ones, retaining original vegetation patches or introducing a variety of shrubs and trees, keeping wider spacing and thinning to enhance both floral and avian diversity, abstaining from herbicides to bolster the invertebrate population, preserving large trees to provide habitats for avifauna, and preserving woody debris post-fellingsto amplify amphibian and invertebrate diversity can be some viable and effective approaches towards biodiversity conservation even in areas outside the recorded forests.

In a country already battling with the challenges of water crisis, environmental degradation, and climate change, the details contained in the FSI's 2021 report simply indicate the need for a complete paradigm shift in India's approach towards forest and biodiversity conservation. The future lies in finding innovative solutions that marry the two objectives of economic utility and conservation to ensure that development does not come at the planet's expense.

Deepening ebb in India-Canada relations

Ottawa expelled a top Indian diplomat allegedly for extrajudicial killing even as India denies its involvement in the incident, writes Debashis Jena

In a shocking turn of after the successful completion of G20 events in Delhi, the Canadian government has expelled a high-ranking Indian diplomat for alleged involvement in an "extrajudicial killing". This move has strained diplomatic relations between Ottawa and New Delhi, raising concerns about human rights and international cooperation. The expelled Indian diplomat, whose identity has not been officially disclosed, was reportedly working at the Indian High Commission in Ottawa. According to Canadian sources, authorities took this drastic step after gathering substantial evidence suggesting the diplomat's involvement in an extrajudicial killing in India.

The allegations stem from an incident that occurred in Canada on 18 June 2023; where a pro-Khalistani sympathizer Hardeep Singh Nijjar was shot dead with multiple gunshot wounds and declared dead by Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) after shooting at the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Canada's Surrey.

Hardeep Singh Nijjar - a pro-Khalistani activist was sought by the Indian government for his alleged involvement in the killing of a Hindu priest in the Indian state of Punjab in the year 2021. He was involved in anti-India activities like regulating and funding the Khalistan movement to create a ruckus in India. He also used social media as a propaganda tool to propagate malicious propa-



ganda against India.

Responding to Ottawa's move on the issue, MEA Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi issued an official statement rejecting all the allegations made by Canadian Prime

Minister Justin Trudeau and his Foreign Minister. "We have seen and rejected the statement of the Canadian Prime Minister in Parliament, as also the statement by the Canadian Foreign Minister."

Indeed, the allegations of the Government of India's involvement in any act of violence in Canada are absurd and motivated. India is a democratic country with a strong commitment to the

rule of law. India has never supported any extra-judicial killing on its soil or outside. Such unsubstantiated allegations seek to shift the focus from Khalistani extremists, who have been provided shelter in Canada and continue to threaten India's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The inaction of the Canadian Government on this matter has been a long-standing and continuing concern. Perhaps this is a Canadian Government's plank to put under wraps its inability to deal with its homegrown extremism.

That Canadian political figures have openly expressed sympathy for such elements remains a matter of deep concern. The space given in Canada to a range of illegal

activities including murders, human trafficking and organised crime is not new. The Government of Canada must take prompt and effective legal action against all anti-India elements operating from their soil.

The Ministry of External Affairs, India summoned the High Commission of Canada in India to inform him about the decision by the Government of India to expel a senior Canadian diplomat based in India. Olivier Sylvestre, the Canadian diplomat has been asked to leave India within the next five days. Arindam Bagchi, the MEA spokesperson in his official statement said, "The High Commissioner of Canada to India was summoned and informed about the decision of

the Government of India to expel a senior Canadian diplomat based in India. The concerned diplomat has been asked to leave India within the next five days." The decision reflects the Government of India's growing concern at the interference of Canadian diplomats in our internal matters and their involvement in anti-India activities. The turn of events is though highly deplorable as two strong democratic countries are at loggerheads with each other and if the damage control is not initiated by the two countries it could turn into a full-blown diplomatic crisis, straining the relations between the two countries even further.

(The writer is a researcher and writes on external affairs; views expressed are personal)

IMF chief tells Pak to 'tax rich, protect poor'

PTI ■ NEW YORK/ISLAMABAD

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has urged Pakistan to collect more taxes from the wealthy and protect the poor people, as the cash-strapped country reels under double-digit inflation after securing a bailout from the global lender in July, media reports said on Thursday.

Speaking to Geo News after meeting Interim Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar on the sidelines of the 78th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) session in New York, Georgieva said that it is in the interest of the people of Pakistan that the country revitalises its economy and addresses some of the "shortcomings" of the past.

"What we are asking in our programme is that please collect more taxes from the wealthy and please protect the poor people of Pakistan," the IMF chief said.

"I do believe this is in line with what people in Pakistan would like to see for the country," she added.

"Shortcomings" of the past should be addressed, Georgieva urged, referring to reforms the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has sought in the country, Geo News reported from New York.

Her comments come amid soaring inflation in Pakistan after the Washington-based global lender transferred USD 1.2 billion to the cash-strapped country in July, a part of the USD 3 billion bailout programme for nine months to support the government's efforts to stabilise the country's ailing economy.

The steps taken by the government to give the IMF's approval made lives difficult for the masses, as a massive hike in electricity and petrol prices pushed inflation to a record level, the report said.

Pakistan's inflation leapt to 27.4 per cent in the month of August.

The IMF Managing Director took to social media platform X and said, "Very good meeting with Pakistan's

Pak's general elections to be held in last week of January 2024: EC

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's election commission on Thursday announced that the general elections in the country will take place in the last week of January 2024, amid mounting pressure from political parties that pressed for timely elections in the cash-strapped country.

In a statement, the electoral body said that it reviewed work on delimiting constituencies and the initial list for the delimitation of constituencies would be published on September 27.

It said parties would be able to file objections after that the ECP would address all objections and suggestions.

After hearing objections and suggestions regarding the list, the final list would be issued on November 30, which would be followed by the election schedule, it said.

It said that by the end of delimitation, it would announce a 54-day election programme and 'polls will be held in the last week of January 2024.'

The National Assembly was dissolved on August 9 and constitutionally, the elections should be held within 90 days but the process was delayed by the ECP due to the delimitation exercise which became mandatory in the wake of the new census held this year.

PM @anwaar_kakar today on Pakistan's economic prospects. We agreed on the vital need for strong policies to ensure stability, foster sustainable and inclusive growth, prioritise revenue collection, and protection for the most vulnerable in Pakistan."

Caretaker Prime Minister Kakar also posted on X, terming his meeting with Georgieva a "constructive dialogue" and said it "emphasised extending our mutual commitment towards bolstering economic stability and growth in Pakistan."

According to The Express Tribune newspaper, an official handout released by the Prime Minister's Office said Kakar expressed gratitude for the global lender's approval of the USD 3 billion standby agreement to support Pakistan's economy.

The handout said the premier briefed Georgieva on the various measures taken by the government to "stabilise and revive the country's economy".

"The prime minister affirmed that these initiatives

aim to create a stable and conducive environment for sustainable economic growth and investment. Additionally, a strong focus had been placed on protecting the vulnerable segments of society," the PMO statement said.

It further said that Georgieva "appreciated Pakistan's concerted efforts in implementing policies and reforms to revive the economy" and assured that the IMF remained committed to continued engagement with Pakistan. The development comes a day after a report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) warned that the downside risks to Pakistan's economic outlook remain exceptionally high and said that the cash-strapped country's adherence to an economic adjustment programme through April 2024 would be critical for restoring stability and the gradual recovery of growth. Pakistan's economy has been in a free fall mode for the last many years, bringing untold pressure on the poor masses in the form of unchecked inflation.

Pak anti-graft body to reopen corruption case against ex-PM

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's accountability watchdog has decided in principle to revive corruption charges against prominent political figures, including ex-prime minister Nawaz Sharif and former president Asif Ali Zardari after the Supreme Court scrapped the recent amendments to anti-graft laws. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) submitted a record of graft cases to accountability of the courts, asking them to reopen corruption cases involving amounts less than Rs 500 million, the Dawn newspaper reported on Thursday.

Last week, Pakistan's Supreme Court scrapped the recent amendments to the country's anti-graft laws, restoring corruption cases against public office holders, including former president Asif Ali Zardari and ex-premiers Nawaz Sharif, Shehbaz Sharif, Yusuf Raza Gilani, Raja Pervez Ashraf and Shahid Khaqan

Abbasi. The apex court was announcing its reserved decision on jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's plea filed last year, challenging the amendments made to the accountability laws by the then government led by former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Among other things, the amendments limited the jurisdiction of the NAB to cases involving over Rs 500 million. According to the report, the accountability watchdog wrote to the Federal Investigation Agency, anti-corruption departments in all provinces, banking courts, and the police, asking them to return all cases referred to these departments following the new amendments.

The decision to approach all courts and departments was made in a recent meeting presided over by NAB Chairman Lt Gen (retd) Nazir Ahmed Butt, the report said, quoting a source.

"The NAB headquarters

has submitted an application before the registrar [of] accountability court Islamabad for [the] reopening of closed cases," the source said, adding that all regional headquarters of the accountability watchdog have also approached regional accountability courts for the purpose. The report said that the accountability courts had returned white-collar crime cases involving less than Rs 500 million to the watchdog after the new amendments. The restoration of the old law has reopened cases of several politicians, including former president Asif Ali Zardari and ex-premiers Nawaz Sharif, Shehbaz Sharif, Imran Khan, Yusuf Raza Gilani, Raja Pervez Ashraf and Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and Shaikat Aziz.

Nawaz Sharif, 73, who is set to return on October 21, ending his self-exile in London, where the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme has lived since 2019, may see the restoration of a

Toshakhana case. In 2020, an accountability court declared him a proclaimed offender in the Toshakhana vehicles reference. Zardari, 68, and Gilani, 71, are also accused in the same case. In the case, the NAB accused Nawaz Sharif and Zardari of illegally retaining expensive vehicles gifted to them by various foreign countries and dignitaries instead of depositing them in the Toshakhana.

According to the country's top anti-corruption body, Gilani, during his tenure as Prime Minister, facilitated Zardari in retaining the vehicles. Abbasi may face the LNG terminal case, while Ashraf will face the rental power corruption case.

Other bigwigs whose cases have been reopened are former federal ministers Khawaja Saad Rafiq, Kh Asif, Rana Sanaullah, ex-chief minister Punjab Hamza Shehbaz, Faryal Talpur, Syed Murad Ali Shah, Javed Latif, Akrum Durrani, Saleem

Mandviwalla, according to the report.

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

The NAB is expected to submit the record of all cases to the court in the next two days in order to resume hearings, Economy.pk news portal reported.

The coalition government had made several changes in the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) ordinance of 1999 through the National Accountability (Second Amendment) Act 2022, which 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.

Prachanda to meet Xi during China visit

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" will be on an eight-day visit to China from September 23 for talks with the top Chinese leadership, including President Xi Jinping, on ways to further bolster bilateral ties between the two neighbours. Prachanda will also attend the opening ceremony of the 19th Asian Games in the eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou on September 23, Nepal's Foreign Ministry said on Thursday.

Prachanda, who along with the country's Foreign Minister Narayan Prakash Saud is currently in the US to attend the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, will directly fly to China on September 23 for the official visit.

Prime Minister Prachanda is paying an official visit to China from September 23 to 30 at the invitation of Li Qiang, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China," said the statement issued by the Nepal Foreign

Ministry. Prachanda's delegation to China will also include several Nepal government cabinet ministers, including Foreign Minister Saud, Minister for Water Supply Mahindra Raya Yadav, Minister for Physical Infrastructure and Transport Prakash Jwala among others and the National Security Advisor Shanker Das Bairagi. During his visit to China, Prime Minister Prachanda is scheduled to meet with President Xi in Hangzhou. He will hold a bilateral meeting with his counterpart Premier Li Qiang, and also meet Zhao Leji, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in Beijing, said the statement.

During the meetings, the two sides will have an in-depth exchange of views on deepening traditional friendship, expanding mutually beneficial cooperation and international and regional issues of mutual interest, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said in Beijing on Thursday. In recent years, the two countries conducted fre-

quent high-level exchanges, enhanced communication and cooperation in economic and cultural fields, and maintained close coordination and collaboration on international and regional affairs, the spokesperson said. "China stands ready to work with Nepal to deepen strategic mutual trust, expand practical cooperation, advance the high-quality Belt and Road cooperation and elevate the strategic cooperative partnership to a new height through the visit," Mao said.

The Prime Minister will also address the China-Nepal Investment Summit jointly organised by China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) and Federation of Nepal Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI) and Nepali Embassy in Beijing.

He is also scheduled to visit Chongqing Municipality to observe the agricultural and industrial advancement in China's fourth-largest city. He will also visit Lhasa, the capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region of China that borders

Nepal. "Nepal and China enjoy an excellent state of bilateral relations as good friends, close neighbours and trusted partners. The pedestal of this strong relationship has been nurtured by many commonalities in culture, history, and geography. This visit will bolster our age-old bilateral relations and expand the areas of cooperation in various fields of mutual interest," said Nepal's Foreign Ministry.

Prime Minister Prachanda has visited China many times.

China and Nepal are traditional friends, neighbours and strategic cooperative partners. Since the two countries established diplomatic relations 68 years ago, no matter how the international or regional situations have evolved, China-Nepal relations have maintained sound and steady progress, Mao said.

"Our two countries have given each other understanding and support on issues concerning our respective core interests, making this relationship a good example of equality and win-win cooperation between countries of different sizes," she added.

Sharifs looking for 'certain guarantees' before Nawaz's return to Pakistan

Islamabad/Lahore (PTI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party supreme Nawaz Sharif and his brother Shehbaz Sharif are looking for 'certain guarantees' to be in place before Nawaz's arrival to Pakistan next month, according to a media report on Thursday. Shehbaz, who had returned to Lahore two days ago from London, is set to board a flight Thursday to go back there and again meet his elder brother in person, the Dawn newspaper reported. Nawaz, the 73-year-old three-time prime minister is expected to return to Pakistan on October 21 and lead the PML-N party in the next general election which will be held in the coming months.

"Will the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the anti-corruption watchdog, oppose Nawaz's protective bail in the Chaudhry Sugar Mills case ... this remains to be seen when the party chief applies for it ahead of his planned return," it said.

Quoting a party insider, the Dawn said, "The Sharifs are looking for 'certain guarantees' to be in place before Nawaz's arrival."

The news that the Sharif brothers are looking for 'certain guarantees' assumes significance as the elder brother, who is set to return to Pakistan on October 21, would be facing the landmark Supreme Court ruling that restored the corruption cases against him.

On September 15, Pakistan's Supreme Court scrapped the recent amendments to the country's anti-graft laws and restored corruption cases against public office holders, including Nawaz Sharif, who was one of the major beneficiaries of the changes.

The apex court had announced its reserved decision on jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's plea filed last year, challenging the amendments made to the accountability laws by the then government led by Shehbaz Sharif.

Indian scientist Swati named Norman E Borlaug Award winner

Washington (PTI): Dr Swati Nayak, an Indian scientist at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), has been named the 2023 recipient of the prestigious Norman E Borlaug Award for Field Research and Application, with the World Food Prize Foundation describing her as an "outstanding young scientist."

Nayak is the South Asia Lead for Seed System and Product Management at the IRRI in New Delhi.

Endowed by the Rockefeller Foundation, the award recognises Nayak for her innovative approach to engaging smallholder farmers in demand-driven rice seed systems, from testing and deployment to equitable access and adoption of climate-resilient and nutritious rice varieties, a release from the World Food Prize Foundation said in a tweet on platform X on Wednesday.

The award is given to exceptional scientists under 40 and someone who works in the field of food and nutrition security, hunger eradication in memory of the Nobel awardee and Green Revolution's chief architect Dr Norman Borlaug.

Based in Delhi, the scientist from Odisha, Nayak will formally receive the Borlaug Field Award during a ceremony at the 2023 Norman E. Borlaug International Dialogue October 24-26 in Des Moines, Iowa (US), the release said.

"This moment is a new beginning and a great opportunity to further strengthen my efforts, voice and impact as a field scientist," said Nayak. "I look forward to working relentlessly, and ensuring that novel technologies, knowledge and resources reach the farmers faster, while ensuring equity and inclusivity."

I am deeply grateful to the World Food Prize Foundation for this honor which echoes our joint pledge to build a resilient food system and a better world for all."

Syrian Prez Assad visits China

AP ■ BEIJING

Syrian President Bashar Assad arrived in China on Thursday on his first visit to the country since the start of Syria's 12-year conflict, one in which Beijing has been one of his main backers. China's Foreign Ministry said Assad would join other foreign leaders attending the opening ceremony of the Asian Games, an international sports event beginning Saturday in the eastern city of Hangzhou.

China has been expanding its reach in the Middle East after mediating a deal in March between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and it continues to support Assad in the Syrian conflict, which has killed half a million people and left large parts of the nation in ruins.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Assad's visit would "further deepen political mutual trust and cooperation in various fields between the two countries and push bilateral rela-



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, Syrian President Bashar Assad, right, and first lady Asma Assad receive a bouquet of flowers from a young girl as they arrive in Hangzhou, China, Thursday. AP/PTI

tions to a new level". Assad and Chinese President Xi Jinping were set to meet for "in-depth talks" on a range of issues, she said. Assad landed in Hangzhou on Thursday, according to Chinese state broadcaster CCTV. Xi was expected to arrive there on Friday and hold a banquet and

bilateral activities with Assad and other heads of state and government attending the games from countries friendly to China, including Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni, Kuwait's crown prince Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmed Al Jaber and Nepali Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal

Dahal, according to China's Foreign Ministry.

Nepal's prime minister will arrive Saturday and be in China for one week, the Nepali Foreign Ministry said. Besides Hangzhou, he will also visit the city of Chongqing and Lhasa, the capital of Tibet.

'Cop should be put on unpaid leave for comments about Indian student's death'

AP ■ SEATTLE

Seattle Community Police Commission has recommended the city police chief to relieve from duty and withhold pay for an officer under investigation for joking about and downplaying the death of a 23-year-old Indian student when an overspeeding police car driven by another officer struck her. Jaahnavi Kandula was hit by a police vehicle driven by Officer Kevin Dave when she was crossing a street on January 23 this year. He was driving at 74 mph (more than 119 kmh) on the way to a report of a drug overdose call. The 21-member commission and its three appointed co-chairs on Wednesday also asked Seattle police Chief Adrian Diaz to "immediately engage in a workgroup" made up of the

Community Police Commission (CPC), the Office of Police Accountability (OPA) and the Office of Inspector General to "address repeated concerns with the culture of policing and police practices at Seattle Police Department, the Seattle Times reported.

Wednesday's letter calls on Diaz to suspend without pay Officer Daniel Auderer, the vice president of the Seattle Police Officers Guild (SPOG), who came under investigation earlier this month after department officials listened to audio from Auderer's body camera during an investigation into the death of Kandula, a student who was struck and killed by a speeding police vehicle in January. In bodycam footage released last week by the Seattle Police Department, Officer Auderer laughed about the

deadly crash and dismissed any implication Dave might be at fault or that a criminal investigation was necessary.

Auderer, who was involved in the investigation, can be heard laughing, calling Kandula a "regular person" and suggesting that the department "write a check."

"Eleven thousand dollars. She was 26 anyway," Auderer said, misstating Kandula's age. "She had limited value."

An SPD spokesperson declined to comment Wednesday on the CPC's recommendation, referencing a previous statement about the body-camera video.

No public access to evidences of Sri Lanka Easter attacks probe: Speaker

AP ■ COLOMBO

The sensitive evidence recorded by the special presidential panel that probed the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks can only be accessed by MPs for scrutiny, Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena said on Thursday.

Speaking at the commencement of a two-day debate on the Easter Sunday attacks, Abeywardena said that 87 volumes containing testimonies made at the commission were restricted to be kept at the parliamentary library exclusively for the use of members of parliament. The opposition had demanded the two-day debate following revelations by UK's Channel 4 early this month that the terror attack was politically manipu-



lated to gain an advantage for the Rajapaksa family, then in the opposition.

Channel 4 accused the current chief of state intelligence of organising the attack in cohort with the jihadi group. Abeywardena said that the panel report was tabled in parliament on February 25, 2022. "As per the secretary to the

president's notice 87 volumes containing testimonies made at the commission were restricted to be kept at the parliamentary library exclusively for the use of members of parliament," Abeywardena said.

He described it as a move to restrict and protect the identities of witnesses.

He said he was making the statement in response to the speculations made in the press about the motive of restricting public access to testimonies.

The panel was appointed by the president at the time of the attack Maithripala Sirisena.

The panel found him guilty of criminal negligence for his inability to prevent the attack despite the availability of prior intelligence.

Later Sirisena was ordered to pay heavy compensation to

the kith of the victims in response to fundamental rights petitions filed by them.

The government has come under fire for its continuation with some of the high-ranking security personnel at the time who have been charged with criminal negligence.

Nine suicide bombers belonging to the local Islamist extremist group National Thawheed Jamaat (NTJ) linked to ISIS carried out a series of devastating blasts that tore through three Catholic churches and as many luxury hotels on April 21, 2019, killing nearly 270 people, including 11 Indians, and injuring over 500.

The head of the Catholic minority Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith has alleged that all investigations thus far have been political cover-ups.

Ukraine leader appeals for more war aid at US Capitol

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy returned to Washington on Thursday for a whirlwind one-day visit, this time facing the Republicans now questioning the flow of American dollars that for 19 months has helped keep his troops in the fight against Russian forces. Zelenskyy arrived at the Capitol to talk privately with Republican and Democratic leaders of the House and Senate as the world is watching Western support for Kyiv. He will also meet with President Joe Biden at the White House and will speak with US military leaders at the Pentagon.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries escorted Zelenskyy into the Capitol. House Republican leaders, who promised tough questions for Zelenskyy on his plans for the way forward for Ukraine's war effort, notably chose not to join in greeting the Ukrainian president before the cameras.

House Foreign Affairs Chairman Michael McCaul said Zelenskyy's message for House lawmakers Thursday was "that he's winning." Speaking to reporters, McCaul stressed "The majority of the majority support this," but said there had to be confidence in a clear strategy for victory for Ukraine. "War of attrition is not

going to win this," McCaul said. "That's what Putin wants. He wants to break the will of the American people and the Europeans."

It is Zelenskyy's second visit to Washington since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 and comes as Biden's request to Congress for an additional USD 24 billion for Ukraine's military and humanitarian needs is hanging in the balance. Back home, Russian launched its heaviest strikes in a month in the hours before Zelenskyy's arrival at Congress, killing three, igniting fires and damaging energy infrastructure as Russian missiles and artillery pounded cities across Ukraine.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby called the Ukrainian president "our best messenger" in persuading US lawmakers to keep vital US money and weapons coming.

"It's really important for members of Congress to be able to hear directly

from the president about what he's facing in this counteroffensive," Kirby told reporters Wednesday, "and how he's achieving his goals, and what he needs to continue to achieve those goals."

Biden has called on world leaders to stand strong with Ukraine, even as he faces domestic political divisions at home. A hard-right flank of Republicans, led by former President Donald Trump, Biden's chief rival in the 2024 race for the White House, is increasingly opposed to sending more money overseas. As the White House worked to shore up support for Ukraine before Zelenskyy's visit, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and top intelligence officials briefed senior lawmakers behind closed doors Wednesday to argue the case. Zelenskyy faces challenges in Europe as well as cracks emerge in what had been a largely united Western alliance behind Ukraine.

Late Wednesday, Poland's prime minister said his country is no longer sending arms to Ukraine, a comment that appeared aimed at pressuring

Kyiv and put Poland's status as a major source of military equipment in doubt as a trade dispute between the neighboring states escalates.



Shots fired outside US embassy in Lebanon, no injuries reported

Probe launched

AP ■ AUKAR

Lebanese security agencies are investigating a late-night shooting outside the heavily fortified US Embassy just north of Beirut, officials said Thursday. No one was hurt in the small-arms fire.

The shots erupted near the entrance to the embassy compound in Beirut's northeastern suburb of Aukar on Wednesday night. No one claimed responsibility for the shooting and the motives behind it were not known. After the shooting, the Lebanese army took measures and launched the investigation,

including analysing security camera footage from the area, a Lebanese official said, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

Lebanese military police marked at least five bullet holes in the wall next to the embassy entrance. Heavier-than-usual security measures were in effect, but the road leading to the embassy was not closed.

"There were no injuries, and our facility is safe," US Embassy spokesperson Jake Nelson said.

"We are in close contact with host country law enforcement authorities."

Lebanon has a long history of attacks against Americans.

The deadliest of the attacks

occurred in October 1983, when a suicide truck bomber drove into a four-story building, killing 241 American service members at the US Marine barracks at the Beirut airport.

Earlier that year, on April 18, 1983, a bombing attack on the US Embassy in Beirut killed 63 people, including at least 17 Americans.

Top CIA officials were among those who died. US officials blamed the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

After that attack, the embassy was moved from central Beirut to the Christian suburb of Aukar, north of the Lebanese capital.

On September 20, 1984, a suicide bomber struck the

embassy compound in Aukar, killing himself and 14 others, prompting the embassy to close. The United States withdrew all diplomats from Beirut in September 1989 and did not reopen its embassy until 1991. In 2008, an explosion targeted a US Embassy vehicle in northern Beirut, killing at least three Lebanese who happened to be near the car and wounding its Lebanese driver.

An American passerby was also wounded. In 1976, US Ambassador Francis E. Meloy Jr. and an aide, Robert O. Waring, were abducted and killed in Beirut. In 1984, William Buckley, the CIA station chief in Beirut, was abducted and killed by the Iran-backed Islamic Jihad group.

'Every day we get closer to normalisation with Israel'

Washington (AP): Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has said in an interview with Fox News that ongoing negotiations over Israel means the prospects of normalised relations between both countries "get closer" every day but that treatment of Palestinians remains a "very important" issue to be resolved.

Saudi Arabia is discussing a major agreement with the United States in which it would normalise relations with Israel in exchange for a US defence pact and aid in developing its own civilian nuclear programme. The Saudis have said any deal would require major progress toward the creation of a Palestinian state, which is a hard sell for the most religious and nationalist government in Israel's history.

Widely known as MBS, Saudi Arabia's de facto leader was asked during an interview on "Special Report with Bret Baier" airing Wednesday what it would take to normalise relations with Israel and answered that the Biden administration supports that happening.

"For us, the Palestinian issue is very important. We need to solve that part," he said. In excerpts released ahead of the broadcast, he added that there had been "good negotiations" so far.

"We got to see where we go," he said. "We hope that will reach a place, that it will ease the life of the Palestinians, get Israel as a player in the Middle East."

The prince denied reports that the talks had been suspended, saying "every day, we get closer". The interview was airing shortly after President Joe Biden met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu while both were in New York for the meeting of the UN General Assembly. Biden raised concerns about the far-right Israeli government's treatment of the Palestinians, urging Netanyahu to take steps to improve conditions in the West Bank at a time of heightened violence in the occupied territory.

Russia strikes cities from east to west Ukraine, killing 3

AP ■ KYIV

Russian missiles and artillery pounded cities across Ukraine early Thursday, sparking fires, killing at least three people and trapping others under the rubble of destroyed buildings, authorities said, as Poland said it would stop providing weapons to its ally amid a trade dispute. The early-morning wave of missile strikes on what's known as the International Day of Peace was Russia's largest in over a month, and came as world leaders meet at United Nations General Assembly in New York. In a speech there, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy denounced Russia as "a terrorist state."

Zelenskyy was to meet Thursday with President Joe Biden and congressional leaders in Washington with an additional USD 24 billion aid package hanging in the balance.

Poland, which has been a major supporter of Ukraine, said it would stop transferring weapons to its neighbour as it works to modernise its own military, but denied the decision was linked to a simmering dispute over a temporary ban on Ukrainian grain imports.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said the decision would not affect NATO and US weapons transfers through Poland.

"We are no longer transferring any weapons to Ukraine because now we will arm ourselves with the most modern weapons," he said in an interview on the private TV broadcaster Polsat News late Wednesday. A dispute about whether Ukrainian grain should be allowed to enter the domestic markets of Poland and other European Union countries has pushed the tight relationship between Kyiv and Warsaw to its lowest point since Russia invaded Ukraine last year. Morawiecki stressed that Poland would defend its economic interests, but added that the dispute over grain imports would not hurt Ukraine's security. "We are not going to risk the security of Ukraine," he said. Poland has transferred large amounts of its

older weapons to Ukraine and has been upgrading its own inventory with new equipment purchased from South Korea and other countries.

Air raid sirens sounded repeatedly across Ukraine, as Russia launched dozens of missiles and, near the front lines, likely used shorter-range artillery to pound the southern city of Kherson. Three people were killed in Kherson Thursday and at least four injured after a residential building was hit, the Defence Ministry said on social media. Seven people were injured in Kyiv, including a 9-year-old girl, Mayor Vitalii Klitschko said, as missile strikes blew out windows in buildings and cars and left fires burning around crumpled metal wreckage.

Marharya Moldokova, 76, who had taken shelter on the floor of her Kyiv home just before hearing an explosion and the sound of her window shattering, denounced Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"God, we can't wait for someone to shoot him," she said. "Everything is not enough for him. ... What does he need?"

Students at the National Academy of Statistics, Accounting and Audit in Kyiv stood outdoors looking at a building where metal strips hung from the portico and empty window frames were bent inward.

Illia Melnyk said he had taken shelter behind two walls as he heard an explosion and saw a flash and then ran outside.

"When I came out, I saw bricks falling from the door," he said. "It was visible how the wall was broken and the door was knocked out. ... It was scary." The academy, located in Kyiv's cozy Tatarka neighbourhood, has endured numerous missile strikes and damage from falling debris. It is located near an arms maker that manufactures high-precision ammunition and missiles. The Ukrainian Air Force said it had intercepted 36 of 43 cruise missiles launched deep into Ukraine. Kharkiv, closer to the front lines, was struck with S-300 missiles.

'Poland done sending arms to Ukraine'

Warsaw (Poland): Poland's prime minister said his country is no longer sending arms to Ukraine, a comment that appeared aimed at pressuring Kyiv and put Poland's status as a major source of military equipment in doubt as a trade dispute between the neighbouring states escalates.

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said in an interview late on Wednesday that Poland is no longer transferring weapons to Ukraine. He made the comment as his populist party faces pressure from a far-right party in a national election on October 15.

The far-right party, Confederation, says Poland is not getting the gratitude it deserves for arming Ukraine and accepting its refugees.

"We are no longer transferring any weapons to Ukraine because now we will arm ourselves with the most modern weapons," Morawiecki said in an interview on Polsat, a private television broadcaster.

The prime minister then spoke of a military modernisation plan underway, spurred by fears of Russian aggression in the region.

A government spokesman, Piotr Mueller, appeared to confirm Thursday that Warsaw would not agree to more military aid.

He said the country was now only providing supplies of ammunition and armaments that had previously been agreed to, noting that "a series of absolutely unacceptable statements and diplomatic gestures appeared on the Ukrainian side."

Poland has supplied Ukraine with a wide range of weaponry, including Leopard 2 tanks and Soviet-era MiG fighter jets. A leading security and defense expert, Michal Baranowski, said that Poland gave most of what it could give earlier in the war, and with no plans for shipments of major equipment soon he doesn't see a threat to Ukraine's capabilities in the near term. Still, he considers the comments as troubling for Ukraine as it seeks to maintain Western support in the war unleashed by Russia.

The message is very bad, both for Poland's reputation but also because Poland has been one of the chief advocates of military aid to Ukraine.

Biden admn to protect hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Biden administration said that it was granting temporary legal status to hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans who are already in the country — quickly making them eligible to work — as it grapples with growing numbers of people fleeing the South American country and elsewhere to arrive at the US border with Mexico.

The move — along with promises to accelerate work permits for many migrants — may appease Democratic leaders who have pressured the White House to do more to aid asylum-seekers, while also providing grist for Republicans who say the president has been too lax on immigration.

The Homeland Security Department plans to grant Temporary Protected Status to an estimated 4,72,000 Venezuelans who arrived in the country as of July 31, 2023, making it easier for them to get authorisation to work in the US. That's been a key demand of Democratic mayors and governors who are struggling to care for an increased number of migrants in their care.

That's in addition to about 2,42,700 Venezuelans who already qualified for temporary status before Wednesday's announcement.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas granted the expansion and an 18-month extension for those who already have temporary status due to "Venezuela's increased instability and lack of safety due to the enduring humanitarian, security, political, and environmental conditions," the department said in a statement.

The administration said that it would accelerate work authorisations for people who have arrived in the country since January through a mobile app for appointments at land crossings with Mexico, called

CBP One, or through parole granted to Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans who have financial sponsors and arrive at an airport. It will aim to give them work permits within 30 days, compared to about 90 days currently.

The promise of accelerated work permits does not apply to people who cross the border illegally and seek asylum, who, by law, must wait for six months to receive work permits.

Mayors and governors have been clamouring for President Joe Biden to figure out a way for the administration to get newly arrived migrants to be able to work legally, so they can support themselves.

Democratic officials in New York, Massachusetts, Chicago and elsewhere have complained about the strain that newly arrived migrants are putting on their resources, especially in New York where the government is required to provide housing for anyone who needs it. The city is currently paying to house about 60,000 newly arrived migrants. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said in a statement late Wednesday after the news broke that she was "grateful the federal government has acted so speedily to grant one of our top priorities: Temporary Protected Status to Venezuelan asylum seekers and migrants who have already arrived in this country."

The administration said it was also using Department of Defence forces to support Homeland Security staff on the border. Homeland Security already uses about 2,500 National Guard troops to help Customs and Border Protection. In the news release, Homeland Security said up to 800 new active-duty troops would also be detailed to the border; they would be used for things like logistics so as to free up the Customs and Border Protection officials to do more of the front-line responsibilities.

Murdoch stepping down

New York (AP): Murdoch, the 92-year-old media magnate who created Fox News, is stepping down as leader of both Fox's parent company and his News Corp media holdings.



Fox said Thursday that Murdoch would become chairman emeritus of both companies. His son, Lachlan, will become News Corp chairman and continue as chief executive officer of Fox Corp.

Lachlan Murdoch said that "we are grateful that he will serve as chairman emeritus and know he will continue to provide valued counsel to both companies."

Besides Fox News, Murdoch started the Fox broadcast network, the first to successfully challenge the Big Three of ABC, CBS and NBC. He is owner of the Wall Street Journal and the New York Post. Murdoch is a force in the conservative world, where Fox News Channel has profoundly influenced television and the nation's politics since its start in 1996. Murdoch vowed in a letter to employees that he would remain engaged at Fox. "In my new role, I can guarantee you that I will be involved every day in the contest of ideas," Murdoch wrote. "Our companies are communities, and I will be an active member of our community."

I will be watching our broadcasts with a critical eye, reading our newspapers and websites and books with much interest."

There was no immediate word on why Murdoch's announcement came now.

S Korean leader warns Russia against collaboration with North

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

South Korea's president sounded a warning to fellow world leaders Wednesday about the recent communication and possible cooperation between North Korea and Russia, saying any action by a permanent U.N. Security Council member to circumvent international norms would be dangerous and "paradoxical." Speaking before the U.N. General Assembly, Yoon Suk Yeol invoked North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's visit last week to Russia, which is one of the five permanent members of the council, the UN's most powerful body.

Kim met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Russia's far east. The two said they may cooperate on defense issues but gave no specifics, which left South Korea and its allies — including the United States — uneasy.

"It is paradoxical that a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, entrusted as the ultimate guardian of world peace, would wage war by invading another sovereign nation and receive arms and ammunition from a regime that blatantly violates Security Council resolutions," Yoon told fellow leaders on the second day of the UN General Assembly's annual gathering of leaders. He had been expected to raise the issue.

Yoon said that if North Korea "acquires the information and technology necessary" to enhance its weapons of mass destruction in exchange for giving conventional weapons to Russia, that would also be unacceptable to the South.

"Such a deal between Russia and the DPRK will be a direct provocation threatening the peace and security of not only Ukraine but also the Republic of Korea," he said, using the acronym for North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "The Republic of

Korea, together with its allies and partners, will not stand idly by." South Korea has expressed support for Ukraine, which is fighting a war against the 2022 Russian invasion of its territory. At the G20 summit in India earlier this month, Yoon said Seoul would contribute \$300 million to Ukraine next year and — eventually — a support package worth more than \$2 billion.

"The nuclear and missile programs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea pose not only a direct and existential threat to the peace of the Republic of Korea, but also (are) a serious challenge to peace in the Indo-Pacific region and across the globe," Yoon said in his speech.

Foreign experts speculate that Russia and North Korea were pushing to reach arms transfer deals in violation of Security Council resolutions. Both countries are in major disputes with the West, and both are under international

sanctions. While Russian-North Korean cooperation is feared to fuel Russia's war efforts in Ukraine, it has also encouraged unease 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. On Tuesday, South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Chang Ho-jin summoned the Russian ambassador to Seoul, Andrey Kulik, and urged Moscow to immediately stop its military cooperation with North Korea, which he said would have a "very negative impact" on its relations with the South.

North Korea has been increasing its nuclear arsenal for years, ratcheting up tensions in the region as it threatens to use nuclear weapons in conflicts. It regularly conducts missile tests, particularly in the past 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. strategic assets and launch a bilateral nuclear consultative group.

The Korean Peninsula was split into the US-supported, capitalistic South Korea and the Soviet-backed, socialist North Korea after its liberation from Japan's 35-year colonial rule at the end of the World War II in 1945. The two Koreas remain along the world's most heavily fortified border since they end of the 1950-53 Korean War. The two countries technically remain in a state of war 70 years after an armistice was signed.

Kim, North Korea's leader, oversees an autocratic government and is the third generation of his family to rule.

He was preceded by his father, Kim Jong Il, who died in 2011, and his grandfather Kim Il Sung, a former guerrilla who established the state.

King Charles III visits fire-damaged Notre-Dame cathedral

AP ■ PARIS

King Charles III went from a meeting with young athletes in a working-class, multicultural suburb of Paris to an emotional stop in front of the fire-damaged Notre Dame cathedral on Thursday, the second day of his state visit to France. Earlier, Charles made an address to lawmakers at the Senate, praising France and the United Kingdom's "indispensable relationship" and its capacity to meet the world's challenges, including the war in Ukraine and climate change.

Charles and Queen Camilla, accompanied by French President Emmanuel Macron and his wife, Brigitte, paid much attention to a presentation about ongoing renovation work at Notre Dame, one day after the king said he had been "utterly appalled by the scenes of such devastation following the catastrophic fire"

in April 2019. Charles and Camilla were not able to enter the cathedral for safety reasons, but Macron invited them to take a closer look at the entrance as dozens of workers on the higher floors of the monument applauded the king and took pictures. The cathedral is due to reopen at the end of next year.

During the day, Charles made a few stops to greet the crowds waiting for him along the streets of the sites he visited, including the Paris flower market named after his late mother, Queen Elizabeth II.

In Saint-Denis, north of the capital, Charles chatted with young athletes while Camilla exchanged a few balls with Prithika Pavade, a 19-year-old French table tennis player. The area will serve as a major venue in next year's Olympics.

Residents said the royal visit to Saint-Denis was a welcome boost for the town with

deep pockets of poverty, a reputation for crime and a feeling among many of being left by the wayside.

"A lot of people are poor and it has a reputation as a cut-throat place," said Yasmina Bedar, who was born in Saint-Denis and has lived there for 50 years.

"For a king in real flesh and blood to come to Saint-Denis of course can only help our image," she said, chatting with friends in the Le Khédivé café where Charles stopped to sit down for a few minutes with job seekers. Café owner Sid Ould-Moussa said, "It's excellent for the town, for us."

The king also met there with the Paris Saint-Germain soccer club president Nasser Al-Khelaifi, who gave him the club's No. 3 jersey and explained the club's involvement in supporting young people and communities in difficulty.



French President Emmanuel Macron, center right, his wife Brigitte Macron, right, Britain's King Charles III, center left, and Queen Camilla arrive for a state dinner, at the Chateau de Versailles, west of Paris, Wednesday. AP/PTI

RBI can spend \$30 bn of forex reserves to defend rupee: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Amid pressure on the rupee, a German brokerage on Thursday said the RBI can spend up to USD 30 billion from the over USD 594 billion forex kitty to defend the domestic currency. Even after spending the money, India will be left with reserves sufficient to take care of import bills for ten months, Deutsche Bank said in a note. The rupee is trading close to its all-time high against the US dollar at around Rs 83.30, and the Reserve Bank is actively intervening in the forex

market to curtail volatilities, it added.

"...The RBI can easily spend at least USD 30 billion to defend the rupee, and even then, the import cover will remain around 10 months," the brokerage said in its report. The rupee rose by 5 paise to close at 83.06 against the dollar at the end of the day's trade on Thursday.

The brokerage also estimated that the headline inflation will cool off sharply to 5 per cent for September, from 6.8 per cent in August, on a decline in the vegetable prices, but noted that there is an increase in global crude prices to USD 95 a barrel.



However, the fuel station prices are unlikely to change despite the pressure from global crude, owing to the upcoming state elections, which will be followed up with general elections, the brokerage said.

It also said that the central government recently cut prices of domestic cooking gas up to Rs 200 per cylinder, which will lead to a 0.25 per cent decline in the CPI.

Ideally, a ten per cent spike in crude prices can otherwise impact consumer price inflation by 0.30 per cent, it noted.

If domestic pump prices of petrol and diesel are not raised, then they are unlikely to have

any meaningful impact on growth estimates, the brokerage said, reiterating its view of FY24 GDP growth to come at 6.2 per cent.

The brokerage said headline inflation can fall below 4 per cent in July-September 2024 due to the exceptionally favourable base effect, and the RBI may consider a rate cut from April 2024 onwards.

The note said it does not foresee any major upside risk to the balance of payments estimates at this stage, even with the current spike in oil prices, and added that India's current account deficit will come at 1.4 per cent in FY24.



Markets decline for 3rd day on weak global cues

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty buckled under selling pressure for the third straight session to settle nearly 1 per cent lower on Thursday as investors pared exposure to auto, banking and financial shares amid a sluggish trend in global markets.

Global equities fell after the US Federal Reserve signalled that they expect to raise rates once more this year to fight inflation.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 570.60 points or 0.85 per cent to settle at 66,230.24. During the day, it plunged 672.13 points or 1 per cent to 66,128.71.

The Nifty declined 159.05 points or 0.80 per cent to end at 19,742.35.

"Domestic market declined following a hawkish stance by the Fed chair and prolonged high-interest rate trajectory, which is not positive for a slowing global economy."

"PSU Banks and Mid and small-caps were the worst hit due to stretched valuations and concern over moderation in yields. Rising oil prices and erratic rainfall further led investors to stay cautious in the market," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

ICICI Bank was the biggest loser in the Sensex pack, slipping 2.81 per cent, followed by Mahindra & Mahindra, State Bank of India, UltraTech Cement, IndusInd Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tata Motors, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank and Power Grid.

Tech Mahindra, Bharti

Airtel, Infosys, Asian Paints, Hindustan Unilever, Larsen & Toubro and Titan were the gainers.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge fell 0.99 per cent and smallcap index declined 0.98 per cent.

Among the indices, bankex fell by 1.75 per cent, auto declined by 1.58 per cent, financial services (1.35 per cent), realty (1.16 per cent), consumer discretionary (1 per cent), utilities (0.97 per cent), power (0.90 per cent) and commodities (0.75 per cent). Teck emerged as the only gainer.

"Bearish sentiment across the global equities led to selling in the domestic market for the third straight session as investors fretted over the US Fed statement indicating one more rate hike later this year."

"Other negative catalysts like lingering overseas fund outflows, rising US Dollar index and treasury yields, and higher crude oil prices are making investors jittery," Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd, said. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the negative territory. European markets were trading in the negative territory. The US markets ended in the red on Wednesday.

The US Federal Reserve left its key interest rate unchanged on Wednesday for the second time in its past three meetings, a sign that its moderating its fight against inflation as price pressures have eased. But, Fed officials also signalled that they expect to raise rates once more this year.

BLS International shares decline

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of BLS International, the agency hired by India to carry out initial scrutiny of visa applications of Canadians, fell over 2 per cent on Thursday amid concerns over suspension of India visa services in Canada. The stock declined 2.15 per cent to Rs 263.65 on the BSE. During the day, it fell 3.41 per cent to Rs 260.25.

On the NSE, it dropped 2.42 per cent to Rs 263.40 apiece.

The company's market valuation fell by Rs 213.99 crore to Rs 10,855.55 crore. In a series of flip-flops, a private agency hired by India to carry out initial scrutiny of visa applications of Canadians on Thursday put out a note on its website on suspension of visa services due to "operational reasons", withdrew it within hours and then again put it back online. The BLS International, also informed the stock exchanges that it had suspended India visa services in Canada with immediate effect.

The note put on the Canada page of the firm's website, which was withdrawn and restored later, read, "Important notice from Indian mission. Due to operational reasons, with effect from September 21, 2023, Indian visa services have been suspended till further notice. Please keep checking the BLS website for further updates."

"The Canadian visa issuance business contributes less than two per cent to BLS International's total annual revenue", it said.

Valiant Organics settles case with Sebi, pays ₹10 lakh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Valiant Organics Ltd settled with capital markets regulator Sebi a case concerning flouting of alleged disclosure rules by paying Rs 10 lakh as the settlement amount.

This came after the company filed a settlement application with Sebi proposing to settle the enforcement proceedings that may be initiated against it for the alleged lapse of non-compliance of Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements (LODR) Regulations by "neither admitting nor denying" any finding.

"It is hereby ordered that the proceedings that may be initiated for the violations... Are settled qua the applicant (Valiant Organics)," Sebi said in a settlement order passed on Monday. In its order, Sebi noted that Amariyot Chemical Ltd (ACL) merged with Valiant Organics by absorption, which was sanctioned by the Mumbai Bench of the National Company Law Tribunal in March 2019.

Following this, Valiant Organics allotted 72 fully paid equity shares of Rs 10 each and 21 Optionally Convertible Preference Shares (OCPS) of Rs 10 each held in ACL, for every 100 equity shares of Rs 10 each



held in ACL.

One OCPS was to be converted into 1 equity share of the applicant at the option of the holder within 18 months from the date of trading approval by the BSE. Valiant Organics had allotted 62,84,868 equity shares and 18,33,087 OCPS to the shareholders of Amariyot Chemical in May 2019.

At the time of filing the application with the BSE for prior approval on the scheme, Valiant Organics as well as the stock exchange failed to note that the applicant was non-compliant with Sebi's rule, the order said.

As per rules, the percentage of shareholding of pre-scheme public shareholders of a listed entity and the Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) of an unlisted entity, in the post scheme pattern of the "merged" company should not be less than 25 per cent, it noted.

Rupee rises 5 paise to close at 83.06 against \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled 5 paise higher at 83.06 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday as crude oil price receded from its elevated level.

The rupee was also weighed down by a rising dollar index, following hawkish comments from US Federal Reserve officials, forex traders said.

Moreover, investors remained cautious ahead of the Bank of England and Bank of Japan policy decisions, they added.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 83.16 against the US dollar and settled at 83.06 (provisional), registering a rise of 5 paise from its previous close. During the session, the domestic unit witnessed an intra-day high of 83.02 and a low of 83.17.

In the previous session, the rupee staged a sharp rebound from its lifetime low levels and surged by 21 paise to close at 83.11 against the US dollar.

"Indian rupee headed south after a flat opening amid a hawkish signal from FOMC,



which dragged the global risk-assets lower," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

However, the rupee managed to end the session with minor losses supported by the retracement in the crude oil prices and probable central bank interventions, Parmar added.

Market participants are in a wait-and-watch mode ahead of the Bank of England and Bank of Japan policy decision, he said.

"The dollar is expected to bode well amid policy divergence and a better US macro environment compared to other developing nations," Parmar said.

The trend for USD/INR remains bullish, following

broad-based strength in the greenback. The pair has resistance at 83.30 and support at 82.90, he added.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.18 per cent to 105.51.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, fell 1.05 per cent to USD 92.55 per barrel. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex was trading 570.60 points or 0.85 per cent lower at 66,230.24. The broader NSE Nifty declined 159.05 points or 0.8 per cent to 19,742.35.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital market on Wednesday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 3,110.69 crore, according to exchange data.

Sebi issues guidelines for handling complaints received via SCORES platform

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Thursday came out with a framework for handling complaints received through SCORES platform for registered entities and for monitoring such grievances by designated bodies.

The new guidelines will come into force from December 4, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a circular.

SCORES is a grievance redressal system that was launched in June 2011. Investors can lodge their complaints online with Sebi, pertaining to the securities market, against companies, intermediaries and market infrastructure institutions.

Under the guidelines, all entities including companies that received complaints of investors through SCORES, will have to resolve them within 21 calendar days of receipt of such grievances.

The complaint lodged on SCORES against any entity will be automatically forwarded to the concerned entity through SCORES for resolution and submission of ATR (Action Taken Report).

Further, the complaint against the entity will be simultaneously forwarded through SCORES to the relevant designated body.

Designated body for listed companies will be stock exchanges and for mutual funds it will be Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI).



In case the complainant is satisfied with the resolution provided by the entity or the complainant does not choose to review the complaint, such grievance will be disposed on SCORES.

However, if the complainant is not satisfied, the complainant may request for a review of the resolution provided by the entity within 15 calendar days from

the date of the ATR. Also, the complainant may seek a second review of the complaint within 15 calendar days from the date of the submission of the ATR by the designated body.

Sebi or the designated body may seek clarification on the ATR submitted by the concerned entity. Additionally, the regulator

has put in place a provision for imposing penalty on the listed firm that fails to redress investor complaints within the stipulated time. The designated stock exchange (DSE), which will be the designated body for listed companies, would levy a fine of Rs 1,000 per day per complaint on the listed company. These penalties would also be imposed on companies that are suspended from trading.

If the company fails to redress investor complaints or pay the fine within 15 days, then the DSE will issue a notice to the promoters of the listed company to ensure submission of ATRs on pending complaints and payment of fines within 10 days.

'Warehousing monthly rent in Delhi-NCR up 20 per cent in first half of 2023'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Monthly average rental of quality warehousing space in Delhi-NCR rose 19.9 per cent in the first six months of this year, according to a report by realtors body Credai and data analytics firm CRE Matrix.

In their joint report released on Thursday, Credai and CRE Matrix highlighted that the Grade-A warehousing stock crossed 163 million square feet in the first half of 2023, owing to rapid industrial growth.

During January-June period, the demand for Grade A warehousing space stood at 13 million square feet, whereas supply stood at 9.4 million square feet across six major cities. The vacancy level stood at a mere 8.8 per cent at the end of H1 2023, from the previous 10.5 per cent in the year-ago period. These six cities are -- Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Pune, Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad.

Rental costs too have witnessed a 10 per cent surge across India wherein Delhi-NCR (almost 20 per cent) and Chennai (20.8 per cent) had the highest increments in rental rates at the end of H12023.

As per the data, the weighted average market rent of warehousing in Delhi-NCR is Rs 27.7 per square feet a month.

CREDAI President Boman Irani says, "With the growth of e-commerce, retail, and coupled with the influx of global companies foraging into India, we strongly believe that the demand and supply of Grade A warehouses will only witness an upward trajectory in the coming years."

CRE Matrix CEO Abhishek Gupta said warehousing is the only real estate segment where demand has outstripped supply every year since last 7 years.

"Vacancy is at its all-time low at 8.8 per cent, rentals are at all-time high. India is growing at a breakneck speed and we need more and more Grade A warehousing," he said.

Total Grade A warehouse stock in India is approximately 165 million square feet and estimated to rise to 500 million square feet over the next 5 years, Gupta said.

"Warehouses are often built in outskirts of cities. Brace up for in-city warehouses for fast delivery where rentals could be higher than office rentals in some cases," he added.



Gold declines ₹130 to ₹60,170 per 10 gm; silver remains flat

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold declined Rs 130 to Rs 60,170 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid fall in precious metal prices in the overseas markets, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the yellow metal had finished at Rs 60,300 per 10 grams.

However, silver remained flat at Rs 74,500 per kilogram.

Gold slipped on Thursday, with spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets trading at Rs 60,170/10 gram, down by Rs 130, following a weak trend in the overseas markets, Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the global markets, gold was trading lower at USD 1,926 per ounce, while silver was flat at USD 23.19 per ounce.

Gold price slipped as the US dollar and bond yields rose after the Federal Reserve signalled another rate hike this year and a tighter monetary policy through 2024 than previously expected, Navneet Damani, senior vice-president of commodity research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.

Cigarette demand likely to rise by 7-9 per cent this fiscal: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Return of a large number of workforce to offices, coupled with a stable tax regime, is likely to push up cigarette demand by 7-9 per cent this fiscal, according to a report.

Cigarette volumes saw an 18 per cent rebound in the last fiscal after the pandemic hit demand in the previous two financial years, the report by Crisil Ratings said on Thursday.

Going forward, volume growth is expected to move closer to the long-term average of 5 per cent, the rating agency said in the report.

On the other hand, profitability of manufacturers is likely to remain strong despite input cost pressures in FY24 as they focus on premium cigarettes and hike prices in select categories, the report said.

Healthy balance sheets will support credit profiles, the report, which is based on an analysis of cigarette manufacturers accounting for over 90 per cent of the organised segment's sales volume, said.

Anand Kulkarni, a Director at Crisil Ratings, said physical occupancy at the workplace plays a significant role in driving cigarette volumes.

Physical occupancy in offices is expected to be 65-70 per cent this fiscal as against 40 per cent last fiscal, he said, adding that stability in the tax regime, which has a huge impact on demand, will also support growth.

A substantial increase in levies, including excise duty and goods and services tax, had dragged down the share of organised cigarette sales between FY13 and FY18.

Though the national

calamity contingent duty was hiked on cigarettes by 16 per cent in the FY24 Union Budget, the cost impact on the industry is marginal at 1-2 per cent, the report said, adding that manufacturers have passed on the impact through limited price hikes of 3-5 per cent in mid-premium and premium categories.

Cigarette manufacturers have seen cost pressures as tobacco prices, which account for 50-55 per cent of the manufacturing cost, have logged a compound annual growth of 20-25 per cent over the past three fiscals and is likely to go up in FY24 as well, the report said.

Rucha Narkar, an associate director at Crisil, said the rise in input costs may hurt profitability by only 50-100 basis points this fiscal, with operating margins expected to be about 65 per cent.

DGTR suo motu initiates anti-dumping probe into Chinese drawer sliders import

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has initiated a probe into the matter of alleged dumping of drawer sliders by Chinese firms in the country. The move is aimed at protecting domestic players from cheap imports from the neighbouring country.

The probe was started after a complaint by Highhope Furniture Fittings Manufacturers Associates Pvt Ltd was received, which stated that the domestic industry is getting injured due to an increase in dumped imports.

Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), the commerce ministry's investigation arm, is probing the dumping of Telescopic Channel Drawer Slider originating in or exported from China.

The product under consideration is a small device that helps in smoothly closing and

opening of the drawer. The product is an essential component of modern furniture design that enhances the functionality and aesthetics of drawers.

It said that there is sufficient prima facie evidence of injury being caused to the domestic industry by dumped imports from China.

It added that there is sufficient prima facie evidence that the normal value of the goods in China is higher than the ex-factory export price, indicating the item is being dumped into the Indian market by Chinese exporters. "The authority initiates a suo motu anti-dumping investigation on the imports," the notification said.

If it is established that the dumping has caused material injury to domestic players, DGTR would recommend the imposition of anti-dumping duty on these imports.

BUSINESS BRIEF

SEMINAR TO HIGHLIGHT INDIA'S AQUACULTURE TRANSFORMATION ON SEPT 25

New Delhi: In a move that underscores India's commitment to sustainable aquaculture, a groundbreaking seminar titled Sustainable Aquaculture: India's Potential to be the Global Leader is set to take place on September 25, 2023, in New Delhi.

Moment of immense pride to be flag-bearer in Asiad opening ceremony: Harmanpreet

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian men's hockey team captain Harmanpreet Singh on Thursday said it is a "moment of immense pride" for him to have been picked as the country's joint flag-bearer for the opening ceremony of the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou on Saturday.

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on Wednesday named Harmanpreet and Olympic medalist boxer Lovlina Borgohain as the flag-bearers of the country's 655-member contingent.

In the recent past, Dhanraj Pillay (1998, 2002), Jyoti Sunita Kullu (2006), Gagan Narang (2010), Sardar Singh (2014), and Neeraj Chopra (2018) were India's flag-bearers at the continental showpiece.

"Being named as the joint flag-bearer alongside Lovlina Borgohain for the Asian Games is a moment of immense pride for me. It is an opportunity to represent my country on an even larger scale, and I am truly humbled by this honour."

"I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate our boxing star Lovlina for the



same," Harmanpreet said in a Hockey India release.

"I look forward to leading our contingent with all the enthusiasm and determination that has driven me throughout my career. This event is a testament to the unity and diversity

of our nation, and I hope to carry our flag with the utmost pride and humility."

A key member of the men's team, Harmanpreet played a pivotal role in India's bronze medal-winning campaign at the Tokyo Olympics.

His drag-flicking prowess was on full display in Tokyo, where he emerged as India's top scorer, netting six goals.

Harmanpreet recently led India to the Asian Champions Trophy title in Chennai. Talking about Indian team's

preparation for the Asian Games, which is an Olympic qualifier, Harmanpreet said: "We've put in diligent preparation for the tournament, and our entire team is brimming with confidence. Our primary focus is on the crucial group-stage matches."

"We won't underestimate any opponent, as in major events, every team brings their A-game. Our mindset is geared towards victory against all opponents."

"After our commendable performance at the Asian Champions Trophy, our aim is to sustain that high level of play and clinch the gold medal at the Asian Games, which will help us in securing direct qualification for 2024 Paris Olympics," he added.

The Indian men's team is placed in Pool A alongside arch-rivals Pakistan, Japan, Bangladesh, Singapore, and Uzbekistan in the hockey competition of the Asian Games, while Pool B consists of Korea, Malaysia, China, Oman, Thailand, and Indonesia.

India will open their campaign against Uzbekistan on Sunday.



Indian stars who stumbled on injury, ineligibility hurdle ahead of Games

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hundreds of Indian athletes will strive set to write tales of glory in the upcoming Hangzhou Asian Games but a few stars will have to go through the disappointment of watching all the action from afar.

A combination of injuries and eligibility technicalities have resulted in their absence in Asia's biggest sporting event.

The depth of their pain will be even deeper because they had etched their own stories of triumph for India during the Jakarta Asian Games in 2018 or in other top-flight competitions like the Olympics or World Championships.

So, here we look at some of those less fortunate ones, who will have to wait for their moment under the light.

Vinesh Phogat, who had won the gold in the last edition of the Asian Games in 50 kg freestyle wrestling, could have added a medal to India's tally in China too.

In fact, the 29-year-old, who was at the forefront of wrestlers' protest against former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Singh recently, had gained a direct entry into the latest sequel of the Asiad.

But a knee injury that she sustained while training forced her to undergo surgery in August, enough to end her Asian Games dreams.

Ravi Dahiya, an Olympic silver medal winner in the 57 kg category in Tokyo, might have been gunning for his maiden Asian Games medal.

But the 25-year-old grappler will not compete in Hangzhou after losing to Atish Todkar in the first round of the national trials in July. He is also recovering from a knee injury at the

moment. Talismanic women's hockey player Rani Rampal will be a big miss in Hangzhou.

Rampal was the leader of the Indian women's team when they returned with a silver from the 2018 Games.

But the prolific striker will not be a part of the Indian team four years later when they search for a gold. Instead, Rampal will be tutoring the Indian U17 side.

Another prominent name who will miss the action in Hangzhou will be sprinter Hima Das.

The 23-year-old was a part of India's 4x400M relay team, also comprising M.R. Poovamma, V.K. Vismaya and Sarita Gayakwad, which won a historic gold at Jakarta.

In the 2018 Games, she had also won the silver in the 400M race.

But a hamstring injury that she suffered in April this year ended her hopes of travelling to the Asian Games.

In recent years, boxers have emerged as genuine medal contenders for India in international competitions.

Amit Panghal, a World Championship silver medalist, is a premier name among the pugilists.

The 27-year-old had won a gold in the 49kg category in Jakarta and expecting another top performance from him was not unrealistic.

But as it turned out, Panghal did not even qualify for the Hangzhou event. He fared poorly in the selection trials and Deepak Bhoria found a place in the Indian boxing contingent.

Panghal took the legal route and approached the Punjab and Haryana High Court, alleging bias in the selection process. But

the court summarily dismissed his petition.

In shooting also, India has become a force to reckon with in top level tournaments globally.

At Hangzhou, top shooters such as Manu Bhaker (Sports Pistol) and Rudranksh Patil (Air Rifle) will lead India's medal quest.

However, Sourabh Choudhary will not be defending his 10m Air Pistol gold in the swanky Chinese city.

In fact, 2023 was a year of disappointments for the 21-year-old.

He finished eighth in the six-round national selection trials for the Asian Games, and failed to earn a ticket to Hangzhou.

Additionally, Saurabh, who was the youngest Indian marksman to win an Asian Games gold, was also not part of the Indian team that contested in the ISSF World Championships at Baku in August.

But with age on his side, Saurabh is still viewed as an elite sporting event in India.

But from Jakarta, Fouaad Mirza brought home rare silver medals in Jumping — individual and the team events.

But the 31-year-old Bengalaru man will not wear India jersey in this Asian Games, after non-selection by the Equestrian Federation of India for not meeting the eligibility requirements.

Some other big names such as gymnast Dipa Karmakar, who finished fourth in Rio Olympics, former world No.1 archer Deepika Kumari have also stumbled on the eligibility hurdle.

Shafali shines as Indian women enter semi-final



PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Shafali Verma bullied an inexperienced Malaysian attack with a sparkling 39-ball-67 as India entered the semi-final of the women's cricket event at the Asian Games by virtue of better ICC rankings after Thursday's quarter-final was abandoned due to rain.

The match was reduced to 15 over-a-side affair and India scored an imposing 173 for 2, courtesy Shafali, skipper Smriti Mandhana's 27 off 16 balls, Jemimah Rodrigues' 29-ball-47, Richa Ghosh's 7-ball-21 came as a cherry on top of the cake.

It was going to be next to

deliveries forced Shafali to walk down the track in order to meet the ball early. Mandhana, at the other end, got some full-tosses which were dispatched to all corners of the ground.

Mandhana was dismissed after the opening pair got 59 within the Powerplay when she tried to pull a delivery, which was bowled slightly on the fuller side from spinner Mahira Izzati Ismail.

Shafali's innings had five sixes apart from four boundaries and mostly in the region between square leg and deep mid-wicket apart from a straight six that got her to a well-compiled half-century.

Rodrigues also looked in good touch as she got six boundaries and added 86 for the second wicket with Shafali.

Shafali was also hit on her right forearm when she couldn't evade a powerful bowler's back-drive by Rodrigues and needed an urgent taping.

She got a reprieve in the deep off Mas Elysa's bowling but immediately after that was caught plumb in front. Richa came in and blasted four boundaries in the 15th and final over of the innings which took India past the 170-run mark.

Brief Scores: India 173/2 in 15 overs (Shafali Verma 67, Jemimah Rodrigues 47), Malaysia (Revised target 177) 1/0 in 0.2 overs.

Match called off. India win due to better ICC ranking.



Chhetri strike downs Bangladesh, keeps India's Games hopes alive

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

The Indian football team rode on a late Sunil Chhetri strike to beat Bangladesh by a solitary goal and stay alive for a place in the knockouts of the Asian Games here on Thursday.

The 39-year-old veteran scored from the spot in the 85th minute to help his team earn full points after the 1-5 hammering at the hands of hosts China on Tuesday.

The Bangladesh goalkeeper dived the right way but could not do anything against Chhetri's fabulous knock from the spot as the ball went past him.

India were awarded the penalty after a foul Bangladesh captain Rahmat following a long ball to Bryce Miranda at the edge of the box.

Asked about the lack of recovery time, Chhetri said, "The first thing is to go and recuperate, it was not easy. I'm petty sure it was the same thing for the opponents also. Playing three

games in five days is not easy, a lot of ice bath, eat good food and get ready."

India will next play Myanmar, who beat Bangladesh 1-0 on the opening day.

India had a great chance of scoring from a free kick after Gurkirat Singh was fouled near the Bangladesh box.

Samuel Kynshi took the free-kick after getting some advice from Chhetri, but his shot to the top-left corner was brilliantly saved by the Bangladesh custodian, who dived to palm the ball away. After a goalless first half, India had another chance to score but Rahul KP could not make use of the cross inside the box as he headed it the other way.

There were three changes for India as Gurmeet Singh, who received a yellow card in last game, was replaced by Dheeraj Singh. The two other changes were Rohit Danu for Rahim Ali and Chinglensena Singh for Sumit Rathi.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's only Asian Games individual medalist in recurve section, Tarundeep Rai, feels at least one from the men's archery team could win a medal in the Hangzhou edition and end a 13-year-long drought in the continental showpiece.

Rai indicated that fellow Army colleague Dhiraj Bomma-devara and Atanu Das, the senior most in the recurve team, stand a chance to become individual champion.

"Hopefully, I'll get a company (as an Asian Games individual recurve medalist) before I quit next year," Rai told PTI in an exclusive interview.

"I think my record will be broken this year. If they have their day, it can be a gold this

Rai optimistic about Indian men's recurve team's success

time. Hopefully, I will find a company this time. "I've a huge feeling that Indian men recurve archers will do better in individual events this time. More than the team we have a better chance in individual and teams like Korea, Japan, China, Malaysia and Indonesia are going to be strong medal contenders."

"A Games experience is totally different than a championship event — most of the times you lose track and get lost in the crowd," Rai explained why India have fared poorly at the Asian Games.



He added, "The grandeur of the event, the location, the village, atmosphere altogether puts different kind of pressure. It

slowly starts affecting your form, unless you are used to it."

Set for his third successive Asian Games, two-time Olym-

pian Das has a wealth of experience, while Rai's Army "junior" Dhiraj is in the midst of a breakout season.

In his first full competitive season as a senior, the 22-year-old Dhiraj has won one silver, three bronze medals including one in individual section at the World Cup that earned him a World Cup Final berth. He impressed in his maiden World Cup Final where he shocked two-time Olympic gold medalist Kim Woo-jin of Korea, before ending a creditable fourth.

"Dhiraj has shown he's hungry for success. To win four World Cup medals in his first full World Cup season is not easy," said Rai, who has seen Dhiraj's rise since he joined the Army Sports Institute, Pune five years back.

Srinagar's Bilquis appointed senior canoeing, kayaking judge

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

Bilquis Mir, the former kayaking and canoeing player from Srinagar and the first water sports coach from the region, has achieved the distinction of becoming the first Indian woman to be appointed as the 'finishing chief judge' at the Asian Games, beginning in Hangzhou on Saturday.

Mir, who hails from Khanayr area of the city, said it was a proud moment for her. "I am the first woman from



India to have been included in this jury panel," Mir told PTI on Wednesday.

"I will be the chief judge at the finishing point in kayaking, canoeing and canoe sprint events at Hangzhou. It is a very

crucial position and it's an honour for me. It's a dream come true. I would like to dedicate this success to those girls who will take up this sport in future," she said.

Mir, who turned to coaching after a career as a player, said more women are in decision-making positions in the sport.

"When I started competing as a player, I saw very few women players being given such responsibilities, but today women are (in) decision-making process," she said.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Commonwealth Games silver medalist 3000m steeplechase runner Avinash Sable hopes to get over the World Championships disappointment and set a new national record en route to a gold medal in the Asian Games in Hangzhou, China. By his own admission, Sable is not satisfied with the season so far, which includes a disappointing seventh-place finish in the 3000m steeplechase heat at the World Championships in Budapest last month, thereby failing to qualify for the final.

But come the Asian Games, Sable feels he is in a good frame of mind to register his best result of the season.

"The Asian Games will be my season's last race. This year I didn't run any race for national record but I hope to clock my best timing in Hangzhou. I will be running for timing in Asian Games.

Sable hopes to put behind World C'ship disappointment

The training I had, I hope to record my personal best and win the race," the long-distance runner said in a virtual media interaction. In Hangzhou, besides 3000m steeplechase, his pet event, Sable will also compete in 5000m race. "I am confident about steeplechase and my main aim is to win gold in that event but I am also focussing on 5,000 metres," he said.

While Sable will compete in 3000m steeplechase on October 1, his second event — 5000m — is on October 4.

"I haven't competed in two events much this year, I was only focussing on steeplechase. In Commonwealth Games, I participated in two events on the same



day so I couldn't do well. I have been preparing for two events from March-April this year. I don't have that much experience in 5000m as I have in steeplechase but it's good that there are two days for recovery after steeplechase," he said.

"The decision to participate in two events in the Asian Games was taken after discussions with the coaching staff. Considering the standard in the Asian Games and with no qualifier, it's a bit easy," Sable, however, admitted that it was tough to get his motivation back after the World Championships, where he made mistakes.

"My preparation for the last World Championships was good. I thought qualifying won't be tough because I was feeling 100 per cent in terms of my fitness. But I made a few mistakes. Sometimes the body doesn't react in tactical races. I don't think we lacked in pace.

IYER TO PROVE HIS FITNESS

Surya his worth during WC dress rehearsal

PTI ■ MOHALI

Shreyas Iyer's dodgy match-fitness will be put to ultimate test while Suryakumar Yadav's desperation to alter a dismal ODI record adds a fascinating sub-text to India's three-game series against Australia, which also serves as final dress rehearsal before the World Cup, beginning next month.

With pillars of Indian batting — skipper Rohit Sharma and the brilliant Virat Kohli — resting for the first two games along with lead spinner Kuldeep Yadav and premier all-rounder Hardik Pandya, it will be head coach Rahul Dravid's final chance to assess his bench strength.

The two Mumbai batters — both very different players from each other — are fighting their own little battles to be a part of the most important tournament of their lives.

The 28-year-old Iyer hasn't played much cricket in last six months due to stress fracture surgery.

A stiff back just before an Asia Cup match against Pakistan raised questions about his fitness.

As chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar has said that Iyer is good to go in the three games but whether his body is holding for 100 overs during the three games over next five days, will be observed keenly.

As much as Ishan Kishan



has done his bit, India will need Iyer, the proverbial slayer of spin bowling in the middle overs during the World Cup.

For Surya, literally 'SKY' has been the limit in T20s but before anything else, he perhaps need an uncluttered mind about what kind of role is he looking at in ODI cricket.

In today's day and age, 27 ODIs are a lot and less than 25 average is neither a true reflection of his talent nor his capabilities.

Surya was not even in Indian team management's radar and now the crafty veteran and his younger state-mate Washington Sundar are locked in a battle for an outside chance to make it to the squad.

If one goes by the buzz,

33, he won't practically get a shot at another 50-over World Cup.

'Ash' is name of the game

The small quadriceps tear that left-arm spinner Axar Patel suffered has opened an unlikely door for 37-year-old Ravichandran Ashwin to play his third and what could likely be his last 50 over World Cup in case the former doesn't recover in time.

Even two weeks back, Ashwin was not even in Indian team management's radar and now the crafty veteran and his younger state-mate Washington Sundar are locked in a battle for an outside chance to make it to the squad.

If one goes by the buzz,

Ashwin even if he doesn't do well in the upcoming games, is way ahead of Washington in terms of probable chance of a look-in. Ashwin's battle against David Warner and Steve Smith could be a fan's delight.

The absence of Kuldeep Yadav and Hardik Pandya will give both Ashwin and Washington, a chance to showcase what they have to offer to the team.

But, there is every possibility that even if Ashwin does brilliantly, the team management will go with Axar if he recovers on time and plays the third ODI.

Usually, a small tear takes two weeks to heal and for a spinner, it is not a serious injury unlike for fast bowlers, where it

takes more time before they can go full steam.

Hence India will remain hopeful about getting Axar fit before the tournament proper starts.

Team Combination

With no Rohit at the top of the order, Ishan Kishan is likely to open with Shubman Gill while Kohli's place is taken by Iyer, who needs game time.

India's Asian Games-bound skipper Rituraj Gaikwad is in the squad more as a cover and could be released after the second game as he would link up with T20 team flying to Hangzhou on September 28.

India haven't rested any of its fast bowlers but Jasprit Bumrah

and Mohammed Siraj may play two of the three games as three 50-over games have been slotted in five days and it also includes travel.

Workload management of two pacers will be paramount.

Australia, the team to beat in World Cup

Australia despite losing 2-3 to South Africa recently had a quality series even as skipper Pat Cummins' injury keeps bothering them.

But having won the last ODI series in India in March and being one of the international teams which has regularly cracked the 50-over code in sub-continent, there couldn't have been a better preparation going into a marquee event where both countries will incidentally meet again on October 8.

Travis Head's injury gave Marnus Labuschagne a chance which he has taken with both hands but it will be Australia's bowling attack that will be put to test on three of the flattest decks that one comes across in sub-continent.

SQUAD

India: KL Rahul (C & WK), Ravindra Jadeja (Vice-captain), Rituraj Gaikwad, Shubman Gill, Shreyas Iyer, Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak Varma, Ishan Kishan (wicketkeeper), Shardul Thakur, Washington Sundar, R Ashwin, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohd. Shami, Mohd. Siraj, Prasidh Krishna.

Australia: Pant Cummins (Captain), Alex Carey, Nathan Ellis, Cameron Green, Adam Zampa, Marcus Stoinis, Mitchell Starc, Steve Smith, David Warner, Josh Hazlewood, Spencer Johnson, Marnus Labuschagne, Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Tanvir Sangha, Matt Short.

Bhullar opens with superb 66 to be top Indian in Taiwan

PTI ■ TAIPEI CITY

India's Gaganjeet Bhullar opened his campaign at the Yeangder TPC golf with three birdies on the first three holes and ended with four more birdies against one bogey for a solid 6-under 66 in the first round here on Thursday.

Bhullar is a part winner here, having tasted success in 2012. His 66 saw him tied with seven others in eighth position.

Thailand's Natipong Srithong posted a classy bogey-free nine-under-par 63 to take the lead.

Another Indian, Karandeep Kochhar, had a great start with 5-under 67 to be tied 16th, while S Chikkarangappa and Veer Ahlawat with 68 each were tied 31st in the low scoring first round. Preferred lies were played on an extremely hot but calm day.

Khalin Joshi and Yuvraj Sandhu shot 69 each to be T-49, as Rashid Khan and Ajeetesh Sandhu were T-60 and on the cutline. Kartik Sharma (71) was T-75, Honey Baisoya (72) was T-93, Jeev Milkha Singh and Rahul Gangjee with 73 each were T-110 and Viraj Madappa (74) was T-126.

Bhullar, starting on the 10th opened with three birdies in a row and then followed that with six pars to turn in 3-under. He had birdies on first, third, fourth and eighth and a bogey on sixth on his second nine for



66. Kochhar also started on the back nine and had just one birdie on 10th and then eight pars. Like Bhullar he had an action-filled back nine. He birdied first, third, fourth, sixth and ninth and his sole bogey of the day came on the second.

Both Chikka and Ahlawat had an eagle each in their 68. They had four other birdies and two bogeys each. Natipong Srithong had nine birdies, including four in a row from the 12th, to lie ahead of Sweden's Bjorn Hellgren with a 64.

Defending champion Travis Smyth from Australia returned a 65, along with Kosuke Hamamoto and Chapchai Nirat from Thailand, Chinese Taipei amateur Su Ching-hung, and Hong Kong's Matthew Cheung. Natipong has won once before on the Asian Tour, at the 2015 Resorts World Manila Masters, which was only his fourth event on the Asian Tour.

Nagal gets support from DLTA, PepsiCo India

NEW DELHI, SEP 21 (PTI)

Soon after Sumit Nagal shared his financial struggle in an interview with the PTI, support began to pour in for India's top tennis player with leading beverage company PepsiCo India and the DLTA rushing to his aid.

The Delhi Lawn Tennis Association (DLTA) has decided to release a one-time support of Rs 5 lakh while PepsiCo has also pledged to support Nagal for three years.

"We have taken details from Sumit Nagal and Rs 5 lakh will be deposited in his account. DLTA President Rohit Rajpal has approved the support," DLTA administrator Ranbir Chauhan said.

Nagal had claimed in an interview with PTI that his annual budget to survive on the ATP Tour is no less than Rs one crore and after arranging for his funds, he was left with just 900 Euros in his account.

Rajpal said, "He deserves much more. Sports people have to be treated like national assets. They needed to be taken care of. Tennis is a brutal and tough game. It requires travel on weekly basis, that makes it tough. We are talking to other sponsors and have already requested the sports ministry for help."

Meanwhile, Ankit Agarwal, Associate Director, Energy & Hydration, PepsiCo India said, "Sumit is a role model for the new-gen athletes of India with

his career being a true example of hard work and sweat that makes talent shine."

"As a brand that is dedicated to supporting athletes in removing barriers to sporting success, we are delighted to welcome Sumit to the Gatorade squad.

"We wish him the best as he represents the nation, and we hope to empower the next generation of athletes with this association as they continue to pursue their dreams."

Nagal said, "I am deeply moved and grateful to join hands with Gatorade. This association comes to me at a pivotal time, and I am thankful my hard work and passion is getting recognised and appreciated."

Double blow for SA: Nortje, Magala out of World Cup

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

South Africa were dealt twin blows weeks ahead of the ODI World Cup after injured pacers Anrich Nortje and Sisanda Magala were ruled out of the tournament in India, head coach Rob Walter said on Thursday.

Bowling all-rounder Andile Phehlukwayo and seamer Lizaad Williams have replaced the duo in the World Cup-bound squad.

"It's hugely disappointing for Anrich and Sisanda to be missing out on the 50-over World Cup. Both are quality players that add immense value to the Proteas," Walter said.

"We sympathise in their omission and will continue to provide all the necessary support as they work towards their return to competitive action," he added.

Nortje has a lower-back injury. The 29-year-old seamer experienced back spasms during the second ODI against Australia and underwent assessments and scans.

Magala, on the other hand, has a left-knee problem. Both Nortje and Magala were part of South Africa's initial 15-member squad for the marquee event.

However with the South African team set to leave for India on Saturday, both players failed to recover in time for



the World Cup, forcing the team management to name replacements.

"This provides an opportunity for Andile and Lizaad on the global stage. Both players have been part of our winter programs as well as having represented South Africa in the recent white-ball tour against Australia," Walter said.

"They offer great skill sets and we're excited to have them complete the 15-player squad for this year's World Cup."

Nortje's injury is a major blow for South Africa as he is one of the quickest bowlers in world cricket at the moment and has substantial experience playing in India. His express speed and ability to generate bounce makes him a valuable asset for the Proteas

in all formats of the game. Phehlukwayo is a like for like replacement for Magala. He showcased his batting prowess in the final ODI against Australia.

South Africa will begin their World Cup campaign against Sri Lanka in New Delhi on October 7.

South Africa's updated squad:

Temba Bavuma (c), Gerald Coetzee, Quinton de Kock, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Andile Phehlukwayo, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Rassie van der Dussen and Lizaad Williams.

Feel like a million bucks, says Smith ahead of India series

PTI ■ MOHALI

Returning from a wrist injury, star Australian batter Steve Smith said he is feeling like "a million bucks" after batting for close to two hours in the nets ahead of the opening ODI against India.

The 34-year-old had torn a tendon in his left wrist during the second Ashes Test at Lord's after making a match-winning 110 in the first innings.

Smith faced Australia skipper Pat Cummins, who also returns to the squad after a wrist injury, during the nets session here on Wednesday.

"I faced Patty (Cummins) for a bit, felt good against him,

felt quite a bit of spin and lots on the 'wanger', so it's a good start," Smith told cricket.Com.Au here.

"I did lots of running, I was still able to do that when I had the brace on. I got the brace off, not much changed, had a little injection and feel a million bucks now."

The injury forced Smith to wear a wrist brace and miss the white ball tour of South Africa.

The former skipper, who had taken a cortisone injection to get through the Ashes, said he needed another injection to help him get fit in time for the three-match ODI series against India, starting here on Friday.

Pay dispute between England women's global players, FA appears to be resolved

AP ■ LONDON

Players from the England women's team appear to have reached an agreement with the country's soccer federation regarding a dispute over bonuses and commercial structures.

England captain Millie Bright said at a news conference on Thursday that the players "feel really confident moving forward about the structure we now have in place" with the Football Association. Exact details of the agreement have yet to be officially announced.

In a statement released before the recent Women's World Cup in Australia, the England squad expressed disap-



pointment at the dispute having not been resolved before the tournament and said the players had decided to pause talks with the intention of revisiting them.

Players from teams at the World Cup were due to receive individual payments directly from FIFA for the first time, ranging from \$30,000 to

\$270,000 depending on what stage of the tournament they reached.

England players didn't receive any payments from the FA, reportedly because the governing body perceived payments coming from FIFA to be enough.

There is also believed to be frustration over a commercial

strategy which players feel limits their ability to earn extra money from sponsorship.

"We've had a really good conversation with the FA," Bright said. "We have come to an agreement, but I think it's bigger than just the bonus."

"For us it's about being world leaders on and off the pitch, and as we know the women's game is evolving very quickly and conversations like this need to happen in order to make sure in all areas we're at the top of our game."

England lost to Spain in the World Cup final, a year after the team coached by Sarina Wiegman won the European Championship for the first time.

Indian wrestlers' woeful performance continues in greco-roman

PTI ■ BELGRADE (SERBIA)

Indian greco-roman grappler I.Sajan Bhanwala lost in the opening round of the World Championships to a technically far superior opponent from South Korea as the country's disappointing show at the prestigious competition continued here on Thursday.

The 82kg wrestler was no match for Yang Sejin, losing 3-1 and getting eliminated from the tournament against an opponent ranked one place lower than the Indian at No.18 in the world.

Indians have had a torrid time at the Worlds with only Abhimanyu (70kg) making it to the bronze-medal round in

men's free-style. He had lost to Arman Andreyanov of Armenia.

In the women's section, Antim Panghal (53kg) has a chance to win a bronze medal and secure a spot for the Paris Olympics later on Thursday.

Gurpreet Singh, the 77kg grappler, after getting a direct entry into the pre-quarterfinal lost his bout to world No.1 Levai Zoltan of Hungary in just one minute 12 seconds.

Zoltan, the 2022 World Championships silver medalist in Belgrade last year, achieved a victory by fall.

However, Gurpreet can still make it to the bronze medal round through the repechage route if Zoltan goes all the way to the final.

England and Arsenal player Williamson calls for equality in soccer

AP ■ MANCHESTER

When England soccer player Leah Williamson addressed the United Nations in New York this week, she spoke of her recent visit to Za'atari in Jordan, the world's biggest Syrian refugee camp.

She spoke of the power of sport - soccer in particular - to change lives after witnessing

the work being done by Save The Children and The Arsenal Foundation within the camp.

Girls, she says, became empowered after being introduced to the sport, while male attitudes were changed as a result. Williamson's message, however, goes beyond one laudable project with refugees in Jordan. She is using her status to challenge gender stereotypes

that she says continue to hold women and girls back and is calling for parity in soccer.

"The world has been the way it has been for a long, long time," she told The Associated Press before her address on Tuesday. "Not only do we face the stereotype from these sort of archaic beliefs that women are only meant to be a certain way ... But we are also conditioned to

believe them. So I think it is not just a conversation that needs to be had with men, it needs to be had with women who can then find the confidence to take the opportunity when it is presented to them." Williamson is calling for a "level playing field."

There is an obvious disparity between the opportunities afforded refugees and women and girls from more affluent

parts of the world. But the England captain says gender imbalance is widespread.

The recent Women's World Cup underlined the soaring popularity of women's soccer, while the growth of leagues in Europe is further evidence of its appeal. Yet there have also been reminders of the issues that remain in the game.

The tournament was over-

shadowed by the fallout after former Spanish soccer federation president Luis Rubiales kissed player Jenni Hermoso on the lips during the awards ceremony for Spain's triumph in Australia last month.

"It's the exact reason I am here, I go to Jordan and I want to be involved in these events in the U.N. To highlight what isn't just an isolated incident,"

Williamson said. "It's the life. It's the environment we've created for women and the environment we are trying to step away from and be respected in the way we should be. There are so many things that we've been conditioned to believe that's what happens," Williamson said. "A woman walks down the street and she accepts certain things happen because that's

just the way of the world." She added, "we can change it. That's up to us. I'm trying. I'm doing my bit."

There have been other disputes over pay and conditions. England's preparations for the World Cup were cast against the backdrop of a dispute with the Football Association over bonuses and commercial arrangements.