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AIR POLLUTION RENDERS
ANTIBIOTICS INEFFECTIVE

WORLD 8
RAMASWAMY CALLS FOR ENDING
BIRTHRIGHT CITIZENSHIP IN US

MONEY 10
SENSEX, NIFTY PLUNGE
NEARLY 1 PER CENT

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PAK TEAM
WEAKER THAN
INDIA: WAQAR
12 SPORT

SHOOTERS ADD TO GOLD HAUL MP Bidhuri faces Privileges Committee

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

The men's 10m air pistol team continued India's success story at the Asian Games here, winning gold but two of the marksmen, who made it to the individual finals on Thursday, missed a medal.

The team of Sarabjot Singh, Arjun Singh Cheema and Shiva Narwal narrowly beat the Chinese team to take the top podium and earn India its fourth gold medal from the shooting ranges.

With Thursday's success, Indian shooters have so far won four gold, four silver and five bronze medals.

The Indian trio's aggregate score of 1734 was just one better than the Chinese team, which settled for the silver medal, while Vietnam, with a score of 1730, bagged the bronze.

Sarabjot and Arjun also made it to the eight-shooter individual finals but finished fourth and eighth, respectively. Vietnam's Pham Quang Huy won gold with a score of 240.5, while South Korea's Lee Wonho (239.4) and Uzbekistan's Vladimir Svechnikov (219.9) took the silver and bronze, respectively.

Sarabjot, 21, finished fourth, scoring 199, while Arjun ended up eighth and last, exiting on the second elimination shot.

It was another fruitful day for Indian shooters, with Sarabjot, who will be celebrating his 22nd birthday on Saturday, giving himself an



Gold medal winning Indian team shooters Sarabjot Singh, Arjun Singh Cheema and Shiva Narwal during the presentation ceremony of the men's 10m air pistol event at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou in China on Thursday

early birthday gift as he led the air pistol trio to team gold, scoring 580 in the qualification round, while Cheema shot 578 and Narwal amassed 576 to aggregate 1734.

In the qualification round, whose aggregate score decides the team medallists, Sarabjot shot cards of 95, 95, 97, 98, 97 and 98 to aggregate 580 and entered the finals at fifth place.

Team-mate Arjun Cheema shot series of 97, 96, 97, 97, 96 and 95 for his 578 to also make the eight-shooter finals, placed eighth.

Shiva Narwal, the younger

brother of 2020 Tokyo Paralympic gold medallist in mixed 50m pistol Manish, came out of his elder sibling's shadow as the third member of the gold-winning team here, but he could not make it to the individual finals, finishing 14th.

Narwal shot series of 92, 96, 97, 99, 97 and 95 for his 576. This was the third team gold at the shooting ranges here after the 10m air rifle top-podium finish and women's 25-metre pistol gold.

Sarabjot had won his first individual senior gold medal at the ISSF World Cup in Bhopal

earlier this year, and was gunning for more success today in the individual category after being placed fifth among the eight finalists at the end of the qualification round.

But a string of below-par scores in the finals, undid his efforts in the qualification round. He managed just 9.8 and 9.4 on the third and fourth shots in the finals and another rank bad shot of 8.9 on the seventh shot pegged him further back from where he could not recover.

Sarabjot, whose success story started in 2021 when he



won the junior air pistol team and mixed team gold at the ISSF World Championships in Lima, Peru in 2021, has been performing consistently ever since, bagging the mixed team gold at the recently-concluded World Championships in Baku, Azerbaijan.

He would now be aiming to seal a 2024 Paris Olympics quota place at the Asian Championships in Changwon (South Korea) later this year. Meanwhile, Indian men's and women's teams assured themselves of medals at the Asian Games after progressing to the semifinals of the squash events here on Thursday.

While the men's team blanked Nepal 3-0 in its final pool tie, the women were handed a 0-3 loss by Malaysia in their last pool B fixture. Both teams sealed top two spots in their respective pools to make the semifinals which guarantees them at least a bronze.

The Indian women's team began the day with veteran Joshna Chinappa enduring a 6-11, 2-11, 8-11 defeat to Subramaniam Sivasangari in 21 minutes. In the second match, Tanvi Khanna squandered a 2-1 lead before going down to Commonwealth Games gold medallist Aifa Binti Azman 9-11, 11-1, 7-11, 13-11, 11-5.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has referred the complaints lodged by several MPs on the issue involving BJP member Ramesh Bidhuri's use of objectionable words against BSP's Danish Ali to the Privileges Committee, sources said on Thursday.

While Ali and several other Opposition MPs, including Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and DMK's Kanimozhi, wrote to the Speaker seeking action against Bidhuri, some BJP parliamentarians like Nishikant Dubey said the BSP member "incited" the South Delhi MP when he was speaking in the House and urged the Chair to look into this as well.

Sources said Birla has sent all these complaints to the Privileges Committee headed by BJP MP Sunil Kumar Singh.

Bidhuri had made certain derogatory remarks, later expunged from records, targeted at BSP member Danish Ali on September 22 when he was speaking in the Lok Sabha during a discussion on the success of the Chandrayaan-3 mission.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who was present in the House, expressed his regret at the ruling party MP's conduct.

As opposition parties rallied around Ali after a video of Bidhuri's remarks went viral triggering an outrage, the Lok

Sabha Speaker took "serious note" and warned him of "strict action" if such behaviour is repeated in the future.

The BJP also issued him a show-cause notice.

Ali wrote to the Speaker, seeking an enquiry by the Privileges Committee, describing Bidhuri's comments as "hate speech".

Almost all Opposition parties also wrote to Birla, seeking action against him.

However, a few BJP MPs, including Dubey, asserted that Ali incited Bidhuri with highly objectionable remarks against the Prime Minister.

While Dubey condemned Bidhuri's conduct, he urged the Speaker to look into Ali's behaviour as well. Other BJP MPs echoed the view.

In a post on X on Thursday, Dubey thanked the Speaker for referring the matter to the committee.

"It was possible because the BJP has a majority in Lok Sabha," he said, as he cited several previous incidents to assert that no committee was formed to probe these issues and nor was anyone punished.

In this context, Dubey alleged that the RJD-JD(U)-Congress members were engaged in a fight involving shoes and microphones in 2006, Sonia Gandhi was involved in an incident in 2012 besides the commotion and injuries to parliamentarians in

2014 during the creation of Telangana as a separate state.

Opposition leaders have slammed the BJP over Bidhuri being given poll responsibility by the party in Rajasthan's Tonk district.

In a post on X, Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal said the BJP has "rewarded" Bidhuri for attacking Ali with the "unspeakable words" in Parliament.

"BJP rewards 'hate' Bidhuri rewarded for attacking Danish Ali (BSP) for the unspeakable words he used in the Special Session of Parliament. Made BJP in-charge of Tonk District in Rajasthan."

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh, in a post on X last night, said, "Sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas" yeh sab hai inka bakwaas."

TMC MP Mahua Moitra also slammed the BJP and said Bidhuri had been "rewarded" for his remarks against a Muslim MP. "How does a showcased person be given a new role by BJP? Narendra Modi ji, is this your Sneha Yatra for minorities, your love outreach?" she said on X.

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said, "So much for the #BhajaParty's show cause notice! The foul-mouthed MP is now in charge of Tonk, where no doubt he will have plenty of opportunities to polarise the electorate even further with his divisive rhetoric!"

Khalistanis at it again

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Operatives of Khalistani terrorist outfit Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) painted pro-Khalistan graffiti in North Delhi on Wednesday, a month after defacing several Delhi Metro stations with similar slogans.

According to the police, "Delhi banega Khalistan" and "Khalistan Zindabad SFJ" slogans were found painted on both sides of the Kashmiri Gate flyover connecting North Delhi and North East Delhi and at some other places. The Delhi Police removed the graffiti soon after they spotted it.

Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, the US-based Khalistani terrorist and chief of the SFJ, claimed responsibility for the illegal act and threatened to storm the "Modi Stadium" in Ahmedabad on October 5.

"Khalistanis from Canada are in Delhi to avenge assassination of Nijjar," Pannun said in a statement.

"A case has been lodged under Section 153 of the IPC (Indian Penal Code) and the Delhi Prevention of Defacement of Public Property Act against unidentified miscreants and an investigation has been launched in this connection," an official said on the condition of anonymity.

In a statement, the Delhi Police said, "A video came to notice on September 27, where in certain visuals showed defacement through graffiti. According to the signage boards visible in the video, an extensive search was conducted in the North District area, and graffiti was discovered on Yudhister Setu flyover, heading from Seelampur towards Kashmir Gate.

"An FIR has been filed under the relevant sections of the IPC and Delhi Prevention of Defacement of Public Property Act, and it is currently under investigation."

It is being said the defacement of walls in the national Capital was in response to the raids conducted by the National Investigation Agency on Wednesday across Punjab, Haryana, Delhi-NCR, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh in three separate cases linked to the terror-gangster-smuggler nexus.

The incident comes a month after similar pro-Khalistan slogans were sprayed on the walls of more than five Metro stations in the national Capital. "Delhi Banega Khalistan and Khalistan Zindabad" slogans were written on the walls.

Similar slogans were also

found on the walls of a Government school in Nangloi.

The crackdown on Khalistan elements came amid diplomatic tensions between India and Canada over the killing of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Tensions escalated between India and Canada after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made a serious allegation regarding the potential involvement of Indian agents in the murder of Nijjar, a Khalistani extremist, in British Columbia on June 18.

India had designated Nijjar as a terrorist in 2020. India has, however, strongly rejected Trudeau's allegations terming it as "absurd" and "motivated" and expelled a senior Canadian diplomat in a tit-for-tat move to Ottawa's expulsion of an Indian official over the case.



Devotees celebrate during the procession of Lalbagha Raja idol of Lord Ganesha before its immersion in Mumbai on Thursday

Green Revolution Icon passes away

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The new generation may not be aware of it but India had a recent past when the then Prime Minister of the country himself had asked the people to skip a meal daily so that the country's hunger could be satisfied to a certain extent.

The Prime Minister was none other than Lal Bahadur Shastri and the country was undergoing severe drought caused by deficient Monsoon and low productivity of the seeds and soil.

"We were leading a ship to mouth existence. Every day ships laden with wheat given by the USA under its PL-480 programme would arrive in Indian ports to feed the crores. Those were the days when India was dependent on the wheat offered by the USA," Professor MS Swaminathan, who breathed his last on Thursday morning, used to recall.

Kumbakonam-born Swaminathan was 98 and is survived by three daughters, Soumya, Mathura and Nitya. His wife Mina predeceased him. It was the time when

Swaminathan, a plant geneticist by training, returned to India to work for the Indian Agricultural Research Institute and he had a dream of developing high yield varieties of rice and wheat, the staple food of the sub-continent's population.

Along with Dr Norman Borlaug, the Nobel Laureate and with the political patronage extended by C Subramaniam, the then food and Agricultural Minister of India, Professor Swaminathan launched the Green Revolution, which was the foundation stone of India's self-reliance in food production.

Within a decade, India became a food surplus State from a food deficient country. Having resolved the issue of food shortage, Professor Swaminathan turned his attention to other areas about which the then political leadership was ignorant. He drew the attention of the policy makers towards the poor mortality rate of women and children because of the shortage of nutritious food.

Professor Swaminathan also alerted the Government of the day about LBW, the low



August 7, 1925 – September 28, 2023

birth weight, of the newborn.

"Every third child born in India and several South Asian countries is characterised by low birth weight. The LBW children, resulting from maternal and foetal undernutrition, suffer setbacks in brain development and several serious health problems in adult life. Such enforced handicaps at birth represent the cruelest form of inequity in the emerging knowledge age," he had warned in 1999.

Had the Governments of the day listened to his words, India would have experienced the Amrit Kaal long back. For Professor Swaminathan, agricultural research was not something to be confined to the laboratory. He was at home interacting with farmers, fishermen and agricultural workers to get first hand information about their grievances and problems.

He travelled to Orissa and Wayand in Kerala to study the traditional style of farming operations. The credit for informing the world about the vast collection of conventional rice seeds under the possession of tribals in Orissa should

go to him only.

It was his vision to set up pulse and cereal villages across the country to address the malnutrition faced by the rural and urban folks. Professor Swaminathan stands out because of his strong views on sustained development. He was of the view that development and urbanisation were unavoidable, it could be done with minimum damage to the environment and ecology.

"The coming decades will prove that whoever controls the genes and seeds would control the world. The days of nuclear warheads and conventional wars are over," he had said in his speeches.

The MS Swaminathan Research Foundation at Taramani in Chennai is a standing monument to the Father of India's Green Revolution. When he was awarded the first ever World Food Prize in 1987, he used the prize money of \$250,000 for setting up the MSSRF, a world class research institute and think tank on agricultural research.

Though he was for inter-linking of Indian rivers and

genetically modified seeds, Professor Swaminathan stayed away from all controversies.

He held the view that "if there are reservations against the GM foods and inter linking of rivers, we should try to address the apprehension in the minds of the people".

Since 2000, he has been asking the authorities to include millets as a staple food in the food basket. The National Farmers Commission recommendations (which he headed) had asked the Government of India in 2005 itself that procurement price of farm products produced by them should be given twice the amount they spent on cultivation.

The recommendations are yet to be implemented in full. "Anything can wait but not agriculture," was his catchword till the end.

Professor Swaminathan had been honoured with Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Sri in addition to nearly 90 honorary doctorates.

Narendra Modi hailing Swaminathan's yeoman service to the nation.

Murmu said Swaminathan left behind a rich legacy which would serve as a "guiding light to steer the world towards a safer and hunger-free future for humanity".

Modi said his groundbreaking work transformed the lives of millions, ensured India's food security.

Modi said on X: "Deeply saddened by the demise of Dr MS Swaminathan Ji. At a very critical period in our nation's history, his groundbreaking work in agriculture transformed the lives of millions and ensured food security for our nation."

"I will always cherish my conversations with Dr Swaminathan. His passion to see India progress was exemplary. His life and work will inspire generations to come. Condolences to his family and admirers. Om Shanti."

The Congress party described him as the key scientific architect of the Green Revolution and hailed his contribution to the agriculture sector.

Make J&K terror free: Omar

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah Thursday threw a fresh challenge to the Union Territory administration to make J&K terror-free and then remove the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA).

Reacting to the recent statement of the Director General of Police Dilbag Singh about terror-free Jammu and Kashmir, Abdullah said his party will play its role in achieving this goal.

"Who can object to it, other than the terrorists? No one will say that the DGP has said anything wrong. Please make Jammu and Kashmir terror-free, we will also play whatever role we can in this regard. But nothing can be achieved by just making statements. How terror-free we are is evident

from the Kokernag incident. After such a long time, losing a Colonel, a major, a DySP of JK Police and a jawan is not an ordinary incident," he said.

"Your aim is to make (JK) terror-free, please do it. Let it be proved on the ground. Then remove the AFSPA. We will be the first ones to cheer for you," he added.

Interacting with the media persons at the party headquarters in Srinagar Omar Abdullah also reiterated BJP does not want to hold any elections in Jammu and Kashmir as it knows that people will punish them through ballot.

"They (BJP) are not in a mood to hold elections because they know that people are not with them. Leave Kashmir aside, BJP will be at the receiving end from the people in Jammu as well. That's why they do not have the courage to hold polls," Abdullah added.



"The current dispensation does not seem to be in favor of even holding the local bodies and panchayat elections, which the government played up in the Supreme Court.

"Assembly is a far cry, perhaps they are not willing to hold local bodies and panchayat elections which they talked about a lot in the Supreme Court. The only elec-

tion that we believe will be held is the one to Parliament. They might find it difficult to defer that. Other than that they don't seem to be in a mood to hold any other election because the mood of the people is to punish them through votes," he said.

In response to another question, Abdullah charged that Lieutenant Governor

Manoj Sinha and some bureaucrats were the only people who did not want assembly elections to be held in Jammu and Kashmir.

"There is only one person and there may be a few officers around him who will be going from here when the LG leaves, who does not want elections. Ask anyone on the road. I am not saying they will vote for my party or a particular party but everyone wants elections. There are a few yes men who visit the Raj Bhawan to mislead the LG. I also headed a government for six years, these turncoats used to come to my office as well," he added.

Abdullah was referring to a recent statement made by Sinha in which he claimed that 80 percent of people in Jammu and Kashmir were happy with the current dispensation and did not want any change.

TMC upset over ED summons to Abhishek

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA



The Trinamool Congress has strongly reacted to the Enforcement Directorate's summons to its party general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on a day he is scheduled to hold rallies in Delhi to protest against the central deprivation of Bengal. Banerjee has been asked to appear before the ED officials on October 3 at the CGO complex in Kolkata.

ED's summons comes days after the Calcutta High Court gave a raw rap on its knuckles for loosely investigating the role of Leaps and Bounds a company --- owned by Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee --- allegedly involved in the multi-crore teachers' recruitment scam.

Banerjee strongly protested the Thursday's summons writing on the X handle, "Now,

appear in the next week.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who is confined to her home following a knee injury too attacked the Centre for its "political vendetta" even as she wrote, "we will make sure our voice reaches the ears of the leaders in Delhi for the due funds of the poor people of Bengal ... for far too long the people of Bengal have been bearing the brunt of withheld MNREGS and Awas Yojna funds." She said, "we shall march to Delhi carrying the heartfelt letters written by the affected people."

Incidentally Abhishek, who is also the nephew of the Chief Minister, had earlier been summoned by the ED on September 13 the day when he was to join the coordination committee meeting of Indian National Inclusive Developmental Alliance.

today yet again they have served me another summons to appear before them on a day when the protest agitation for West Bengal's rightful dues is scheduled in Delhi on 3rd Oct. This stark revelation unequivocally exposes those who are truly perturbED, rattlED and scared."

Abhishek's mother and father Lata and Amit Banerjee who too have been the directors of the said company have been summoned by the ED to



Anurag raps Rajasthan Government over rape of minor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Anurag Thakur on Thursday slammed the Rajasthan government over the rape of a minor in the poll-bound State and wondered why Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi are not talking about the incident.

Responding to questions here, Thakur also claimed that crime against women is on the rise in Rajasthan, where more than 34,000 cases have been registered for such crimes.

"Take the figures of the last five years for Rajasthan. More than two lakh cases of crime against women have been registered," he said.

Thakur said former Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi never lost an opportunity to flag cases of crime against women in other states, but were silent on Rajasthan, "which ranks number one in such crimes". "Congress government is shielding criminals, women are insecure in Rajasthan where 16-17 cases of rape and crime against women are registered every day," the senior BJP leader said.

Thakur said last time Rahul Gandhi visited Banswara, a Dalit girl was raped, murdered and thrown in a well in nearby Bhilwara. "Then too, he did not visit that place," he said. "If such incident happens in other states, Congress leaders are the first to tweet, but Rajasthan is number one in rape cases, and crime against women and Congress leaders are silent," he said.

According to National Crime Records Bureau, with 6,337 rape cases, highest in the country, Rajasthan accounts for 21 per cent of all the rape cases registered in the country.

In case of rape of minor girls, Rajasthan accounted for 48.6 per cent of the cases registered in the country. Rajasthan has registered 1,452 cases of rape of minor girls. "There are 40,056 total crimes against women registered in the state under the Indian Penal Code, including over nine thousand assaults on women with the intent to outrage modesty," NCRB said.

Mob tries to attack Manipur CM's ancestral house

PTI ■ IMPHAL

A mob tried to attack Chief Minister N Biren Singh's empty ancestral house on Thursday night, despite a security clampdown and curfew in the Imphal valley where protesters have been holding violent demonstrations after photos of bodies of two youths missing since July surfaced on social media earlier this week.

Security forces, however, were successful in foiling the attempt and stopping them 100-150 metres from the residence after firing several rounds of tear gas shells.

The Chief Minister lives in a separate, well-guarded official residence in the centre of the state's capital.

Amid reports that militants have been seen moving around openly and instigating mobs in Imphal valley, Srinagar Senior Superintendent of Police Rakesh Balwal, who has expertise in handling terror-related cases, has been "prematurely" brought back to Manipur.

The 2012 batch IPS officer will be assigned a new posting in Manipur upon his joining the state.

About the attack on the chief minister's

ancestral residence, a police officer said, "Two groups of people came from different directions and approached the house but they were stopped around 100-150 metres away from it."

The authorities switched off the electricity connection in the entire area to help reduce the visibility of the protesters. More barricades were added to the previous ones near the house, while the protesters also burnt tyres in the middle of the nearby road.

Ambulances were seen advancing near the spot but till now there is no report of injury to any side.

The incident occurred after a mob vandalised the deputy commissioner's office in Imphal West district and torched two four-wheelers in the early hours of Thursday.

Curfew was re-imposed in the two districts — Imphal East and West — on Wednesday as the security forces combated the violent protests, which saw 65 demonstrators being injured since Tuesday.

The Manipur government on Thursday constituted a committee to verify complaints of alleged use of excessive force on protesters, mainly students, by security forces here over the last two days, an official order said.

Sourav defends his decision to accompany Mamata to Spain

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Always known and hailed for stepping out and hitting sixes over the bowlers' heads former Indian southpaw Sourav Ganguly on Thursday did an encore of the past while defending his decision to accompany Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to Spain from where he announced setting up a ₹ 2,500 crore steel plant at Salboni in West Midnapore district.

When asked to comment on criticisms made by a number of Opposition politicians for towing Mamata Banerjee to Spain to announce his industry plans that he could easily have done from Kolkata the former Team India captain said, "Look here I am an individual who does not live in an animal world ... so I will go



wherever I want to go ... will do whatever I want to do ... till I do not do anything wrong or I do not hurt anyone's interests."

When asked whether he was hurt by the statements of some non-TMC politicians who had scoffed at his decision to join Banerjee — often called the destroyer of industries in Bengal — the former BCCI president said, "I am not an MP or an MLA or even a Councillor that I have to take political decisions ... I am not answerable to anyone ... I get invitations

from all over the world and it is my decision where to go and where not to go ... no one can dictate terms to me ... if I find it worth going then I will go and if not then I will not go ... but this will depend upon my decision and no one else's decision because as I said I am a free individual and not answerable to anyone for my deeds insofar as I don't do anything wrong."

But on why he announced it in Spain he said, "It was because the industrial meet was there ... had it been in Delhi or Kolkata I would have done so here ... there is no difference between Madrid, Delhi or Kolkata ... Much is being seen into it because this is Bengal ... why such questions are not asked elsewhere."

Standing by the Chief Minister's side Ganguly had

earlier announced from Spain that he would set up a steel plant at West Midnapore.

"A lot of us believe that I only played a sport, but we started a small steel plant in 2007 ... And in the next five to six months, we will start building our new steel plant in Medinipur ... We will build a state of the art facility within a year's time in the district of Medinipur," he earlier said.

The Salboni plant will be set up on a land acquired by the Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee Government for the Jindal Steel which subsequently left the place allegedly for fund crunch but reportedly because the company was not sure of investing in an atmosphere created after the Tatas' exit from Singur and the other investors refusing to set shop at Nandigram and its vicinity.

2020 Delhi riot: Court slams cops for incomplete probe

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A session's court has ordered framing of charges against two accused in a case of 2020 northeast Delhi communal riots. It, however, rapped the Delhi Police for "incomplete investigation" of three additional complaints that were clubbed with the case, and referred the matter to the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) concerned to make an appraisal of the "moonshine investigation" conducted by the Investigating Officer (IO).

Additional Sessions Judge Pulastya Pramachala was hearing a case against Firoz Khan and Mohammed Anwar, who were accused of being part of a riotous mob that committed vandalism and loot at a godown in Karawal Nagar on February 24, 2020. They were also accused of attempting to set the godown on fire.

The local police had registered an FIR on the complaint of Chhidda Lal Tomar, the owner of the godown. Three complaints filed by Mukhtiyaz Ali, Eshak and Kafil Ahmed were later clubbed the case.

The court said in a recent order there was "prima facie" evidence that the two accused were part of a riotous mob that committed various offences at Tomar's godown.

It ordered framing charges against the duo for various offences, including rioting, unlawful assembly, theft, mischief by fire or explosive substance, house trespass and disobedience to



an order duly promulgated by a public servant. The court, however, said the probe in the three additional complaints remained incomplete.

"I find that there is no complete evidence collected by IO in respect of incidents taking place at the shops of Kafil Ahmed, Eshak and Mukhtiyaz Ali. The investigation qua these three complaints remained incomplete," ASJ Pramachala said. "It was very unfortunate that IO shrugged off his duty to investigate every incident professionally," he added.

The court said clubbing the three complaints was a "questionable exercise" because there was no material to show that the incidents were the outcome of "one continuous riotous act" by the same mob. It said on the basis of "hearsay evidence", the court cannot presume that the properties of other complainants were also damaged at the same time by the same mob.

"Copy of the order be sent to DCP (northeast district) to make an appraisal of

Assam Govt planning to modernise State's inland waterways: Himanta

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday announced that the State Government is planning to modernise the State's inland waterways at an estimated cost of ₹700 crore.

Launching ten catamaran vessels, three tug boats and a search-and-rescue vessel in Guwahati, Sarma said this was a momentous occasion that marked a significant leap in Assam's transportation infrastructure.

"Rivers have always been the lifeline of Assam. These modern vessels will not only revitalise the waterways but will also open doors to economic growth, job creation, and a greener future," Sarma said.

The CM said the launch of these vessels is a significant initiative that seeks to harness the vast potential of Assam's abundant river systems.

"The introduction of these vessels is set to redefine inland water transport in the state, offering numerous benefits in terms of efficiency, safety, and environmental sustainability," he said.

The Chief Minister also announced that a ferry service connecting major religious centres around Guwahati will also be started soon.

The State Government, with financial aid from the World Bank, has taken up the Assam Inland Water Transport project to improve the quality of inland waterways transport by integrating high-quality pas-

senger and vehicle ferry services in Brahmaputra and Barak rivers, to ensure a safe, sustainable and reliable mode of transport for commuters across the state, the CM said.

Sarma said to modernise the inland water transport sector, the World Bank is assisting the state government through a phase-wise project, which includes upgrading ferry infrastructure, fleet modernisation, and institutional capacity development.

The introduction of the 10 catamaran vessels, worth a total of ₹38.43 crore and carrying capacity of 100 passengers and 50 motorcycles each, are set to redefine the way people and goods traverse Assam's waterways, he said.

"With exceptional stability, passenger and cargo capacity, and environmentally conscious design, the catamaran vessels will offer a sustainable and efficient mode of transportation for both commuters and traders," Sarma said.

The three powerful tug boats, worth a total of ₹5.38 crore, will play a crucial role in enhancing the efficiency and safety of water transport and their deployment along key routes will enhance safety, expedite berthing, and reduce delays at ports, thereby optimising the efficiency of waterborne trade and passenger transport.

The search-and-rescue boat with advanced navigation and communication equipment, and manoeuvrability will serve as first responders during distress calls.

Ban on firecrackers in Gurugram from Nov; green crackers allowed on Diwali



PTI ■ GURUGRAM

The Gurugram district administration has issued orders to ban the storage, sale and use of firecrackers in view of pollution.

In the orders issued by District Magistrate-cum-DC Nishant Kumar Yadav, e-commerce companies such as Amazon and Flipkart have also been prohibited from accepting any online order for firecrackers.

The orders will come into force in Gurugram district from November 1, 2023 and will remain effective till January 31, 2024.

"According to the instructions of the Supreme Court, only green firecrackers which cause less pollution can be sold through licensed traders in Gurugram district. The production, sale and use of other firecrackers and sticks has been completely banned as they cause excessive air and noise pollution and also cause

solid waste related problems. "The green firecrackers will be allowed to be burst only from 8 pm to 10 pm on the festival of Diwali and from 11.55 pm to 12.30 am on the occasion of Christmas and New Year," the order read.

The orders have been issued by the DM under the Explosive Substances Act 1884 and Explosive Substances Rules 2008 regarding the production, storage and sale of firecrackers in the district.

The responsibility of ensuring compliance with the rules has been given to Gurugram Police, Municipal Corporation Gurugram and Manesar.

The regional officers of the Pollution Control Board have also been instructed to regularly monitor the air quality. Action under sections of the Criminal Procedure Act and Explosive Substances Act 1884 will be taken against those violating the orders, it read.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mrs. Nafisa to general public that the Original Sale Deed dated 27.07.1991 which was Document No 2955 registered in SR Faridabad, and GPA ATS & Will Dated 07.06.2002, related to the Property bearing no. 156, area measuring 100 sq. yds., out of Khevali/Khatola no. 236/443, Must no. 27, Killa no. 1/2 10/1, situated in the area of Village Sanjay Colony, Tehsil Gauruchi, Distt. Faridabad, Haryana, have been lost/ misplaced. Public is being warned not to deal with the documents. Any person dealing with the aforesaid documents would do so at their own risk and responsibility. Owner shall not be liable in any manner whatsoever for any loss incurred by such persons. If anybody found these documents OR notice any misuse of these documents, Concerned Person is required to communicate at the address given below.
Juris NextGen LLP
E-56, LGF, Greater Kailash Enclave Part-I
New Delhi-48 #011-42662177, 78

INDIA Bloc will disintegrate before 2024 Lok Sabha polls: Chirag

PTI ■ BALLIA

Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) president Chirag Paswan on Thursday called the Opposition INDIA bloc "Bhanumati ka Kunba" and claimed that it will disintegrate before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Paswan also said that the INDIA alliance's constituent

parties are "thirsty for each other's blood".

He was talking to reporters here on the sidelines of a Dalit conference organised by his party.

"The INDIA bloc is like 'Bhanumati ka Kunba' (people with different ideologies coming together) which will collapse before the parliamentary polls in 2024. Similar efforts

would have been seen even before the 2019 elections.

"When more than a dozen contenders for the post of prime minister are on one platform, then how can that alliance survive? Personal ambitions dominate such a coalition," the Jamui MP said.

On the women's reservation bill recently passed by the Parliament, he expressed con-



fidence that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will fulfil various demands, including inclusion of other backward classes in the Rajya Shakti Vandan Bill.

On the controversy over RJD MP Manoj Jha reciting an "anti-Thakur" poem in the Rajya Sabha last week, Paswan said that Jha has adopted the policy of "divide and rule".

"Manoj Jha serves his political interests only by creating division in the society. He has made indecent comments against people belonging to a particular caste. This is not the first time. This is the thinking of the party he belongs to," he said.

Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) formed in 2021 is a faction of former Union minis-

ter Ram Vilas Paswan-led Lok Janshakti Party (LJP). The faction has Chirag Paswan, son of Ram Vilas Paswan, as the only member in Parliament.

The rest five MPs of LJP are in the LJP (National) headed by Union minister and Hajipur MP Pashupati Kumar Paras, who is Chirag Paswan's uncle.

CBI probe into house welcome, did no wrong: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday "welcomed" the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)'s preliminary inquiry into alleged irregularities in the construction of his bungalow while asserting that nothing will come out of it as there "is nothing wrong". He also targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi and claimed the action showed his "nervousness". The Aam Aadmi Party national convener said that he may have faced the maximum number of inquiries in the world during his tenure as chief minister in the last eight years, and added he will not bow down.

Reacting to the CBI action, Kejriwal told reporters on the sidelines of an event, "This is not the first time. The prime minister is nervous. This shows his nervousness. The inquiry against me is nothing new. So far, inquiries have been conducted against me in more than 50 cases in the last eight



years."

Slamming the BJP, Kejriwal said, "It was said that Kejriwal committed bus scam, liquor scam, road scam, water scam, electricity scam and scam in school buildings. They have lodged more than 33 cases

against me.

"It was said that Kejriwal committed scam in building schools, bus scam, liquor scam, road scam, water scam, electricity scam. I may have faced the maximum number of inquiries in the world. Welcome this new inquiry. Nothing was found in any case. Nothing will be found in this also. What will you get when there is nothing wrong?" he said.

Kejriwal said, "What else can be expected from a fourth pass king? Just keep playing the game of inquiry-inquiry for 24 hours, or keep giving speeches.

Don't do any work. He wants me to bow down before him. But I am not going to bow down before them, even if they conduct as many fake inquiries as they want or file as many cases as they want."

"I also challenge him - just as nothing was found in all the previous inquiries, similarly if nothing is found in this inquiry too, will he resign for conducting a false inquiry?" the chief minister said.

The ruling Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi rejected the allegation of any wrongdoing and accused the BJP of "using all its power to finish AAP". The AAP alleged that the development was part of the BJP's efforts to stop Arvind Kejriwal-led party from working for the people.

"This is the reason why the country's best health and education ministers Satyendra Jain and Manish Sisodia were put behind bars," it alleged. "The BJP is using all its power to finish the AAP," the party alleged. There is "only one party which

is AAP that seeks votes on the basis of doing good work in the fields of health and education but, the BJP does not want the poor people should have good education and excellent health facilities," it said.

The CBI has registered a preliminary enquiry to look into alleged "irregularities and misconduct" by unidentified public servants of the Delhi government in connection with the construction of a new official residence for the chief minister.

The preliminary enquiry is the first step to ascertain if the allegations have prima facie material to proceed with a regular FIR. The anti-corruption branch of the CBI has demanded from the PWD records related to the approval and recommendation of its officials related to alteration, tender documents, bids submitted by contractors, approval of building plans and requests from the client for superior specifications like modular kitchen, marble flooring and other ornamental work, official said.

Probe will reveal truth behind CM 'rajmahal', claims BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Tearing into the AAP over allegations linked with the construction of a new residence for Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the BJP on Thursday said it hoped that the CBI probe would bring forth the truth behind his "rajmahal".

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said Kejriwal is playing victim card by making absurd statements to mislead the public and media. "Evidence has been found in every investigation of corruption on Kejriwal government and this is the reason why two Ministers of Kejriwal are in jail," Sachdeva said.

Earlier, addressing a press conference, former Delhi BJP President and MP Manoj Tiwari on Thursday charged that the



Arvind Kejriwal government is a government with a criminal mentality which is being run by criminals and corruption has become its identity.

Leveling these allegations in a news conference, Tiwari also said if there is any party in the history of Indian politics which has achieved record in loot and corruption in the shortest time since its formation it is 'Aam Aadmi Party' whose kingpin is Arvind Kejriwal.

The BJP leader claimed Kejriwal's entire system is involved in forming a party in the name of the common man

and looting the treasury of the same common man. The former Delhi BJP president said we have been saying that all the scams and loot happening in Delhi government are happening as per Kejriwal's orders.

Taking a dig at the revamped Chief Minister's bungalow, Tiwari charged leave aside its other things, the toilet seats and curtains installed in it are worth crores. He also said those who had pledged for simplicity in 2013 are today in 2022 living in the rajmahal.

The former President of Delhi BJP said that BJP has been continuously demanding a CBI investigation in this matter and yesterday CBI has decided to start the investigation and we hope that this investigation will bring the truth of the rajmahal in front of the public.

Bamboo plantation efforts to help clean Capital air, says LG

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has highlighted the efforts undertaken in Delhi to plant bamboo trees to augment oxygen supply in the national capital, saying this initiative will help revive the city's ambience.

At a recent meeting of the Northern Zonal Council in Amritsar, Saxena made a presentation on the good practices and innovative steps taken in Delhi in recent months.

The Northern Zonal Council — chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah — comprises Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and the Union Territories of Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and Chandigarh.

Saxena said the city government's forest department planted about 2.9 lakh bamboo trees and the Delhi Development Authority another 25,000 across the city, including at 'Baansera' on the Yamuna's bank.

Saxena claimed bamboo trees emit 30 per cent more oxygen compared to other plant species and consume less water, helping raise the water table.

These trees, despite scepticism by "experts", have grown up to 10-20 feet during the past eight months. While Delhi suffers from "imported air pollution" from other states, this initiative will help revive and refurbish the city's ambience, Saxena told the gathering.

Similarly, in an effort to clean the Najafgarh drain and the Yamuna river, the extremely cost-effective and innovative measure of "partial gravitational de-silting" was used to dispose of thousands of tons of accumulated silt and garbage, he said.

This apart, motor boats with attached rotor blades were used to cut hyacinth into small pieces that were then loaded onto trucks using conveyor belts. These were then put beneath the soil on the banks of the drain/river, turning them into natural manure, the Lt Governor said.

For the disposal of waste accumulated at Delhi's infamous landfill sites, Saxena said innovative measures such as selling the refuse-derived fuel (RDF) to cement and paper industries for their boilers and plants was undertaken.

These industries in Rajasthan and Western UP respectively, had started paying the MCD Rs 100 per ton for the RDF picked, instead of about Rs 2500 that MCD was paying to get this RDF picked earlier. Before undertaking this exercise, the LG had got the Gross Calorific Value of the RDF calculated, and once it came out that this value was more than coal, the same was offered to these industries as cheaper fuel that could replace coal.

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Rahul visits Kirti Nagar furniture market, meets carpenters

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who surprised the porters at the Anand Vihar Railway Terminal station recently, on Thursday dropped in at the Kirti Nagar furniture market in the national Capital, interacted with carpenters at work and heard their problems besides also trying his hand at building some furniture items.

This is Rahul's third such reaching-out exercise in the national capital in the recent past. He met fruit and vegetable vendors in Azadpur Mandi in August and more recently spoke to the porters at the Anand Vihar railway station. This visit was part of Gandhi's reaching-

out exercise ahead of the next Lok Sabha elections.

In a post on X, Rahul said, "Today I went to Asia's largest furniture market located in Kirtinagar, Delhi and met the carpenter brothers. Apart from being hard workers, they are also amazing artists - experts at carving strength and beauty! We talked a lot, got to know a little about his skills and tried to learn a little." "We talked a lot, got to know a little about their skills and tried to learn a bit," the former Congress chief also said.

The Congress also shared pictures of Gandhi's visit to the Kirti Nagar market on X, in which he is seen trying his hand with some furniture tools. "The Bharat Jodo Yatra is still



on," the party said.

The photographs of the Congress leader visiting the market was shared by Indian Youth Congress chief Srinivas B.V. on his official X handle. In his post, Srinivas said, "When

mass leader Rahul Gandhi reached Asia's largest furniture market located in Kirtinagar, Delhi. During this time he met hard working carpenter brothers. Bharat Jodo journey continues."

Haven't gone to PG after fire, says distraught girl

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A girl staying at a paying guest accommodation in northwest Delhi where a fire incident took place on Wednesday, said she could not sleep the whole night after the horrifying incident. Nidhi Kumari, a UPSC aspirant from Bihar, said she was at a library when the incident took place. She added that she has not gone back to the paying guest accommodation since the incident and does not know whether her belongings are safe or not.

"I was at a library when the fire broke out. One of my friends informed me about it. I rushed back and saw the building was engulfed in fire and thick smoke billowing out. Luckily, all the girls had managed to come out through an adjacent building," she



said. Nidhi said the paying guest accommodation has fire extinguishers but they do not know how to operate those.

"The girls have been shifted to other paying guest accommodations nearby. I could not sleep the whole night due to the incident. It was horrifying. The girls who were present there at the time of the incident had gone to the police station to get their statements registered," Nidhi said. Suman Bishnoi, another UPSC aspirant

from Rajasthan's Bikaner who lives at a nearby paying guest accommodation, said some girls came to their building to sleep at night. She said she was not present there at the time of the incident, but saw that the building was covered in black soot after the incident.

Thirty-five people, including a four-year-old girl, were rescued by firemen from the women's paying guest facility run from an apartment in northwest Delhi's Mukherjee Nagar.

According to fire department officials, five people, including the girl, were taken to a hospital since they had inhaled fumes. Abhinandan Kumar Singh, who attends coaching classes for the United Public Service Commission (UPSC) examination, said he has taken a flat on rent in the area as the rooms at the paying guest facilities are very small.

Two Noida siblings drown during idol immersion

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

Two minor siblings from Noida drowned in a swamped area in Delhi post immersion of a Lord Ganesh idol on Thursday, police here said.

Their third sibling and one more boy are currently undergoing treatment at a hospital in Noida, the police said.

Noida Assistant Commissioner of Police Rajnesh Verma said an idol of Lord Ganesh was taken to Delhi's Mayur Vihar area for immersion by a group of people from Nithari village in Noida.

"During the immersion process, four children were trapped in a swamp and started drowning. Soon some of their relatives joined in to pull them out," Verma said.

"All four children were then rushed to the Child PGI Hospital in Noida Sector 30 where doctors declared two of them, Neeraj (15) and Krishna (5), dead," the officer said.

Their third sibling, Sachin (17), is undergoing treatment at the Government-run hospital while the fourth child Abhishek (14) has been referred to a private facility here, he added.

Further legal proceedings in the case are being carried out, the police added.



Nirikshan app launched to boost academic experience

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Thursday launched a mobile application to enhance the academic experience for students and teachers and empower them to raise school-related concerns.

The DoE Nirikshan app has been designed to empower the students and the teachers to raise school-related concerns and ensure their prompt redress, they said.

"The app can be accessed by using student and teacher IDs. It promises to revolutionise the way issues in Delhi government schools are addressed," the Directorate of Education (DoE) said in a statement. "The DoE Nirikshan app serves as a dynamic platform for instant communication, enabling users to submit requests concerning various school-related matters to the administration directly," it added.

The DoE further said the app will play a crucial role in disseminating information and streamlining and digitising the inspection of essential attributes such as infrastructure, supplies, midday meals, stationary and uniform-related issues.

Speaking about the app's features, Education Minister Atishi said the Arvind Kejriwal government is committed to introducing technological interventions to make the lives of the students and the teachers easier.

"This technological intervention by the DoE will prove to be extremely helpful in quickly addressing the needs of students and teachers at school. It will also decrease the duration of complaint redressal by the school administration and the Directorate of Education," she said.

With the app, students facing challenges such as lack of adequate desks, benches or blackboards can bring these issues to the notice of their principal. Once the concerns of the teachers and the students are submitted, they can track the status of their grievance in the app itself.

Bhagi retains DUTA prez post

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The National Democratic Teachers' Front candidate AK Bhagi on Thursday retained the post of Delhi University Teachers' Association president, defeating the Democratic United Teachers' Alliance's Aditya Narayan Mishra.

Bhagi polled 4,182 votes while Mishra got 3,787. Out of more than 9,500 eligible voters, an impressive 8295 exercised their democratic rights. Total valid votes were 7969 and invalid stood at 326.

Bhagi said that his priority is to complete the regularisation scheme and introduce new policies such as the pension scheme and EWS seats.

"We are happy and excited to be the winners again. Our priority is to complete the regularisation scheme, which is in the halfway stage. We will also focus on completing the pending work that we started two years ago," Bhagi said. "We will also focus on new policies such as the pension scheme and EWS seats," he added.

Specifically referring to the 12 Delhi government funded colleges, Professor Bhagi emphasized that DUTA will pressurize the Delhi government to timely release grants and salaries to these col-



leges, otherwise DUTA will approach the Education Ministry and the UGC to request them to take these colleges under their direct control. Out of these 12 colleges, 11 have not even initiated the recruitment process. DUTA will make all efforts to get posts advertised in this colleges at the earliest.

Nine organisations, including the Democratic Teachers' Front, AAP-backed Academic for Action and Development Delhi Teachers' Association, Indian National Teachers' Congress, Delhi Teachers' Initiative, Samajwadi Shikshak Manch, Common Teachers' Front, Independent Teachers' Front for Social Justice and the Voice of DU Ad Hocs — came together to form the Democratic United Teachers' Alliance for this year's Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) elections.

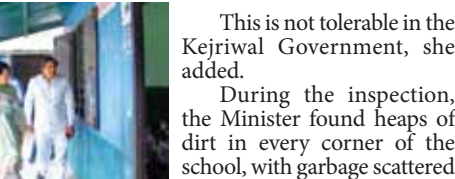
Atishi raps BJP for deplorable state of MCD school

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Education Minister Atishi on Thursday expressed his disappointment at the poor hygiene and deplorable state of the MCD school in Nizamuddin where she made a surprise inspection Thursday morning. The poor condition of the MCD schools is the result of the BJP's 15 years of "maladministration" in the MCD, the Minister said. The deplorable condition of the schools makes it clear that for so many years, the MCD played with the future of children and never paid attention to education.

According to sources, not only were the walls and floors of the school covered in dust, but also the classrooms were sans teachers. Pointing out negligence and dirt in the school's maintenance, she issued an ultimatum to the school principal, giving her a week's time to address the issues or be prepared for suspension.

The Education Minister stated that poor sanitation and cleanliness in the school premises reflect the insensitive attitude of the school administration towards the future of the students.



This is not tolerable in the Kejriwal Government, she added. During the inspection, the Minister found heaps of dirt in every corner of the school, with garbage scattered all around.

Due to a prolonged lack of cleanliness, dust had accumulated on the floors and walls besides cobwebs. Also, there were piles of broken desks and insufficient provision of drinking water for the children. Upon seeing the deplorable condition of the school, she said it is the principal's duty to ensure that all children receive quality education in a clean and safe environment.

However, the condition of the school suggests that the school administration is insensitive to the future of the children studying here. She said that the indifferent attitude towards the education of the children studying here is the reason for the school's current state. In this regard, she directed the officials to immediately issue a show-cause notice to the school inspector to provide reasons for the situation.

City Govt extends old excise policy for six months

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Those looking forward to private liquor stores reopening in Delhi might need to wait a little longer as the Government has decided to extend the ongoing existing policy, for another six months, allowing only Government vendors to operate in the national Capital.

Under the ongoing policy, only Government-owned agencies will run liquor shops. The existing excise policy was implemented as a stopgap arrangement till a new policy was prepared and implemented by the Delhi Government.

The old excise regime was set to expire on September 30.

The Government said the decision was taken to ensure the continuity of the existing excise regime while the excise department formulates a new policy.

The proposal for extension was approved by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. A notification to this effect is expected by Friday.

Reacting on the extension of the old excise regime for another six months, Vinod Giri, Director General, Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) told *The Pioneer* that

the current policy was meant to be a stop-gap measure to prevent a regulatory vacuum due to sudden withdrawal of the new excise policy of 2021.

"It is now being extended repeatedly just to keep business going. It is not a planned excise policy design to work for all stakeholders. What the industry needs more than anything else is a regulatory stability. In absence of a long-term excise policy, companies cannot make long-term plans. They need clarity on the policy front over the next year or two at least in order to invest and execute in the state," Giri said.

"In recent times we have



seen frequent major changes in excise policy which have had an unsettling effect on the indus-

try. For example, the companies had responded well to the Delhi Government's appeal to

supply stocks well during policy transitions to prevent stock outs. But they have been left in lurch as there is still no resolution on stock left in company depots during excise policy transitions even though it's almost two years from the first change over. Furthermore, even though the policy is extended for a few months every time, the department charges a fee for the full year. That's bizarre and against all norms of fair trade," Giri added.

The government scrapped its new policy and returned to the old one after Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena in July last year recommended

a CBI probe into alleged irregularities in the implementation of the former. This policy was scheduled to expire on March 31, 2023, but the Delhi government extended it for six months until September 30. In August, the excise department made it mandatory for proprietors and firm partners running hotels, clubs and restaurants having bars to submit their police verification certificates.

The step was taken by the department to ensure that a person holding the excise licence was of good moral character and did not have any criminal record.

There are over 970 HCR category licensees in the city. Around 400 HCR category licensees have approached the police for verification, bar owners said.

According to CIABC, liquor companies who have option of supplying elsewhere in India are naturally hesitant to stock up in Delhi not knowing the future regulatory landscape. "Since Delhi's operating margins anyway are not great, companies with pan India footprint have the option of prioritising other markets for supplies if faced with such uncertain regulatory framework," it said.

Tributes pour in for 'father of Green Revolution'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
The death of renowned agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan is a profound loss to the scientific community but his legacy endures and will continue to guide the world towards sustainable food security and pioneering agricultural innovations.

Dr Mankombu Sambasivan Swaminathan, the 'Father of the Green Revolution' who dedicated his life to revolutionising agriculture and ensuring food security for all, passed away in his Chennai home on Thursday at the age of 98.

"All of us have benefited immensely, directly or indirectly, from his vast contributions over the years. Without the Green Revolution in India, which he spearheaded, we would not have achieved food security," agriculturist Ranjitha Puskar, country representative for India and research at the Manila-headquartered International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), told a news agency.



He was the director general of IRRI and his legacy has guided the organisation and its researchers to this day... His mental agility and intellectual curiosity were as high as ever in the last few years and still provided great guidance, even though he was physically frail. Our deepest condolences to the agricultural sector worldwide on this loss!" Puskar said.

"I was really fortunate to have worked with him very closely from 2007 to 2014 when we formed a coalition for food and nutrition security..." Pradhan, research coordinator, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) South Asia region, told an agency.

Swaminathan was born in Kumbakonam on August 7, 1925. His father's involvement in the freedom movement and Mahatma Gandhi's influence inspired his passion for agricultural science.

Describing him "the greatest agricultural scientist the world has ever seen", J Justin Mohan, former secretary of the National Biodiversity Authority, said Swaminathan's contribution to designing agricultural policies and schemes helped not only India but other countries as well.

Ranju one millionth US visa receiver

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a pointer to burgeoning people to people ties between the two countries, the US Mission to India on Thursday surpassed its goal to process one million non-immigrant visa applications this year with Ambassador Eric Garcetti personally handing over the one millionth visa to a couple.



They will be heading to the United States to attend their son's graduation at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Dr Ranju Singh, senior consultant, Lady Hardinge College was elated at receiving an email from the US Embassy about hers being the one millionth visa this year. Her husband Puneet Dargan, was granted the next visa. The couple will be travelling to the US in May, 2024.

"I couldn't be happier today, happy for India, Indians and the United States. Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi and President (Joe) Biden had said lets do a better job in moving faster on the visas and so the Ministry of External Affairs here approved more bodies in places like Hyderabad...More people who can work on these visas, we changed our systems, we worked harder and smarter and we hit a million visa applications processed this year," the ambassador said.

The Mission has already surpassed the total number of cases processed in 2022 and is processing almost 20 per cent more applications than in pre-pandemic 2019.

"We got an email after we had finished our visa interviews that we are supposed to collect our visas, we were told that we were the one millionth...The Ambassador meeting us in person was a great moment for us. We are looking forward to going to the US, we will be there at MIT to celebrate our son's proud day and then explore the country as tourists," Dr Singh told PTL.

Dargan informed that their son is currently pursuing his Masters in Financial Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). "This will be our first trip to the US. We are really looking forward to it," he said. Last year over 1.2 million Indians visited the United States. Indians now represent over 10 per cent of all visa applicants worldwide, including 20 per cent of all student visa applicants and 65 per cent of all H&L-category (employment) visa applicants.

According to a statement by the US Embassy here, recognising the continued high demand for US visas, the United States continues to invest heavily in our operations in India. "In the past year, the Mission has expanded its staffing to facilitate more visa processing than ever before. The Mission has made significant capital improvements to existing facilities, such as the US Consulate in Chennai, and has inaugurated a new Consulate building in Hyderabad.

"The Mission has also implemented strategies to increase efficiency, extending interview waiver eligibility to new visa categories and utilising remote work to allow staff around the world to contribute to Indian visa processing. Early next year, the Mission plans to implement a pilot program that would allow domestic visa renewal for qualified H&L-category employment visa applicants," it said.

Thane fake currency case: NIA files supplementary chargesheet against four

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday said it has filed a supplementary chargesheet against four persons, including a 'designated terrorist', in the Thane fake currency case.

quality counterfeit Indian currency notes of the denomination of ₹2,000 from accused Shikilkar. Subsequently, NIA had taken over the case and, after investigations, had arrested Fayaaz in May 2023 for possession of illegal arms. "Investigations also revealed that Fayaaz was in contact with 'Uncle' alias Javed Patel alias Javed Chikna through WhatsApp, and had conspired to carry out unlawful activities in India. He had also received funds sent by 'uncle', a designated individual terrorist, through his associate 'bhai', the NIA said in a statement.

Besides the designated terrorist Uncle alias Javed Chikna, those charge-sheeted under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act have been identified as Riyaz Shikilkar, Mohammad Fayaaz Shikilkar and Nasir Chaudhari, all residents of Mumbai.

One of the accused Fayaaz Shikilkar has also been charged under the Arms Act. Three accused were chargesheeted earlier, in April last year, by the Thane police in the case, which was originally registered following the seizure of 149 high

Even 5 days of exposure to air pollution linked to increased risk of stroke: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Short-term exposure i.e. just five days exposure to air pollution may be linked to an increased risk of stroke, according to a study. Previous research has established a connection between long-term exposure to air pollution and an increased risk of stroke.



MD, study author, University of Jordan in Amman. The meta-analysis that involved a review of 110 studies that included more than 18 million cases of stroke is published in the online issue of Neurology, the medical journal

of the American Academy of Neurology. Researchers looked at pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide, ozone, carbon monoxide and sulfur dioxide. They also looked at different sizes of particulate matter, including PM1, which is air pollution that is less than 1 micron (?m) in diameter, as well as PM2.5 and PM10. PM2.5 or smaller includes inhalable particles from motor vehicle exhaust, the burning of fuels by power plants and other industries as well as forest and grass fires. PM10 includes dust from roads and construction sites. People who had exposure to a higher concentration of various types of air pollution had an increased risk of stroke. Higher concentrations of nitrogen dioxide were linked to a 28 per cent increased risk of stroke; higher ozone levels were linked to a 5 per cent increase; carbon monoxide had a 26 per cent increase; and sulfur dioxide had a 15 per cent increase.

A higher concentration of PM1 was linked to a 9 per cent increased risk of stroke, with PM2.5 at 15 per cent and PM10 at 14 per cent. Higher levels of air pollution were also linked to higher risk of death from stroke. Higher concentrations of nitrogen dioxide were linked to a 33 per cent increased risk of death from stroke, sulfur dioxide, a 60 per cent increase, PM2.5, a 9 per cent increase and PM10, a 2 per cent increase.

Kapil Dev moves HC for stricter laws against cruelty to animals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Legendary India cricketer Kapil Dev and his wife Romi Dev have approached the Delhi High Court challenging certain provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act that allow destruction of stray dogs in lethal chambers and extermination or destruction of any animal under the authority of any law.



petition for further hearing on October 13. Petitioners Kapil Dev, his wife Romi Dev and animal rights activist Anjali Gopalan, said the petition was being filed on account of repeated instances of barbaric treatment meted out to animals showing the "most brutal and cruel face of humanity" and the "utter effete" response of law and the law enforcing agencies. The plea challenged section 11 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, saying it was without deterrence and manifestly

arbitrary since it trivialises life and denies animals any meaningful existence by treating their mutilation and killing as petty and frivolous acts, mocking their death through imposition of punishment of less than ₹10. Section 11 deals with treating animals cruelly and entails a fine which shall not be less than ₹10 but may extend to ₹50 in case of first offence. For the second or subsequent offence committed within three years of the previous offence, the punishment involves fine which shall not be less than ₹25 but may extend to ₹100 or with imprisonment for a term of maximum of three months or both. "Section 11 is further

unfair and unreasonable in so far as the exception under PCA Act which permits cruelty to animals for the purposes mentioned in Section 11(3) (b) (destruction of stray dogs in lethal chambers), Section 11(3) (c) (extermination or destruction of any animal under the authority of any law for the time being in force) ...," the plea said. It has also challenged sections 428 (Mischief by killing or maiming animal of the value of ten rupees) and 429 (mischief by killing or maiming cattle, etc., of any value or any animal of the value of fifty rupees) of the Indian Penal Code claiming that it is an instance of speciesism ggesting lack of moral worth or value in animals.

PUBLIC NOTICE
ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd Office Number 201-B, 2nd Floor, Road No. 1 Plot No-B3, Wifi It Park, Wagla Industrial Estate Thane (West)- 400604

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

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset/ Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Alok Kumar Sinha/ Sarita Sinha/ (LBSAT00005448356/ LBBHP00006071552) & E-109/1, Shivaji Nagar, Bhopal- 462016	Flat No. J-601, 6th Floor, Tower No. J, Maxblis White House, Plot No. 17, Eco City, QSector-75, Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, Noida-201301	September 14, 2023 Rs. 8,00,727/-	04-07-2023

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

Date : September 29, 2023
Place : Delhi NCR & Noida
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Govt has crushed hopes, dreams of youth: Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday targeted the Narendra Modi Government over the issue of unemployment alleging that it has crushed the hopes and dreams of India's youth, leading to rising suicides among them.

Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh alleged that the government, instead of dealing with the crisis of demographic dividend turning into a demographic disaster, might want to "manipulate" the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data due for 2022 to hide the alarming suicide rate among the youth.

In a statement, he said unemployment in India remains a severe problem as well as the hidden under-employment.

Ramesh cited the interactions of Rahul Gandhi with porters at the Anand Vihar Terminal here where he had noted that large numbers of

educated youth, including those with engineering degrees, were unable to find formal employment and were forced into precarious informal jobs such as porters.

The Congress general secretary said the massive failure of the Modi Government to provide sufficient formal-sector employment has led to this situation.

Ramesh cited data from the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) for 2021-22 that shows that formal sector employment remains 5.3 per cent lower than it was in 2019-20. Further, the number of formal employers has declined by a massive 10.5 per cent from 2019-20 to 2021-22.

According to a report from Azim Premji University, the Congress leader said, 42 per cent of graduates under 25 were unemployed in 2021-22. Jobs in manufacturing dropped 31 per cent between 2016-17 and March 2023, according to Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data.

CSIR lab producing affordable green innovative technology

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

From converting pathogenic biomedical waste into eco-friendly soil additives to manufacturing vegan leather from agricultural waste like mango peel and banana stem, the CSIR's lab National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (NIIST), is busy churning out affordable green innovative technology.

These among others were displayed at the foundation day of the CSIR at Pragati Maidan here recently.

NIIST Director Dr C Anandharamkrishnan said that vegan leather has the potential to replace around 30-50 per cent of synthetic chemicals from the existing leather available in the market.

"Also, the developed leather sheet costs 50 per cent less than synthetic and animal leather and has a smaller carbon footprint as various agricultural residues such as mango peel, banana stem, pineapple waste, cactus, water hyacinth, corn husk, and rice-related waste are being used.

Vegan leather has a shelf



life of more than three years. It has also shown strong tensile strength, sleek finish, good water retention properties, temperature resistance, and stability compared to other existing synthetic and animal leather," he emphasised.

Though still held out by the fashion industry as a luxury material, leather is a co-product of the meat industry, and it comes with many environmental downsides.

A leather jacket has a climate cost of 176 kilograms of CO2, for instance, and manufacturers also dump toxic chemical compounds like lead, arsenic, cadmium and chromium into the water as the leather is processed, on top of the millions of goats and other animals slaughtered each year in India for leather.

About the dual disinfection-solidification system for spontaneous and instantaneous disinfection of both liquid and solid biomedical waste, including urine, saliva and blood, bacterial broths, cotton, tissues, swabs, needles, and syringes, the NIIST Director said the innovative system converts degradable waste into soil additives while lab disposables are prepared for direct recycling.

Segregation, transportation and disposal of such disinfectant medical waste are easier and safer with significant reduction in cost for a health-care facility and less expensive than red-bagging, a method currently in practice for containing medical waste, explained Anandharamkrishnan.

PUBLIC NOTICE
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Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset/ Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Jyoti Yadav/ Narender Yadav- LBAWR00006238135/ LBAWR00006291288- D/o Nawal Singh, Ujoli Village, Kotkashim, Bhiwadi, Rajasthan- 301702	Flat No-504, Fifth Floor, Tower-D, Ramsons Kshitij, Village Dhorka, Near Ayushman Hospital, Sector-95, Pataudi Road, Sub Tehsil Harsaru, Gurgaon, Haryana- 122505	August 25, 2023 Rs. 21,28,608/-	20/06/2023

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

Date : September 29, 2023
Place : Gurgaon
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Make vegetable farming employable, says Mishra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister (PM) Dr Pramod Kumar Mishra called upon the agricultural scientists to make vegetable farming employable and research on important topics like climate change, artificial intelligence, higher product value and processing is the need of the hour. He was speaking as the chief guest at the 33rd Foundation Day function of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)-Indian Vegetable Research Institute (IVIR) here on Thursday.

Dr Mishra praised the research work of the ICAR-IVIR (Varanasi) and said that the IVIR has played an important role in the vegetable production scenario of India. "The farmers can increase and double their income by diversifying agriculture through vegetables," he said, expressing hope that planting material will be easily available to the farmers through hi-tech vegetable nurseries which will benefit lakhs of farmers of Uttar Pradesh.

Speaking as a special guest Additional Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh government Dr Devesh Chaturvedi said in his address that UP is a leading state in vegetable production and farmers of Purvanchal (eastern UP) are now earning more income by exporting vegetables abroad. Deputy Director General (Crop Science



PS to PM Dr PK Mishra addressing Foundation Day function at IVIR in Varanasi on Thursday.

and Horticulture Science), ICAR, New Delhi, Dr Tilak Raj Sharma said that India is setting new dimensions every day in vegetable production and last year vegetables worth more than Rs 7,000 crore were exported.

The programme started with the inauguration of hi-tech vegetable nursery and plantation of trees in the institute campus. In his welcome address, IVIR Director Dr Tushar Kanti Behera highlighted the achievements of the institute so far and gave details of the action plan to double vegetable production by 2047.

On the occasion, various publications of the institute were released and for the best work after the year, Pradeep Karmakar in the scientific category, Sudhir Kumar in the technical category and Dr Manoj Kumar Pandey in the Agricultural Science Centre were given citations. The awards were also distributed to the school students. An agricultural exhibition was also organised on this occasion. In this ceremony, PMO officials, Divisional Commissioner (DC) Kaushal Raj Sharma, District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam, Director General, Uttar

Pradesh Agricultural Research Council, Lucknow, Dr Sanjay Kumar Singh, officers of agriculture and horticulture departments of the state, the scientists, technical and administrative officers, support staff, research students, and senior officers of the institute apart from a large number of farmers and school students were also present.

The programme was conducted by Dr Dhananjay Pratap Singh, while the vote of thanks was proposed by Dr Sudhakar Pandey, Assistant Director General (Horticulture), ICAR.

Poster hints at Priyanka contesting Lok Sabha poll from Phulpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Congress in Prayagraj is known for 'poster revolution'. Though demoralised the workers themselves, most of the times, issue posters to prove that they are still in the picture.

Now a new poster has been floated suggesting that Priyanka Gandhi will be contesting the Lok Sabha election from Phulpur in Prayagraj, the seat of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, which was later represented by several parties and politicians, including mafia don Atiq Ahmed.

The poster terms Priyanka as 'aandhi' (storm) and by the side of his picture a milestone is shown reading 'Phulpur 0

km'.

It may be mentioned here that some overenthusiastic office-bearers of the Congress had been expelled from the office for issuing posters without the knowledge of the leaders, but it has become a part of their life, so posters are released by the local Congress leaders from time to time to let the leaders recognise them.

Phulpur of Nehru is not that Phulpur now. Earlier it was a rural constituency, but after delimitation of Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha constituencies, a huge urban area of Prayagraj city has become the part of Phulpur constituency.

Though nothing has been suggested by the party leaders, hundreds of posters of Priyanka Gandhi can be

seen, particularly in the urban areas of the Phulpur constituency, as if her name has been announced for this seat.

BEATEN TO DEATH: One person was beaten to death in a fight between two groups in a dispute over road in Jamua village of Meja. The family members took him to the hospital, where doctors declared him as brought dead. On getting information the police reached the spot and reviewed the situation.

A fight broke out between the two groups on Thursday afternoon. Lal Chandra Dubey, Bablu Dubey and a woman from one side were injured. However, Lalchandra was seriously injured. The family members took him to the hospital. But Lal Chandra (65) was

declared as brought dead there. On information SHO Major Rajesh Upadhyay arrived with force and started investigation.

The women of the family of the deceased Lal Chandra said there was an altercation with neighbours Bunty Dubey, Bablu Dubey and Alok Dubey in connection with the dispute over road. The altercation turned into a fight and the opposite party allegedly thrashed Lal Chandra with bricks, stones and sticks killing him on the spot.

Police station in-charge Rajesh Upadhyay said the elderly man injured during the fight died. All the accused are still absconding. The body has been taken sent for the post-mortem examination.

New V-C of Dr Rajendra Prasad NLU takes charge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Newly-appointed Vice-Chancellor of Dr Rajendra Prasad National Law University (NLU) Prof Usha Tandon took charge on Thursday. On the very first day she held a meeting with subordinates and discussed how academic and administrative activities could be started as soon as possible.

She said a registrar will also be appointed in the university soon. Chief Revenue Officer Kunwar Pankaj has been given the responsibility of special officer of the university.

Prof Tandon said "our aim is to produce world class law professionals from this city of justice. Such an academic environment can be created in which students can prepare themselves for global competition. There is a need for good and knowledgeable professionals in the field of law not only in India but also abroad. One can also earn good money



Prof Usha Tandon

abroad". The construction work of Law University campus is going on in Jhalwa here. Now it may take another 6 to 8 months. Till the completion of the construction, the university will operate from the BBS Engineering College campus. Right now

protection and women's rights. **ARRESTED:** A coaching operator sexually exploited a minor student for one and a half months in Dhoonganjan area and threatened to fail her if she opened her mouth. As a result the student remained silent. Seeing her daughter upset, when the mother asked her she narrated her ordeal. The police has arrested him and sent him to jail.

According to the police, the victim is a resident of Bamhrauli area and a student of class X. She had joined the class to study mathematics and science. When she returned from coaching on September 21, her mother became suspicious on seeing her condition. When the mother asked her forcefully, the daughter told her the reason. The police have registered a case against the accused under POCSO Act and molestation. The accused has been arrested and sent to jail.

BHU tops among central varsities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has received the top position in the category of central universities in the 9th edition of 'Clarivate India Research Excellence Citation Awards-2023' for its excellent research work. This award is given to all the universities in the country. It is given for the excellent research work of one of the central universities. Dr Devendra Kumar Singh, Librarian of BHU, received the award in a function organised by Web of Science in New Delhi recently.

The Clarivate India Research Excellence Citation Awards-2023 is a unique award given to recognise excellence in education research in India. This award is organised once every two or three years and honours individuals and institutions who have made outstanding education research contributions in various categories and whose research



BHU Librarian Dr DK Singh receiving an award in New Delhi recently.

makes a significant impact in their chosen field. In the direction of research excellence, the Central Library (BHU) is making available all

the important books and research journals of the world for the research work being done in the university, as a result of which this year the

Central Library of BHU was also given the Best Library Award by the Indian Library Association.

Varanasi first in UP in health ranking dashboard

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In the health ranking dashboard, Varanasi has once again secured the first position in the state by securing an 85 per cent score. The district has come first for the fifth time in the Health Ranking Dashboard. District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam and Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal praised the Health department for this achievement and encouraged them to provide quality services in future.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said that recently the ranking of all the districts has been displayed in the state's health ranking dashboard (August). By continuously working as per the guidelines given by the DM, the district has secured the first position in the state for the fifth consecutive time. The health facilities being provided in the district are being supervised by the CDO. He said that according to the monthly dashboard, the district has achieved first place in the state in achieving 100 per cent HIV testing in relation to expected pregnancies and 100 per cent vaccination in complete vaccination of children (BCG, Pentavalent, second and third, measles-rubella).

"Along with this, it stood second in the state in temporary means of family planning (Antara, Chhaya, Copper-T,



Arazilines CHC best in Varanasi as per UP Health-Ranking Dashboard.

PPIUCD and IUCD), second in cesarean delivery in relation to delivery at Community Health Centres (CHCs) and fourth place in institutional delivery in relation to estimated delivery," he said, adding that apart from this, it has performed better on 16 indicators including complete vaccination.

According to the CMO, this time Arazilines CHC has got the first position while Harhua PHC, Pindra PHC, Chiragaon PHC, Misirpur (Kashi Vidyapeeth) CHC, Baragaon PHC, Cholapur CHC and Sewapuri PHC secured from second to eighth places respectively and the district headquarters is at ninth position. The CMO congratulated the officers and health workers of the primary and community health centres (PHCs/CHCs) which were performing well and encouraged them to maintain the quality of services.

"Quality medical and health services of maternal-child health and family welfare programmes are being provided in all the government hospitals, CHC/ PHCs, Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) of the district," he said, informing that for this, good performance has been achieved under the collaborative supervision of Additional Chief Medical Officer (RCH) Dr HC Maurya and District Programme Manager (DPM) of National Health Mission Santosh Kumar Singh. "ASHA workers and ANMs have an important role in improving the indicators. ASHA workers mobilise beneficiaries from the community and bring them to the medical units," he said.

The CMO further said that the ranking of Varanasi is an honour to the front line workers. He directed all the health workers that the quality of

activities related to maternal health, child health, newborn health and nutrition should be maintained. The department is making continuous efforts to provide medical and health benefits to the last person of the community. This is the aim of the government and the department, he remarked.

Dr Chaudhary also said that the achievement of Varanasi should continue. "For this, all programme nodal officers, block programme managers, block community process managers, data operators, ANMs and other health workers have been directed to visit the regular blocks as well as VHSND, vaccination sessions, intervals and happy family days etc. Take people's feedback about the facilities provided there and ensure to improve it by taking appropriate action and ensuring 100 per cent data of all indicators on time," he said.

Ramlila to focus on creating lively experience for audience

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The authorities of Pajawa Ramlila Committee have decided to set up a two-storey stage for performing Ramlila. Interestingly, entry of a 20-foot Lord Hanuman and demon queen Surpanakha will be shown flying in different parts of Ramlila. Besides, the episode of 'Sita haran' (kidnapping of Goddess Sita) will also be staged using latest technology. The committee has also planned to showcase the flying of 'Pushpak Viman' during the

Ramlila episode. The fight between Lord Ram and demon king Ravan will be showcased with the help of laser technology.

The students pursuing management, graduation and post-graduation courses are being imparted training to do justice with their assigned roles. Pajawa Ramlila will begin from October 15 and culminate on October 22.

There will be eight light and sound based episodes for the entire Ramlila from birth of Lord Ram to victory over

Lanka. Sachin Kumar Gupta, director and finance secretary of Pajawa Ramlila committee told mediapersons, "A special ropeway is being made to help different characters to move from one end to another. However, after introduction of light and sound system, majority of Ramlila episodes are being staged more precisely and lively."

Management students here are taking on prominent roles such as Lord Ram, brother Laxman, and Goddess Sita in

the Pajawa Ramlila committee. This year's Ramlila will feature light and sound effects to enhance the storytelling, including scenes such as Sita Haran and Hanuman bringing Sanjivani.

Students from various colleges and universities will be playing the prime characters, while a team of technical experts will create visual effects. The Ramlila will run from October 15 to 22, with a focus on creating a more lively and impactful experience for the audience.

Man's body found hanging from tree

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

The body of one person was found hanging from a tree in the jungle under the Rajgarh police station on Thursday. Giving details, Circle Officer (CO) Operation Anil Kumar Pandey said after the Rajgarh police was informed that the body was hanging in the jungle near Raikara village he and the police team reached the spot. According to the police the deceased was later identified as Mahendra alias Rannu (37) of Perh village under Ghorawal police station, Sonbhadra. After taking the body into possession the police is busy in completing the legal formalities, the CO added.

INSPECTED: District Magistrate Priyanka Niranjana has decided to recover fine if anyone was found spitting in the Parikrama area of Vindhyaachal. Such decision was taken by her while inspecting the ongoing construction works under Vindhya Corridor project at Vindhyaachal along with MLA city Ratnaker Mishra on Wednesday. She has warned shopkeepers to maintain the area as no-tobacco zone and directed the police as well as other officials to follow the direction in view of the sanctity of the area.

The official concerned was taken to task for not comply-



ing with the direction of the earlier meeting in which the clear direction had been given to set up a borewell. She directed the EE Power Corporation to complete the work of underground cable within this month. The working agency concerned was warned to complete the work within stipulated time otherwise action will be taken because Navratra Mela was to start in a few days.

The working agencies were directed to complete roads, streets along with other works timely and cover drains. Later the DM inspected the repair work at Shastri Bridge and directed the working agency to complete the work till October 15. During the inspection she was accompanied by City Magistrate Vinay Kumar Singh and others.

REVIEWED: Divisional Commissioner (DC) Dr Muthukumarasamy Bhas while reviewing the progress in division's works costing more than Rs 50 lakh on Wednesday

directed the officials to complete them within the stipulated time and with quality. Reviewing the works of Sonbhadra, especially under DMD Trust the DC became aware about the ongoing works, including roads and bridges. On the road from Babhanaha Tola to ITI school the working agency was directed to examine the quality of the entire work. Reviewing progress in other works, including roads and canals, the DC asked the working agencies to complete them within the stipulated time. The EO Nagar Palika Parishad Bhadohi was directed to maintain roads of the area along with other works maintaining the quality.

Reviewing the ongoing works under AMRUT project the DC was apprised by the working agency that most of the works, including laying of pipeline for potable water, overhead tanks, connection of water pipeline to the houses etc had been completed. About sewage

system the authority concerned stated that the work had been divided into different zones and most of the works, including laying of sewage pipeline and chambers for houses were at the verge of the completion. The DC said proper repair of roads which have become dilapidated due to the pipeline work was the responsibility of the working agency. The meeting was conducted by Joint Development Commissioner Suresh Chandra Mishra and was attended by Additional District Magistrate (ADM/Finance and Revenue) Shiv Pratap Shukla, Additional Commissioner Abhay Pandey, EO NPP Mirzapur Angad Gupta and other officials concerned.

ARRESTED: The Jigna police arrested an accused of illegal mining on Wednesday. During the inspection of sand mining sites the then mines officer had found illegal mining in Khaira village under Jigna police station. The officer had filed a case on April 8, 2022. During investigation the name of Dinesh Kumar Yadav of Saray Rahchanda village under Mungarabadshahpur police station, Jaunpur, had come to light but he was still at large. Station Officer of Jigna handed over the case to sub-inspector Abhay Narain Tiwari and the accused was nabbed from his residence.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Big guns roll out

The BJP leadership is taking no chances in Madhya Pradesh, fielding 3 Union Ministers in Assembly polls

With elections to five Assemblies scheduled by this year end, political temperature is already on the rise. However, as the situation persists today, the battleground of Madhya Pradesh has taken the lead in evoking competition and wonderment more fierce than in the other four States. As the X factor in these elections for the BJP is the party's decision to bring back to fight the Assembly polls three Ministers from the Union Government, at least four sitting MPs representing the State and other senior party office bearers holding influence across castes, religion and region. The ruling party has come up with its second list of 39 candidates for Madhya Pradesh. This move comes as the party faces tough competition from the Congress. The BJP has made a bold move by fielding heavyweights, including Union Ministers, to maintain its stronghold in the State. Union Ministers Narendra Singh Tomar, Prahlad Patel and Faggan Singh Kulaste, along with party MPs Rakesh Singh, Ganesh Singh, Reeti Pathak and Uday Pratap Singh, as well as general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, will now contest the Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections. The inclusion of these prominent leaders as candidates has also opened up the field for chief ministership aspirants; Narendra Singh Tomar, Prahlad Patel and Kailash Vijayvargiya are now considered strong contenders.



Shivraj Singh Chouhan has held the CM's post for nearly 20 years, with a brief interruption after the 2018 elections. The BJP is concerned about fatigue setting in regarding Chouhan. During a recent rally, Prime Minister Modi did not mention Chouhan even once. Meanwhile, Congress is emerging as a formidable contender under former CM Kamal Nath's leadership. This election promises to be a riveting showdown, with significant implications for Chouhan, besides the State's political future. Though Chouhan has served as the Chief Minister for multiple terms and is widely credited as a popular leader, his reputation and political future are now closely tied to this poll's outcome. If the BJP manages to secure a comfortable majority, it will consolidate his position within the party and strengthen his leadership in the State. On the other hand, a loss could raise questions about his ability to win elections and govern effectively. Kamal Nath, a seasoned politician, is working to consolidate the party's base and capitalise on anti-incumbency sentiments. The Congress' performance in recent byelections has been promising, boosting its confidence. The party is banking on issues such as unemployment, rural distress. Its campaign is centred on the promise of "change and improved governance". Meanwhile, the BJP's decision to field its stalwarts is an ominous sign for Chouhan and shows the party's dwindling faith in his leadership. Anti-incumbency and a number of unsavoury incidents have led to the erosion of his reputation which could cost the party an important State in the Hindi heartland. The BJP would not like that to happen just ahead of the 2024 general elections.

tem. The Lancet study compared and analysed the PM 2.5 levels with levels of antibiotic resistance and made a disturbing discovery that the higher the pollutant level, the greater the antibiotic resistance. PM 2.5 are smaller than human hair and contains antibiotic resistance elements. As these pollutants travel through the ambient air, they disperse antibiotic resistance elements, which can then be inhaled by humans which in turn sets in motion the resistance. The concerning aspect is that antibiotic-resistant bacteria can withstand antibiotic treatments, rendering the drugs ineffective against them. Antibiotics are primarily used to eliminate microorganisms, especially bacteria, but resistant bacteria are impervious to their effects. The data for this research was collated from 116 countries utilising sources like ResistanceMap, the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control Surveillance Atlas, and the PLISA Health Information Platform. Overall, nine pathogens and 43 drugs were analysed. It was observed that the surge in antibiotic resistance among bacteria is largely attributed to the indiscriminate use of antibiotics. Repeated and widespread antibiotic usage can empower bacteria to develop resistance over time, often facilitated by Antibiotic Resistance Genes (ARGs). Pathogenic bacteria, responsible for infections and diseases, can acquire antibiotic resistance through ARGs in a process known as horizontal gene transfer. The Lancet health report concluded that the need of the hour is to address the PM2.5 levels. Without this, antibiotic resistance may increase by approximately 17%, with related deaths rising by 56% globally by 2050. Conversely, adhering to the World Health Organization's recommended PM 2.5 level of 5 µg/m could lead to a 17% reduction in antibiotic resistance and a 23% decrease in deaths. But this is easier said than done. Of the world's 30 cities with the worst air pollution, 21 are in India. Capital New Delhi is the worst with PM 2.5 being nearly 10 times higher than the World Health Organisation levels. According to the CleanAir organisation India sees 2 million early deaths and a loss of 95 billion to the economy due to PM 2.5. Given these bleak conditions, India needs to cover a lot of ground to rein in PM 2.5 levels while there is still time. The National Clean Air Program (NCAP) is a deter-

PICTALK



ISRO chief S. Somanath with others at Aadi Jyotirling Shree Somnath Mahadev Temple in Saurashtra on Thursday PTI

Impact of menopause on sleep can be debilitating

It is imperative that both individuals and society recognise the significance of addressing sleep issues during menopause

Menopause is a phase that marks the cessation of menstruation and reproductive function. Beyond the widely known physical changes, menopause brings a range of challenges, and one often underrated area of impact is sleep. Sleep becomes elusive for many women during this phase.

Menopause and sleep Menopause typically occurs between the ages of 45 and 55, with the average age being around 46 for Indian women. As the ovaries cease producing estrogen and progesterone, various physiological changes occur, giving rise to a multitude of symptoms. One of the most common complaints is sleep disturbances. According to the National Sleep Foundation, about 61% of women going through menopause report experiencing sleep problems. The hormonal changes that accompany menopause have a direct impact on sleep. Estrogen, known to regulate the sleep cycle, decreases during menopause, disrupting the body's internal clock. This can lead to difficulties falling asleep and staying



asleep through the night. Hot flashes and night sweats, affecting up to 75% of menopausal women, further exacerbate sleep. These sudden surges in body temperature can awaken women from deep sleep, leaving them fatigued and irritable during the day. **Sleep efficiency:** Studies show that sleep efficiency—the percentage of time spent asleep while in bed—drops significantly during menopause. The post-menopausal women often see this number drop to 70% or lower. **Insomnia:** Insomnia becomes a prevalent issue during menopause. According to the National Sleep Foundation, the risk of insomnia doubles during this phase, and about 40% of menopausal women experi-

ence insomnia symptoms. **Sleep duration:** Menopause can lead to shorter sleep durations. On average, women in their 40s and 50s sleep about 30 to 60 minutes less. **Daytime fatigue:** The ripple effects of disrupted sleep patterns are felt during the day. Women undergoing menopause often report increased daytime fatigue, leading to reduced productivity and a diminished quality of life. **Strategies for improved sleep** Despite the challenges, there are effective strategies that can help women improve their sleep quality during menopause. **● Create a sleep-conducive environment** by keeping the bedroom dark, quiet, and comfortably cool. Invest in a comfortable mattress and pillows. Make sure to avoid any screen time for at least an hour or two before sleeping. **● Establish a regular sleep schedule** by going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, even on weekends. This helps regulate the body's internal clock. **● Practices like medita-**

tion, deep breathing, and progressive muscle relaxation can help reduce stress and promote better sleep. **● Engage in regular physical activity** but avoid vigorous exercise close to bedtime. Limit caffeine and alcohol intake, especially in the evening. **● Consult a healthcare professional** if sleep disturbances become severe. Menopause is a natural phase of life, and while sleep disturbances may seem inevitable, they are not insurmountable. By understanding the science behind these disruptions and embracing strategies to mitigate them, women can embark on a journey toward restful nights and energized days. From healthcare providers offering tailored guidance to workplaces providing flexibility to accommodate sleep-related challenges, collective efforts can foster an environment where women can navigate this transitional phase in a better manner. (The writer is Co-Founder and Head of Health Outcomes and Programs, Elda Health; views are personal)



AMEYA KULKARNI

ment. The Lancet study compared and analysed the PM 2.5 levels with levels of antibiotic resistance and made a disturbing discovery that the higher the pollutant level, the greater the antibiotic resistance. PM 2.5 are smaller than human hair and contains antibiotic resistance elements. As these pollutants travel through the ambient air, they disperse antibiotic resistance elements, which can then be inhaled by humans which in turn sets in motion the resistance. The concerning aspect is that antibiotic-resistant bacteria can withstand antibiotic treatments, rendering the drugs ineffective against them. Antibiotics are primarily used to eliminate microorganisms, especially bacteria, but resistant bacteria are impervious to their effects. The data for this research was collated from 116 countries utilising sources like ResistanceMap, the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control Surveillance Atlas, and the PLISA Health Information Platform. Overall, nine pathogens and 43 drugs were analysed. It was observed that the surge in antibiotic resistance among bacteria is largely attributed to the indiscriminate use of antibiotics. Repeated and widespread antibiotic usage can empower bacteria to develop resistance over time, often facilitated by Antibiotic Resistance Genes (ARGs). Pathogenic bacteria, responsible for infections and diseases, can acquire antibiotic resistance through ARGs in a process known as horizontal gene transfer. The Lancet health report concluded that the need of the hour is to address the PM2.5 levels. Without this, antibiotic resistance may increase by approximately 17%, with related deaths rising by 56% globally by 2050. Conversely, adhering to the World Health Organization's recommended PM 2.5 level of 5 µg/m could lead to a 17% reduction in antibiotic resistance and a 23% decrease in deaths. But this is easier said than done. Of the world's 30 cities with the worst air pollution, 21 are in India. Capital New Delhi is the worst with PM 2.5 being nearly 10 times higher than the World Health Organisation levels. According to the CleanAir organisation India sees 2 million early deaths and a loss of 95 billion to the economy due to PM 2.5. Given these bleak conditions, India needs to cover a lot of ground to rein in PM 2.5 levels while there is still time. The National Clean Air Program (NCAP) is a deter-

mined step in the right direction, but it needs more grit and resolve behind it if the initiative has to succeed. Some major steps are the need of the hour for India. Firstly, immediate curbs on ammonia release in farms are essential, this must be followed by a full ban on refuse burning. Apart from this rural brick kilns must be persuaded to shift to cleaner kiln-firing technologies. Urgent efforts also need to be made to convert coal-based power plants to clean energy, as this by itself will make a huge difference. To make this a reality, India must make a push for creating the correct financial architecture through investment funds with a dedicated green focus that can play an instrumental role in catalysing the growth of green industries and simultaneously addressing the twin problems of air pollution and climate change. These funds would combine a returns-driven strategy with the sustainability imperative and accelerate investment in green industries. Measures such as these can help India fight air pollution and prevent a calamitous future where common antibiotic efficacy is not held to ransom by polluted air. (The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Air pollution renders antibiotics ineffective

A 'Lancet' study has established a connection between bacterial antibiotic resistance and air pollution; inhaling PM 2.5 can lead to antibiotic resistance

There was a sense of palpable urgency to address climate change, air pollution and degradation of the environment at the recently concluded three-day G20 summit held in New Delhi. Led by India, the G20 nations agreed to urgently accelerate their actions to address environmental crises and climate change challenges with the help of a green development plan. This in a way reflects the prophetic warning to world leaders by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres at the 27th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) held in 2022, that humanity is on a "highway to climate hell with a foot on the accelerator". Because 80 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions emanate from G20 nations, the member nations needed to understand the gravity of the problem and ensure meaningful progress in this regard.

As the stakes for mankind keep rising thanks to rising pollution and climate change, keeping global average temperatures below 2 degrees centigrade alone may not be the urgent goal of the nations. Newer and more perilous problems are arising due to unabated pollution levels. A recent study published in the health journal "Lancet" has established a connection between bacterial antibiotic resistance and air pollution, particularly PM 2.5. The study suggests that PM 2.5 contains elements of antibiotic resistance, and inhaling this pollutant can lead to an increase in the spread of antibiotic resistance. The authors of the study aimed to estimate the global premature death toll caused by resistance to antibiotics due to PM 2.5 pollution.

PM 2.5 refers to particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 micrometres or smaller. These particles, consisting of solid and liquid elements, are of varying sizes, with some, like dust and soot, visible to the naked eye and others, such as PM 2.5, only observable under electron microscopes. Inhaling these pollutants can pose serious health risks, especially to the respiratory sys-



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SOME MAJOR STEPS ARE THE NEED OF THE HOUR FOR INDIA. FIRSTLY, IMMEDIATE CURBS ON AMMONIA RELEASE IN FARMS ARE ESSENTIAL, THIS MUST BE FOLLOWED BY A FULL BAN ON REFUSE BURNING

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS

Sir — The 22nd Law Commission of India is poised to submit a report on the feasibility of conducting simultaneous elections in the country and is likely to recommend it for the 2029 elections. The Commission, led by Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, has diligently worked on this final report since February 2023. The report, destined for submission to the Law Ministry, currently headed by Arjun Meghwal, arrives at a pivotal juncture. It coincides with the government's formation of a high-level committee, under the leadership of former President Ram Nath Kovind, tasked with examining and providing recommendations for simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha, state assemblies, municipalities, and panchayats, all in the name of 'national interest'. According to reports, there's a possibility that the government may forward the Law Commission's report to the Kovind-led committee for their consideration. The Law Commission is likely to propose synchronized elections within the next five years, with the goal of implementing simultaneous elections by 2029. **Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai**

IS BJP ANTICIPATING THE INEVITABLE?

Sir — Is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) sensing the inevitable? If not, then why does the BJP's recent move in Madhya Pradesh (MP) signal the party's intention to contest the elections under collective leadership, with prominent figures from different regions in the fray? In a surprising development that has set political circles abuzz, the BJP has announced its decision to field seven Lok Sabha members, including three union ministers—Narendra Singh Tomar, Prahlad Singh Patel, and Faggan Singh Kulaste, as well as its national general secretary, Kailash Vijayvargiya. One can't help but wonder whether this move signifies that the BJP lacks strong candidates in MP, necessitating the deployment of Lok Sabha members, many of whom owe their electoral success to the Modi wave. By fielding these seven sitting MPs, the

Dada Saheb Phalke Award for Waheeda



Congratulations to the versatile actor, Waheeda, who, at the age of 85, has earned the prestigious Dada Saheb Phalke (lifetime achievement) award for 2023. Her illustrious acting career spanning five decades, from 1955 to 1991 and then from 2002 to the present, not only showcases her exceptional acting skills but also highlights her endearing, friendly, and controversy-free persona. Beyond her acting prowess, she is a multifaceted personality—a generous philanthropist, a passionate advocate for education, and a dedicated worker for poverty eradication through the Rangdara organization. Her cinematic journey has embraced various languages, including Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Bengali, Marathi, and English. Her latest endeavor, "Skater Girl" (2021), is a bilingual

party aims not only to secure the weaker seats but also to influence neighboring constituencies through the continued presence of these seasoned politicians. It's worth noting that the BJP has employed a similar strategy in past assembly elections. In the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elections, the BJP fielded five of its sitting Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha MPs. Only two of them managed to secure victory in their respective constituencies, while the remaining three faced defeat. Nevertheless, it appears that the BJP faces an uphill battle in MP following the perceived misrule under Shivraj Singh Chouhan's leadership. Furthermore, Jyotiraditya Scindia has proven to be a liability, with most of his associates returning to the Congress fold. These factors could spell deep trouble for the BJP. **Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad**

film in Hindi and English, leaving us eagerly anticipating her next project in 2023-2024.

Waheeda has been rightfully honored by the Government of India with prestigious civilian awards such as the Padmashree (1972) and the Padma Bhushan (2011). Her contributions have been multidimensional, collaborating with two generations of iconic families in the film industry, including Raj Kapoor, Amitabh Bachchan, Sunil Dutt, Dharmendra, and many more. One might ask, with which distinguished actor or director did she not collaborate?

She has worked alongside all major heroes and directors of her time, such as Gurudutt ("Pyasa," "Kagaz Ke Phool"), Manoj Kumar ("Aadmi"), Rajendra Kumar ("Kaala Bazaar"), Devanand ("CID," "Guide"), Dilip Kumar ("Ram Aur Shyam"), Dharmendra and Rajesh Khanna ("Khamoshi"), Sunil Dutt and Amitabh Bachchan ("Reshma Aur Shera"). Notably, she even took on a double role in "Man Mandir" (1971). We wish Waheeda, now 85 years old, a life filled with happiness, excellent health, peace, prosperity, and continued progress, along with her family. We eagerly await news of her next movie. **PV Srinivas Sreelekha | Secunderabad**

INDIA-CANADA TIES

Sir — The recent discussions by Canada's Defence Minister regarding bolstering ties with India underscore the importance of nurturing strong international partnerships. In a world grappling with numerous challenges, collaboration among nations assumes increasing significance.

Canada and India share democratic values and common interests, making this relationship particularly noteworthy. Enhancing diplomatic, economic, and defense ties between these two nations can yield mutual benefits and contribute to global stability.

Md Maimul Safui | West Bengal

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

RESPECT INDIA'S SOVEREIGNTY

Canada must not allow its soil to be used for anti-India activities



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

A story of agents executing transnational operations, intelligence agencies sharing crucial information, backchannel diplomatic conversations, political instability and every chapter from a racy spy thriller is playing out for the world audience, with Canada and India in the lead for the past few weeks. In a hurried and perhaps half-baked allegation Canadian PM Justine Trudeau blamed Indian agencies for carrying out extra-territorial executions of Canadian citizens.

India was quick to retort with a terse statement, which instead pointed out the long-standing issue of concern between the two countries in the form of Canada allowing Indian separatist groups to operate out of their country. The Indian statement said unequivocally "We have seen and reject the statement of the Canadian Prime Minister in their Parliament, as also the statement by their Foreign Minister. Allegations of the Government of India's involvement in any act of violence in Canada are absurd and motivated. Similar allegations were made by the Canadian Prime Minister to our Prime Minister and were completely rejected. Such unsubstantiated allegations seek to shift the focus from Khalistan terrorists and extremists, who have been provided shelter in Canada and continue to threaten India's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We reject any attempts to connect the Government of India to such developments. We urge the Government of Canada to take prompt and effective legal action against all anti-India elements operating from their soil."

What is happening in the bilateral relationship is not a recent development but has been brewing for decades. Nearly forty years back India had demanded the extradition of a terrorist from Canada, responsible for one of the worst plane bombings in history, killing everyone on board an Air India flight. The several convicts responsible for the act of terror were never convicted by Canada, despite repeated inputs from India abandoning victims' families chasing long winding court cases for decades.

The reason Canada allows or even nurtures these anti-India forces



on its soil leads through the corridors of domestic politics. Millions of Indians particularly from Punjab make a substantial chunk of the Canadian demography. While most of them earn an honest living and are peace-loving, some notorious elements have managed to sneak into Canada, working through well-oiled semi-government machinery. Over some time, these criminals and terrorists wanted by India, have managed to control important real estate through the Gurudwaras committees. These mafia-controlled gurudwaras also serve as a conduit for fulfilling the immigration dream of thousands of Punjab youth, working with their India handlers across Punjab and several other states of north India. The modus operandi for getting ground force for staging anti-India acts from Canadian soil starts with a letter issued by Indian handlers, about the youth facing discrimination, and persecution due to his religion, in India. This sets the ball rolling for the youth to get an easy Canadian citizenship, on mercy grounds and feeds into domestic political narratives. In the present case too, the trigger was PM Trudeau's falling political popularity. A few months back he accused China of meddling with domestic politics even as he was trying to warm up the India bilateral, through a trade deal.

Canada understands the rising importance of India in the new global order, especially with China and Russia facing flak. It understands that a powerful, resilient, democratic India is important for a prosperous Indo-Pacific region, which indirectly translates to bringing more prosperity to its citizens. However, the domestic political concerns rise above geopolitics, and retaining the chair as PM seems more important for Trudeau at the moment. It may be argued that several news reports have pointed to US intelligence aid in Canadian allegations against India, however, the US knows which way the wind is blowing.

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

Regulatory boost to self-sufficiency in energy



UTTAM GUPTA

Modi Government is giving considerable policy support for the exploration of hydrocarbons so that investors can earn assured return on their investments

Delivering the 75th Independence Day address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi set the country a target to achieve self-reliance in energy production by boosting the gas-based economy (besides giving a push to electric mobility and hydrogen production). Modi wants the share of natural gas (NG) in the total energy mix to go up from the current around 6 per cent to 15 per cent.

Currently, India imports 50 per cent of its NG requirement. This is because domestic production is hovering around a low of 28.6 - 34 billion cubic metres (bcm) in 2020-21 to 2021-22 (down from a peak of 52 bcm in 2010-11). There is a dire need to give a massive push to domestic output to meet the target. India has 26 sedimentary basins (SBs) covering an area of 3.4 million sq km that could be searched for hydrocarbon resources. Only six of the SBs are under commercial exploitation; these too are sub-optimally utilized.

Hydrocarbon exploration is a highly capital-intensive and technology-intensive business involving a long-gestation period. It is risk-prone especially when it comes to drilling in deep/ultra-deep and high-pressure/high-temperature (D/UD/HP/HT) fields in offshore areas such as the Krishna-Godavari (KG) basin. However, these areas offer maximum promise in terms of reserves.

Multinational companies (MNCs) such as ExxonMobil, Chevron Total etc. which have the technology and resources can be enthused to take long-term bets in the Indian hydrocarbon sector provided the government offers them an opportunity to earn an attractive return on their investment in a 'sustained' basis. This in turn, requires that their efforts in the discovery and development of NG fields don't face regulatory hurdles leading to the commencement of production within a reasonable time frame and that they can sell the gas 'freely' at a 'remunerative' price. In all three areas, the MNCs faced impediments in the past. In recent years, the Modi - government has made significant progress in removing these though, a lot more ground remains to be covered. Let us look at the regulatory landscape.

Nearly 50 per cent of SB area or 1.73 million sq km lies offshore. Out of this, until recently 0.69 million sq km lay in the prohibited zone (fondly referred to as 'No go' area) due to security reasons. Now, the incumbent government has released a 0.67 million sq km sedimentary basin lying offshore. This should give a big boost to exploration and production (E&P) activity.

Until hitherto, E&P firms were getting lease rights for short tenure though extendable by 10 years for gas/oil & gas fields and by five years for oil fields. They had to go to the bureaucrats to seek approval for an extension of the lease which came in the way of undertaking long-term investment commitment.

Now, the government has granted E&P rights over the entire economic life of the allotted fields (this could extend up to 30 years, even beyond depending on the available reserves and the pace of their exploitation) instead of the extant system of allowing extensions. This will entice global firms to undertake long-term investment bets as they know for sure in



advance that they will get to operate the field for their entire economic life

The government has passed the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, which says that seismic surveys (it is done in the initial stage to determine evidence of economically viable hydrocarbon resources below the ground) won't be treated as a non-forest activity. This implies that explorers would be granted prompt access to forest areas, thereby saving time spent on seeking permits.

Under the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP), also known as the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) launched in 2017, E&P firms are allowed to pick up a block of their choice unlike the earlier New Exploration and Licensing Policy (NELP) (launched in 1999) wherein they had to accept what the government offered. Besides, under OALP, an operator gets a composite license to search for hydrocarbon in whatever form; for instance, if it is 'shale gas', she won't need a separate license for extracting it.

For long, E&P efforts were hamstrung by cumbersome procedures, multiple approvals and bureaucratic red tape. Approvals were needed at every stage viz. preparation of field development plans (FDP) including its revision, and extension of the contract, drilling wells, conducting tests to determine the commercial viability of the field, annual work program (AWP), laying the pipeline, reviewing production and so on. As many as 37 processes and procedures were required to be followed by a firm-awarded block under NELP.

Team Modi has substantially liberalised and de-bureaucratized the approvals. It has identified 22 processes for which self-certification of documents by contractors is accepted. Besides, it has provided for pre-approved clearance of blocks which will substantially cut the time lost in taking approvals. The government is also keen to opt for globally recognised and accepted dispute resolution mechanisms and play-based exploration.

Moreover, the 'revenue sharing' model under the OALP (currently in vogue) allows the operator to share an agreed percentage of the revenue with the Government of India (GOI) unlike the production sharing contracts (PSC) under erstwhile NELP wherein she could fully recover the cost incurred in exploration and development of the field before sharing profits with the GOI. The former does away with an additional layer of approval which was intrinsic to the latter wherein the costs incurred at every stage were subject to official scrutiny.

Coming to the selling of NG and realisation therefrom, in respect of gas from fields given under HELP/OALP, the operators are allowed freedom of pricing and marketing. This is a big positive for E&P firms that are being allotted fields under this policy. Furthermore, supplies from the so-called marginal fields (there are a total of 149) previously with the central PSUs viz. ONGC and OIL auctioned to private entities during 2020/21 are also eligible for freedom of pricing.

However, supplies from the so-called Legacy fields which account

for the bulk of the current gas supply are subject to government control over price as well as the marketing of the produce. The Legacy staff includes fields given to ONGC/OIL on a 'nomination' basis, those given under NELP and pre-NELP blocks. There are two price ceilings.

One, call it 'normal' price. Based on the recommendations of the Kirit Parikh committee and in force from April 1, 2023, this price expressed on a per million British thermal units (Btu) basis is arrived at by taking 10 per cent of the monthly average of the Indian crude basket in the preceding month and notified every month. The price thus calculated is subject to a price band of US\$4-6.50 per Btu.

Second, there is a 'premium' price applicable to the difficult fields. These are deep/ultra-deep and high-pressure/high-temperature fields (the high-profile KG-D6 operated by Reliance Industries and neighbouring KG-DWN-98/2 operated by ONGC fall in this category). Technically though the price of NG flowing from these fields is market-determined, this is subject to a ceiling linked to the prices of alternate fuels, viz., fuel oil, naphtha and imported LNG.

Even as the committee has recommended de-regulation of difficult gas fields' price by January 1, 2026, and that of normal price by January 1, 2027, the government is silent on this. Having substantially liberalized the regulatory space, besides removing the remaining hurdles, Modi needs to take the next logical step of unshackling marketing and pricing for supplies from the Legacy fields.



TEAM MODI HAS IDENTIFIED 22 PROCESSES FOR WHICH SELF-CERTIFICATION OF DOCUMENTS BY CONTRACTORS IS ACCEPTED

(The writer is a Policy Analyst, views are personal)

Save that beating heart with positive vibes

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is one of the major causes of mortality. On this World Heart Day let us resolve to correct our lifestyle, and adopt positivity to be from heart ailments

Roughly more than 17 Million people die each year from cardiovascular diseases, an estimated 32% of all deaths worldwide. Heart Attack is rising rather steeply in our country especially among young people in their 20s & 30s. To a very large extent, heart attack is self-inflicted by our faulty lifestyle, which we adopt right from childhood. Genetics definitely play a role but it can be modified by lifestyle optimisation.

The prevalence of Coronary Artery Disease in adults in India in the urban population is 14 per cent, while in the rural population, it is 8 per cent. One should not have a heart attack, especially when he or she is in their prime years. In fact, we are the cause and we are the cure of



HK CHOPRA

(The writer is chief cardiologist, Medanta Moolchand heart Institute, New Delhi; views are personal)

this malady of a premature heart attack at a young age. A healthy heart is an expression of our own perceptions, thoughts, interpretations and choice-making. Enhancing awareness about prevention and timely prediction and treatment of heart attack is the only solution to reducing the rising menace of heart attack in our country. Women are fortunate to have a lower prevalence of coronary artery disease before the age of 45 i.e. menopause. After menopause, the prevalence of CAD is the same as in men. Over 25 million people die of Heart Attacks in our country every year. Out of these, 16 lakh die within an hour of a Heart Attack before even medical aid is available.

While the mortality rate

from cardiovascular disease (CVD) has decreased by 60% in Japan and Finland, 50% in the USA, Canada and Australia and 25% in Europe, according to WHO projections, there will be a significant rise in mortality from CVD in India. The female population is at greater risk because metabolic syndrome The risk is significantly high in India.

Prevention of coronary artery disease must begin earlier especially at a young age before being victimised by a faulty lifestyle including erratic eating habits, drinking, smoking, high levels of stressful life with lack of sleep and burning both ends of the candle at the same time, coupled with a sedentary lifestyle, uncontrolled hypertension, dyslipidemia and diabetes

which harden the arteries of the heart with increase tendency for clotting all of which establish the bedrock of heart disease.

The theme of World Heart Day this year is:

- Use your Heart to Beat CVD (Cardiovascular Disease)
- Work with your Heart, Know your risk factors
- Have Coordinated Efforts to improve your own Lifestyle and Diet
- Motivate yourself and others to reduce CVD Risks
- One Heart, One Home, One World
- Use your Heart to "Make Perfect Choices for a Healthy Heart for ourselves, our family, our community, our corporate, our society, our nation and the

world

The four sutras for an optimal Healthy Heart are love, compassion, peace and harmony" to make perfect choices for a healthy heart and beat CVD. These sutras (Suture or stitch) are possible through the regular practice of yoga, meditation and perfect lifestyle optimization, they connect the heart with the consciousness through a network of nerve fibres of the autonomic nervous system (Heart Plexuses) which are chemically mediated, nurtured with human values release natural opiates: endorphins, serotonin, dopamine acetylcholine, oxytocin and nitric oxide which preserve the endothelial functions, thereby maintaining the patency of coronary arteries and the har-

monious friendly biochemical environment within the blood vessel the heart thus remains healthy.

If kindness, compassion, love, peace and harmony are missing with cynical behaviour and hostility, then the heart is undernourished and stressed and the physiology changes to pathology. Fear, jealousy, hatred, anger, greed, lurking grief, vengeance, vindictiveness, bigotry, arrogance, greed, lust, ego and other negative emotions release jittery molecules (Chemicals) which comprise epinephrine, norepinephrine and cortisol which produce coronary artery diseases, alter the endothelial functions, agitate the platelets, oxidise Low-Density Lipoproteins (LDL). They may enhance the tendency of a vulnerable

plaque in the coronary artery to rupture, erode and ulcerate, thereby enhancing aggregation of platelets and enhancing thrombus (clot) formation thus leading to angina, acute Coronary Syndrome, Heart Attack, and even sudden Cardiac Death and Brain Attack. Just one fit of anger or negative stress can produce a massive heart attack

Emotions of love, compassion, peace and harmony are the most powerful sutras to have a healthy heart and may help in the prevention, regression and reversal of coronary artery diseases. This is possible by practicing perfect choices, and regular practice of meditation and yoga. Thus, the "Health of the Heart" is a matter of your own choice, and not a matter of chance.

4 graft cases against Nawaz Sharif set to be reopened

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan's anti-graft body is reopening at least four corruption cases against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif as he is scheduled to return to the country next month, ending four years of self-exile in the United Kingdom, an official said on Thursday.

The 73-year-old Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme is scheduled to return to Pakistan from London on October 21 to lead the party's election campaign. Nawaz left the country in November 2019 on medical grounds after the Lahore High Court granted him bail for four weeks. He was serving a seven-year imprisonment in the Al-Azizia Mills corruption case at Kot Lakhpat Jail Lahore.

On arrival in Lahore, his party says he will address a rally at Minar-i-Pakistan where he will give a road map to steer the country out of the economic crisis, governance problems and other issues the country is facing today. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in the light of a Supreme Court

ruling which struck down amendments made to the accountability laws by the previous Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government led by Nawaz's younger brother Shehbaz Sharif, is reopening the four pending probes against Nawaz. The cases are related to illegal plots and land allotment, dubious transfer of shares of his sugar mills and Toshakhana (national treasury gifts).

"Nawaz Sharif being chief minister of Punjab province in 1986 had allotted plots in Lahore to several people by misusing his authority. He is accused of illegal construction of several kilometres of road to his house in Jati Umra Raiwind, Lahore, in 1998 when he was prime minister in violation of rules. "The third case is related to the transfer of shares in 'illegal' manners in the Chaudhry Sugar Mills case which is owned by Nawaz Sharif and his family members. In this case, his daughter Maryam Nawaz is also accused of being a major beneficiary," an official privy to the development told PTI on Thursday.

The fourth is related to the



Toshakhana case in which he is accused of taking luxurious vehicles from the national treasury in violation of rules, he said. Besides these cases, Nawaz will have to face the case related to his conviction.

Meanwhile, Nawaz's close aide and senior PML-N leader Mian Javed Latif said the party has stopped "demanding accountability of former army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa and former ISI head Gen Faiz Hameed" for conspiring against Nawaz to topple his government in 2017.

"The PML-N doesn't want accountability of Gen Bajwa and Gen Hameed but only those characters and facilitators involved in May 9 events and

mutiny against the head (Army Chief Gen Asim Munir) of the institution," he said.

Latif was referring to attacks on military installations following the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan in May.

On September 18, Nawaz demanded "strict accountability" of Gen Bajwa, Gen Hameed and chief justices — Asif Khosa and Saqib Nisar — while addressing the party's ticket holders in Lahore via video link from London.

He had hinted at trying them under treason charges if his party returned to power in the upcoming elections, scheduled early next year.

Nawaz's demand for strict accountability left many in the party in a precarious position as the leaders became wary of a possible backlash from the military establishment if he continued with such statements. Sources told PTI that Nawaz backtracked from demanding accountability of army generals after a "strong message" was conveyed to him through his younger brother Shehbaz Sharif.

SL to focus on IMF recommendations to secure second tranche of bailout package

Colombo (PTI): With the IMF saying that Sri Lanka's full economic recovery is not yet assured, the government on Thursday said it will focus on the recommendations of the global lender and will continue discussions with it to reach a staff-level agreement for the second tranche of the bailout package.

In March this year, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a 48-month, USD 2.9 billion extended arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) to support Sri Lanka's economic policies and reforms.

"We have to take note of points made on tax administration, granting of tax relief and eliminating tax evasion," said State Minister of Finance, Ranjith Siyambalapatiya.

We are working with a contracted economy and a population hit by economic hardships," Siyambalapatiya said. Sri Lanka was hit by its worst economic crisis in history when its foreign exchange reserves fell to a critical low and the public came out on the streets to protest the shortage of fuel, fertilisers and essential commodities. On Wednesday, it emerged that Lanka's second tranche of the bailout package will likely be delayed given the inconclusive nature of the cash-strapped nation's external debt restructuring.

The debt-ridden nation was banking on the release of the second tranche of around USD 330 million at the end of the review as stated by Siyambalapatiya last week.

However, the IMF in the review said more discussions were needed to reach the next staff-level agreement on the external debt restructuring. The Washington-based global lender, while noting Sri Lanka's commendable progress in implementing difficult reforms, said "the full recovery of the economy was not yet assured." It stressed the need to strengthen tax administration, remove tax exemptions, and actively eliminate tax evasion.

The IMF had originally set a September deadline for Sri Lanka to restructure its external debt. The completion of negotiations with external creditors was to culminate with the first review.

American soldier who crossed into N Korea returns to US

AP ■ SAN ANTONIO

The American soldier who sprinted into North Korea across the heavily fortified border between the Koreas more than two months ago arrived back in the US early Thursday, video appeared to show.

North Korea abruptly announced Wednesday that it would expel Pvt Travis King. His return was organised with the help of ally Sweden and rival China, according to the White House.

While officials have said King, 23, is in good health and the immediate focus will be on caring for him and reintegrating him into US society, his troubles are likely far from over. King, who had served in South Korea, ran into the North while on a civilian tour of a border village on July 18, becoming the first American confirmed to be detained in the isolated country in nearly five years. At the time, he was supposed to be heading to Fort Bliss, Texas, following his release from prison in South Korea on an assault conviction.

He has been declared AWOL from the Army. In

many cases, someone who is AWOL for more than a month can automatically be considered a deserter.

Punishment for going AWOL or desertion can vary, and it depends in part on whether the service member voluntarily returned or was apprehended. King's handover by the North Koreans makes that more complicated.

Video aired Thursday by a Texas news station appeared to show King walking off a plane in San Antonio. Dressed in a dark top and pants, he could be seen speaking briefly with people waiting on the tarmac. He shook hands with one before being led into a building.

Emails seeking comment were sent to Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, the Air Force and the Army.

Officials earlier said he would be taken to Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston. He is expected to undergo psychological assessments and debriefings, and he will also get a chance to meet with family.

He will be in military custody throughout the process since his legal situation is com-

plicated.

Many questions remain about King's case, including why he fled in the first place and why the North — which has tense relations with Washington over Pyongyang's nuclear programme, support for Russia's war in Ukraine and other issues — agreed to turn him over.

The White House has not addressed North Korean state media reports that King fled because of his dismay about racial discrimination and inequality in the military and US society.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency reported that King made such complaints but verifying that is impossible. On Wednesday, Swedish officials took King to the Chinese border, where he was met by US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns, the Swedish ambassador to China, and at least one US Defence Department official.

He was then flown to a US military base in South Korea before heading to the US.

His detention was relatively short by North Korean standards.

Pakistan CJ: If Faizabad verdict was implemented, serious incidents would not have happened later

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa Thursday said if his verdict against a radical Islamist group and others for involvement in the Faizabad sit-in was implemented, the serious incidents could have been prevented, as he adjourned the hearing on a set of pleas challenging the judgment in the case till November 1.

A three-member bench led by Chief Justice Isa and comprising Justices Aminuddin Khan and Athar Minallah was hearing a set of pleas challenging the Supreme Court's verdict in the Faizabad sit-in case, wherein intelligence agencies were directed not to exceed their constitutional mandates.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and others had heavily criticized the judgment and subsequently review pleas were filed against the verdict by

the PTI, the Ministry of Defence, the Intelligence Bureau, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority, the Election Commission of Pakistan, the Mutta-hida Qaumi Movement party, ex-interior minister Sheikh Rashid and Ijazul Haq, son of former military dictator Zia-ul Haq.

Isa, who was a member of the three-member bench that issued the 2019 verdict, expressed annoyance after multiple petitioners seeking a review of the apex court's 2019 verdict against the Faizabad sit-in decided to withdraw their pleas.

The chief justice observed that the challengers in their pleas had stated that the verdict was full of flaws, wondering why they were withdrawing pleas, and asked "why is everyone so afraid to speak the truth?"

Attorney-General Mansoor

Usman Awan, who was representing the federal government, assured the court that the decisions of the Faizabad judgement would be implemented but the chief justice was not amused.

"If this verdict was implemented at that time, then serious incidents would not have taken place later," the chief justice said, in an apparent reference to the Jaranwala incident where a mob of radical Islamists vandalised 22 churches and set scores of Christian houses on fire over allegations of blasphemy. There were no casualties but it was one of the most destructive attacks on Christians in the Muslim-majority country.

Apparently, unable to satisfy the queries by the bench, Sheikh Rashid's counsel urged the court to adjourn the hearing, which was accepted and the case adjourned till

November 1. However, the court directed the respondents' counsels to submit a written response by October 27.

The original judgement was authored by Justice Isa, instructing the defence ministry and the tri-services chiefs to penalise personnel under their command who were found to have violated their oath. It had also directed the federal government to monitor those advocating hate, extremism and terrorism and prosecute them in accordance with the law.

The TLP sit-it went for about 20 days and had paralysed life in both Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The government and the powerful establishment were so angry due to the decision that a case of alleged corruption was launched against Justice Isa and effort were made to remove him from office.

China's defence min missing in action for a month

AP ■ BEIJING

A Chinese Defence Ministry spokesperson said Thursday that he was "not aware of the situation" in the ministry's first public comments on the disappearance of the defence minister from public view about one month ago.

Senior Col Wu Qian, the director of the ministry's information office, gave only a one-sentence response when asked at a monthly news conference whether Li Shangfu is under investigation for corruption and if he is still the defence minister. "I'm not aware of the situation you mentioned," Wu said in response to a question from a foreign news outlet.

Li, who became defence minister when a new Cabinet was named in March, hasn't been seen since giving a speech on August 29. He is the second senior official to disappear this year, following former Foreign Minister Qin Gang, who was removed from office in July.

The Chinese government has given no reason for his removal, or why both he and Li suddenly stopped making public appearances. There is no indication, at least so far, that their disappearances signal a change in China's foreign or defence policies.

The disappearance of officials and other people without explanation is not uncommon in China and often followed months later by the announcement of criminal charges against the person. The disappearance of two sitting ministers in rapid succession, though, is unusual.

The American ambassador to Japan, Rahm Emanuel, tweeted earlier this month that Chinese President Xi Jinping's Cabinet lineup "is now resembling Agatha Christie's novel And Then There Were None".

Wu, the defence ministry spokesperson, played down concerns expressed by US officials that the two countries don't have clear military-to-

military communications channels. He said the problem is not a lack of communication but a need for the US to change its ways to get relations between the two militaries back on track.

"The US always wants to tie somebody's hands and feet, so they can do whatever they want," he said.

He also said that Taiwan is "heading down the path of its own destruction" with the self-governing island's launch of its first domestically made submarine on Thursday.

Wu, who opened the news conference with an announcement about a global security conference to be held in Beijing next month, ducked a question about Li from another foreign media reporter, who asked whether the defence minister would attend the conference.

"We will release information about the Beijing Xiangshan Forum in due course," he said.

Taiwan launches its first domestically made submarine for testing

AP ■ KAOHSIUNG

Taiwan's president launched the island's first domestically made submarine for testing Thursday at a port in Kaohsiung.

The submarine, if successful in its tests, will be a major breakthrough for Taiwan in shipbuilding and design.

"In the past, a domestic-made submarine was considered impossible, but today a submarine designed and built by our countrymen is in front of you," President Tsai Ing-wen said at the launch ceremony.

"Building a submarine is the concrete realization of our resolution to protect our country. Submarines are an important piece of equipment for the Taiwan navy to develop asymmetric combat power in terms of strategy and tactics," she said. The US has been pushing Taiwan to develop asymmetric warfare strategies by investing

in smaller and lighter weapons such as the reduced-size submarine. The process was "torturous," said Cheng Wen-lon, head of Taiwan's CSBC Corp, which led the construction of the submarine. "Although we have worked quietly during the past several years, it doesn't mean the process was very smooth," he said at the ceremony held in CSBC's shipyard.

After seven years of design and construction, the prototype will begin tests in the harbour before heading to the ocean. The submarine is named Hai Kun after a fish in Chinese mythology called kun with legendary proportions.

It will only be handed over to the military after passing both its harbour and ocean-faring tests. Taiwan plans to build another submarine if successful, with both to be deployed by 2027, according to the semi-official Central News Agency.

N Korean leader urges greater nuclear weapons production in response to a 'new Cold War'

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called for an exponential increase in production of nuclear weapons and for his country to play a larger role in a coalition of nations confronting the United States in a "new Cold War," state media said Thursday.

The Korean Central News Agency said Kim made the comments during a two-day session of the country's rubber-stamp parliament which amended the constitution to include his policy of expanding the country's nuclear weapons programme. The Supreme People's Assembly's session on Tuesday and Wednesday came after Kim travelled to Russia's Far East this month to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin and visit military and technology sites.

The trip sparked Western concerns about a possible arms alliance in which North Korea

would supply Putin with badly needed munitions to fuel his war on Ukraine in exchange for economic aid and advanced Russian technologies to enhance North Korea's nuclear and missile systems.

As North Korea slowly ends its pandemic lockdown, Kim has been actively boosting his partnerships with Moscow and Beijing as he attempts to break out of diplomatic isolation and join a united front against Washington. He has described the world as entering a "new Cold War" and that North Korea should advance its nuclear capabilities in response.

KCNA's reports on Kim's comments came a day after North Korea confirmed the release of US Army Pvt Travis King, who is now being flown back to America, two months after he sprinted across the heavily fortified border into the North. King's relatively swift expulsion defied speculation that North Korea might drag

out his detention to squeeze concessions from the United States, and possibly reflected the North's disinterest in diplomacy with Washington.

KCNA said members of the assembly gave unanimous approval to a new clause in the constitution to "ensure the country's right to existence and development, deter war and protect regional and global peace by rapidly developing nuclear weapons to a higher level."

North Korea's "nuclear force-building policy has been made permanent as the basic law of the state, which no one is allowed to flout with anything," Kim said in a speech at the assembly. He stressed the need to "push ahead with the work for exponentially boosting the production of nuclear weapons and diversifying the nuclear strike means," KCNA said. Kim pointed to what he described as a growing threat posed by a hostile United States and its expanding mili-

tary cooperation with South Korea and Japan, accusing them of creating the "Asian version of NATO, the root cause of war and aggression."

"This is just the worst actual threat, not threatening rhetoric or an imaginary entity," he said. Kim urged his diplomats to "further promote solidarity with the nations standing against the US and the West's strategy for hegemony." South Korea's Unification Ministry, which handles relations with North Korea, said the North Korean constitutional amendment confirms Kim's unwillingness to relinquish his nuclear weapons program and his unwavering commitment to advancing that arsenal.

It said in a statement that South Korea will continue to expand its military cooperation with the US and Japan and work closer with other international partners to increase pressure on North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions.



Living god Ganesh is carried on a chariot during Indra Jatra, a festival that marks the end of the rainy season, in Kathmandu, Nepal, Thursday, Sept. 28, 2023. According to a local myth, the god of rain Indra once disguised himself as a human to collect night jasmine for his mother but was captured by locals. In exchange for his release, it was agreed that the rain would be stopped and the souls of those departed in that year ascend to heaven. AP/PTI

Israel SC hears challenge to law that makes it harder to remove Netanyahu

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel's Supreme Court on Thursday was hearing a challenge to a law that makes it harder to remove a sitting prime minister, which critics say is designed to protect Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who has been working to reshape the justice system while he is on trial for alleged corruption.

The hearing is part of several pivotal court challenges against a proposed package of legislation and government steps meant to alter the country's justice system. It comes after months of turmoil in Israel over the plan and deepens a rift between Netanyahu's government and the judiciary, which

it wants to weaken despite unprecedented opposition.

Thursday's hearing on the law took place in front of an expanded 11-judge panel, underscoring the importance of the deliberations.

Netanyahu's governing coalition - Israel's most religious and nationalist ever - passed an amendment known as the "incapacitation law" in March which allows a prime minister to be deemed unfit to rule only for medical or mental health reasons. Under the amendment, only the prime minister or the government has the power to determine a leader's unfitness.

The previous version of the law was vague about both the circumstances in which a prime minister could be

deemed unfit, as well as who had the authority to declare it. But experts say the amendment expressly strips the attorney general, who historically wields the power to declare a prime minister unfit for office, of the ability to do so. Critics say the law protects Netanyahu from being deemed unfit for office over claims that he violated a conflict of interest agreement by dealing with the legal overhaul while on trial for corruption charges. They also say the law is tailor-made for Netanyahu and encourages corruption.

Based on those criticisms, Thursday's hearing is focusing on whether the law should come into effect after the next national elections and

not immediately, so that it isn't interpreted as a personalised law. A ruling is expected by January.

"We are trying to repeal the undemocratic and unconstitutional statute which allowed an unfit and improper prime minister to remain in his position. Actually, they built him a kind of a golden cage (so) that he will be protected from justice," said Eliad Shraga, chairman of the Movement for Quality Government in Israel, one of the groups that is challenging the amendment.

Ahead of the hearing, dozens of protesters gathered outside Netanyahu's private residence in Jerusalem, chanting "democracy," while his allies defended the law.

Simcha Rothman, a main driver of the overhaul, told Israeli Army Radio that the court's decision to hear the case was harmful to Israeli democracy and challenging the law was akin to throwing out the results of a legitimate election.

"The moment the court determines the laws, then it is also the legislative branch, the judiciary and the executive branch," he said. "This is an undemocratic reality."

The government wants to weaken the Supreme Court and limit judicial oversight on its decisions, saying it wants to return power to elected lawmakers and away from what it sees as a liberal-leaning, interventionist justice system. The first major piece

of the overhaul was passed in July and an unprecedented 15-judge panel began hearing arguments against it earlier this month.

The drive to reshape Israel's justice system comes as Netanyahu's trial for alleged corruption is ongoing. He is charged with fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three separate cases involving influential media moguls and wealthy associates. He denies wrongdoing, seeing the charges as part of a "witch-hunt" against him orchestrated by a hostile media and a biased justice system.

Experts and legal officials say a conflict of interest arrangement struck after Netanyahu was indicted is

meant to limit his involvement in judicial changes. After the incapacitation law was passed, Netanyahu said his hands were no longer tied and that he was taking a more active role in the legal changes underway.

That sparked a rebuke from Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara, who said Netanyahu's remarks and any further actions were "completely illegal and in conflict of interest."

Critics say Netanyahu and his government are working to upend the country's delicate system of checks and balances and setting Israel on a path toward autocracy.

The overhaul has plunged Israel into one of its worst domestic crises, deepening

longstanding societal divisions between those who want Israel to be a Western-facing liberal democracy and those who want to emphasize the country's more conservative Jewish character.

Netanyahu has moved forward with the overhaul despite a wave of opposition from a broad swath of Israeli society. Top legal officials, leading economists and the country's booming tech sector have all spoken out against the judicial changes, which have sparked opposition from hundreds of military reservists, who have said they will not serve so long as the overhaul remains on the table. Tens of thousands of people have protested every Saturday for the last nine months.

Ramaswamy calls for ending birthright citizenship in US

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Continuing his proposals of harsh policy changes, Indian-American presidential aspirant Vivek Ramaswamy, in his second Republican presidential debate, has said he would favour ending birthright citizenship for children of illegal immigrants in the US. The second Republican debate of the 2024 election cycle which was held at Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum in Simi Valley, California on Wednesday, saw Ramaswamy sharing the stage with six other candidates including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley.

When asked "what legal premise" he would use to expel undocumented immigrants and their American-born children from the country, Ramaswamy, the son of Indian immigrants, resurrected a 2015 proposal of ending birthright citizenship from then-candidate Donald Trump, reported the Washington Post on Wednesday.

The first section of the citizenship clause of the US Constitution's 14th Amendment says, "All persons born or naturalised in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside."

Although most agree with the long-held tradition that it grants citizenship to those born on US soil, some legal scholars argue that the phrase "and subject to the jurisdiction thereof" seems to give the government some leeway to restrict the right, just as other constitutional principles can be limited, the report said.

Because of this, he argued, children of undocumented immigrants born in the United States should not be granted citizenship, because their parents "broke the law" to be in the country.

Ramaswamy, 38, also supported his opponents onstage and acknowledged other mea-

asures such as militarisation of the southern border, defunding "sanctuary cities," and an end to foreign aid to Mexico and Central America.

He said he would go a "step further" by ending "birthright citizenship for the kids of illegal immigrants in this country."

A second-generation Indian-American, Ramaswamy, had earlier criticised the H-1B visa programme saying the current "lottery" system needs to be "guttured" and replaced with a "meritocratic" skill-based immigration scheme to match the needs of the US.

The H-1B visa, much sought-after among Indian IT professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

His stance on H-1B visas is also reminiscent of the 2016 Trump campaign, when then-candidate Donald Trump, who has also hired a number of foreign workers under H-1B visas for his businesses, took a headline stance on these foreign workers before later softening his rhetoric.

It is to be noted that Ramaswamy himself has used the H-1B visa programme 29 times.

According to Politico, from 2018 through 2023, US Citizenship and Immigration Services approved 29 applications for Ramaswamy's former company, Roivant Sciences, to hire employees under H-1B visas.

Ramaswamy, who was addressed as "Trump's heir apparent" by Time Magazine has garnered quite an attention after his maiden Republican presidential primary debate held on August 23.

The first poll after the debate said that 28 per cent of the 504 respondents said that Ramaswamy performed the best. Ramaswamy's harsh proposals have helped him stand out in the crowded primary field, according to US media reports.

Haley slams Vivek



Washington (PTI): Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley has slammed her fellow Indian-American rival in the Republican primary race Vivek Ramaswamy for joining Chinese-owned TikTok, saying "every time I hear you, I feel a little bit dumber."

Haley, the former two-term Governor from South Carolina and the former US Ambassador to the UN, was very critical of the 38-year-old biotech entrepreneur Ramaswamy and the two entered into a war of words during the second Republican presidential primary debate at Reagan Library in Simi Valley in California on Wednesday.

"Every time I hear you, I feel a little bit dumber. This is infuriating because TikTok is one of the most dangerous social media apps that we could have. And...honestly, every time I hear you, I feel a little bit dumber for what you say," Haley said.

"One hundred and fifty million people are on TikTok. That means they can get your contacts, they can get your financial information, they can get your emails, they can get your text messages, they can get all of these things. China knows exactly what they're doing," she said.

In February, Haley said under her leadership, "Communist China will end up on the ash heap of history."

"We can't trust you. We can't have TikTok in our kids' lives," Haley told Ramaswamy.

Ramaswamy fought back. "I think we will be better served as a Republican party if we are not sitting here hurling personal insults and actually have a legitimate debate about policy following Reagan's example and in his honour," he said.

Chinese government, Ramaswamy said, "Part of how we win elections is reaching the next generation of young Americans where we are."

Kids under 16 should not be on "addictive social media," Ramaswamy said, but "we're only going to ever get to declaring independence from China, which I favour if we actually win."

"This is infuriating because TikTok is one of the most dangerous social media apps that we could have. And...honestly, every time I hear you, I feel a little bit dumber for what you say," Haley said.

NATO's secy-gen meets with Zelenskyy

AP ■ KYIV

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to discuss the status of the war and needs of troops on Thursday, the day after Russia accused Ukraine's Western allies of helping plan and conduct last week's missile strike on the Black Sea Fleet's headquarters on the annexed Crimean Peninsula.

Zelenskyy said Stoltenberg agreed to make efforts to get NATO members to help provide additional air defense systems to protect Ukraine's power plants and energy infrastructure that were badly damaged in relentless and deadly attacks by Russia last winter. He also reminded the secretary-general of the persistent attacks that often strike civilian areas, including 40 drone attacks overnight. "In the face of such intense attacks against Ukrainians, against our cities, our ports, which are crucial for



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, left, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy talk during their meeting in Kyiv, Ukraine, Thursday.

global food security, we need a corresponding intensity of pressure on Russia and a strengthening of our air defense," Zelenskyy said. "The world must see how Russia is losing dearly so that our shared values ultimately prevail."

Stoltenberg said that NATO has contracts for 2.4 billion euros (\$2.5 billion) in

ammunition for Ukraine, including 155 mm Howitzer shells, anti-tank guided missiles and tank ammunition.

"The stronger Ukraine becomes, the closer we become to ending Russia's aggression," Stoltenberg said. "Russia could lay down arms and end its war today. Ukraine doesn't have that option. Ukraine's surren-

der would not mean peace. It would mean brutal Russian occupation. Peace at any price would be no peace at all."

On Wednesday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova had said the attack on the Black Sea Fleet headquarters in Crimea had been coordinated with the help of US and UK security agencies, and that NATO satellites and reconnaissance planes also played a role.

Ukraine said without providing supporting evidence that the attack had killed 34 officers and wounded 105 others. But it also claimed to have killed the fleet's commander, Adm Viktor Sokolov, who was shown on Russian state television on Wednesday speaking with reporters in the Black Sea city of Sevastopol.

Unconfirmed news reports said Storm Shadow missiles provided to Ukraine by the UK and France were used in the attack on the Russian navy installation.

Half of Nagorno-Karabakh's population has fled: Officials

AP ■ YEREVAN (ARMENIA)

The separatist government of Nagorno-Karabakh announced Thursday that it will dissolve itself and the unrecognized republic will cease to exist by the end of the year, and Armenian officials said more than half of the population has already fled.

That is after Azerbaijan carried out a lightning offensive to reclaim full control over its breakaway region and demanded that Armenian troops in Nagorno-Karabakh lay down their weapons and the separatist government dissolve itself.

A decree to that effect was signed by the region's separatist President Samvel Shakhramanyan. The document cited an agreement reached last week to end the fighting under which Azerbaijan will allow the "free, voluntary and unhindered movement" of Nagorno-Karabakh residents and disarm troops in Armenia in exchange.

Nagorno-Karabakh is a region of Azerbaijan that came under the control of ethnic Armenian forces, backed by the Armenian military, in separatist fighting that ended in 1994. During a six-week war in 2020, Azerbaijan took back parts of the region along with surrounding territory that Armenian forces had claimed during the earlier conflict.

Following the latest offensive and a cease-fire agreement brokered by Russian peacekeepers, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh separatist authorities have begun talks on "reintegrating" the region back into Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani authorities have pledged to respect the rights of ethnic Armenians in the region and restore supplies after a 10-month blockade. Many local residents, however, fear reprisals and have decided to leave for Armenia. By Thursday morning, more than half of Nagorno-Karabakh's population - over 65,000 people - had fled to Armenia,

according to Armenian officials.

The massive exodus began on Sunday evening, and the only road linking Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia quickly filled up with cars that created an hourslong traffic jam.

On Monday night, a fuel reservoir exploded at a gas station where people seeking to leave were lining up for gas that due to the blockade had been in short supply. At least 68 people were killed and nearly 300 injured, with over 100 more still considered missing.

It isn't immediately clear if any of the ethnic Armenians that have populated the region will remain there. Shakhramanyan's decree on Thursday urged Nagorno-Karabakh's population - including those who left - "to familiarize themselves with the conditions of reintegration offered by the Republic of Azerbaijan, in order to then make an individual decision about the possibility of staying in (or returning to) Nagorno-Karabakh."

'Australian lawmakers being utilized by separatists'

Canberra (AP): China's ambassador to Australia on Thursday criticised Australian politicians who visit Taiwan, saying they are being utilized by separatists on the self-governing island.

Ambassador Xiao Qian was commenting in Sydney after an Australian parliamentary delegation visited Taiwan this week, and as a former prime minister plans to deliver a speech in Taipei next month. China considers Taiwan to be part of its territory.

Xiao said Australian parliamentarians and former prime ministers who visit Taiwan "carry political significance."

"It might be easily utilized by the political forces in Taiwan for their independent forces movement, for their secession movement, and I don't want to see that happen," Xiao told reporters.

"I hope they will stick to the one-China policy" in words and indeed, refrain from engaging with Taiwan in whichever form or capacity so that they will not be politically utilized by people in the island with political motives," Xiao said. The "one-China policy" holds that the Communist Party is the government of China and Taiwan is a part of the country. The Chinese government on Wednesday accused Taiwan's governing party of seeking independence, a day after President Tsai Ing-wen lobbied for Australia's support in joining a regional trade pact during a meeting with six visiting Australian lawmakers.

Former Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison plans to speak at the Yushan Forum in Taipei from Oct. 11 to 12, which focuses on Taiwan's cooperation with neighboring countries.

Australia's relationship with China plummeted under Morrison's four-year rule, which ended when his conservative coalition government was defeated by the center-left Labor Party in elections last year.

Trudeau apologises for recognition of Nazi war veteran

Toronto (AP): Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologised Wednesday for Parliament's recognition of a man who fought alongside the Nazis during last week's address by Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Trudeau said the speaker of the House of Commons, who resigned Tuesday, was "solely responsible" for the invitation and recognition of the man but said it was a mistake that has deeply embarrassed Parliament and Canada. "All of us who were in the House on Friday regret deeply having stood and clapped, even though we did so unaware of the context," Trudeau said before he entering the House of Commons. "It was a horrendous violation of the memory of the millions of people who died in the Holocaust, and was deeply, deeply painful for Jewish people."

Trudeau repeated the apology in Parliament.

Just after Zelenskyy delivered an address in the House of Commons on Friday, Canadian lawmakers gave 98-year-old Yaroslav Hunka a standing ovation when Speaker Anthony Rota drew attention to him. Rota introduced Hunka as a war hero who fought for the First Ukrainian Division.

Observers over the weekend began to publicize the fact that the First Ukrainian Division also was known as the Waffen-SS Galicia Division, or the SS 14th Waffen Division, a voluntary unit that was under the command of the Nazis.

"It is extremely troubling to think that this egregious error is being politicised by Russia, and its supporters, to provide false propaganda about what Ukraine is fighting for," Trudeau said. In Moscow, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said earlier this week that the standing ovation for Hunka was "outrageous," and he called it the result of a "sloppy attitude" toward remembering the Nazi regime. Russian President Vladimir Putin has painted his enemies in Ukraine as "neo-Nazis," although Zelenskyy is Jewish and lost relatives in the Holocaust.

Violence continues in Sweden, 3 killed

Stockholm (AP): Three people were killed overnight in separate incidents in Sweden as deadly violence linked to a feud between criminal gangs escalated. Late Wednesday, an 18-year-old man was shot dead in a Stockholm suburb.

Hours later, a man was killed and another was wounded in a shooting in Jordbro, south of the Swedish capital. Early Thursday a woman in her 20s died in an explosion in Uppsala, west of Stockholm. The blast, which damaged five houses, is being treated by the police as a murder. Swedish media said the woman who died likely was not the target.

Swedish broadcaster SVT noted that the two fatal shootings brings the death toll from gun violence in September to

11, making it the deadliest month for shootings since police started keeping statistics in 2016.

It was not known whether the shootings or the blast were related to each other but Swedish media said at least two of the three events were somehow connected to a feud between criminal gangs, a growing problem in Sweden with drive-by shootings and bombings.

Two gangs — one led by a Swedish-Turkish dual national who lives in Turkey, the other by his former lieutenant — are reportedly fighting over drugs and weapons.

Three people have been detained, suspected of complicity in the fatal shooting in Jordbro.

Russia accuses US of promoting ties between Israel and Arabs

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

Russia accused the United States on Wednesday of promoting Israel's normalisation of relations with Arab nations and circumventing the Arab Peace Initiative launched by Saudi Arabia in 2002, which calls for a settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict before any diplomatic recognition of Israel.

The statement by Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said the UN Security Council's monthly meeting on the Mideast also implicitly criticised Saudi Arabia — without naming it — for moving toward establishing diplomatic relations with Israel while taking "aggressive illegal actions"

including an "unprecedented" expansion of settlements on territory that is supposed to be part of an independent Palestinian state.

Nebenzia said US efforts to normalize Arab-Israeli relations at a time that the "de facto" international legal framework for an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement is being dismantled not only circumvents the "logic" of the Arab Peace Initiative, but it stymies "any prospects for reviving direct negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis" to achieve peace and a long-sought two-state solution to their decades-old conflict.

The council meeting took place a day after Saudi Arabia's newly appointed envoy to the Palestinian Authority, Nayef al-

Sudairi, made a first trip to the Israeli-occupied West Bank since the 1967 Mideast war. At the same time, Israel's Tourism Minister Haim Katz led an Israeli delegation to the Saudi capital Riyadh to take part in a conference hosted by the U.N. World Tourism Organization.

Both visits were clearly linked to the recent American efforts to normalize ties between Saudi Arabia and Israel.

Al-Sudairi's visit was widely seen as an attempt by the kingdom to address the key sticking point in the Saudi-Israeli normalization deal: Saudi Arabia's stance toward Palestinians.

The Saudi government has said it will only normalize ties with Israel if there is major

progress toward the creation of a Palestinian state. Before presenting his credentials to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah, al-Sudairi sought to assure the Palestinians that Saudi Arabia was "working to establish a Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital," without elaborating.

Nebenzia and virtually all Security Council members — including the United States — reiterated support for a two-state solution where Israel and Palestine live side-by-side in peace.

US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield expressed continuing US support for efforts to normalize relations between Israel, its neighbors and other countries in the region.

'Apple leverages idea of switching to Bing to pry more money out of Google'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Apple was never serious about replacing Google with Microsoft's Bing as the default search engine in Macs and iPhones, but kept the possibility open as a "bargaining chip" to extract bigger payments from Google, a Microsoft executive testified Wednesday in the biggest U.S. antitrust trial in a quarter century.

"It is no secret that Apple is making more money on Bing existing than Bing does," Mikhail Parakhin, Microsoft's chief of advertising and web services, said in U.S. District Court in Washington. The comment drew a laugh from the courtroom. Parakhin was describing Microsoft's years of futility trying to supplant Google on Apple devices.

Analysts estimate Apple collects USD 15 billion to USD 20 billion a year in revenue-sharing payments from Google in return for giving its search engine the coveted default slot on Apple's

devices. The revenue is generated when users click on advertisements in search results.

The US Department of Justice accuses Google of using similar agreements to lock out rival search engines such as Bing and Yahoo, stifling innovation. The trial began Sept. 12 and is expected to continue into November.

Another witness, the founder of startup Branch Metrics, testified that Google's exclusive contracts with phone companies and equipment manufacturers sabotaged his company's attempts to market a search engine for apps on smartphones. Alexander Austin said his Palo Alto, California-based company was forced to scale back what its product could do to avoid running afoul of Google's agreements with companies like Samsung and Verizon that make Google's search engine the default choice on digital devices. Branch Metrics had hoped to do for smartphone apps what Google had done for searching

the internet — and to collect advertising revenue when users clicked on apps such as DoorDash.

"We had very high hopes and good feedback from advertisers," he said.

But Branch Metrics' potential partners worried that the app search product, called Discovery, would violate their lucrative agreements with Google. Branch Metrics had to limit the app results and to avoid links to the internet. The result was that it could not monetize its app search engine.

"It felt like there was injustice being done that a product like this could not see the light of day," Austin said.

Google lawyer Ken Smurzynski, questioning Parakhin earlier, sought to knock down one of the government's key arguments: that Google's existing market dominance allows it to collect massive amounts of user data to improve search results and widen its lead over competitors.

'Most Pakistanis fly to Saudi on Umrah visas only to indulge in begging'

Islamabad (PTI):

Pakistanis travel to the Middle East under the guise of pilgrimage and indulge in begging-related activities, leading to complaints of prison overcrowding in countries like Saudi Arabia, an official has told lawmakers. "Pakistanis beggars travel to the Middle East under the guise of ziarat (pilgrimage). Most people visit Saudi Arabia on Umrah visas and then indulge in begging-related activities," Secretary Overseas Pakistanis, Zeeshan Khanzada told a meeting of the Senate's standing committee for Overseas Pakistanis on Wednesday.

A majority of the pickpockets arrested from within Makkah's grand mosque are Pakistani nationals, daily The International News quoted Khanzada as saying.

Pakistan is facing an unprecedented economic crisis with skyrocketing inflation

amid price rise on fuel and food fronts.

"Ambassadors of Iraq and Saudi Arabia complain to us that their prison facilities have been overrun (due to Pakistani beggars that enter the country via unauthorised channels), Khanzada was quoted as saying.

"This issue now befalls within the category of human trafficking," he added.

There are 1.6 million and 2,00,000 Pakistanis residing in the UAE and Qatar respectively, the official said.

"People are ready to pay (as much as) Rs 5 million to go abroad in search of jobs," he said.

The media report further quoted Rana Mahmoodul Hassan Kakar, who was the chair, as saying that only 200 Pakistanis travelled to Japan after the island country had floated a requirement of 3,40,000 skilled people.

 ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ, ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ ਨੋਟਿਸ
ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ ਕੋਮਪ ਵਿਖੇ ਵਰਗਿਕਲ ਸਟੈਂਡ (ਮੇਨ ਗੇਟ ਅਤੇ ਬੈਕ ਸਟੈਂਡ ਗੇਟ) ਦੀ ਆਲਟਮੇਟ ਸਬੰਧੀ ਬਿਨੈ-ਪੱਤਰ ਮਿਤੀ 16-10-2023 ਤੱਕ ਮੰਗੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ। ਆਲਟਮੇਟ ਸਬੰਧੀ ਵੇਰਵਾ, Term & Conditions ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ ਵੈਬਸਾਈਟ www.gndu.ac.in -(Tenders) ਤੋਂ download ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਅਤੇ ਨਿਰਧਾਰਿਤ ਬਿਨੈ-ਪੱਤਰ ਜਨਰਲ ਸ਼ਾਖਾ ਤੋਂ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਣ। ਰਜਿਸਟਰਾਰ

LOST AND FOUND
This is to inform public at large that Relinquishment Deed dated 16-12-2021 was executed by SMT. ARTI JAIN (DAUGHTER), SMT. POOJA JAIN (DAUGHTER) & SMT. PARVESH BHANDARI (WIFE) in favor of SH. DEEPAK BHANDARI, for relinquishing all their share of their father/husband (LT. SH. BHUSHAN BHANDARI), in Residential Unit No. C-2301, Tower 3(C), admeasuring area of 929.03 square meter (equivalent to 10000 square feet), on the Twenty Third Floor of Tower No. 3 (C) together with Three covered car parking space(s) in the residential scheme known as "Providence Estate", situated in Village Gwal Pahari, Sector-02, Tehsil Wazirabad, District Gurugram, Haryana, duly Registered at SR-WAZIRABAD, Vide Registration no.13905, dated 16/12/2021. This relinquishment deed was part of the chain documents of Residential Unit No. C-2301 sale deed between Mr. Deepak Bhandari & M/s. We Serve Prop Management LLP (Sellers) AND Mr. Mohd. Abdullah Masood & Mr. Kunal Seth (Buyers) The aforesaid relinquishment deed got lost in transit and to ensure no misuse can be done of the aforesaid deed, the undersigned has lodged F.I.R vide Complaint No. 923336/2023 dated 22.09.2023 with E-Portal of P.S. Crime branch, Delhi, stating that the aforesaid deed has been lost. The public at large is advised that if they found they should return or have any interest, they may lodge their claim within 15 days from date given of this publication to "Mr. Rajiv Khurana, A-2/3, F.F., Safdarjung Enclave, Delhi-110029". Sd/- Rajiv Khurana On behalf of Mr. Mohd. Abdullah Masood & Mr. Kunal Seth

Sensex, Nifty plunge nearly 1 per cent

On weak global cues; RIL, Infosys weigh

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty fell by nearly 1 per cent on Thursday due to unabated foreign capital outflows amid a largely negative trend in global markets.

Besides, heavy selling pressure in index major Reliance Industries, Infosys and ITC also dented market sentiments, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 610.37 points or 0.92 per cent to settle at 65,508.32. During the day, it plunged 695.3 points or 1.05 per cent to 65,423.39. The Nifty declined 192.90 points or 0.98 per cent to end at 19,523.55.

"The selling was broad-based, as investors are on alert given the rise of oil prices. If crude continues to stay above the USD 90 level, it will be a threat to inflation and boil the operational margins. Currently, the combination of higher interest rates and US bond yields are influencing FIIs to stay in the selling mode," said Vinod Nair,



Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Tech Mahindra was the biggest loser in the Sensex pack, slipping 4.59 per cent, followed by Asian Paints, Wipro, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Infosys, ITC, Mahindra & Mahindra, Hindustan Unilever, IndusInd Bank, Reliance Industries and JSW Steel.

In contrast, Larsen & Toubro, Bharti Airtel, Power Grid and Axis Bank were among the gainers. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 1.19 per cent and smallcap index fell 0.34 per cent.

"The prevailing weakness in heavyweights across sectors combined with feeble global

cues is weighing on the sentiment," Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said. Among the indices, IT declined 1.84 per cent, FMCG fell 1.74 per cent, teck (1.49 per cent), consumer durables (1.29 per cent), auto (1.24 per cent), commodities (1.21 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.15 per cent), metal (1.05 per cent), realty (0.98 per cent) and services (0.89 per cent).

Telecommunication and capital goods were the gainers. "World stocks were on track for their longest losing streak in two years on Thursday as the sight of oil prices heading for USD 100 a barrel compounded concerns about persistently high

global interest rates while persistent fears of higher US interest rates and concerns over China's beleaguered property market also dented sentiments," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

In Asian markets, Shanghai ended in the green while Tokyo and Hong Kong settled lower. Trading was closed in South Korea for a holiday.

European markets were trading in the negative territory. The US markets ended on a mixed note on Wednesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.38 per cent to USD 96.18 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs

354.35 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

"The selling was broad-based, as investors are on alert given the rise of oil prices. If crude continues to stay above the USD 90 level, it will be a threat to inflation and boil the operational margins. Currently, the combination of higher interest rates and US bond yields are influencing FIIs to stay in the selling mode," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

The BSE benchmark had climbed 173.22 points or 0.26 per cent to settle at 66,118.69 on Wednesday. The Nifty gained 51.75 points or 0.26 per cent to end at 19,716.45.

Net claims of non-residents on India rise to \$379.7 billion in June quarter: RBI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Net claims of non-residents on India increased USD 12.1 billion to USD 379.7 billion in the June quarter on account of higher rise in foreign-owned financial assets, according to RBI data released on Thursday.

Increase in reserve assets, at USD 16.6 billion, was the largest contributor to the rise in Indian residents' foreign assets during the April-June period, followed by direct investment, loans and trade credit, as per the data on India's international investment position for June-end.

"The rise in net claims of non-residents during the quarter was an account of higher rise in foreign-owned financial assets in India (USD 36.2 billion) when compared with Indian residents' overseas financial assets (USD 24.1 billion)," the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said.

"Inward portfolio investment (USD 15 billion) and foreign direct investment (USD 8.9 billion) together accounted for two-thirds of the rise in foreign liabilities of Indian residents," it added.

As per the data, reserve assets accounted for 64.2 per cent of India's international financial assets at the end of the June quarter.



Variation in the exchange rate of rupee vis-a-vis other currencies impacted the change in liabilities, when valued in the US dollar terms, the RBI data said.

The RBI further said the ratio of India's international assets to international liabilities moderated to 70.9 per cent in June from 71.1 per cent a quarter earlier and 71.5 per cent a year ago. Debt and non-debt liabilities accounted for nearly equal share in total external liabilities during the quarter.

Sebi penalises YES Securities for wrong reporting of margin, other discrepancies

New Delhi, Sep 28 (PTI) Capital markets regulator Sebi has imposed a penalty of Rs 5 lakh on YES Securities (India) Ltd for wrong reporting of margin and discrepancy in the computation of client's net worth.

It has been directed to pay

the fine within 45 days, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in its order.

The order came after Sebi, jointly with the Stock exchanges — NSE, BSE and MCX — conducted inspection of documents and other records of YES Securities (India) Ltd to verify the possible violation of stock brokers' rule.

In its order, Sebi found several violations, including wrong reporting of margin and discrepancy in reporting of net worth of clients by YES Securities, during July 2021 to March 2022.

The regulator said the brokerage house said the retention statements after the prescribed time of five days and also mailed the statements of accounts to wrong email addresses.

Further, it was found that the brokerage house had projected a wrong reporting margin of Rs 2,083. In addition, the regulator noted lapses on the part of YES Securities for not having maintained adequate margin for the client.

"There was a discrepancy in the computation of net worth submitted by the noticee (YES Securities) to the exchange... The noticee had overstated the net worth to an extent of Rs 1,89,45,070.32," Sebi said in its order on Wednesday.



ONGC inks pact with NTPC Green for renewable energy projects

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has signed an initial agreement with NTPC Green Energy Ltd to explore setting up green hydrogen and offshore wind projects.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) "will primarily explore the feasibility and setting up of renewable energy projects in various domains," ONGC said in a statement.

The MoU was signed by ONGC executive director Debudul Adhikari and NTPC Green Energy Ltd (NGEL) CEO Mohit Bhargava in the presence of ONGC chairman and CEO Arun Kumar Singh and NTPC chairman and managing director Gurdeep Singh.

"The MoU envisages collaboration of the two mega entities in renewable power projects in India and overseas through offshore wind projects and exploring opportunities in the storage, e-mobility, carbon credits and green credits, nuclear, green hydrogen business and its derivatives (green ammonia and green methanol)," it said.

ONGC is India's largest crude oil and natural gas producer while NGEL is a subsidiary of the country's largest power utility NTPC.

"Exploring and setting up renewable power assets in India and overseas, ONGC inked a trailblazing MoU with NTPC Green Energy Limited on September 27, 2023.

"Over a period of three years, the MoU will primarily explore the feasibility and setting up of offshore wind projects, green hydrogen and pumped energy storage projects," ONGC said in a separate post on X, formerly known as Twitter.

'Show-cause notices to e-gaming firms as per legal provisions'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

E-gaming companies have been issued show cause notices for alleged GST evasion as per legal provisions, the head of Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) Sanjay Kumar Agarwal said on Thursday, adding that the tax demanded is based on analysis of data.

He also said that the government is fully prepared to implement from October 1 the amended provisions for levying a 28 per cent tax on online gaming, casinos and horse racing along with mandatory registration of offshore online gaming platforms.

In its meetings in July and August, the GST Council had approved amendments in law to include online gaming, casinos and horse racing as taxable actionable claims, and clarified

that such supplies would attract 28 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST) on full bet value.

Parliament last month passed amendments to the Central GST and Integrated GST laws to give effect to the Council's decision.

Since then, online gaming companies like Dream11 and casino operator Delta Corp have received show cause notices from taxmen for non-payment of GST at 28 per cent on the full face value of bets placed on their platform.

"The show cause notice which is going is as per legal provision... The department is taking a uniform stand in the interpretation of the law and accordingly show cause notices are being issued," Agarwal told reporters here.

Asked about the quantum of taxes that are due from these e-gaming companies, Agarwal



said, "It is very difficult for me to say there are many companies. Data is being collected and wherever the data is received, the department has issued show cause notice."

While maintaining that online gaming, casinos and horse racing was subject to 28 per cent tax since the inception of GST, the GST Council had

decided that the amended provision to classify these supplies as actionable claims and clarifying the taxation provisions would come into effect from October 1. A review of the implementation was proposed to be carried out after six months, which is April 2024.

Even though the amendments in CGST and IGST laws

had been passed by Parliament, the finance ministry is yet to notify the appointed date for implementation of these clarificatory amendments. Also, some states are yet to pass amendments in their state GST laws.

About a dozen states have passed the amendments in their assemblies, while a similar number of states are understood to have brought in an ordinance to pave the way for implementation of the changes from October 1.

"We are fully prepared to bring it (amended provision of online gaming) into effect from October 1. As per the decision taken in the last meeting of the GST council, the related notifications are under process. It is necessary for all states to pass the law or come out with an ordinance... By September 30," the CBIC chief said.

Further, Agarwal said that the GST Council in its last

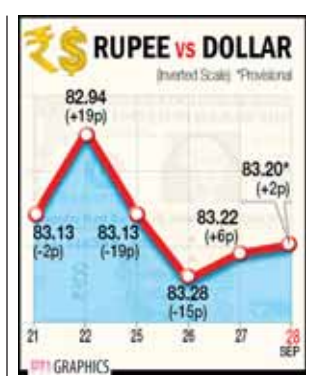
meeting had decided that the clarificatory amendments in GST laws with regard to online gaming would be implemented from October 1.

"If there is a requirement (for notification), it will be fulfilled," Agarwal added.

The show cause notice slapped on Delta Corp last week was for alleged short payment of taxes worth Rs 16,800 crore.

In September last year, a similar show cause notice was served to online gaming company Gameskraft for recovery of Rs 21,000 crore GST. The company had approached the Karnataka High Court which had quashed the show cause notice.

Following this, the revenue department in July filed a Special Leave Petition in the Supreme Court on the Karnataka High Court ruling in the Gameskraft case. The next date of hearing is listed for October 10.



Rupee edges up 2 paise to 83.20 against \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee edged up 2 paise to settle at 83.20 (provisional) against the US currency in a restricted trade on Thursday, aided by a correction in crude oil prices and the greenback.

Foreign fund outflows and losses in local equities, however, restricted the rupee's gains, forex dealers said.

The rupee opened flat at 83.22 against the US dollar and later moved in a range of 83.25 to 83.13 in day trading.

The local unit settled at 83.20 against the US dollar, up by 2 paise over the previous close. The rupee had closed at 83.22 on Wednesday after a listless trade.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, declined by 0.27 per cent to 106.38 after touching a nearly 10-month high of 106.84 in overnight trade.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, also retreated 0.57 per cent to USD 96 per barrel. Analysts said the combination of higher interest rates and US bond yields are influencing FIIs to stay in the selling mode in Indian capital markets, which is weighing on the local currency.

On the domestic equity front, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell 610.37 points or 0.92 per cent to settle at 65,508.32. The broader Nifty declined 192.90 points or 0.98 per cent to end at 19,523.55. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital market on Wednesday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 354.35 crore, according to exchange data.

Credit growth may moderate to 13-13.5 per cent this fiscal: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The credit growth is likely to moderate to 13-13.5 per cent this fiscal but will improve slightly to 13.5-14 per cent next financial year as the economic pace picks up, according to a report.

The biggest factor driving the moderation is low demand in wholesale credit, which constitutes as much as 60 per cent of the overall credit. Wholesale credit is seen slowing to 11-11.5 per cent this fiscal from a decade high of 15 per cent in 2022-23, Crisil Ratings said in a report on Thursday.

A key monitorable, which will determine credit growth going forward, is the extent to which deposit growth picks up for banks, Crisil Ratings said.

The retail credit demand will continue to go up in this fiscal but corporate credit demand is lagging, which is likely to pick up in the next fiscal on capex revival, the report noted.

In absolute terms, overall bank credit stood at Rs 148 lakh crore in FY23, clipping at 15.9 per cent year-on-year, and this is likely to grow to Rs 168 lakh crore or 13-13.5 per cent this fiscal and further grow to Rs 191 lakh crore or 13.5-14 per cent in the next, it added.

According to the agency, the credit demand moderation this fiscal will be because of the following four key reasons — gross domestic product growth is expected to fall to 6 per cent this fiscal from 7.2 per cent last fiscal, which will impact the overall credit growth.

Secondly, the easing of inflation with some



softening in commodity prices. A significant part of the growth in wholesale credit (comprising corporates and micro, small and medium enterprises) last fiscal was driven by higher working capital demand in a high-inflation environment. Going forward, inflation levels are expected to be lower than the last fiscal.

Thirdly, robust bond issuances in the first half of this fiscal with the changes in interest rates have seen a substitution of bank credit with debt capital, which also supported wholesale credit growth last year, especially in the first half. But this is not seen to the same extent this year.

Finally, given the strong growth in fiscal 2023, especially in the second half, the high-base effect will also be a factor, said the agency.

The retail credit, which is 28 per cent of overall credit, is expected to continue to grow at a healthy rate of 19-20 per cent, similar to last fiscal.

Massive write-offs and low recovery ails the banking sector: Amit

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Principal chief advisor to West Bengal chief minister Amit Mitra said on Thursday that massive write-offs in the last nine years and low recovery is presently ailing the banking sector of the country.

Speaking at a CII banking session here, Mitra said that in the last nine years from 2014-2023, Rs 14.56 lakh crore has been written off from the books of the banks.

During 2021-22, the written-off amount was Rs 1.75 lakh crore, and subsequently Rs 2.09 lakh crore in the succeeding fiscal.

Mitra, also the former finance minister of the West Bengal government, said that union minister of state for finance Bhagwat Karad had informed Parliament that out of the total written-off amount of Rs 14.56 lakh crore, Rs 7.40 lakh crore are for large industry and services segments.

He said, however, the recov-



ery had been low to the tune of Rs 2.04 lakh crore out of Rs 14.56 lakh crore, which means more than Rs 12 lakh crore is yet to be recovered.

According to him, the amount of write-offs in the preceding last nine years (2005-2014) was Rs 2.20 lakh crore.

"Even if this write-off amount of Rs 2.20 lakh crore is indexed to inflation, the increase in subsequent write-offs is very large," he said.

Regarding wilful defaulters, he said that the top 50 in this list owes Rs 87,295 crore to scheduled banks as on March 31, 2023.

Gold declines ₹650; silver tumbles ₹1,000

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The prices of gold tumbled Rs 650 to Rs 58,950 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid decline in the precious metal's prices in the overseas markets, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the yellow metal had settled at Rs 59,600 per 10 grams.

Silver also nosedived Rs 1,000 to Rs 73,100 per kg.

Comex gold hit a six-month low as an uptick in the US dollar and treasury yields weighed on the precious metal, Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, gold and silver were trading lower at USD 1,877 per ounce and USD 22.55 per ounce, respectively.

Market focus now turns to the revised US GDP growth rate for the second quarter and weekly jobless claims due later in the day, Navneet Damani, senior vice-president of commodity research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.

SBI to encourage corporates to implement emission reduction tech

PTI ■ KOLKATA

State Bank of India, the country's largest lender will encourage corporates to implement emission reduction technologies and get better terms for availing finance, an official of the bank said on Thursday.

Ashwini Kumar Tewari, the managing director (risk, compliance and stressed assets resolution group), SBI, said that the bank will see how it can help corporates in this regard but at the moment does not ask them of their plans for net zero.

At present SBI gives 25 basis points concession on interest rates for electric vehicles. At a later stage, corporates with a



better ESG (environment, social and corporate governance) score will get better terms for getting finance from it, he said.

"We don't ask for net zero plan from the companies now. Ultimately, we will go to it. We will start conversation with the corporates and that process will start," he said at the sidelines of

the banking conclave organised by CII here.

"Net zero" emissions refer to the achieving of an overall balance between greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions produced and GHG emissions taken out of the atmosphere.

Earlier speaking at the conclave, Tewari said that banks still remain a major source of funding for the country though

The banking industry is facing competition with the growth of the equity market and NBFCs.

"The banking sector needs to be shepherded. Unlike the NBFCs which can reach the last mile, banks have high cost of operations," he said.

Toyota looking to set up third manufacturing plant in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Japanese auto major Toyota is looking to set up a third manufacturing plant in India with its two facilities in the country running at almost full capacity, according to industry sources.

Bengaluru-based Toyota Kirloskar Motor, a joint venture between Toyota Motor Company and Kirloskar Group, currently operates two plants in the country with a total production capacity of around 3.42 lakh units per annum. With enhanced demand leading to long waiting periods on certain products, the automaker is now looking to set up a third plant in the country, sources said.

However, details about the production capacity, location and investment in the new plant

could not be immediately ascertained. When contacted, a TKM spokesperson said: "We would like to refrain from commenting on speculations and future plans."

In May this year, the company initiated a third shift at its Bidadi-based plant near Bengaluru to enhance production capacity by about 30 per cent as it looked to cut down waiting periods on some of its models.

TKM invested over Rs 90 crore to upgrade the existing infrastructure at the facility and added about 1,500 workforce for the third shift at the plant.

The automaker has two facilities within the Bidadi compound, which roll out different sets of products.

TKM's Plant 1 commenced production in December 1999



and currently rolls out Innova Hycross, Innova Crysta, Fortuner, and Legender. It has an installed production capacity of 1.32 lakh units per annum.

The second plant at the same site, with an installed production capacity of 2.10 lakh units, rolls out products like Camry Hybrid, Urban Cruiser Hyryder and Hilux.

demand for its models this year.

In the January-August period, its sales grew by 34 per cent to 1,47,192 units from 1,09,669 units in the same period of last year. With an increase in bookings, the waiting period for some of the company's products has crossed the one-year mark.

On September 23, the automaker announced to temporarily halt bookings of the E-CNG option of Rumion MPV to avoid customer inconvenience due to the long waiting period.

In April this year, TKM temporarily halted bookings of top trims of its multi-purpose vehicle Innova Hycross owing to supply challenges. Last year, it stopped taking orders for the diesel variant of Innova Crysta due to high demand and an increased waiting period.

MAN CITY OUT OF LEAGUE CUP

AP ■ NEWCASTLE

Manchester City crashed out of the League Cup with a 1-0 defeat at Newcastle on Wednesday as Arsenal, Chelsea and Liverpool booked their places in the last 16.

Alexander Isak scored the only goal at St James' Park in a clash between two much-changed sides.

City won the treble of Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup last season, but any dream of surpassing that feat with an unprecedented quadruple was swiftly brought to an end.

Erling Haaland was left on the bench by City coach Pep Guardiola for the full 90 minutes and his presence was missed in a toothless display.

Eddie Howe also rang the changes from an 8-0 thrashing of Sheffield United at the weekend.

But it was not until the Newcastle boss introduced Anthony Gordon and Bruno Guimarães at half-time that the hosts took control.

Isak had the simple task of slotting home at the far post after a burst from Joelinton opened up the City defence.

"A win like this can elevate us," said Howe.

"First-half we tried to rotate the squad and keep our players fresh. Second-half we were better for sure, but when you bring

on players like Anthony Gordon and Bruno, they're high level players."

Newcastle's reward is a fourth-round trip to Manchester United in a repeat of last season's final.

CHELSEA BOUNCE BACK

Chelsea prevented the crisis at Stamford Bridge deepening as Nicolas Jackson's goal beat Brighton 1-0.

The Senegalese's wastefulness in front of goal has been partly to blame for the Blues' return of one win in their opening six Premier League games under Mauricio Pochettino.

But Jackson coolly slotted home from the impressive Cole Palmer's pass on 50 minutes.

Chelsea will face Blackburn in the last 16.

Arsenal were also 1-0 winners at Brentford as Aaron Ramsdale responded to being controversially dropped by Mikel Arteta.

Reiss Nelson's eighth-minute goal separated the sides despite a Brentford onslaught after the break.

Arteta has preferred David Raya to Ramsdale in goal for the past three games.

But the England international was needed for the Gunners to progress as he produced a brilliant stop to deny Yoane Wissa an equaliser.

Arsenal will travel to West Ham in the next round after the



Hammers were 1-0 winners at third-tier Lincoln.

Liverpool trailed to Championship leaders Leicester after just three minutes before fighting back to win 3-1.

Kasey McAteer rounded off a rapid counter-attack to give the Foxes a flying start.

Jürgen Klopp's men laid siege to the visitors' goal but were made to wait until after the break to draw level.

The equaliser was made in the Netherlands as Ryan Gravenberch set up Cody Gakpo to find the far corner.

Klopp then turned to his bench to find a winner and found it through a stunning strike from Dominik Szoboszlai.

The Hungarian captain took aim from outside the box and smashed the ball into the top corner 20 minutes from time.

"Dom was a surprise with how fast he has fitted in, it was pretty much from the first minute," said Klopp on Szoboszlai's fast start to his Liverpool career.

"Top-class player with a lot of quality. He never stops."

Diogo Jota's backheel in off the far post then made the tie safe.

Klopp's men will travel to Bournemouth in round four.

Everton built on their first Premier League win of the season at Brentford on Saturday with an impressive 2-1 victory at Aston Villa.

Inter crash to first defeat

AP ■ MILAN

Inter Milan crashed to their first defeat of the Serie A season on Wednesday, going down 2-1 at home to Sassuolo as controversial striker Victor Osimhen starred for Napoli despite an apparent rift with the champions.

Inter went into the game with a perfect record of five wins in five and looked in control at 1-0 ahead thanks to a Denzel Dumfries goal on the stroke of half-time at the San Siro.

Sassuolo levelled in the 54th minute when Nedim Bajrami scored with a long-range effort which caught out goalkeeper Yann Sommer.

Domenico Berardi hit the winner 10 minutes later as Sassuolo claimed all three points to follow up last week's win over Juventus.

Inter remain top of the table on goal difference ahead of AC Milan who earlier defeated Cagliari 3-1.

"After a good first period where we should have scored more than one goal, but we lost our focus especially after the equaliser," said Inter coach Simone Inzaghi.

"Losing in front of our home crowd hurts us, we have to understand what happened, even if the schedule, with our next match on Saturday, doesn't really give us time to take a step back."

After a defeat and two draws, champions Napoli returned to winning ways with Osimhen playing a starring role in a 4-1 win over Udinese.

The Nigerian striker scored his fourth goal of the season after 39 minutes with



Khvicha Kvaratskhelia ending a long goal drought by finding the net in the second half.

Osimhen, top scorer in Serie A last season, had cut a controversial figure at the weekend when he showed his displeasure at being taken off by coach Rudy Garcia in the 0-0 draw with Bologna.

On Tuesday, his agent threatened Napoli with legal action for having published a video on the club's TikTok account, since deleted, mocking the striker for missing a penalty in that game.

Osimhen removed photos of himself in Napoli colours from his own social media, fuelling speculation that he will demand a move in the next transfer window. "I have a very good relationship with Victor," insisted Garcia.

"I am happy for him because he scored tonight. After the match in Bologna, we were all frustrated, angry, Victor in particular, because he missed the penalty.

"On the sporting aspect and on other levels, especially on TikTok, there have been a lot of things to manage in recent days," smiled Garcia.

"But I can assure you that Victor loves this jersey and that he is invested in 100% in our project."

Napoli are now fifth in the table with 11 points, four points behind the two Milan clubs.

Real beat Las Palmas but Girona move top of La Liga

AP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid eased to a 2-0 win over Las Palmas on Wednesday to overtake Barcelona and move second, but Catalan minnows Girona are the surprise La Liga leaders after a 2-1 win at Villarreal.

Barcelona started the week top of the league but a 2-2 draw at Real Mallorca on Tuesday left the door open for their rivals to overtake them.

Madrid produced a comfortable victory with goals from Brahim Diaz and Joselu, while Brazilian winger Vinicius Junior also made his return from injury as a second half substitute, following a month out.

Real coach Carlo Ancelotti rested Jude Bellingham, who has been Madrid's

best player so far, starting Diaz in attacking midfield in the England international's stead.

The Italian coach also swapped out both full-backs after the painful derby defeat by Atletico Madrid on Sunday, with Ferland Mendy and Nacho starting in place of Fran Garcia and Lucas Vazquez.

Real Madrid were on the front foot from the start against their promoted visitors from the Canary Islands, but lacked the killer finishing touch that Karim Benzema brought in recent years, and Bellingham has in recent weeks.

Vazquez replaced the injured David Alaba and the substitute played a part in the opening goal.

Valles stopped another Joselu drive before Diaz broke the deadlock, taking



a touch to control Vazquez's cross and then firing into the top corner with the aid of a slight deflection.

Joselu made amends for his first half profligacy to pounce early in the second with a well-placed header from Rodrigo's cross that this time left Valles no chance.

Vinicius made his return with over half an hour remaining as Ancelotti reverted to a 4-3-3 system, having begun with the midfield diamond he has favoured this season.

Aurelien Tchouameni came close with a long-range effort and Madrid saw out the game without incident to move one point ahead of Barcelona.

Michel's Girona came from behind to beat Villarreal, with on-loan Barcelona defender Eric Garcia netting the winner.

Ramkumar-Myneni pair one win away from gold

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

The Indian tennis camp had something to cheer on Thursday with Ramkumar Ramanathan and Saketh Myneni reaching the men's doubles gold medal round and the mixed doubles pair of Rohan Bopanna and Rutuja Bhosale assuring itself of a medal.

The second-seeded team of Ramkumar and Myneni downed the gutsy Korean pair of Seongchan Hong and Soonwoo Kwon 6-1, 6-7(8), 10-0 to move to the title clash.

Myneni will now gun for his second Asian Games gold, having won a mixed doubles yellow metal with Sania Mirza in the 2014 edition.

It will be a maiden Games medal for Ramkumar.

The Koreans fought back after losing the opening set in a rather sedate manner but Myneni and Ramkumar held their nerves to outplay their rivals in the Super Tie break.



The Indian team will now take on Chinese Taipei, that ousted Thailand, in the gold medal match on Friday.

India had won the men's doubles title in the last edition in Indonesia with Rohan Bopanna and Divij Sharan emerging victorious in the final.

The second-seeded Bopanna-Bhosale pair moved to the mixed doubles semifinals with a fluent 7-5, 6-3 win over Kazakhstan's Zhibek Kulambayeva and Grigoriy Lomakin.

The first set seemed going into a tie-break as Kulambayeva was serving at 40-0 in the 12th game but she lost her serve from that strong position.

There was hardly any fight in the second set.

Bopanna, who is playing his last Asian Games at 43, will not go without a medal.

He has already been ousted from the men's doubles with partner Yuki Bhambri.

Lingard training with Al Ettifaq

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Former Manchester United player Jesse Lingard could be the next Premier League star to join the Saudi Arabian league.

The England international, who is a free agent, is training with Saudi club Al-Ettifaq after leaving Nottingham Forest at the end of the last season.

Al-Ettifaq is coached by Liverpool great Steven Gerrard and signed England midfielder Jordan Henderson in the off-season. "I've watched him for many years, so I'm aware of the talent," Gerrard told Al Arabiya's sports program FilMarmara.

Miami fall short without Messi

AP ■ FORT LAUDERDALE

The Houston Dynamo defeated Inter Miami 2-1 to win the US Open Cup on Wednesday with an injured Lionel Messi watching from the stands at DRV PNK Stadium.

Without Messi and his former Barcelona team-mate Jordi Alba, Miami struggled to compete with an enterprising Houston and could have little to complain about the outcome.

Miami co-owner David Beckham, who watched the game with his former Real Madrid team-mate Zinedine Zidane, had hoped for another night of celebration after the team's League Cup triumph last month.

But Miami lacked intensity and ideas as they were given the runaround by Ben Olsen's impressive Houston team.

No clear explanation has been given for Messi's injury



with references to "muscle fatigue" followed by talk from coach Gerardo Martino of "scars" from an old injury.

With no Messi to worry about, Houston were on top from the outset, moving the ball around with confidence and purpose while Miami struggled to get a foothold.

Houston grabbed the lead in the 24th minute with a perfect counter-attack ending with Brazilian Artur feeding the overlapping Griffin Dorsey who blasted in at the near post.

Houston were utterly dominant, passing the ball with a swiftness that left Miami chasing shadows and it wasn't long before they had doubled their advantage.

Colombian winger Quinones cut into the box from the left flank and Miami right-back DeAndre Yedlin's desperate lunge brought him crashing to the ground. French forward Amine Bassi made no mistake from the spot to make it 2-0.

Men's & women's squash teams assure India of medals

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Indian men's and women's teams assured themselves of medals at the Asian Games after progressing to the semifinals of the squash events here on Thursday.

While the men's team blanked Nepal 3-0 in its final pool tie, the women were handed a 0-3 loss by Malaysia in their last pool B fixture.

Both teams sealed top two spots in their respective pools to make the semifinals which guarantees them at least a bronze. The Indian women's team began the day with veteran Joshua Chinappa enduring a 6-11, 2-11, 8-11 defeat to Subramanian Sivasangari in 21 minutes.

In the second match, Tanvi Khanna squandered a 2-1 lead before going down to Commonwealth Games gold medalist Aifa Binti Azman 9-11, 11-1, 7-11, 13-11, 11-5.

Manika, Sharath, Sathiyan storm into last 16

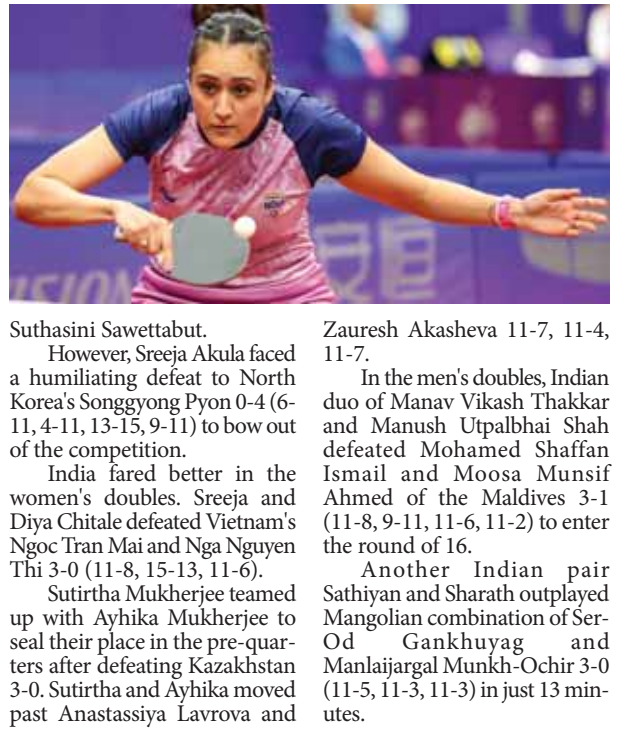
PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Star Indian paddlers Manika S Batra, Sharath Kamal and G Sathiyan dominated their opponents en route their pre-quarterfinals entry in the table tennis competition at the Asian Games here on Thursday.

Sharath, a team bronze winner in 2018 Asian Games, never gave a chance to Mohammed Shaffan Ismail, his opponent from Maldives before winning 11-9, 11-2, 11-7, 11-7.

Sathiyan, who had won a bronze medal in the team event in Jakarta Games 2018, too was equally overwhelming against Turki Lafi Almutairi of Saudi Arabia while registering a 11-5, 11-6, 11-9, 11-2 victory.

Manika, a 2018 Commonwealth Games gold medalist and a bronze winner in mixed doubles at the Jakarta Asian Games, blanked Nabita Shrestha of Nepal 4-0 (11-5, 11-4, 11-3, 11-2) in just 20 minutes to set up a clash with Thailand's



Suthasini Sawettabut.

However, Sreeja Akula faced a humiliating defeat to North Korea's Songyong Pyon 0-4 (6-11, 4-11, 13-15, 9-11) to bow out of the competition.

India fared better in the women's doubles. Sreeja and Diya Chitale defeated Vietnam's Ngoc Tran Mai and Nga Nguyen Thi 3-0 (11-8, 15-13, 11-6).

Sutirtha Mukherjee teamed up with Aihika Mukherjee to seal their place in the pre-quarters after defeating Kazakhstan 3-0. Sutirtha and Aihika moved past Anastassiya Lavrova and

Zauresh Akasheva 11-7, 11-4, 11-7.

In the men's doubles, Indian duo of Manav Vikash Thakkar and Manush Utpal Shah defeated Mohamed Shaffan Ismail and Moosa Munsif Ahmed of the Maldives 3-1 (11-8, 9-11, 11-6, 11-2) to enter the round of 16.

Another Indian pair Sathiyan and Sharath outplayed Mongolian combination of Ser-Od Gankhuyag and Manlaijargal Munkh-Ochir 3-0 (11-5, 11-3, 11-3) in just 13 minutes.

PLEASED PLAYERS RETURNING FROM INJURIES GOT 'GAME-TIME'

PTI ■ RAJKOT

India coach Rahul Dravid is relieved that key players such as Jasprit Bumrah, KL Rahul and Shreyas Iyer, who are all coming back from injuries, could get enough miles in their legs ahead of the ODI World Cup, starting in a week's time.

Bumrah, who was troubled by a back issue that kept him out for long, bowled his full quota of overs in Mohali and Rajkot — the two matches he played against Australia — but was a bit expensive in the series-concluding third ODI.

The fast bowler had made a comeback during the T20 series against Ireland last month and also competed in Asia Cup in Sri Lanka.

Iyer, who is expected to bat at number four, struck a hundred in Indore and also contributed 48 in Rajkot.

Rahul not only batted in an impressive fashion, scoring two half centuries, he also kept the wickets, allaying concerns around his fitness. "For all those guys game-time was important. The fact that they have been able to get that is I think something that we are much better off for it," Dravid said after the third ODI that India lost by 66 runs.

"Jassi has been able to play a couple of games and bowl his quota of 10 overs, Siraj (was) suffering from a little bit of bug but he got back and was able to bowl," he said.

"(For) Ashwin, it was really nice to see the way he bowled in the first two games. KL as well, the keeping right through the 50 overs, he is coming off after almost 6-7 months. Shreyas has played a couple of really good knocks in the last couple of games. We know we have to keep improving but also hope that we carry this momentum into the World Cup," the India coach added.



Off-spinner R Ashwin's inclusion in the squad for the Australia series had triggered speculation that he might be included in the final World Cup squad. However, Dravid was non-committal.

All the teams are required to finalise their World Cup squads by Thursday. "We have to wait for an official confirmation or a decision on that. The NCA is in touch with the selectors and Ajit

(Agarkar) so I will not make any comments on that. If there is any change you will get to hear about it officially, as of now there are no changes," Dravid said, hinting that Axar Patel will be retained in the 15-man squad.

The India coach expects India's full strength squad to assemble in Guwahati ahead of the first warm-up match against England on September 30.

India had only 13 players to pick their

final eleven against Australia here on Wednesday as some members Shardul Thakur, Hardik Pandya and Mohammed Shami returned home while Ishan Kishan missed the contest due to a bug going around in the group.

"The two practice or warm-up games, generally people play 15 versus 15, it is tough to sometimes get the intensity in those games but as we have seen in these three games, in hot conditions there has been a lot of intensity as well," Dravid added.

"There was a bit of juggling we had to manage in this game but I am hoping that we have got about a week, we have got a few days. We should have the full strength squad, hopefully the bug around the group has cleared out as well. It will be nice if that happens," the coach said.

Talking about the big loss in the Rajkot ODI, Dravid blamed it on giving away too many runs in the first half of the Australian innings.

"In the overall scheme of things probably 350 was 30 (runs) too many. We should have been chasing 320 if we had bowled better in the first half," he said.

Rohit Sharma (81) and Virat Kohli (56) added 70 runs but the team lost the plot after their partnership was broken. Dravid, however, was pleased to see the two senior batters were among runs right after a break.

"We were on par when Virat and Rohit were batting. We needed one of the top three to get 130 or 140. In these chases you need these kinds of scores," he said.

"Unfortunately it did not happen, but a good thing from our perspective is that both of them batted really well — that is a positive. They are coming off not playing cricket for a week so it was nice to get straight into it and get runs for us," he said.



Pakistan is a weaker team than India at this moment: Waqar

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Legendary pacer Waqar Younis rated India a better side over Pakistan going into the World Cup while basing his observation on the better preparation of the Rohit Sharma-led team ahead of the quadrennial big bash.

India had recently won the Asia Cup and handed a massive 228-run defeat to their arch-rivals in a Super 4 match at Colombo.

In the World Cup, India will face Pakistan on October 14 in Ahmedabad, and Younis said pressure will be there on both the outfits but said Men in Blue just could have an edge.

"As we all know, it (India vs Pakistan) will be the biggest game, mother of all the games.

So, when you play in Ahmedabad, you will have to control your nerves, and not only Pakistan will be under pressure since it is a weaker team as compared to India. "But India will also be under pressure because the crowd in the stadium will create pressure on both the teams," Younis told Star Sports.

"However, if we judge purely based on the team's performance, India definitely will be a better team," he added. Younis was also mindful of the Pakistani's unstable form, and said the injury-enforced absence of pacer Naseem Shah could put them in a significant disadvantage.

"If I talk about Pakistan, they are a miss and hit this time. The absence of Naseem Shah will be a big disadvantage because

Naseem and Shaheen (Afriidi) used to complement each other with new ball."

"Though Hasan Ali has been declared as his replacement; he has got a lot of experience and gave brilliant performances in the past, but I feel, to suddenly come and perform on this kind of big stage will not be an easy task for him," said Younis.

Analysing the Indian squad, Younis said the team has great spinners, while its bench strength is equally potent.

"If we only talk about ticking the boxes then we will see no other team can match India right now because they have good spinners, who are playing right now in the starting XI such as Kuldeep, Jadeja. But they also have strong bench strength."



We deserved to win gold in Asian Games: Harman

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian women's cricket team captain Harmanpreet Kaur on Thursday said they deserved to win the Asian Games gold medal, considering their domination over neighbouring teams, though she admitted that the expectations put a bit of pressure on the side.

Playing in their maiden Asian Games in Hangzhou, India fulfilled the expectations on them and clinched the yellow metal, beating Sri Lanka by 19 runs in the final.

"It was a great experience, we played really well. When we left for the Asian Games, we knew our team is pretty strong and we had in mind that we need to prepare like this for future tournaments. We deserved to win the gold," Harmanpreet said on the sidelines of a felicitation function organised by the Sports Ministry here.

"The team performed very well in Hangzhou and we managed to return with the gold. Before leaving we mentally knew that our team is very strong and

we can win the gold.

"We will approach future tournaments with the same mindset and prepare ourselves the same way we did before the Games," added the star cricketer.

Harmanpreet refused to compare the Commonwealth Games silver with the gold in Hangzhou, saying both the feelings were different.

"That moment was different because we could have won that match. Despite playing good cricket we got the silver. Here it was completely different because there was different sort of pressure on us as we have done well against the Asian teams.

"There was extra pressure on us because we have been dominating Asian cricket," she said.

Harmanpreet said the support provided by the government to the cricket teams in preparation for the Asian Games was very helpful.

"There are a lot of changes. As a sportsperson when you get so much support from all sides, it feels really motivating. This

year we witnessed a new thing and that is the government has given us money for preparation.

"These are the new things which never happened in cricket. As a sportsperson when you know there is not so much financial burden on you, you can play freely and that matters a lot," she said.

The skipper refused to compare rising pacer Titas Sadhu with legendary Jhulan Goswami but said the young Bengal bowler has a lot of promise.

"She (Titas) performed very well in Under-19 World Cup. She bowled really great there and whenever she gets a chance she is always ready to bowl for the team," Harmanpreet said.

"I can't compare her (Jhulan) with anyone but they are from the same state and I think Jhulan is working a lot on her, they keep on talking to each other."

During the ceremony, Sports Minister Anurag Thakur gave away cash awards to the shooting, rowing contingents besides the women cricketers, including Shafali Verma.

PTI ■ RAJKOT

All-rounder Glenn Maxwell will have a big role to play in the ODI World Cup for Australia as he brings a lot of balance to the side as the third spinner, said Mitchell Marsh.

Returning to top flight cricket after six months due to soreness to his ankle and birth of his son, Maxwell came up with career-best 4 for 40 to bowl Australia to a convincing 66-run win over India in the third and final ODI here on Wednesday night.

"It was a great spell. He came back after having not played much cricket for the last (few) months," Marsh said during the press-conference.

"It was great to see him back. It is the energy that Maxi brings to the team, his presence and the balance that he gives us.

"We obviously know that his batting is absolutely class but what he can do with the ball,

Mitchell Marsh backs Maxwell to play big role in World Cup campaign

and the options that he will give us with our all-rounders is vital for us going into the World Cup."

Talking about Maxwell's role in the World Cup, Marsh said, "There may be wickets where he's the third spinner through this World Cup.

"But just the ability for us to play the three quicks, a spinner and have Maxi who has the ability on the right wicket to bowl ten overs, think you see a lot of teams around the world have guys like Maxi; it gives you a lot of flexibility with the teams you can pick or the way you can structure your batting line-up."

Marsh, who struck a match-winning 96 in the first half, could not field in the second



innings as he was cramping up after batting in extreme heat and humidity.

"It was as tough as (anywhere) I have batted in. When I came off, I was absolutely exhausted, (had) full body cramp but obviously (it was) nice to contribute to a win like that. I thought we played outstanding (cricket)," he said.

"I wanted to (bowl), basically bowled a couple of balls (during warm up) but basically had cramps all the way up in my legs.

"It has been a big couple of weeks, I have played 10 out of a possible 11 games in the last three weeks so with what is to come, the staff said to cool my jets for the fielding innings," he said.

Shakib hints at retirement after 2025 Champions Trophy

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan wants to call time on his illustrious international career after the 2025 Champions Trophy in Pakistan.

He has also asserted that while he plans to retire from Tests following the forthcoming ICC Cricket World Cup in India starting next month, he is also likely to quit T20s after the ICC T20 World Cup next year in West Indies and the United States of America.

Talking to T-Sports, as reported by ESPNcricinfo, Shakib said, "The 2025 Champions Trophy for ODIs and the 2024 T20 World Cup for T20s. Tests may be sooner. Maybe (after the World Cup)."

"I will retire all at once, but I will stop playing each format one by one. I will announce my retirement after the 2025 Cham-



pions Trophy," Shakib will be leading Bangladesh during the World Cup, having also captained the side during the Asia

Cup earlier this month in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

It was his second stint as the unit's leader. Under him, the

Tigers did make it to the Super 4 of the Asia Cup, but failed to make it to the final.

In the meantime, Shakib has

confirmed that his outing in the upcoming World Cup will be his last as the skipper and will be quitting captaincy as a whole.

"Given the current reality, I am captain only till the World Cup. Not a day more."

"I resigned from the captaincy on the 17th (of September). The reasons were the same when I didn't want to captain ahead of the Asia Cup."

"I don't think my captaincy is adding value at this stage of my career. I wanted to just bowl my 10 overs, give my best in fielding, and do my batting." "The easiest thing to do for me would have been not to take the captaincy. At this age, I didn't want to take this pressure. I want to smile, enjoy my game, perform for Bangladesh," he added.

Bangladesh take on Afghanistan in its opening fixture of the World Cup on October 7 in Dharamsala.

We believe we can win ODI World Cup: Rabada

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

South Africa pacer Kagiso Rabada believes the Proteas have what it takes to shed the chokers tag and win their maiden world title in the upcoming ICC ODI World Cup in India.

Despite having some star players, South Africa has never progressed behind the semi-final stage of any of the World Cups till date but Rabada said this time they have the arsenal at their disposal to create history.

"One thing we have never lacked as South Africans is belief, so going into the tournament we do believe we can win it," Rabada was he was quoted as saying by



ICC.

"We've got the players to do so, so hopefully we can make our first final and win this competition. It's going to be hard, but it's going to be really enjoyable.

"It's exciting to have the best players in the world playing against each other, competing for one prize, and we are up for the challenge."

The Proteas failed to advance beyond the group stage four years ago but are yet to taste a series defeat in ODIs this year.

The four-time semi-finalists struggled in 2019 but have since risen to fourth in the men's ODI team rankings, and are full of confidence after a 3-2 series victory over Australia.

Bavuma returns home due to personal reasons

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

South Africa suffered a setback on Thursday with their ODI skipper Temba Bavuma returning home from India due to personal reasons ahead of the side's two warm-up games of the ICC Cricket World Cup.

The Proteas are scheduled to take on Afghanistan and New Zealand in their first and second warm-up games on



here September 29 and October 2 respectively.

As per an update on South Africa cricket's social media handles, Bavuma has returned to South Africa due to personal reasons.

T20I captain Aiden Markram will be leading the side in the two warm-up clashes in absence of Bavuma, who is likely to rejoin the team ahead of their opening game. South Africa opens their World Cup campaign against Sri Lanka in New Delhi on October 7.