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BANGLADESH QUESTIONS
SHEIKH MUJIB'S LEGACY

WORLD 8

HOUSE REPUBLICANS RELEASE
IMPEACHMENT REPORT ON BIDEN

MONEY 10

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DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADALate City Vol.13 Issue 227
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

RAIPUR, TUESDAY AUGUST 20, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

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AHLAWAT, RASHID &
MANE AMONG
GOLFERS TO TEE OFF
11 SPORTS

CENTRE DEFENDS LAW AGAINST TRIPLE TALAQ



RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Defending its 2019 Triple Talaq Law in the Supreme Court, the Modi Government has argued that the legislation was crucial for protecting the rights of Muslim women and promoting gender justice. In an affidavit filed in response to petitions challenging the law, the Government said despite the Supreme Court's 2017 ruling setting aside the practice, it has "not served as a sufficient deterrent reducing the number of divorces through this practice" within the community. The Government argued that the practice legitimised and

institutionalised the abandonment of wives by their husbands and was "neither Islamic nor legal." "Taking note of all these factors, we are of the considered view that the ordinance in question has been brought into force in accordance with the requirements of law only to make more effective implementation of the law laid down by the Supreme Court in the case of Shayara Bano vs Union of India (supra) in the form of an ordinance and we see no reason to make an indulgence into the matter," the Centre said in its 433-page counter affidavit reminding the court

of its own Constitution Bench judgment of 2017 in the Shayara Bano case, which had held triple or instant talaq (talaq-e-biddat) manifestly arbitrary. This comes in response to a plea by the Samastha Kerala Jamiathul Ulema, which sought a declaration that the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, is unconstitutional and violative of Articles 14, 15, 21, and 123 of the Constitution. Triple talaq is a form of divorce that was practiced in Islam, in which a Muslim man could legally divorce his wife by pronouncing "talaq" three times.

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FILE PHOTO: PTI

Jammu attacked, yet again

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

One Inspector-rank CRPF officer was martyred on Monday when a heavily-armed group of Pakistani terrorists targeted an area domination patrol party comprising jawans of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Special Operations Group of Jammu Kashmir Police (JKP) in the remote Duddu Basantgarh area of Udhampur. The Monday attack, which occurred shortly after 3.00 pm in the thickly forested belt of Chel in Duddu, comes close on the heels of the poll schedule by the Election Commission for Jammu and Kashmir Assembly. Till the time of filing the report, the operation in the area was going on and additional reinforcements

were rushed from the district headquarters to prevent the Pakistani terrorists from escaping. The joint team was carrying out a routine patrol when the attack from the Pakistani terrorists came. Official sources said an inspector of the CRPF belonging to the 187th Battalion was hit by a bullet and later succumbed to injuries while being taken to hospital. The incident has once again brought into focus the lack of human intelligence and ground support enjoyed by the Pakistani terrorists through their well-entrenched network of overground workers in the area. Confirming the attack on the joint patrol party, a spokesman of the Udhampur police posted a message on the microblogging site X claiming,

"During area domination patrol..., exchange of fire took place between terrorists and joint parties of JKP and CRPF. In the encounter, one Inspector of CRPF suffered bullet injuries and has attained martyrdom. Operation continues". Official sources claimed the same group of Pakistani terrorists has been shuttling in the thickly forested belt of Dudu Basantgarh for a long time and operations launched to neutralise them have not borne fruitful results. Last week, a young captain of the Indian Army sacrificed his life, on the eve of the 78th Independence Day celebrations, while leading an ongoing anti-terrorist operation aimed at flushing out Pakistani terrorists hiding in the forested belt of Assar in the Doda district of Jammu.

CBI prepares for Lie Detection

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Monday obtained judicial permission to conduct a polygraph test on Sanjoy Roy, the prime accused in the RG Kar Medical College rape and murder case, sources said. The Central agency may also petition the court to conduct a similar test on Sandip Ghosh, the former principal of the college, who, according to agency sources, is "not fully cooperating" with the investigation. Roy, who was initially arrested by the Kolkata Police and later handed over to the CBI following a Calcutta High Court order, is the only accused arrested so far. According to sources, CBI officials have found that Roy, a civic volunteer attached to the Kolkata Police, visited RGMCH three times on the evening and night before August 9, when the body of the postgraduate lady doctor was discovered in a semi-nude condition. Roy first visited the hospital's surgery department at 6 pm to see a patient. He returned at 11 pm and proceeded directly to the seminar hall of the Department of Chest Medicine on the 3rd floor. Sources said he visited the same location again around 4 am the following morning, staying inside for about 30-35



Lawyers of Calcutta High Court stage a protest against alleged sexual assault and murder of a postgraduate trainee doctor, in Kolkata, on Monday PTI

minutes — the estimated time when the crime was committed, according to autopsy reports. A postgraduate trainee doctor was raped and murdered at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata while on duty last week leading to nationwide and even international protests demanding security for doctors. A polygraph test, commonly known as a lie detector test, measures physiological responses such as blood pressure, heart rate, and other indicators while the accused is asked a series of questions.

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Delhi LG seeks action on infrastructure accidents

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a serious view of several deaths and disruptions in normal life in the city caused by severe waterlogging and flooding this monsoon due to "complete collapse of civic infrastructure", Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has directed Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to submit a monthly report on the inspections conducted by senior officers of the state of civic infrastructure in the Capital.

In a written communication to the Chief Secretary, Ashish Kundra, the Principal Secretary to Saxena, said the LG has advised that an "institutionalised mechanism be put in place for regular inspections" by senior officers of the facilities under their charge. "It would help them get a first-hand feel of the core problems being faced by the citizens and take corrective policy or regulatory measures. The Chief Secretary shall circulate a uniform format of inspection report to all departments and submit a monthly report on the number of inspections done by each officer," read the letter.

The Arvind Kejriwal Government has blamed the bureaucracy for failing to desilt drains ahead of the monsoon season this year. This purported negligence led to frequent waterlogging and



File photo: Ranjan Dimri

flooding whenever there was rain turning the entire city into another Venice. Kundra also pointed out that even the Delhi High Court has taken a serious stance of the drains desilting issue, and has made "stinging observations". "The LG has observed that this monsoon has seen the complete collapse of civic infrastructure, leading to unfortunate and avoidable deaths and great hardships to the citizens. The underlying problems are symptomatic of endemic neglect," he has said in the letter. "Drains have not been desilted for years, sewer lines are choked leading to flooding even in planned colonies," he added. According to Saxena, all this points to a "complete absence

of senior management oversight" in the city, Kundra's letter said. Sharing the LG's directives on the issue, Kundra said all heads of departments (HoD), Secretaries, Principal Secretaries, or Additional Chief Secretaries need to "draw up a schedule of field inspections at district level under the district magistrates (DM). The inspection notes need to be submitted to the Divisional Commissioner who shall then send a consolidated note to the Chief Secretary, Kundra said. "District magistrates, SDMs and ADMS shall undertake inspection twice a week in areas of public delivery services, focusing on road infrastructure, drains, sewage management, education, transport, etc.

Continued on Page 2

PM PROMISES RAKSHABANDHAN



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during Raksha Bandhan celebration with schoolchildren, in New Delhi, on Monday PTI

Airlines head North this festive season

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Airfares are heading northwards for the festive season, with the average one-way ticket price on key domestic routes being 10-15 per cent more for Diwali and 20-25 per cent higher for certain flights to Kerala cities for Onam, according to an analysis. An analysis done by travel portal ixigo for PTI showed that the average one-way economy class fare for non-stop flight on Delhi-Chennai route during October 30-November 5 period is 25 per cent higher at ₹7,618. This is in comparison to the fare during November 10-16 period last year.

For the given comparison period, the ticket price is 21 per cent more at ₹5,162 on Mumbai-Hyderabad route and 19 per cent higher at ₹5,999 and at ₹4,930 on Delhi-Goa and Delhi-Ahmedabad routes, respectively. On certain other routes, fares are higher in the range of 1-16 per cent, as per the analysis. Ixigo's Group Co-CEO Rajnish Kumar said travel demand for Diwali is on the rise with airfares higher than last year. "Popular routes like Delhi-Chennai, Mumbai-Bengaluru, and Delhi-Hyderabad are seeing average one-way fares ranging between ₹4,000-5,000,



marking a 10-15 per cent Y-o-Y increase as the festival approaches," he said. On the other hand, fares have also dropped in the range of 1 per cent to 27 per cent on certain routes for the given comparison period. While the ticket price for Mumbai-Ahmedabad flight has declined 27 per cent to ₹2,508, the fall is 25 per cent at ₹4,890 for Mumbai-Udaipur flight. In the case of Bengaluru-Hyderabad flight, the fare has dropped by 23 per cent to ₹3,383 and by 21 per cent to ₹7,826 for Mumbai-Jammu flight, the analysis showed. Also, an analysis of airfare trends on select routes for the upcoming festival in Kerala

showed that prices have increased in the range of 1 per cent to 25 per cent on certain routes. At the same time, ticket prices have fallen around 6-35 per cent on some routes. The figures are average one-way fare for non-stop flights for departure during the September 6-15 period this year compared to August 20-29, 2023 period when Onam was celebrated. A 30 per cent rise in fare to ₹4,102 has been registered for Hyderabad-Thiruvananthapuram flight for the given comparison period. A similar quantum of increase is there for Mumbai-Calicut flight to ₹4,448. "Travel demand for Onam festivities has surged this year,

with flight bookings and searches for travel to Kerala in the second week of September doubling compared to last year. Average airfares to key cities like Cochin, Calicut, and Thiruvananthapuram have risen by 20-25 per cent year-on-year," Rajnish Kumar said. There have been persisting concerns over high airfares, especially during peak and festival seasons. Against this backdrop, Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu, earlier this month told Lok Sabha, that the ministry was planning to introduce an online mechanism to address grievances to ensure passengers were not exploited by unnecessary fare hikes.

Sharad, Uddhav to attend Rajiv Gandhi's 80th birth anniversary organised by Maha Cong

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a show of unity being put up by the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) ahead of the State Assembly polls, Nationalist Congress Party (SP) President Sharad Pawar, Shiv Sena (UBT) President and ex-CM Uddhav Thackeray will attend the 80th anniversary function of late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi organised by Maharashtra and the Shammukhanda Hall at Sion in north-central Mumbai on Tuesday.



NCP and Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena will showcase the MVA unity at the Tuesday's function being held in the run-up to the Maharashtra Assembly polls to be held in October 2024 or little later. This comes close on the heels of a joint campaign for the State Assembly polls launched by the three MVA constituents on August 16 for the Maharashtra Assembly polls. Fresh from its superlative performance in the recent Lok Sabha polls - in which its three constituents Congress, NCP

the previous MVA Government - has made it clear that he is all for amicable seat-sharing arrangement for the State Assembly polls and that he is not pushing his name for the Chief Minister's post.

"Given that the seat-adjustments talks are currently on, let's settle the matters in a give-and-take manner... Even in the case of the Chief Ministerial candidate's choice, let's not make issues. Let the NCP (SP) Chief Sharad Pawar announce their candidates, I will support their choice. But, let's not squabble over the sharing of seats," Uddhav had said at the joint MVA meeting held on August 16.

"I don't think I am fighting the polls for myself but I am for the rights of Maharashtra. My opinion is that the Chief Ministerial candidate must be decided first, rather than going by the logic that the Chief Minister will be the party which wins the most seats in the polls," the Sena (UBT) Chief had said.

13 girls sexually abused in fake NCC camp; Tamil politician, principal, 6 others arrested

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Eight persons, including leader of a Tamil chauvinistic political outfit was arrested in Tamil Nadu's Krishnagiri district for holding a fake National Cadet Corps (NCC) camp and sexually abusing 13 girl students who attended the camp.

The arrested persons include the Principal of the school who fell prey to the offer made by Sivaraman, a "prominent" leader of Naam Tamilar Katchi who is a close confidant of party Chief Seeman. This is described as the first of its kind fake mission making use of the NCC, an elite students unit of national eminence.

Sivaraman reportedly convinced the private school authorities that he would get them a unit of the NCC if they could organise a students' camp during 5th August to 9th August in the school itself. The school management obliged Sivaraman in the hope of getting a wing of the NCC sanctioned for the



latter took up the matter with the police.

The police found that Sivaraman had held such camps in four schools in the district, offering the school management the establishment of NCC units.

Surprisingly, the school management and teachers were either ignorant about the functioning of the NCC units or joined the Naam Tamilar Party Leader in his endeavour.

When Sivaraman came to know about the police investigation, he escaped to Coimbatore but the cops managed to take him into custody. Police have arrested Sivaraman, his three associates involved in the training camp, the Principal, the school correspondent, and two teachers. Further investigation is on to find more details about Sivaraman's adventures. The NTK is an outfit known for its anti-India activities.

school. The associates of Sivaraman included a retired CRPF sub-inspector. The Krishnagiri Police told the media that the school management failed to check the credentials of Sivaraman and his associates and held the camp without consulting the local NCC office. The five day long camp drew 41 students including 17 girls.

Though one of the victims informed Satish Kumar, the Principal of the School, that she was sexually abused by Sivaraman, Kumar and other staff members tried to hush up the matter. Hence the girl student informed her mother about the incident and the

Mehbooba's daughter to contest Assembly polls from Bijbehara

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Mehbooba Mufti's daughter and her media advisor Iltija Mufti is all set to throw her hat in the poll arena from the Bijbehara Assembly segment, considered PDP's stronghold in South Kashmir.



The decision to field her from the Bijbehara constituency was taken after Mehbooba Mufti decided to stay away from the upcoming Assembly polls beginning September 18. In 1996 Mehbooba launched her political career from the same seat. Iltija's name appeared on Monday in the list of eight candidates released by the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). Iltija is already conversing with the audience/and her supporters through a video series on the microblogging

site X. She focuses on issues of importance directly impacting the lives of the people of Jammu Kashmir. She also campaigned aggressively during the Lok Sabha campaign in support of her mother from the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat. Among the other candidates, the party has fielded senior

leader Abdul Rehman Veeri from Anantnag East and Mufti's uncle Sartaj Ahmad Madani from Devsar. Former Lok Sabha MP Mehboob Beg will contest from Anantnag, Ghulam Nabi Lone Hanjura from Charar-i-Sharief, and Ghulam Mohiuddin Wani from Watchi. The party's youth Leader, Waheed Para, who contested the recent Lok Sabha elections from the Srinagar constituency and lost to the National Conference's Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi, has been fielded from Anantnag. The party has also nominated Rafiq Ahmad Naik from Tral. Meanwhile, National Conference Vice-President Omar Abdullah Monday released the party manifesto in the presence of other leaders. Dr Farooq Abdullah remained absent during the launch of the party manifesto. Taking a cue from the Aam Aadmi party, Omar announced that his party would fight for the restoration of the political and legal status of the J&K and promised 200 units of free power if his party is voted to power. Addressing a press conference in Srinagar, Omar said that if

NC is voted to power, it will fight for the restoration of the political and legal status of J&K. "We also promise 200 units of free power to the people of J&K if voted to power," he said.

He said the party will fight for the rights of people and remind the Supreme Court about the Government of India's promise of restoring statehood to J&K. "If GoI delays it, we will approach the SC and remind it about the Centre's promise," he said. Elaborating on the manifesto further, the NC VP said that the party will provide 1 lac jobs to the youth and promises to strengthen the public distribution system further and ensure people get sugar and kerosene from ration depots. "We also promise to seek release of all political prisoners who aren't involved in heinous crimes," he said.

Sena (UBT) MP writes to Prez Murmu, seeks early assent to Women Shakti law

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Flagging the much-discussed issue of the alleged rape and murder of a junior doctor in a Kolkata medical college, Shiv Sena (UBT) Rajya Sabha member Priyanka Chaturvedi on Monday urged President Droupadi Murmu to expedite the grant of assent to Maharashtra Shakti Criminal Law (Maharashtra Amendment) Bill, 2020 passed by the Maharashtra Legislature in December 2021.

In a letter sent to the President on the occasion of Rakshabandhan day, Priyanka stated that the presidential assent to the law would reaffirm "our unwavering dedication in advancing women's safety, not only in Maharashtra but across India", at a time when there are large-scale

protests over a junior doctor's rape and murder in Kolkata's R H Kar Medical College.

The Maharashtra Shakti Criminal Law (Maharashtra Amendment) Act, 2020, which included grant of a Special Court and machinery for implementation of the stringent law was passed by both the Houses of the Maharashtra Legislature on December 23, 2021, when Shiv Sena's Uddhav Thackeray was the chief minister of the state.

"The bill was significant and historic as it prioritised women's safety and introduced stringent punishment and prosecution. However, it has been awaiting your assent since then," the Sena (UBT) MP stated in her letter. The bill provides for capital punishment for certain crimes against women and children

and prescribes a period of 30 days to complete the probe once a complaint is lodged. It puts the onus on social media platforms and Internet service providers to provide data, if needed, for investigation's purposes.

The bill stipulated that the investigations in such cases should be completed within 30 days, and extension of 30 more days can be given by senior police officials if valid reasons are provided. Those convicted under the impending law will attract imprisonment of up to three months or/and fine up to Rs 25 lakh. Alluding to the rape and murder of a junior doctor in a Kolkata medical college, Priyanka said: "The Kolkata rape and murder case is a stark reminder since the 2012 Nirbhaya case, of how unsafe we continue to feel.

India stands to gain USD 1.3 trillion by meeting air quality standards by 2030

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

India, which is among the world's most polluted countries, stands to gain up to USD 1.3 trillion in health benefits by meeting air quality standards by 2030. In contrast, neighbouring Pakistan is projected to incur annual losses of USD 1 billion due to environmental degradation, primarily from air pollution, according to international experts.



GDP each year, said the global experts at an event recently organised by the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), which has India also as a key member. They noted that toxic air has increased by more than 50 per cent since the start of the 21st century, resulting in a five-year reduction in average lifespan across India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, compared to four months for the average American.

VHP leader's murder case solved, arms supplier held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a 22-year-old arms supplier who was wanted in a high-profile murder of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's (VHP) Nangal unit president Vikas Prabhakar, alias Vikas Bagga, in Punjab. The VHP leader was shot dead on April 13 at his shop in Nangal.

Special Cell of the Delhi Police in a statement said a joint operation by the Special Cell, South Western Range and the National Investigation Agency (NIA), arrested Dharminder Kumar, alias Kunal, a resident of Ludhiana. A senior police officer informed that he procured weapons from Madhya Pradesh used in the assassination of Bagga.

"On April 13, 2024, Vikas Bagga was shot dead by unidentified assailants at his confectionery shop in Nangal, Punjab. The case was initially registered at at Nangal police station in Rupnagar district and later transferred to the NIA in May, 2024, due to its severity," Additional Commissioner of Police of Special Cell P S Kushwah said.

CBI prepares for Lie...

From Page 1

The aim is to determine whether the individual is telling the truth based on these responses. However, the accuracy of polygraph tests is often debated by experts.

The Agency on Monday petitioned the Sealadh Court for Roy's polygraph test as he was providing misleading answers to certain queries as to why despite being an outsider he visited the chest medicine department at 11 pm or for that matter why he returned at 4 am the next morning. According to inside sources the CBI is also planning a polygraph test for Ghosh who too had been providing evasive answers. Ghosh has already been interrogated for about 50 hours in four days but has provided "misleading and contradictory answers ... or often has either kept mum or refused to reply to questions."

According to sources the orthopedic surgeon who allegedly enjoys a considerable clout in the State administrative circles --- having managed to thwart or get his transfer orders reversed thrice --- has not made it clear as to under

whose instructions the parents of the victim was told that she had committed suicide or for that matter why they were not allowed to see and inspect the her body for more than three hours after they reached the medical college.

The former principal has also not explained the reason behind demolition of the wall separating the seminar hall where the victim's body was found and the adjacent room within hours of the recovery of the body neither has he provided answers to who instructed such demolition, sources said adding he also refused to share with his interrogators the names of the people he immediately contacted after getting the news of the victim's death. He is known to have given some names but not all, sources said. "If he cooperates then well and good or else he too could be put to polygraph test ... agency official are not ruling out that possibility," an insider said.

Meanwhile, the doctors of Kolkata on Monday celebrated the Raksha Bandhan by tying black Rakhis on each other's hands

while thousands of doctors marched to Lal Bazaar police headquarters along with senior specialists Dr Kunal Sarkar and Dr Subarna Goswami who had earlier been summoned by the police for allegedly spreading disinformation on the social media.

The top doctors were however, released after sometime following discussions with the top officials, sources said. "We have told the police that if they want cooperation we are always there but if they summon us like this then we will always march to Lal Bazaar in protest because we have not done anything wrong by standing for the cause of humanity," Dr Goswami said while Dr Sarkar asked the Government to "listen to the people's voice ensure safety and security not only for the women doctors but all the women at their work places."

Elsewhere the lawyers too joined the protest on Monday while a large swarm of Calcutta High Court lawyers including senior barristers hitting the streets expressing solidarity for the doctors' movement.

INBRIEF

VIT RANKS 2ND IN INDIA IN SHANGHAI 2024 RANKING
Vellore: Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) has been ranked as the 2nd best institution in India and number one among the private institutions in India in the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) 2024 released recently. The Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) has been ranked between 501 and 600 among world universities in the 2024 Shanghai Ranking, also known as Shanghai ARWU (Academic Ranking of World Universities). Shanghai ARWU ranks universities based on academic and research performance indicators, including Alumni and staff winning Nobel Prizes, Field Medals, Highly Cited Researchers, research papers published in Nature and Science journals, papers indexed in major citation indices, and the per capita academic performance of an institution. Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) ranking considers both quality and quantity of research outcomes.

SPOTLIGHT ON WOMEN
New Delhi: The Indian National Sciences Academy in New Delhi hosted the SAHIT National Conference 2024, celebrating women who are breaking barriers and driving India's growth. On this occasion, SAHIT Women in Working Report 2023-24 was unveiled. Dr Subi Chaturvedi, the Chief Patron at SAHIT, underscored the significance of the SAHIT platform. Dr N Kalaiselvi, Director General, CSIR & Secretary, the first woman DG of CSIR, was honoured along with Professor (Dr) Mohammad Afshar Alam, Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Hamdard and Dr Nirupam Madaan, Medical Superintendent at AIIMS. Niyati Tewari, a 17-year-old innovator, bagged the Young Innovator of the Year.

CENTRE DEFENDS LAW AGAINST TRIPLE...

From Page 1
The Supreme Court had declared instant triple talaq - where a Muslim man utters talaq (divorce) three times to his wife, without her consent, and vice versa -- as "void, illegal and unconstitutional". The Centre then implemented a law in 2019 criminalising the instant divorce practice with a maximum of three years of imprisonment and a fine.

According to petitioners, the Act violates fundamental rights, including those that guarantee Indian citizens equality before law and prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion. Explaining the context in which the law came to be

enacted, the government said "essentially" the "practice" of talaq-e-biddat or instantaneous triple talaq "legitimised and institutionalised abandonment of wives by their husbands" and "did not simply result in a private injury but in a public wrong as it militated against the rights of women and the social institution of marriage itself".

The government further said that the practice of Talaq-e-biddat was held unconstitutional and a need was felt to have a standalone legislation to address the same. Therefore, the contentions of the petitioners that the present case ought to

be equated with other forms of non-compliance and statutory violations in the process of divorce must be set aside at the outset, as this seeks the perpetuation of illegality which is not covered under Article 14. Citing reports of triple talaq from different parts of the country despite the Supreme Court order, the government said the victims had no option but to approach the police for redressal of their grievances. It added that the police were helpless as no action could be taken against their husbands in the absence of punitive provisions in the law.

The law was brought in to protect the rights of married Muslim women who are being divorced by way of triple talaq, the government argued. The Centre stressed an urgent need for stringent provisions in the law, which act as a deterrent to Muslim husbands divorcing their wives by adopting instantaneous and irrevocable talaq.

"Since, the Supreme Court declared that divorce through triple talaq is unconstitutional, Parliament, in its wisdom, is empowered to make it an offence and hence no unconstitutionality is involved in the matter," the affidavit said.

"It is submitted that Parliament in its wisdom has enacted the impugned Act to

protect the rights of married Muslim women who are being divorced by triple talaq. The impugned Act helps in ensuring the larger constitutional goals of gender justice and gender equality of married Muslim women and helps subserve their fundamental rights of non-discrimination and empowerment," it added.

The Centre also said there is "no basis to the claim that marriages being under personal law, they are exempt from the application of the general criminal law". It said, "Marriages are a social institution which the State has a special interest in protecting. It is beyond doubt that the state can

protect the stability of marriages by resorting to the device of criminal law. Enactments such as the Domestic Violence Act, 2005, the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, etc are all enacted under the same general principle as the present law i.e. preserving the sanctity of the institution of marriage".

Jamiat claimed in its petition that "criminalising a mode of divorce in one particular religion while keeping the subject of marriage and divorce in other religions only within the purview of civil law, leads to discrimination, which is not in conformity with the mandate of Article 15".

Cong MLAs to devise strategy today on Devendra Yadav case

STAFF REPORTER
RAIPUR

The Congress Legislative Party (CLP) in Chhattisgarh will hold an important meeting in Raipur on Tuesday to formulate a strategy to launch a statewide protest on August 21 against the arrest of its MLA Devendra Yadav over the Baloda Bazar arson.

Yadav was arrested 67 days after the incident. The Congress alleges that it was a pre-planned move of the ruling BJP to crush the protests against the vandalization of the sacred pillar Jaitkhamb of the Satnami community in Girodपुर. Leader of Opposition



Charandas Mahant could chair the Tuesday meeting.

The Bhilai MLA was arrested on Saturday. A court

sent him to judicial remand till August 20.

Yadav has been booked for promoting enmity between different sects, criminal conspiracy, rioting, obstructing a public servant from performing duty and assault

Yadav has been booked for promoting enmity between different sects, criminal conspiracy, rioting, obstructing a public servant from performing duty and assault.

CM prays at Mahakaleshwar, meets MP counterparty Yadav



STAFF REPORTER
RAIPUR/UJJAIN

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Monday offered prayers at

the Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain and later met his Madhya Pradesh counterparty Mohan Yadav.

Sai reached temple, one of the 12 jyotirlingas, with his

wife. He also Yadav at the Circuit House for about 20 minutes.

Sai said he prayed for peace and prosperity in Chhattisgarh.

Raksha Bandhan celebrated with fervour



STAFF REPORTER
RAIPUR

Raksha Bandhan was celebrated across

Chhattisgarh on Monday with fervour.

A differently able girl, Varsha Dhruv from Dhamtari, tied rakhi and



offered sweets to Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai here, an official statement said.

Dhruv has no hand and

does all her work with her feet.

Besides Dhruv, transgenders, Swachhhta Didis, members of self-help



groups and tribal girls tied rakhi to the Chief Minister.

In Bastar division, women and girls tied Raksha Sutra to security personnel in

Sukma, Bijapur, Kanker and other districts.

The women tied Rakhi to the paramilitary personnel at the CRPF camps in Bijapur.

'Tantric' held for cheating



STAFF REPORTER
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Police on Monday arrested a man for cheating a woman of Rs 14 lakhs and gold ornaments in Raipur on the pretext of performing some rituals.

Vijay Pandey has been taken into custody, Raipur Additional Superintendent of Police Lakhan Pawar Patle said.

The police on Monday reached the residence Swati

Keshrwani after being alerted about the incident.

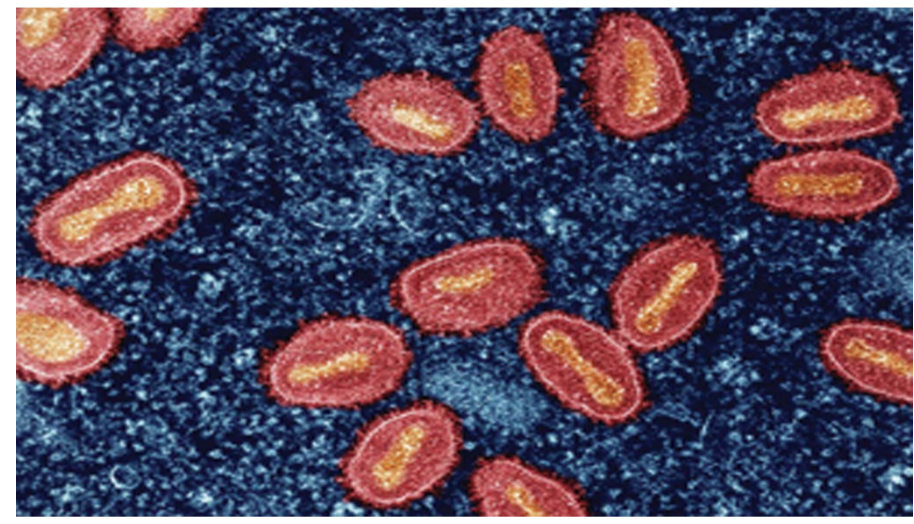
The woman confessed to giving the money and jewellery to Pandey, who confessed he tried to fool the woman by claiming her could solve her problems with her husband.

The woman gave him Rs 14 in cash and gold ornaments valued at Rs 4 lakhs. The police recovered Rs 12 lakhs in cash, gold and two e-scooters valued at Rs 2.50 lakhs from Pandey.



The Chhattisgarh government has launched a Balmitra programme in Naxalite-affected Dantewada district and opened children's libraries under it to attract school dropouts to restart their education.

India must focus on genomic surveillance of Mpox virus to curb spread, say Experts



AGENCIES

India must focus on genomic surveillance to understand the Mpox virus, and develop ways to curb its spread, said experts on Monday.

The deadly Mpox virus is seeing another outbreak, especially in Africa, where so far about 14 countries have been, with 4 nations reporting the infection for the first time. The number of cases reported so far this year has exceeded last year's total, with more than 15,600 cases and 537 deaths.

This prompted the Africa CDC and the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare the disease as a global health emergency.

In 2022 Mpox had a global outbreak with many countries, including India, being affected. Since then, the WHO has reported 99,176 cases and 208 deaths due to Mpox from 116 countries. India detected a total of 30 cases, with the last case in March 2024.

"We need to focus on genomic surveillance of the virus to understand the genetic epidemiology, the spread, and the evolution of the virus," noted biologist Vinod Scaria told IANS.

He also called for developing "good diagnostics for faster diagnosis and better care of affected individuals".

Mpox was first identified in monkeys in research laboratories in the 1950s, and it was not until 1970 that the first human case was discovered.

It has been mostly localised and endemic in the Congo Basin, as well as in West Africa. There have been two types, clade one, which is mostly in the Congo region, and clade two, which is seen primarily in West Africa.

Dr Anurag Agarwal, Dean, BioSciences and Health Research, Trivedi School of Biosciences, Ashoka University, told IANS that the 2022 outbreak was driven by clade 2, which is a less virulent, and the infections were primarily seen in men who had sex with other men.

"The current outbreak that we are seeing in Africa is clade 1b. Clade 1b has a higher mortality and more severe disease than Clade II. And also, while clade one typically does not have human-to-human transmission, here we are seeing infection and deaths in a large number of children, which is making people

worry," he added.

The latest outbreak of monkeypox has not only "played beyond the borders" but also reported "deaths in young children, where you don't expect any sexual transmission".

"That is the reason why the WHO has given a global warning for international concern".

So far, outside of Africa, the infection, driven by the Clade 1b strain of the monkeypox virus, has been detected only in Sweden. Separately, Pakistan (3) and the Philippines (1) have reported lab-confirmed cases of Mpox. However, the variant remains unknown. The US's California has also reported detecting Mpox in wastewater surveillance.

"The fear is that this virus could develop respiratory transmission and become deadly. The best way to prevent that is to reduce the number of infections, to keep it within the geography it currently is, and slowly wipe it out," Dr. Agarwal said, noting the need to build more diagnostics, vaccines, and genomic surveillance as during the Covid-19 pandemic.

New study explores AI in developing antibiotics with less side-effects

AGENCIES

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) has grown significantly, enabling applications such as content development, email proofreading, and driverless cars. New research explores its potential in developing improved antibiotics, with accurate and efficient prediction models. Researchers from the University of Manitoba, Canada, deployed explainable AI (XAI) -- a branch of AI that provides a rationale for model judgments, increasingly being used by scholars to examine predictive AI models.

Though XAI can be applied in a variety of contexts, the team used it to develop antibiotics.

Despite AI's near-omnipotent use, many of its models act as "black boxes,"



making the decision-making process opaque. This can breed distrust, especially in vital domains such as drug discovery.

To overcome this, the team used XAI to train AI drug discovery models, particularly those that identify potential novel antibiotic

candidates. Predictive models are essential given the pressing need for efficient antibiotics in the face of increasing resistance.

"AI is the way of the future in chemistry and drug discovery. It takes someone to lay the groundwork, and I think I'm doing that," said

Hunter Sturm, a graduate student of the University.

To anticipate biological effects, the scientists fed drug chemical databases into an AI model. An XAI model was then used to examine the precise molecular properties behind these predictions.

Fascinatingly, XAI

discovered elements that human chemists would have missed, such as the fact that non-core structures in penicillin compounds are more important than the core itself.

To test predicted antibiotic compounds, the researchers collaborate with microbiology labs to improve AI models through the application of XAI insights.

Rebecca Davis, a professor of chemistry at the University of Manitoba, Canada noted that "AI causes a lot of distrust."

"Nevertheless, there's a better chance this technology will be accepted if we can ask AI to explain itself," she added.

The findings will be presented at the ongoing American Chemical Society (ACS) Fall 2024 meeting, being held from August 18-22.

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KOLKATA RAPE, MURDER CASE

'Mamata shameless; proof destroyed at CM behest': BJP seeks resignation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday called West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee "shameless" and demanded her resignation, alleging that crucial evidence was destroyed at her behest to save the culprits in the rape and murder of a medic in Kolkata.



destroyer of the rule of law and the Constitution," BJP National Spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said at a Press Conference at the BJP Headquarters here.



Police was arrested in this connection and the case taken over by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) after a Calcutta High Court order.

The ruling BJP and the Opposition Congress are the main contenders for power in Haryana but it is the third factor that promises to play spoilsport for either of the two big players, depending on the extent of popular support regional parties and Independents can manage in the Assembly elections.

Regional parties poised to upset BJP, Cong appeal in Haryana elections

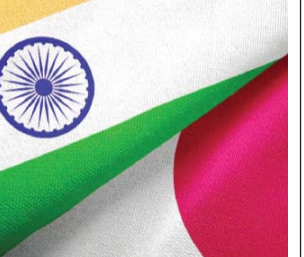
PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The ruling BJP and the Opposition Congress are the main contenders for power in Haryana but it is the third factor that promises to play spoilsport for either of the two big players, depending on the extent of popular support regional parties and Independents can manage in the Assembly elections.

Singh Chautala's estranged uncle Abhay Singh Chautala - and Independents such as MLA Balraj Kundu draw their core support from Jats, the BJP believes that they will cut into non-BJP votes as the community had largely voted for the Congress in the Lok Sabha polls.

Chautala and his mother Naina Singh Chautala being two of them. BJP leaders involved in the assembly poll campaign have expressed confidence that a consolidation of the party's traditional non-Jat votes will occur as the poll date approaches, helping it retain power for a third term.



India, Japan to discuss strategic ties in 2+2 dialogue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Japan will review the entire gamut of their strategic and defence ties here on Tuesday during the 2+2 ministerial dialogue. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will host Japanese Minister of Defense Kihara Minoru and Minister of Foreign Affairs Yoko Kamikawa for the 3rd India-Japan 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue.

Maritime rescue centre to boost rescue ops for mariners, fishermen in distress at sea

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the newly-constructed state-of-the-art Indian Coast Guard (ICG) Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre building in Chennai on Sunday.

with latest equipment for distress monitoring through terrestrial and satellite systems and equipped with advanced communication systems for real-time management of alerts by highly-trained personnel of Indian Coast Guard (ICG) specialising in Search and Rescue procedures, with the rescue aircraft, ships and other facilities.

pollution incidents. The Centre will also impart training in Pollution response techniques to various organisations such as Ports, Oil Handling agencies, Government organisations and private participants.

Key mechanism in gut inflammation tied to vitamin A deficiency: Delhi NII

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



A team of researchers from the Delhi-based National Institute of Immunology, an autonomous research institute of the Department of Biotechnology has uncovered a key mechanism behind gut inflammation, focusing on immune cells called dendritic cells.

bodies in their gut, promoting a healthy gut microbiome. Published in the EMBO Journal, the study led by Dr Soumen Basak and his team of researchers identifies a rather unknown role of the non-canonical NF-B pathway in tuning vitamin metabolism in the gut, paving the way for novel treatment regimes.

Army transformation on cards under new Chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The top brass of Indian Army on Monday here held a discussion on ongoing transformation of the force. The meeting was the first high-level under Army Chief Uday Shankar's leadership since he assumed charge on June 30.

the direction for the Indian Army's transformation over the next two decades. The discussions were centred around ongoing transformational initiatives by the Indian Army and its contribution towards achieving the objective of Viksit Bharat@2047.

Climate change intensifying mental health crisis in South-East Asia, says WHO

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI



Expressing concern that an estimated 260 million people live with mental health conditions, and over 200,000 people die by suicide annually in the South East Asia region, the WHO on Tuesday called upon the member countries to strengthen mental health systems and services to address this growing challenge that is likely to worsen due to climate change.

WHO survey of 95 countries, which said that just 9 mental health and psychosocial support in their national health and climate change plans. Despite this urgent need, significant gaps remain in both the understanding of these impacts and the availability of mental health services to address them, she added.

200,000 people die by suicide every year," she said, noting that climate change is worsening mental health. "There is a large gap in both knowledge of and response to, climate change's impact on mental health...There is an evident need to bring together climate and mental health officials from member states to ensure accelerated action to adapt and mitigate climate change impacts and prevent further widening of this gap," Wazed added.



CDS Chauhan meets Russian Navy chief, boost to maritime cooperation likely

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan on Monday held wide-ranging talks with Commander-in-Chief of Russian Navy Admiral Aleksandr Moiseev with a focus on boosting maritime cooperation between the two sides.

Indian Army mourns passing of ex-Chief Gen Padmanabhan at 83

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The Indian Army on Monday paid tributes and mourned the death of former Army Chief General S Padmanabhan, popularly called "Paddy". He died in Chennai on Sunday night at the age of 83.

Chennai after a prolonged illness at the age of 83, leaving behind a legacy of exemplary leadership and dedication to the nation.

Academy (NDA), Khadakwasla. He was commissioned into the Regiment of Artillery on December 13, 1959, marking the beginning of an illustrious career spanning over four decades.

Lateral entry BJP ploy to deprive Dalits, OBCs, Adivasis of quota: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Upping the ante over the lateral entry issue, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Monday called it an attack on Dalits, OBCs and adivasis, and accused the BJP of seeking to snatch reservations from 'bahujans'.

from bahujans," the former Congress chief said. Government sources have said the concept of lateral entry was first introduced under the Congress-led UPA regime and was strongly endorsed by the Second Administrative Reforms Commission established by it in 2005.

"hypocrisy", and asserted the BJP-led NDA Government has created a transparent method to implement the concept developed by the UPA dispensation. In a social media post in Hindi on Sunday, Rahul had termed the Government's move of recruiting public servants through lateral entry an "anti-national step", alleging that the reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs is being "openly snatched away" by such an action.

"Reservation of SC, ST and OBC classes is being openly snatched away by recruiting through lateral entry on important posts in various Ministries of the central government," Rahul had said.

Casting couch, drugs, liquor plaguing Malayalam film industry: Panel report

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN
KOCHI

A commission appointed by the CPI(M) led Government in Kerala has found that casting couch is predominant in Malayalam film industry. The commission, headed by K Hema, a former judge of the Kerala High Court, has said in its report that Malayalam film industry is not safe for female artists. "One has to surrender and part with their bodies with male members of the film industry to get a foothold in films," said Hema Commission Report, the findings of which were released to the general public on Monday. The report also substantiates the allegation that the Malayalam film industry has become a den of drugs and liquor. The Hema Commission was appointed following the widespread agitation in Kerala as a result of the kidnap and rape of a popular film actress at Ernakulam in which the Malayalam film industry's "most popular hero" Dileep figures as an accused. Dileep was arrested and incarcerated in jail for more than three months in connection with the case.



Though the sexual molestation took place in 2017, trial is yet to begin in the case as a result of legal objections raised by Dilip at each stage of the case. The commission also says that there is systematic sexual harassment against women in the Malayalam film industry. What makes Hema Commission of Enquiry is the fact that it is the first its kind committee appointed anywhere in India to study the exploitation and harassment faced by female artists. The committee interacted with members of Women's Collective in

and pornography, said the Hema Commission Report. It says the victims of harassment hesitated to approach the police due to fear for their lives. It may be noted that many male artists themselves have come out alleging rampant drug misuse in Malayalam film industry. Senior film artist Siddique who is the newly elected general secretary of Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA) told reporters that he would react about the commission's findings after studying the 233 page report. "This is an important document and we have to study the findings before arriving at a conclusion," said Siddique. The Hema Commission Report has unraveled the true picture of the goings in Malayalam film industry. Sarada, who has been honored with Urvashi Award, the national honor for the best actress in the country, has said that Malayalam film industry has to improve a lot from the present state of affairs. "There is no basic facilities like change and wash rooms and there is wide disparity in the payments for men and women artists," said Sarada.

HC relief for Siddaramaiah in MUDA case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court on Monday stayed proceedings in a special court against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in connection with the alleged MUDA scam case. A petition filed by social activist Snehamaayi Krishna against Siddaramaiah was up for hearing in Special Court for People's Representatives on Tuesday. Another petition by TJ Abraham was scheduled for arguments on Wednesday. Now, the proceedings will not take place till the High Court's next hearing on August 29. Earlier, Siddaramaiah on Monday filed a writ petition in the High Court challenging the order of Governor Thaaarchand Gehlot giving sanction for investigation against him in connection with irregularities in the allotment of alternative sites by the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA). The Chief Minister submitted that the sanction order was issued without due application of mind, in violation of statutory mandates, and contrary to Constitutional principles, including the advice of the Council of Ministers, which is binding under Article 163 of the Constitution of India. Siddaramaiah challenged the



August 16 order granting prior approval and sanction under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, and Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Suraksha Sanhita, 2023. "The Hon'ble Governor's decision is legally unsustainable, procedurally flawed, and motivated by extraneous considerations, and thus the petitioner has preferred this writ petition seeking to quash the impugned order dated 16.08.2024 among other reliefs," he submitted. On August 17, the Karnataka Governor granted approval

the High Court challenging the order, adding, Supreme Court lawyer Abhishek Manu Singhvi would argue his case in the High Court. "I have faith in the judiciary. I have total confidence of getting relief from court because I have not committed any wrong," he told reporters on the sidelines of a function here. The Chief Minister recalled that he first became a Minister 40 years ago -- on August 17, 1984 -- and there has not been a "single black spot" in his political career. "My political life is an open book. I have committed no wrong, will not commit any wrong. Using Raj Bhavan, BJP and JD(S) have hatched a conspiracy to tarnish my image," Siddaramaiah said. "Terming the Governor's order 'politically motivated', he said he would counter it politically as well as legally. "We will wage a legal fight; we will wage a political fight too. I get injected with more 'josh' (enthusiasm, passion) during political fights. I have been doing it continuously. I have done it before, doing now and will do in future," the Chief Minister said. To a question, Siddaramaiah said the Opposition in the State is under an illusion that if he is finished politically, the entire Congress will also "get finished". "It (their game plan) will not succeed."

FIR against unknown persons over Sabarmati Express derailment

PTI | KANPUR

An FIR has been registered against unknown persons for alleged sabotage leading to the derailment of 20 coaches of the Sabarmati Express near Govindpuri station in Kanpur, police said on Monday. The incident occurred early on Saturday after the train's engine hit an "object placed on the track", rail officials said. There was no report of any loss of life or injury in the incident. Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Vijendra Dwivedi said, "The FIR was lodged on Saturday. According to it, a piece of an old rail line measuring 0.93 metres was found between the up and down lines and showed signs of recent heating that led to the derailment of 20 coaches." The FIR was lodged at the Panki Police station under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita's section 125 (act endangering life or personal safety of others) and under the Railways Act, 1989, based on a complaint by the railway's senior section engineer Mahendra Pratap Singh. Police Commissioner Akhil Kumar has formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) headed by Deputy Commissioner of Police (west) Rajesh Kumar Singh to probe the incident.



It has been alleged in the FIR that loco pilot A P Bundela witnessed a heavy object on the tracks on the up lines between Govindpuri and Bhimsen station at 2:27 am on Saturday that prompted him and the assistant loco pilot to apply emergency brake. Despite making all efforts, the cattle guard in front of the engine hit the object, leading to the derailment of 20 coaches of the Sabarmati Express, the FIR stated. The train was headed to Gujarat from Varanasi. It has been claimed by the railway in the FIR that the piece of rail was placed deliberately on the tracks. Forensic experts from and the railway's technical team have

Modi pays tribute to erstwhile Tripura king Bir Bikram Manikya

PTI | AGARTALA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday paid homage to Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur, considered the architect of modern Tripura, on his birth anniversary. The king ruled Tripura from 1923 to 1947. He was born on August 17, 1908 and died on May 19, 1947. "I pay homage to the great Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur on his birth anniversary. He played an indelible role in the development of Tripura," the Prime Minister said in a post on X. He devoted his life towards empowering the poor and downtrodden and his welfare measures for the tribal communities are widely respected, Modi said. "Our Government is committed to fulfilling his vision for Tripura's progress," the Prime Minister said. Chief Minister Manik Saha while addressing a programme to observe the birth anniversary of Maharaja Birbikram Kishore Manikya in Agartala said it was the Prime Minister who set an



example on how to respect Maharajas. "There was a time when the contribution of Tripura's Manikya dynasty was overlooked by the erstwhile regime but it was the Prime Minister who started paying respect to the Maharajas who did a lot for the development of the northeastern state," he said. Saha said the Prime Minister unveiled a statue of Maharaja Birbikram Manikya at Agartala airport and renamed the facility after the Maharaja. When the airport got a new terminal building, another statue of the Maharaja was installed, he said.

Security in NE a concern, India needs to engage with Bangladesh: Think tank

PTI | GUWAHATI

Former foreign secretary Harshvardan Shringla has said that India needs to engage with those in power now in Bangladesh, as instability in the neighbouring country has a direct impact on the security scenario of the Northeastern region. Shringla said this at a programme in which a report on policy options for India in dealing with the current Bangladesh situation was released. The report, to be submitted to the Centre, was prepared by a think tank Society to Harmonise Aspirations for Responsible Engagement (SHARE). The political instability in Bangladesh has direct repercussions both on security and developmental projects in North East India, security and defence experts, who are members of SHARE, said at the event. "India has to engage with those in power or those behind the powers in Bangladesh as stability in the neighbourhood has a direct import to the security scenario of North East India. "We have two core concerns - Bangladesh's territory not be used in any manner inimical to its



(India's) interests and ensuring the safety of Hindus and other minorities in the neighbouring country," the former ambassador to Bangladesh said. Shringla also said that the recommendations in this report are prefaced by three key facts -- it remains uncertain who is currently responsible for policy making in Bangladesh, there is palpable anti-India sentiments in the neighbouring country, and finally, economic stability and employment generation there. The report will be submitted to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the National Security Advisor for implementation, former Eastern Command GOC-in-C Lt Gen R P Kalita (Retd) said at the event. Ex-Ladakh Lt Governor R K Mathur said that care has been taken to ensure the recommendations are "implementable and acceptable to all sections and ideologies" as the neighbouring country goes through socio-political upheaval. "The recommendations are divided into short, medium and long-term so as to ensure a staged approach to policymaking on India's part which is mutually acceptable," the former defence secretary said. Assam Chief Information Commissioner Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, highlighting the recommendations, said dialogue with all stakeholders is in India's core interests, especially with regard to tackling a possible refugee crisis in the Northeast which has a border of 1885 kms with Bangladesh.

Kerala CM urges banks to write off loans of landslide victims, survivors of Wayanad

PTI | THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government on Monday expressed strong displeasure over banks deducting monthly installments of loans from the accounts of landslide victims and survivors in Wayanad, and demanded that these loans be written off completely. Waiving loans would not impose any unbearable burden upon the banks, and so it should be written off completely, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said here. While addressing a meeting of the State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) here, the CM said relaxation in interest amounts or extension of time for remitting monthly installments would not at all be a solution in the landslide-hit regions. "Many of those who had taken the loans are deceased, and their land has become unusable due to the disaster," he pointed out. "The only thing we can do is write off the entire loans taken by people in these affected areas," Vijayan said. He expressed the



government's strong displeasure over banks continuing to deduct monthly installments from the accounts of survivors and urged the SLBC (State Level Bankers' Committee) to take a favourable decision in this matter. Recalling the horrors and impact of the July 30 tragedy, the CM said a large number of landslide victims or survivors had been engaged in farming activities in Wayanad, but the disaster has even altered the very geography of the agriculture lands there. Citing reports, he said the affected places have become unusable, and no cultivation or settlement is possible in these areas. "Most of the

installments from the accounts of some landslide survivors in Wayanad. The amount was reportedly deducted from the immediate relief sanctioned to them by the government. Various political parties staged protests in front of the branch of the bank in Kalpetta on Monday. "The government provided the relief amount to the survivors to meet their immediate needs as they had lost everything. The amount was given through various banks," he said. Criticising the Gramin Bank over deduction of monthly installments from the survivors, he said, "I am not saying anything more. Nothing should be done mechanically at this juncture." Meanwhile, the protesters told reporters that they were ending the agitations as the bank authorities have given in writing that they would not deduct any more EMI. Major landslides hit the Mundakkai and Chooralamala regions of Wayanad on July 30, almost decimating both areas and killing over 200 people and injuring many.

Woman doc in Jaipur accuses colleague of threatening her, says it can be 'rape to murder'

PTI | JAIPUR

A woman resident doctor at Sawai Man Singh (SMS) Medical College here has accused a male colleague of threatening to "do worse" to her while expressing apprehension that he could be implying "anything from rape to murder", police said on Monday. The woman made the accusation on a WhatsApp group of the Jaipur Association of Resident Doctors (JARD) on Sunday evening, a screenshot of which was forwarded to Dr Deepak Maheshwari, the principal of the medical college, following which police were informed. SHO of the SMS College Police Station Sudheer Upadhyay said, "The matter came to light after the woman sent a message to an internal WhatsApp group of the resident doctors levelling allegations against the male doctor. "After getting a screenshot of that message, the principal of the college reported the matter to the police last night," Upadhyay



said "We contacted her but she has refused to register a case. The female doctor is currently staying with her family and is safe," the police official said. According to sources, the female resident doctor has refused to lodge an FIR, saying it was for the college administration to take action against the accused.

to do so. So you people tell me should I wait till he does the worst thing to me? It can be anything from rape to murder or anything which according to his mind is worse," the woman resident doctor alleged in the WhatsApp message. "Terming the accused "as criminal as rapist", the woman doctor demanded immediate action against him. "I don't want myself or any other girl to be the next Abhaya or Nirbhaya," she said while urging other female resident doctors who might be feeling unsafe because of their colleagues to come forward and speak up. Abhaya is the name given by many to the woman postgraduate trainee doctor who was allegedly raped and murdered at a state-run medical college and hospital in Kolkata while on duty. The incident has sparked widespread protests across the country with doctors demanding a Central law ensuring the safety of medical professionals at their workplace.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Women safety is non-negotiable

The apex court's suo moto cognisance of Kolkata rape case could lead to stronger security measures in workplaces

The Kolkata rape and murder case has shaken the nation, sparking widespread outrage and a call to end such horrific crimes. While similar cases in the past, like the Ranga Billa case in the 1970s and the Nirbhaya case in 2012, also provoked national anger, real change has been limited, with crimes against women continuing sporadically. The recent assault and murder of a resident doctor in Kolkata serve as a stark reminder of the ongoing vulnerability women face in the workplace. The Supreme Court of India has taken suo motu cognisance of the Kolkata doctor rape-murder incident. A three-judge bench presided by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud will hear the matter on August 20, 2024. Earlier, the Calcutta High Court expressed displeasure over the handling of the case by the State Government. The incident took place at R G Kar Medical College in Kolkata. The case has been transferred to the CBI. The Supreme Court's decision to take up this case underscores a growing concern about the safety of women in public spaces, including professional environments. The matter, while primarily focusing on doctors' safety, also opens a window to address the broader context of women's safety across the country.



In a country where women's safety continues to be a major societal concern, the Supreme Court's intervention in the Kolkata case regarding the safety of doctors brings to light a parallel issue—the precarious conditions under which healthcare workers, especially women, operate. While India grapples with various cases of violence against women, the healthcare sector has seen its share of attacks on women professionals, prompting national attention and legal action.

India's struggle with women's safety is long-standing and complex. High-profile cases of sexual violence, harassment, and workplace discrimination have repeatedly sparked public outrage. Despite legal reforms and awareness campaigns, incidents of violence against women remain alarmingly high. Public spaces, including hospitals, which should be places of care, have become dangerous for many women, underscoring the systemic nature of the problem. The healthcare sector is particularly concerning because female doctors and nurses not only face violence from patients' families but also internal issues such as sexual harassment from colleagues and superiors. This dual threat makes their professional life increasingly challenging and unsafe. With the Supreme Court stepping in, it is hoped that this case will lead to more robust security protocols in hospitals and other public institutions. As the Supreme Court examines the Kolkata case, there is hope that this will lead to a more comprehensive approach to women's safety in India. The focus should not just be on doctors but also on broader societal reforms that ensure women can work, travel, and live without fear of violence or discrimination. If the court's ruling leads to enhanced safety measures for doctors, it could set a precedent for other professions as well, where women face similar threats.

PICTALK



Women tie 'rakhi' on wrists of BSF personnel on the occasion of Rakshabandhan at Attari-Wagah Border, Amritsar

UK-India Free Trade Agreement set for a green shift under Labour leadership

As the UK pushes for greener economic practices, the FTA with India will need to balance trade facilitation with stringent environmental standards

With the Labour Party now leading the UK, international trade dynamics, particularly the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India, are set for transformation. The Labour Party's emphasis on climate change and its advocacy for mechanisms like the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) will likely influence the future of this trade deal.



Labour Party's Environmental Agenda

A key aspect of Labour's policy is its strong commitment to environmental sustainability. Under the leadership of Keir Starmer, the party has set ambitious goals to tackle the climate crisis, aiming to decarbonize the UK economy by 2030, significantly earlier than current targets. Labour plans to invest heavily in renewable energy and enforce stricter regulations on carbon emissions. The UK's Climate Change Act 2008 mandates that the UK achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, and Labour's policies intend to accelerate this shift. The Labour Party's Green New Deal is a central component of this push, aligning

with the global urgency to meet and exceed Paris Agreement targets. As a result, the party's approach to trade, including the India-UK FTA, will likely reflect its commitment to green policies. Labour's aggressive stance on climate action will shape its trade policies, embedding sustainability into international agreements.

Impact on the India-UK Free Trade Agreement

Labour's focus on environmental sustainability is expected to influence the ongoing FTA negotiations with India. Traditionally, FTAs emphasize reducing tariffs and trade barriers to facilitate commerce. However, under Labour, the India-UK FTA will likely include climate-related provisions. India, too, has made progress in renewable energy and carbon reduction efforts. However, its economy still

heavily depends on fossil fuels. This poses a challenge in aligning with Labour's stringent environmental requirements. The transition to greener energy will require significant investments, and India's economic growth might be affected by these demands. Balancing trade promotion and environmental sustainability will be a central issue in the FTA discussions.

The Role of Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)

Labour's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is a policy designed to impose a carbon tax on imported goods based on their carbon content, leveling the playing field for domestic industries. This ensures that foreign producers face the same carbon pricing as local ones, preventing carbon leakage and promoting emission reductions globally. For India, CBAM poses a significant challenge, especially for industries like steel, aluminium, and cement, which have high carbon footprints. As the world's second-largest steel producer, India's exports to the UK would face higher

Bangladesh questions Sheikh Mujib's legacy

With institutions under siege and the legacy of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman under attack, the parallels with the French Revolution become starkly apparent



SIDHARTH MISHRA

We have had an uprising in the neighbouring country of Bangladesh. Despite an interim government led by a Nobel laureate economist and entrepreneur Muhammad Yunus in place, the rule of the 'hoi polloi' continues. Mass power is forcing a 'purge' of the various institutions of the state of what are believed to be compradors of the ousted regime.

Even the judiciary has not been spared. It's unlikely that we would have stability returning to the nascent nation founded by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman following liberation from Pakistan in 1971. Mujibur Rahman's legacy, politically represented by his daughter Sheikh Hasina, the ousted Prime Minister of Bangladesh, is today under attack.

Though there are those in the revolution mass and leadership, who would want to distinguish Sheikh's legacy from Hasina's regime. But in the current situation of social turmoil, a manifestation of an ideological bent could be catastrophic. Public uprisings the world over, especially in the post-colonial democracies of the 20th and the 21st centuries, have drawn inspiration from the French Revolution of the 18th century.

The revolution which started with the symbolic fall of Bastille and the establishment of the Estates General of 1789, ended with the coup of 18 Brumaire in November 1799 and the formation of the French Consulate with the military under the leadership of Napoleon Bonaparte capturing power.

The French Revolution was driven by the ideas of the fundamental principles of liberal democracy. Its causes are generally agreed to be a combination of social, political, and economic factors, which the ruling establishment led by Emperor Louis XVI was unable to manage. What spurred the fall was a financial crisis and widespread social distress. The fall of Louis XVI saw radical reforms including the abolition of feudalism and a declaration of rights. But this did not bring an end to political instability.



The next decade was dominated by the struggle for political control, worsened by economic depression. To overcome the crisis the revolutionaries formed the Committee of Public Safety, which unleashed a reign of terror in which about 16,000 people were executed. Finally in 1799 following a military coup, Napoleon Bonaparte came to seize power marking the end of the revolution. The quick recall of the events of the French Revolution was to establish the fact that insurrection doesn't generally guarantee one thing, the stability of governance. This is best seen in the case of Bangladesh.

Ever since its birth, the country has witnessed numerous coups and uprisings with Sheikh Hasina's 15-year regime from 2009-2024 being an exception to the general rule. This period was, till the fall of the government, seen as a period of not only stable authority but also economic growth. Then what brought the fall? Conspiracy theorists are blaming the American Deep State and the Chinese interest but no uprising can happen without local discontent. After coming to power in 2009 through a free, fair, and credible election, Sheikh Hasina subsequently presided over largely non-participative



THE COUNTRY'S PER CAPITA INCOME TRIPLED IN A DECADE, AND THE WORLD BANK ESTIMATED THAT OVER 25 MILLION PEOPLE WERE LIFTED OUT OF POVERTY IN THE LAST 20 YEARS

and controversial polls on three occasions — 2014, 2018, and 2024. She appeared to be near-invincible, but muzzling democracy was an increasing indication of her growing political frailty. There isn't a doubt that Hasina's rule saw noteworthy economic achievements. Under her Bangladesh transformed from one of the world's poorest nations into one of the fastest-growing economies in the region, even outperforming India.

The country's per capita income tripled in a decade, and the World Bank estimated that over 25 million people were lifted out of poverty in the last 20 years. But then why the downfall, such anger against a regime that was bringing prosperity to the nation? The answer probably lies in the fact that economic progress alone cannot sustain a leader's popularity in the face of eroding democratic values and civil liberties. Democracy, like the proverbial 'jinn', cannot be put back in the bottle once unleashed with whatever power at hand.

The Indian sub-continent, which the Americans decided to call South Asia, is the best example of the sinews of democracy. Across the five nations of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, authoritarian leaders

have met nemesis. India is the only exception, where the change of power has always been through a democratic process and sans violence. The Indian leadership of different political and ideological hues have maintained the delicate balance between socio-economic progress and democratic values. Political setbacks have happened when a government has been seen to be promoting crony capitalism, nepotism, high-handedness and corruption, in that order. Such perceptions have overshadowed acts of major social welfare and economic and development successes. Muhammad Yunus becomes the second economist in the sub-continent to head a government after Dr Manmohan Singh. While Manmohan Singh has been credited with steering the country out of financial turmoil, expectations from Yunus is to take his nation out of a social and political tumult. The challenges for Yunus is equal in measure to what the Indian economist faced. Dr Manmohan Singh is largely seen to be successful in overcoming the challenge, would Yunus too succeed? history would judge.

(The writer is an author and president, the Centre for Reforms, Development & Justice; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LIFE OF SPORTSPERSONS IS NOT EASY

Madam — It was heartwarming that the celebrated wrestler Vinesh Phogat received a rousing welcome at Delhi after her disappointing day at the Paris Olympics. It's not the bed of roses for anything in life and especially for the sportsmen and more to a sportswomen. I can quote a classic example of a great Indian cricketer G R Viswanath. Fondly addressed as Vishy by his fellow players, a selector then was against him by mentioning he was 'too short' and 'lean' to play cricket.

Finally when he got selected for the Karnataka State team he made an unbeaten double century on debut. When he was spotted by Tiger's eye the then Indian skipper Tiger Pataudi included him at the Kanpur test in 1969 against the mighty Australians. While scoring a 'duck' in the first innings the enraged fans hurled matkas at him. Vishy was so much disappointed by sitting in isolation and the pat came from Pataudi by his word of confidence 'Just relax boy, you will get a hundred'. Rest became history by Vishy scoring 137 at debut in the second innings with 25 fours to his credit.

In his career span of 14 years Vishy had scored 6080 runs in 91 tests with 14 hundreds to his credit. Barring his debut century which ended up in a draw, the remaining 13 matches in which Vishy scored a hundred were all won by India. Vishy's strong wrists in his heydays was a nightmare for world class bowlers and whenever he plays a square cut the art in him flourishes and ripples to the boundary line like a bullet. There can never be a better role model than him for all sportsmen to learn that failure alone can bring success to get into the history in any field.

AP Thirvadi | Chennai

FAKE MEDICINES FOR SALE ONLINE

Madam — Lifestyle diseases are on the rise due to the increasing tendency of eating fast food. Obesity is one of those

Ensure safer workplace for women



Amid the nationwide protests, the Supreme Court (SC) has taken suo motu cognisance of the recent rape and murder case at R G Kar Medical college and Hospital in Kolkata. It is a small victory for the protesters across the country for the speedy justice against the crime and the Bengal government's failure to address the

issue properly, stand beside the victim's family, and provide efficient safety to the women in the state. After Kolkata Police's insignificant progress in the case, the high court intervened to hand over the case to the CBI, and now SC's intervention will definitely be crucial considering the many attempts to subdue this case.

The Indian Medical Association has also written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, demanding the fundamental right to life. It may be a doctor or any woman working at any place; there need to be strict rules in place for their safety, and the centre should look into the fact that incidents like these do not occur. Apart from that, there should also be strict punishment in our laws, like in the Middle East. It would be significant so that people having the slightest thoughts of such a crime should be terrified and show respect to the other gender.

Sumit Saha | New Delhi

RETHINK THE FOREST ACT

Madam — The article about Forest Acts (18-8-24) presents fact that needs to be pondered over by one and all. In the present course of reforms what is predominant is that everything is a commodity - education, healthcare, relationship, forest, wind and water also. In the process forest also is allowed to be commercially exploited. Result is that the forest cover which is supposed to be one third of the land mass is reduced to one fifth. This threatens the wild animals, environment, carbon sink and the natives of the forests. The amendment to the concerned act made last year poses further threats as forests can be used for sikar also. We must exert democratic pressure over the government to ensure protection to forests and the animals and natives. They have been at the receiving end and have suffered in silence for long.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

SOOTHING A STRESSED MIND

Through spiritual practices and positive affirmations, one can find the peace



RAVI VALLURI

A student of archery, in all sincerity, asked his Guru how long it would take to master the craft. The Master ponders and with his presence provides a measured reply. "It would take ten years." The student is stupefied. The Guru is promised by the student that he will strive hard to achieve proficiency by putting in extra hours of work. Thereby he would become an ace, an unrivalled archer.

The teacher paused and gravely replied that it would take twenty years to become an expert. So how do ten years become twenty? The simple answer is anxiety and increasing levels of stress. A stressful mind cannot scale the summit. The Guru knew the potential of the candidate in question and the time required to harness the skills. The anxiety, feverishness and desperation of the student can never compress the period of learning. Humans live in highly stressful and disharmonious conditions. Pressure is exerted on their minds, resulting in an unhealthy lifestyle. Stressful conditions are also created by our feverish attitude and desperation: A mental state when our expectations far exceed the actual requirement. Not living in the NOW and a covetous nature also contribute to mental disequilibrium. The memory of past events has a double whammy on the mind. A pleasant occurrence brings peace, but turbulent experiences make us stressed and fret. Unfortunately, the human mind gives more credence to negative experiences and that leads to the gathering of stress in the mind. A stressful mind can be smoothened only through a 3C policy, namely commitment, control, and challenge. The energy of the mind needs to be channelled productively and this can be done



through proper training and a firm commitment. Challenging situations and tasks endear the human mind: to try something new or different and think out of the box. Renowned psychologists Endler and Parker have enunciated a three-factor model to overcome stress or manage this ailment.

(a) Task-Oriented Strategy: The individual should ensure proper time management to complete the task at hand. Also, box out stressful conditions when through experience we are aware of negative possibilities and results.

(b) Emotion-Oriented Strategy: Create a space in the mind to vent anger and frustrations. Literally to let go of the emotions. Develop a belief and hope in a higher power through the power of surrender and sublimate all the muddles.

(c) Avoidance-oriented Strategy: Create a shield or envelop the mind with an aura of positive thoughts. This works like magic and it mitigates the seriousness of the situation and stressful situations get obliterated.

The model merely provides the framework. In reality, relaxation techniques, practising yoga, dwelling deep into meditation, engaging in visualisation (which incorporates features such as imagery and positive imagination), learning breathing techniques like Vipassana and Sudarshan Kriya or even hitting the gym are some of the tools to implement the model.

All these strategies uplift the mood of the person and assist in combating stress. Stress can also be dealt with effectively by acquiring knowledge, taking up responsibility and inculcating a feeling of genuine compassion, love, and concern for humanity. The mind should become bigger than the problem or stress. This, only a true seeker or sadhakan achieve and that too by resolute practice or sadhana. Only positive thoughts, realistic ambitions and limited wants and desires can enable the mind to reduce the magnitude of stress. "In time of great stress or adversity, it's always best to keep busy, to plough your anger and your energy into something positive," says Lee Iacocca.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Why India needs a secular civil code

As India approaches its 76th Republic Day, the question of whether laws should be shaped by religion or remain universally applicable becomes ever more urgent



GOURAV VALLABH



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his Independence Day address from the ramparts of the Red Fort, dispelled all misconceptions and rumours about the stability and strength of his coalition and showed that he has complete control over the government. His address also revealed that his goals have remained the same. His speech was filled with energy and strong determination, as it always is. He stressed the implementation of the Secular Civil Code (SCC). He said the Supreme Court has repeatedly discussed and given orders on the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) because a large section of the country feels, and it is correct, that the present civil code is a communal and discriminatory civil code. There is no place for them in modern society.

The need of the hour is a Secular Civil Code (SCC). The Prime Minister's use of the phrase "Secular Civil Code" was interesting. A "Secular Civil Code" (SCC) was used instead of the possible "Uniform Civil Code" (UCC) so that opposition parties could support it appropriately. On November 23, 1948, Article 44 was introduced in the Constituent Assembly by Dr B R Ambedkar as draft Article 35 and was unanimously passed. "Uniform Civil Code for the citizens -



NEXT YEAR, ON JANUARY 26, 2025, WHEN WE CELEBRATE THE 76TH REPUBLIC DAY, WE MUST ASK OURSELVES: "DO WE WANT TO CONTINUE LIVING IN AN ERA WHERE LAWS ARE BASED ON RELIGION, GENDER, OR ANY OTHER CLASS OR COMMUNITY?"

The State shall endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code throughout the territory of India for the citizens." So states Article 44 of our Constitution. During the Constituent Assembly discussion, amendments were moved by Hussain Imam and some other members. "That any group, section or community or people shall not be obliged to give up its own personal law in case it has such a law, and, provided that the personal law of any community which is guaranteed by the statute shall not be changed except with the previous approval of the community."

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, in his reply to the discussion, stated that our country has a Uniform Code of Laws covering nearly every aspect of human relations. We have a uniform and comprehensive criminal code throughout the country, contained in the Penal and Criminal Procedure codes.

We also have the law of transfer of property, which deals with property relations and applies throughout the country. Additionally, there is the Negotiable Instruments Act, among other acts,

which proves that this country has practically a civil code that is uniform and applicable throughout the country. Dr Ambedkar argued in the Constituent Assembly that the Uniform Civil Code should be viewed as a secular law applicable to all. In 1985, the former Chief Justice of India, YV Chandrachud, shared similar views during the 'Shah Bano' case.

This case revolved around Shah Bano Begum, a Muslim woman who had sought maintenance under Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure after her divorce.

The initial judgment ruled in her favour. However, her husband, Mohammed Ahmed Khan, appealed to the Supreme Court, arguing that Section 125 should not apply to Muslims as it contradicted Muslim Personal Law. The Supreme Court disagreed with this contention, asserting that Section 125 applies to all individuals, irrespective of religion or personal law, and dismissed the husband's petition. Eminent Muslim jurists like Chaudhary Haider Hussain and former Chief Justice of Bombay High Court M C

Chagla had also strongly upheld Article 44 (UCC). In the case of John Vallamattom vs Union of India in 2003, the Supreme Court once again expressed regret that Article 44 of the Constitution had not been implemented. The Supreme Court also asked the government if they were ready to implement the Uniform Civil Code.

Next year, on January 26, 2025, when we celebrate the 76th Republic Day, we must ask ourselves: "Do we want to continue living in an era where laws are based on religion, gender, or any other class or community?"

If the answer is NO, then the Secular Civil Code (SCC) must be implemented. Implementing the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) would be equivalent to fulfilling the vision of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar because the codification of laws should be independent of any specific religion. The current times require a secular civil code, leading to freedom from religious discrimination.

(The writer is Professor of Finance - XLRI Xavier School of Management and BJP Leader; views are personal)

Safeguarding India's Future: The urgent need for a critical infrastructure protection act

This legislation is essential to fortifying India's vital systems against emerging challenges, ensuring both national security and sustained economic growth

India's critical infrastructure is increasingly vulnerable to attacks and sabotage, a threat amplified by regional instability, particularly in neighboring Bangladesh. Recently, radical groups in Bangladesh have targeted essential infrastructure, with the intention of causing widespread disruption. This trend of sabotage is concerning for India, where similar threats loom large.

The need for a legislative framework, such as the Critical Infrastructure Protection Act (CIPA), is more pressing than ever. Such a law would establish a robust defense mechanism for safeguarding critical assets against both internal and external threats, addressing a significant gap in national security.



PADMALOCHAN DASH

Geopolitical Necessities for CIPA: India faces numerous challenges from both regional and internal security threats. The South Asian region, marked by political and social unrest, poses a direct threat to India's stability. Radical ideologies and terrorist groups in the region, often driven by external forces like Pakistan and China, aim to target India's infrastructure, aiming to disrupt its economy and

social harmony. These groups are adept at exploiting vulnerabilities in India's critical infrastructure, using methods like cyberattacks and hybrid warfare, which combine traditional and unconventional tactics. To effectively counter these evolving threats, India must urgently enact CIPA to protect its critical assets and systems.

Safeguarding Economic Growth: As India emerges as a global manufacturing and supply chain hub, protecting its infrastructure becomes vital. CIPA would not only shield key sectors but also ensure sustained economic growth. A well-defined legal framework would boost investor confidence by demonstrating that India is prepared to tackle both physical and cyber threats.

Additionally, CIPA would enable swift recovery from disruptions, helping India maintain its position as a global player.

Evolving Threat Landscape: India's critical infrastructure is vulnerable to various threats, including terrorism, cyberattacks, and geopolitical tensions. These risks are dynamic and rapidly evolving, necessitating a proactive legislative response. CIPA can provide the legal tools to assess and mitigate these risks effectively, shifting the country's security strategy from reactive to proactive. By implementing comprehensive protocols for sectors such as energy, transportation, and financial systems, CIPA would bolster national security and protect public safety.



Coordinating Protection Efforts: Protecting critical infrastructure requires coordination among multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector players, and security forces. CIPA would facilitate this collaboration by establishing a clear framework for joint efforts, ensuring efficient

responses and minimizing fragmented actions.

Aligning with Global Standards: Enacting CIPA would also bring India in line with global standards for infrastructure protection. By addressing emerging technologies like digital infrastructure and the Internet of Things (IoT), and integrating advanced cybersecurity measures, India can ensure its protection strategies remain up-to-date. The act should incorporate technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and blockchain to stay ahead of evolving threats.

Securing Critical Sectors: CIPA must prioritize the protection of essential sectors such as power, transportation, and manufacturing, which are vital to India's economy.

Ordnance factories, which produce military equipment, and water reservoirs, crucial for public health, must also be protected.

Furthermore, nuclear power plants, chemical factories, and airports require robust security measures. Social, political, and economic infrastructure—including government buildings, financial institutions, and public places—are critical to national stability and must be secured under CIPA.

Learning from Global Examples: Global responses to infrastructure threats highlight the importance of legislative frameworks. The United States passed the Homeland Security Act after 9/11 to protect vital systems from terrorism, while the United Kingdom enhanced measures

after the Manchester Arena bombing in 2017. Countries like Australia and Germany have created specialized agencies to address cyber threats and improve coordination. To protect its critical infrastructure and maintain its trajectory as a global economic power, India must prioritize the enactment of CIPA.

The government should take immediate steps to establish a centralized coordination authority responsible for overseeing protection measures. A comprehensive risk assessment framework must be developed, and public-private partnerships should be enhanced to ensure efficient responses to threats.

(The Author is affiliated with an Independent Think Tank; views are personal)

House Republicans release impeachment report on President Biden

AP ■ WASHINGTON

House Republicans have released their initial impeachment inquiry report into President Joe Biden, alleging an abuse of power and obstruction of justice in the financial dealings of his son Hunter Biden and family associates.

The nearly yearlong inquiry by Republicans stops short of alleging any criminal wrongdoing by the president. Instead, the almost 300-page report out Monday ahead of the Democratic National Convention covers familiar ground, asserting the Biden family traded on its "brand" in business ventures in corrupt ways that rise to the Constitution's high bar for impeachment.

With Biden no longer running for reelection, next steps are highly uncertain.

House Republicans have not had support from their own ranks to actually impeach the president, and removal by the Senate is even further afield. Many Republicans prefer to focus attention on the Democratic Party's presumptive presidential nominee Vice President Kamala Harris, with some probes getting underway.

The White House has dismissed the House impeachment inquiry as a "stunt" and encouraged House Republicans to "move on."

"The totality of the corrupt conduct uncovered by the Committees is egregious," wrote the House Oversight and Accountability, Judiciary and Ways and Means panels leading the inquiry.

The report said the Constitution's "remedy for a President's flagrant abuse of office is clear: impeachment by the House of Representatives and removal by the Senate."

Republicans have spent the better part of their time in the House majority with a hyper focus on Biden and his family's businesses, encouraged by Donald Trump as the twice impeached and indicted former president makes a comeback bid for the White House.

The impeachment inquiry has been a cornerstone of the House GOP's effort, launched by former Speaker Kevin McCarthy shortly before he was booted from leadership and formalized in December under new Speaker Mike Johnson. Republicans are investigating many aspects of Biden family finances going back to 2009 when he was vice president to Barack Obama.

Through bank records, interviews from some 30 witnesses, whistleblower accounts and millions of documents, House Republicans allege a years-long practice by Hunter Biden and his associates to solicit foreign business deals using the family's proximity to power in Washington.

Much of the focus of the report is not on Biden's time as president, but on the years when the Biden family was in turmoil after the 2015 death of his oldest son, Beau, and as the vice president was bowing out of elected office, declining to run for president in 2016.

Hunter Biden has acknowledged a serious addiction to crack in these



years. He was convicted in June of felony gun charges and is set to stand trial next month on federal tax charges.

Former Hunter Biden associate Devon Archer, who was sentenced to a year in prison in 2022 in another matter, told the committee, "At the end of the day, part of what was delivered is the brand."

To tie the elder Biden to his son's actions, the Republicans rely on a series of phone calls and pop-by dinner meeting visits Joe Biden made while Hunter was conducting business. At times, Hunter would put his dad on speakerphone for his guests as the father and son exchanged

pleasantries.

The Bidens are a famously tight-knit family and acknowledge they speak almost daily, including during this time, with the father checking on his son's well-being.

In his own defiant closed-door deposition to House investigators, Hunter Biden insisted he did not involve his father in his business.

All told, the House Republicans allege the Biden family and its associates received some USD 27 million in business payments from partners or clients in Russia, China and other countries. They allege another USD 8

million in loans, including some from Hunter Biden benefactor Kevin Morris, a Hollywood attorney, and question the purchases of the son's artwork. The report said it is "inconceivable" that President Biden did not understand what was going on.

"President Biden participated in a conspiracy to monetize his office of public trust to enrich his family," the report claims. Biden himself declined a request to testify before the House.

Touchbacks to Trump's impeachments at the hands of Democrats run throughout the report's pages as Republicans work to contrast his grounds

for removal to Biden family's dealings and "grift."

But the differences are stark, as the indicted Trump faces actual criminal charges, including in the conspiracy to overturn Biden's 2020 election and draw supporters to Washington on the day of the January 6, 2021, Capitol attack. The report also accuses Biden of obstructing justice in the probe, revisiting previously aired complaints about the Justice Department's handling of investigation into Hunter Biden. Attorney General Merrick Garland has forcefully denied those accusations, defending the department against claims of political

influence.

It focuses heavily on what Republicans have long alleged was a pattern of "slow-walking" investigative steps and delaying enforcement actions to the benefit of the president's son.

But the report provides no evidence that Biden had any involvement in his son's investigation, which was launched under Trump's presidency and has been led by a Delaware US attorney appointed by Trump. The US attorney, David Weiss, was kept on by Garland to insulate the probe from claims of political interference.

Garland has insisted that no one at the White House gave him or other senior officials at the Justice Department direction about the handling of the Hunter Biden investigation.

Beyond Hunter Biden, the report includes details of the involvement of Joe Biden's brother, James, in the various family businesses.

Republicans have pointed to a series of payments that they claim show the president benefited from his brother's work. They point to a USD 2,000,000 personal check from James Biden to Joe Biden on the same day in 2018 that James Biden received an equal amount from Americore, a healthcare company.

House Democrats have defended the transaction, pointing to bank records they say indicate James Biden was repaying a loan provided by his brother, who had wire transferred USD 2,000,000 to him about six weeks earlier. The money changed hands

while Joe Biden was a private citizen.

Short of impeaching Biden, the House Republicans have issued criminal referrals recommending the Justice Department prosecute Hunter Biden and James Biden, accusing them of making false statements to Congress as part of the GOP investigation.

Attorneys for those men have argued those claims are baseless or a distraction.

Until recently, the president had been a focal point for Republicans in Congress, but his decision last month to drop out of the presidential race and Harris' ascent to the top of the ticket have forced GOP leaders to reevaluate their marquee investigation.

A year ago, GOP lawmakers had hoped the Biden inquiry would build a strong enough case for impeachment's "high crimes and misdemeanors." But the longer the inquiry dragged and the little direct evidence against Biden investigators were able to produce in public hearings or even in closed-door sessions, the more concerns grew from moderate Republicans wary of a vote on the matter.

The report released Monday makes more than 20 mentions of the "Biden-Harris administration," while previous releases from the committees investigating Biden typically only made direct references to him.

And while Harris is not mentioned on her own in the report, the same committees leading the inquiry have begun to open new probes into her and her vice presidential pick, Tim Walz.



Three security personnel killed in terror attack in NW Pakistan

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

Three Pakistani security personnel were killed as militants from the Afghanistan side launched a major attack at a border security post in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province early on Monday, security authorities said.

The attack comes a day after four security personnel were killed in two separate terror attacks in the same province.

In the early hours of Monday, the militants targeted a Pakistani border security post in the Wara Mamund area in Bajaur district on the Pak-Afghan border in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province.

The ensuing gun battle resulted in the death of three Pakistani security personnel, the sources said, adding that the attack took place in the Gardo sector.

Earlier on Sunday, a policeman and a Station House Officer (SHO) were killed after militants attacked with heavy weaponry the Bargai police station in the militancy-affected southern Lakki Marwat district of the same KPK province.

The policeman died on the spot while the injured SHO, who had sustained multiple bullet wounds during the exchange of fire, succumbed to his injuries in the hospital.

The militants took refuge in a house close to the police station before the attack.

In another incident on Sunday, at least two Frontier Constabulary security personnel were killed and three others injured when militants attacked their vehicles in the Maddi area of Dera Ismail Khan district in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The militants ambushed the security forces convoy, police said.

There has been an uptick in terror incidents across Pakistan, especially in the restive KPK province over the last two years since the Taliban-led dispensation took control of Afghanistan.

Pakistan has consistently asked the Taliban-led interim Afghan government to ensure effective border management on their side of the border and deny the use of Afghan soil by terrorists for perpetrating acts of terrorism against Pakistan.

Blinken pushes for ceasefire in his 9th trip to Mideast since war began

AP ■ TEL AVIV

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken says now is "maybe the last" opportunity to reach a Gaza cease-fire agreement that would return hostages held by Hamas and bring relief to Palestinian suffering after 10 months of war in Gaza.

Blinken on Monday was on his ninth urgent mission to the Middle East since the conflict began. His visit came days after mediators, including the United States, expressed renewed optimism a deal was near. But Hamas has voiced deep dissatisfaction with the latest proposal and Israel has said there were areas it was unwilling to compromise.

The trip also comes amid fears the conflict could widen into a deeper regional war following the killings of top militant commanders in Lebanon that Iran blamed on Israel.

"This is a decisive moment, probably the best, maybe the last, opportunity to get the hostages home, to get a cease-fire and to put everyone on a better path to enduring peace and security," Blinken said as he opened talks with Israeli President Isaac Herzog in Tel Aviv.



HERE'S THE LATEST: UN says a record number of aid workers were killed in 2023, mostly from the agency for Palestinian refugees

Berlin - A record number of aid workers were killed in conflicts around the world last year, and this year may be on course to be even deadlier, the United Nations said Monday.

The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said that 280 aid workers were killed in 33 countries in 2023 - more than double the previous year's figure of 118. It said that more than half of last year's deaths were registered in the first three months of the Israel-Gaza war that started in October, mostly as a result of airstrikes.

The office said that this year "may be on track for an even deadlier outcome," with 172 aid workers killed as of Aug. 7.

More than 280, the majority of them with the U.N. Agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, have been killed in Gaza so far,

according to OCHA.

ISRAELI AUTHORITIES SAY POWERFUL EXPLOSIVE KILLED 1 PERSON IN TEL AVIV: Jerusalem - A blast that killed one person and wounded another in Tel Aviv on Sunday night was a terror attack caused by a large explosive device, Israeli authorities said Monday.

A joint statement from the police and Israel's Shin Bet security agency gave few details other than saying the attack involved "a powerful explosive." They did not identify the attacker or give a motive.

Police said Sunday that the explosion killed one person, presumed to be the bomber.

"We know that the mutilated body is not that of an innocent bystander but the one who carried the bomb," Tel Aviv District Police Commander, Deputy Commissioner Peretz Amar said. The statement on Monday only referenced the bystander who was moderately wounded.

Israeli media provided security footage that showed the presumed attacker

walking down the street wearing a large backpack just before the explosion.

1 PALESTINIAN KILLED AND 2 WOUNDED IN A SHOOTING ON A STREET IN ISTANBUL: Istanbul - Police in Istanbul have launched a "large-scale investigation" after a Palestinian was killed and two others were wounded in a shooting as they sat in a car, officials and media said Monday.

The killer dropped a handgun fitted with a silencer at the scene, the Istanbul Governor's Office said in a brief statement.

The Demiroren News Agency reported that the man sitting in the driver's seat was killed and his friend seriously wounded in the shooting late Sunday. Another man, who the governor's office described as the dead man's bodyguard, was injured in the foot.

The killing was carried out by a masked assailant or assailants, the agency said. The victims were sitting on Dilaver Street in the Kagithane district of north Istanbul when the attack happened.



Japanese shrine that honours war dead, including convicted war criminals, vandalised again

AP ■ TOKYO

Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine, which honors Japan's war dead, including convicted World War II war criminals, was vandalized again overnight Monday.

"It is deplorable that an act seeking to denigrate the shrine's dignity has happened again," the shrine said in a statement.

In May, a stone pillar at Yasukuni was spraypainted red. A Chinese suspect was arrested in July.

Neither the police nor the Shinto shrine would go into details of the latest vandalism, saying an investigation was ongoing.

Japanese media reports said graffiti reading "toilet" in Chinese, written with what appeared to be black markers, was found Monday morning on a stone pillar near the shrine's arch.

Asian nations that suffered from Japanese aggression before and during World War II see Yasukuni as a symbol of militarism.

Convicted Class A war criminals, including Hideki

Tojo, Japan's wartime prime minister, are among the 2.5 million Japanese war dead enshrined at Yasukuni. The shrine itself, a dramatic-looking building with sweeping roofs, also includes in its grounds memorials and museums dedicated to kamikaze pilots.

Every year on August 15, the anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II, there is close scrutiny of which Japanese politicians visit Yasukuni to pray for the war dead. Many regular Japanese go there to pray for their family members and friends, regardless of their political views.

This year, some politicians, including Defense Minister Minoru Kihara, prayed at the shrine on August 15. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who has announced he will not seek reelection next month, did not go but sent an offering.

Emperor Naruhito and his late father Akihito have not visited Yasukuni.

The maximum penalty for property damage is three years in prison and a 300,000 Yen (USD 2,000) fine.

Leaders of China, Vietnam pledge to strengthen political and economic ties

AP ■ BEIJING

The leaders of China and Vietnam pledged to further their economic ties and gave a nod to their shared communist ideology during the first visit by Vietnam's new president to Beijing on Monday.

To Lam, who took office in May, made China the destination of his first state visit, signalling the continuing importance the Southeast Asian nation places on its giant neighbour despite ongoing territorial frictions in the South China Sea.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Li Yuan, hosted a ceremony for Lam and his wife, Ngo Phuong Ly,

at Beijing's vast Great Hall of the People, replete with flags, flowers and a marching band. Xi remarked on the "deep friendship" between Vietnam and China and said Vietnam was a priority for Beijing's "neighbourhood diplomacy."

"As two ruling Communist parties in the world today, the two parties of China and Vietnam should ... continue their traditional friendship ... and jointly promote the development of the world's socialist cause," Xi said. "I believe that our road will expand wider as we walk further."

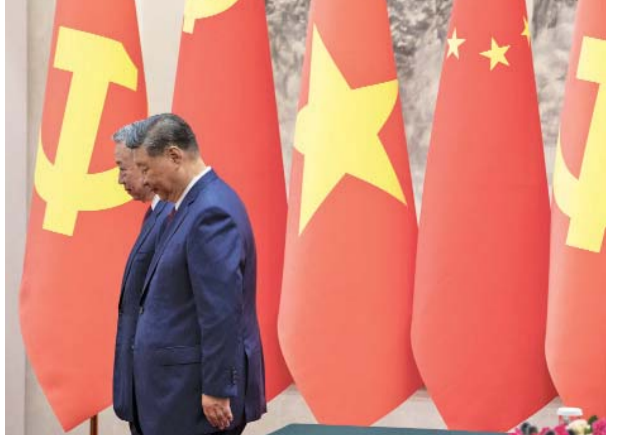
Lam's three-day visit to China comes about two weeks after he was confirmed as general secretary of Vietnam's

Communist Party, the country's top political position. He succeeded Nguyen Phu Trong, who died last month after 13 years as leader.

Lam told Xi the relationship with China was the top priority of Vietnam's foreign policy.

"As a brother, we always observe every step of China's development, and we are happy for the achievement that the party and the government and the people of China have made under your leadership," Lam said in his opening remarks before meeting with Xi.

The two leaders oversaw the signing of 14 cooperation agreements in areas such as



political education, infrastructure, health care and banking. China is Vietnam's largest trading partner, with

total bilateral trade of \$172 billion last year. Lam said Vietnam supported China's claim over self-ruled

Taiwan, known as the "One China" principle, and that any issues pertaining to Hong Kong and the regions of Tibet and Xinjiang constitute China's internal affairs.

Lam is expected to continue his predecessor's strategy of balancing ties with China, the United States, Russia and others.

The US and its ally Japan have been developing closer ties with Vietnam's communist government - America's former foe in the Vietnam War - as they seek partners in a growing economic and strategic rivalry with China.

When Xi visited Vietnam in December, the two countries announced they would build "a shared future that carries

strategic significance." The agreement, which Chinese state media has described as an elevation of ties, was seen as a concession by Vietnam, which had resisted using that wording in the past.

Russian President Vladimir Putin met Lam in Vietnam in June after visiting North Korea on a rare overseas trip for the Russian leader, who has been ostracized by many countries because of the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Lam began his China trip on Sunday in Guangzhou, a major manufacturing and export hub near Hong Kong. He also visited sites in the southern city where Vietnam's former communist leader Ho Chi Minh spent time in the

1920s and '30s. Although both are one-party communist states, Vietnam and China have sparred repeatedly over territory that both claim in the South China Sea. China also briefly invaded parts of northern Vietnam in 1979.

A Vietnamese coast guard ship recently took part in joint drills in the Philippines, which has had a series of violent encounters with China over contested territory in the South China Sea.

Still, Vietnam has benefited economically from investment by Chinese manufacturers, which have moved production to the Southeast Asian country in part to skirt U.

Major police reshuffle in Dhaka

PTI ■ DHAKA

The chiefs of 32 police stations in Dhaka have been transferred, days after the transfer of the 18 other officers-in-charge, in a major reshuffle after the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina-led government in Bangladesh, a media report said on Monday.

The order for the transfer came at midnight on Sunday, the bdnews24.Com news portal reported. With the latest transfer, the heads of all 50 police stations under the Dhaka Metropolitan Police have been transferred now.

The other 18 officers in charge had been transferred on August 13. According to the report, those transferred will no longer have the 'command power' they did as chiefs. They have been sent to training centres across the country where they have been tasked with training police personnel. Others have been transferred to the Tourist Police, the Armed Police Battalion, or the Industrial Police.

There has been a reshuffling of police at all levels since the ouster of prime minister Hasina on August 5.

Hasina, 76, resigned and fled to India following the massive protest by students against a controversial quota system in government jobs.

An interim government was formed, and 84-year-old Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus was appointed as its Chief Adviser.

On August 13, 51 policemen, including

32 CHIEFS OF CITY POLICE STATIONS TRANSFERRED: REPORT



three additional IGs, were replaced in three separate notices from the Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs, according to the report. On Saturday, 13 officials with the ranks of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) additional deputy commissioner and assistant commissioner were transferred out of the city. Seven other

officials were then appointed to the posts of DMP deputy commissioner on the same day, it said.

On Sunday, 73 police officials were promoted to deputy inspector general status, and of them, 31 were elevated from the ranks of superintendents of police, receiving double promotions. Over 230 people were killed in the

incidents of violence that erupted across the country following the fall of the Hasina-led Awami League government, taking the death toll to more than 600 since the massive protest by students first started in mid-July. According to the police headquarters, at least 44 police personnel were killed in the conflict.



Protesters plan large marches, rallies as Democratic National Convention kicks off in Chicago

AP ■ CHICAGO

Crowds of activists are expected to gather in Chicago for protests outside the Democratic National Convention this week, hoping to call attention to such issues as economic injustice, reproductive rights and the war in Gaza.

While Vice President Kamala Harris has galvanised the party as she gears up to accept the Democratic nomination, activists say their plans to demonstrate haven't changed. They're ready to amplify their progressive message before the nation's top Democratic leaders.

Their issues cover climate change, abortion rights and racial equality, to name a few, but many activists agree an immediate cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war is the overarching message of the demonstrations. They've likened it to the Vietnam War of their generation. The Chicago area has one of the largest Palestinian communities in the nation and buses are bringing activists to Chicago from all over the country. Organisers estimate turnout for Monday's march and rally, on the first day of the convention, to be at least 20,000 people.

"We have to play our part in the belly of the beast to stop the genocide, to end US aid to Israel and stand with Palestine," said Hatem Abudayyeh, a spokesperson for the Coalition to March on the DNC.

The coalition is made up of hundreds of organisations,

including students. Activists say they learned lessons from last month's Republican National Convention in Milwaukee. They expect bigger crowds and more robust demonstrations through the week.

The first protest on Sunday night brought together those calling for abortion and LGBTQ+ rights and an end to the war in Gaza. The march lasted for hours, along a route lined by police, and showed no signs of major conflicts.

Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker, who was under consideration as Harris' running mate, said peaceful protests were welcome.

"There are a lot of people who are inside the hall who will believe in some of those messages and carry that with them," Pritzker told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "But importantly, the Democratic Party doesn't shut people out and disallow them from expressing their First Amendment rights."

But some have lingering safety concerns, worried that protests could become unpredictable or devolve into chaos.

Chicago, which has hosted more political conventions than any other US city, has been unable to escape comparisons to the infamous 1968 convention where police and anti-Vietnam War protesters violently clashed on live television. Some businesses boarded up their windows as a precaution and county courts said they would open more space in case of mass arrests. Chicago police say officers have undergone

extensive training on constitutional policing and de-escalation tactics. Coalition activists and the city have been at odds over the location of the protests and other logistics. A judge sided with the city over an approximately 1-mile (1.6-kilometre) march route, which organisers argue isn't big enough for the expected crowds. Abudayyeh said the coalition would continue to push for a much longer route until the march started on Monday.

Also Monday, the Philadelphia-based Poor People's Army, which advocates for economic justice, plans to set up at Humboldt Park on the northwest side of Chicago and will feature events with third-party candidates Jill Stein and Cornel West, plus a 3-mile (5-kilometre) march.

Aside from the protests the city is also hosting a speakers' stage at a park outside the convention centre with 45-minute time slots. Most of the organisations who've signed up have the same progressive agenda as the coalition, but the list also includes the Israeli American Council and the conservative-leaning Illinois Policy Institute. A local firefighters union is also hoping to call attention to their contract fight with the city.

"The First Amendment is fundamental to our democracy," Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson, a former union organizer, told the AP in an interview last week. "I'll do everything in my power to protect the right to assemble in protest."

President Xi calls for 'better management' of differences over South China Sea

PTI ■ BEIJING

President Xi Jinping Monday called for "better management" of differences between China and Vietnam over their maritime disputes as he met Vietnam's new top leader To Lam here, amidst increasing tensions in the disputed South China Sea.

Just two weeks ago, Lam took over as the general secretary of the ruling Vietnamese Communist Party, a powerful post similar to one held by Xi, who heads the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) - the country's top political position. Lam succeeded Nguyen Phu Trong, who died last month after 13 years as leader.

Hosting Lam for crucial talks, Xi underscored that at the critical stage of national development and revitalization, China and Vietnam should consolidate the development pattern

featuring higher political mutual trust, more solid security cooperation, deeper practical cooperation, stronger public support, closer multilateral coordination and cooperation, and better management and resolution of differences.

He welcomed Lam's State Visit to China - his first foreign trip after taking over power.

Xi said Lam's gesture fully reflects the great importance the Vietnamese leader attaches to the relations between the two communist parties and the two countries, as well as the high level and strategic nature of China-Vietnam relations.

He expressed willingness to establish good working relations and personal friendship with Lam.

Xi said China takes Vietnam as a priority in its neighbourhood diplomacy

and supports Vietnam in upholding the leadership of the CPV, taking the socialist path suited to its national conditions, and further advancing the cause of reform, opening up and socialist modernisation.

On his arrival in China, Lam said Vietnam accords top priority to ties with Beijing. Though headed by the "brotherly Communist Parties", tensions remain between China and Vietnam over their overlapping claims in the disputed South China Sea. Both countries claim the Paracel and Spratly islands, and Vietnam has become more vocal about the disputes, drawing closer to India, the US and its allies.

Much to the chagrin of China, Vietnam in recent years has also upgraded its ties with India, the US and Japan to a comprehensive strategic partnership, the country's highest designation for a

diplomatic relationship, in an apparent attempt to have international support for itself in the event of any conflict with China.

Both countries fought a bitter war in 1979. Lam's visit is taking place amidst heightening tensions between China and the Philippines, backed by the US and Japan over the disputed South China Sea.

China claims most of the South China Sea, while the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and Taiwan have counterclaims.

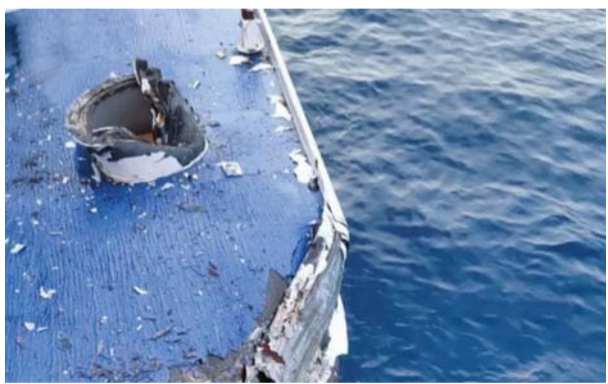
Xi told Lam that China is ready to maintain close strategic communication and high-level exchanges with Vietnam, firmly adhere to mutual support, actively explore ways to expand synergy between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Two Corridors and One Economic Circle strategy, accelerate the "hard connectivity" of

railway, expressway and port infrastructure, enhance the "soft connectivity" of smart customs, and jointly build a secure and stable industrial and supply chain, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Lam, who arrived in the Chinese city of Guangzhou on August 18, said the older generations of leaders of the two parties and countries have forged deep friendships, and the Vietnamese people will never forget China's assistance in Vietnam's national liberation, independence and socialist construction.

He said that his party and country have always considered the development of relations with China as the top priority in their foreign policy and will strive to carry on the tradition of bilateral friendship created by the older generations of leaders of the two parties and countries.

Chinese and Philippine ships collide again in disputed waters



AP ■ TAIPEI

Chinese and Philippine coast guard ships collided at sea, damaging at least two boats, in an encounter early Monday near a new flashpoint in their increasingly alarming confrontations in the disputed South China Sea.

Both blamed the other for the collision near Sabina Shoal, a disputed atoll in the Spratly Islands, where overlapping claims are also made by Vietnam and Taiwan. There were no reports of injuries.

China's coast guard accused the Philippines of deliberately crashing one of its ships into a Chinese vessel. Two Philippine coast guard ships entered waters near the shoal, ignored the Chinese coast guard's warning and intentionally collided with one of China's boats at 3:24 am, a spokesperson said in a statement on the Chinese coast guard's website.

"The Philippine side is entirely responsible for the collision," spokesman Gan Yu said. "We warn the Philippine side to immediately stop its infringement and provocation, otherwise it will bear all the consequences arising from that." The Philippines' National Task

including Sabina Shoal and its adjacent waters. The Chinese name for Sabina Shoal is Xianbin Reef.

In a separate statement, he said the Philippine ship that was turned away from Sabina Shoal entered waters near the disputed Second Thomas Shoal, ignoring the Chinese coast guard's warnings. "The Chinese coast guard took control measures against the Philippine ship in accordance with law and regulation," he added.

Sabina Shoal, which lies about 140 kilometres west of the Philippines' western island province of Palawan, has become a new flashpoint in the territorial disputes between China and the Philippines.

The Philippine coast guard deployed one of its key patrol ships, the BRP Teresa Magbanua, to Sabina in April after Filipino scientists discovered submerged piles of crushed corals in its shallows that sparked suspicions that China may be bracing to build a structure in the atoll. The Chinese coast guard later deployed a ship to Sabina.

Sabina lies near the Philippine-occupied Second Thomas Shoal, which has been the scene of increasingly alarming confrontations between Chinese and Philippine coast guard ships and accompanying vessels since last year. China and the Philippines reached an agreement last month to prevent further confrontations when the Philippines transports new batches of sentry forces, along with food and other supplies, to Manila's territorial outpost in the Second Thomas Shoal, which has been closely guarded by Chinese coast guard, navy and suspected militia ships.

Trump will campaign across country this week as he struggles to adjust to Harris

AP ■ BEDMINSTER (USA)

As Democrats kick off their convention in Chicago, Donald Trump's campaign is trying to regain its footing after weeks of struggling to adjust to Vice President Kamala Harris at the top of the opposing ticket.

Trump will attempt to undercut the Democratic celebration with a jam-packed schedule that includes daily events in battleground states tied to subjects where Republicans think they hold an advantage. It's his busiest campaign week since the winter, when he faced challengers in the Republican primary.

But when Trump has held events billed as policy speeches throughout the campaign, they have often resembled his usual, rambling rally remarks. And as has long been the case during his political career, Trump has undercut his own message with outbursts and attacks that drown out anything else.

The former president and Republican nominee has appeared at times in denial about the reality that Harris, and not President Joe Biden, is now his rival. He's launched deeply personal attacks, lied about her crowds by claiming images of them were generated by AI, and played on racist tropes by questioning her racial identity as she runs to become the country's first Black female and first South Asian president.

The outbursts have alarmed allies, who worry Trump is damaging his chance in what they believe is an eminently winnable race. Privately and publicly, they have urged him to focus on policy instead of personality, and to do more to broaden his appeal with swing voters as they grow more nervous about Harris' competitiveness.

"If you have a policy debate for president, he wins," South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham said Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press." "Donald Trump the provocateur, the showman, may not win this election." Trump is scheduled to appear Monday in Pennsylvania to talk about the economy and energy, Tuesday in



Michigan to talk about crime and safety, and Wednesday in North Carolina to talk about national security at a joint appearance with his running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance. On Thursday, he'll travel to the southwest border in Arizona to talk about immigration before going Friday to Arizona and Nevada.

Graham said he wanted Trump to focus on what he would do on the economy and the US-Mexico border, arguing, "Policy is the key to the White House." Some people at his rallies agreed with that advice.

"He needs to quit talking about Biden other than Harris piggybacking on those policies," said Kory Jeno, a 53-year-old from Swannanoa, North Carolina, who was waiting to see Trump speak last week in nearby Asheville. "He needs to keep the conversation on the issues and what he's doing to do for Americans instead of running off on tangents where he's just bashing her and that sort of thing."

AN ECONOMY NEWS CONFERENCE ENDS WITH TALK OF INJURED VETERANS: The challenge for Republicans was on display last Thursday, when Trump invited reporters to his golf course in Bedminster, New Jersey, to talk about

the economy. As he stood before an assortment of grocery store items, Trump largely stuck to his intended message during the first half-hour, talking about rising prices and blaming Biden and Harris for enacting policies he blamed for spiking inflation.

He was unusually diplomatic, including in responding to criticism from former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley, who said last week Trump should be spending his time working to appeal to suburban women, college-educated voters, independents, moderate Republicans and conservative Democrats instead of his base.

"I want this campaign to win. But the campaign is not going to win talking about crowd sizes. It's not going to win talking about what race Kamala Harris is. It's not going to win talking about whether she's dumb," Haley said. But Trump didn't take Haley's advice when asked separately whether he needed to run a more disciplined campaign and pivot away from personal attacks against Harris.

"I'm angry at her," he said. "I don't have a lot of respect for her. I don't have a lot of respect for her intelligence and I think she'll be a terrible president." He then gave Democrats new fodder at

an event later that night with Miriam Adelson, the widow of casino magnate Sheldon Adelson, who is expected to spend tens of millions of dollars helping Trump regain the White House. As he described giving her the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award, he said it was "much better" than the Congressional Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military honor.

"Everyone who gets the Congressional Medal of Honor, that's soldiers, they're either in very bad shape because they've been hit so many times by bullets, or they're dead," Trump told an audience. "She gets it, and she's a healthy, beautiful woman."

The comment was immediately blasted by the Harris campaign and by some veterans as disrespectful to service members, just as Trump and his running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, have tried to raise doubts about the National Guard record of Harris' running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz.

On Saturday, at a rally in Pennsylvania, Trump repeatedly swerved again from a message focused on the economy to personal attacks against Harris, including a declaration that he is "much better looking" than she is.

HIS CAMPAIGN REJECTS THE IDEA THAT HE IS TRYING TO RESET: Trump's struggles come after an extraordinary stretch that has completely upended the campaign. Just one month ago, Republicans gathered at their national convention in Milwaukee were elated about their chances. Trump had just survived an assassination attempt at a Pennsylvania rally and was being hailed by his most ardent supporters as a messiah-like figure saved by God to save the nation. Biden, his opponent, was facing growing pressure from his party to exit the race after a disastrous debate performance in which he struggled at times to complete sentences. His campaign signaled it would pull back from Sun Belt states like Arizona and Georgia that it had flipped from Trump four years ago.

Sensex, Nifty settle almost flat in lacklustre trade

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty ended on a flat note in a lacklustre trade on Monday, as investors preferred to remain on the sidelines awaiting further triggers. Participants also booked profits in select blue-chip stocks amid high valuation concerns, according to experts.

In a range-bound trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex slipped 12.16 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 80,424.68. During the day, it hit a high of 80,724.40 and a low of 80,332.65.

The NSE Nifty edged up 31.50 points or 0.13 per cent to 24,572.65 in a volatile trade.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, Mahindra & Mahindra, IndusInd Bank, Bharti Airtel, Axis Bank, Tata Motors and ICICI Bank were the biggest laggards. In contrast, Tata Steel, Tata Consultancy Services,



NTPC, JSW Steel, Asian Paints and Reliance Industries were gainers. "The Indian market failed to catch up with the initial gains as there is a degree of profit booking witnessed in auto stocks due to a slowdown in demand," said

Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled higher, while Seoul and Tokyo ended lower. European markets were trading mostly higher. The

US markets ended in positive territory on Friday. "Markets began the week on a muted note and ended nearly flat, taking a breather after Friday's surge. Following an initial uptick, the Nifty traded within a narrow range," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Friday as they bought equities worth Rs 766.52 crore, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,606.18 crore on Friday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.82 per cent to USD 79.03 a barrel. The BSE benchmark jumped 1,330.96 points or 1.68 per cent to settle at 80,436.84 on Friday, marking its best single-day gains in more than two months. The NSE Nifty surged 397.40 points or 1.65 per cent to settle at a two-week high of 24,541.15.

RBI for periodic revision of deposit insurance coverage

PTI ■ JAIPUR

A periodical upward revision of the deposit insurance coverage limit, currently at Rs 5 lakh, may be warranted considering multiple factors like growth in the value of deposits, inflation, and increase in income level, RBI Deputy Governor M Rajeshwar Rao has said.

Delivering the valedictory address at IADI Asia-Pacific Regional Committee International Conference 2024 hosted by Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) here last week, the Deputy Governor said it is important to ensure adequacy of insurance coverage for customer deposits.

In India, he said, the number of fully protected accounts constitute 97.8 per cent as on March 31, 2024 of the total number of accounts in the banking system as against the international benchmark of 80 per cent. While the scope and coverage



appear satisfactory at this juncture, there are likely challenges going forward, Rao said.

"Today we count India to be amongst the fastest growing large global economies and this healthy growth rate is expected to continue in the near future. A growing and formalizing economy can naturally be expected to see a sharp increase in both primary and secondary bank deposits, driving a wedge between the desirable insurance reserve requirement and the available reserve," the senior RBI

official said in his address on August 14.

At present, limited coverage option is adopted in India with uniform deposit insurance coverage limited to an amount of Rs 5 lakh per depositor of each insured bank.

"Considering multiple factors like growth in the value of bank deposits, economic growth rate, inflation, increase in income levels etc., a periodical upward revision of this limit may be warranted. This means that the deposit insurer has to be mindful of the additional funding and needs to work out suitable options to meet the same," Rao said.

On funding and risk based premium (RBP), he said, given the diversity in Indian banking sector, ranging from scheduled commercial banks with global operations to co-operative banks operating as a single branch model with limited computerised operations, meeting the data requirements poses a great challenge.

Rupee rises 8 paise to close at 83.87 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Indian rupee appreciated by 8 paise to close at 83.87 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, supported by a weak US dollar and a decline in crude oil prices.

Forex traders said fresh foreign fund inflows boosted investor sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 83.88 against the greenback, then gained ground and touched an intraday high of 83.84, and a low of 83.93 against the American currency.

The local currency finally settled for the day at 83.88 (provisional) against the American currency.

On Friday, the rupee moved in a tight range and settled just 1 paise lower at 83.95 against the American currency.

Over the past shortened week, the rupee showed minimal fluctuation and narrowly steered clear of the critical 84-mark.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on rise in risk appetite in global markets and a weak US dollar. Softening of crude oil prices may also support the rupee," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

Traders said geopolitical tension in the Middle East may cap a sharp upside for the local unit. Investors may remain cautious ahead of PMI data from the US and Fed Chair Jerome Powell's speech at Jackson Hole Symposium for any cues on rate cuts by the central bank. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading lower by 0.28 per cent to 102.17.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.87 per cent to USD 78.99 per barrel. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex declined 12.16 points, or 0.02 per cent, to 80,424.68 points. The Nifty rose 31.50 points, or 0.13 per cent, to 24,572.65 points.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Friday, as they purchased shares worth Rs 766.52 crore, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, India's forex reserves dropped USD 4.8 billion to USD 670.119 billion for the week ended August 9, the Reserve Bank of India said on Friday.

Sebi segregates ₹76,293 cr dues under 'difficult to recover' category

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi has segregated dues to the tune of Rs 76,293 crore under "difficult to recover" category at the end of March 2024, marking an increase of 4 per cent from the preceding year.

Of this, a huge chunk is on account of cases pending before court-appointed committees. Difficult to recover (DTR) dues are those that could not be recovered even after exhausting all modes of recovery.

"Segregation of such DTR dues is purely an administrative act and this will not preclude the recovery officers from recovering the amount so segregated as DTR as and when there is a change in any of the DTR parameters," Sebi said in its annual report for 2023-24. As of March 31, 2024, Sebi identified 807 cases as DTR, with a total outstanding of Rs 76,293 crore, up from 692 cases amounting to Rs 73,287 crore the previous year, according to the report.

Among these 807 cases, 36 are pending due to ongoing proceedings in State PID



courts, National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) involving Rs 12,199 crore. Additionally, 60 cases are before court-appointed committees, with Rs 59,970 crore at stake.

These two categories together account for 95 per cent of the total amount yet to be recovered. With regard to 140 DTR certificates falling under untraceable category, 131 relate to individuals and nine relate to companies amounting to Rs 13.3 crore and Rs 15.7 crore,

respectively. The Sebi has been disseminating data on the composition of difficult to recover cases from 2021-22 onwards through its annual report in order to enhance transparency of its enforcement proceedings. The markets regulator said a total of 6,781 recovery certificates were generated till March 31, 2024, of which 3,871 recovery certificates were pending as on March 31, 2024.

Overall, the markets watchdog has dues worth Rs 1.03 lakh crore that needs to be recovered from entities,

including those that failed to pay the fine imposed on them, or were unable to pay the fees due to it and did not comply with its direction to refund investors' money.

"Of the total amount of Rs 1,02,830.75 crore to be recovered, Rs 63,206 crore (which is 61.5 per cent of the total amount due) pertains to CIS (Collective Investment Scheme)/DPI (Deemed Public Issue) matters of PACL Ltd and Sahara India Commercial Corporation Ltd, respectively," Sebi said. The Securities and Exchange Board of India is empowered to recover penalties imposed by the adjudicating officer. The markets watchdog took up 342 new cases, pertaining to flouting securities law, for investigation during 2023-24, which was way higher than 144 cases taken up in the preceding financial year.

The cases were related to alleged violation of securities law, including market manipulation, price rigging and insider trading. "During 2023-24, 342 cases pertaining to various violations of securities laws were taken up for investigation and 197 cases were completed," Sebi said.

TruAlt Bioenergy files IPO papers with Sebi; aims to mop up ₹750 crore via fresh issue

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leading biofuel producer TruAlt Bioenergy Ltd has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO).

The IPO is a mix of fresh issuance of equity shares worth Rs 750 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of up to 36 lakh equity shares by promoters, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). The OFS consists of up to 18 lakh equity shares each by Dhraksayani Sangamesh Nirani and Sangamesh Rudrappa Nirani. The company may consider raising Rs 150 crore under the pre-IPO placement round. If such placement is completed, the fresh issue size will be reduced.

Out of the proceeds from the fresh issuance, Rs 425 crore will be utilised for funding working capital requirements, Rs 172.68 crore for setting up multi-feed stock operations, besides, a portion will be used for general corporate purposes.

Based in Bengaluru, TruAlt Bioenergy focuses on ethanol production, with a daily



production capacity of 1,400 kilolitres (KLPD).

The company plans to boost its production capacity by an additional 600 KLPD across three locations and aims for 2,000 KLPD by October 2024. TruAlt is diversifying into new areas like second-generation (2G) ethanol, utilising surplus bagasse - a byproduct of sugar production - as a raw material.

Also, the company plans to use 8,00,000 MT of bagasse from its promoter group companies to produce about 6 crore litres of 2G ethanol annually.

TruAlt's business performance is heavily

influenced by the price and availability of raw materials like sugar syrup and molasses. To reduce reliance on these seasonal resources, the company plans to shift its focus towards producing grain-based ethanol.

This strategic move will help control material costs, optimise revenue, and maintain consistent ethanol production.

TruAlt Bioenergy's revenue from operations was Rs 1,223.40 crore and profit after tax stood at Rs 31.81 crore in FY24.

DAM Capital Advisors and SBI Capital Markets are the book-running lead managers to the company's IPO.

Deposit growth trailing credit concerns statistical myth if seen since FY22: SBI Economists

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Concerns on the trailing deposit growth are a "statistical myth", as the overall quantum of deposits have outpaced credit since FY22, economists at the country's largest lender SBI said on Monday.

In a report, they said that nearly half of the term deposits in the system are held by senior citizens, stating that the younger population is seeking other higher yielding avenues.

The economists pitched for changes in tax treatment on deposits so as to help banks

larger flows to help with the credit growth.

The report said the absolute quantum of deposit growth since FY22 stands at Rs 61 lakh crore, which is higher than the Rs 59 lakh crore of credit growth.

"The myth of a flagging deposit growth appears as just a statistical myth with credit growth outpacing deposit growth being tom-tommed as a deceleration in deposit growth," the report said.

It can be noted that for over one year, concerns are being expressed about the wedge between deposit and

credit growth, which has led to questions around the sustainability of the credit growth in the absence of sufficient deposit accretion.

In this 'war for deposits', banks have been forced to raise interest rates which has hurt their profitability with lower net interest margins, and also resorted to alternatives on liability management like commercial paper and certificate of deposits.

In the report, SBI economists acknowledged that in FY23 and FY24 the growth of deposits has been

trailing credit, at Rs 24.3 lakh crore and Rs 27.5 lakh crore, respectively.

The Indian banking system is in the 26th consecutive month of slower deposit growth, the report said, adding that historically, there have been such episodes of deposit growth trailing credit growth which lasted between 2-4 years.

The current divergence cycle could end between June 2025-October 2025, the economists said, based on their expectations on past experience, and hinted that credit growth may slow down in the interim period.

Additionally, with the new guidelines on liquidity asking banks to keep wider buffers may lead to a short-term slowdown in credit growth, it said.

The report said the saving account balances are held only for transactional purposes, resulting in the decline in the low-cost current account and saving account balances for the banks, while even in the case of fixed or term deposits, there is a move away from banks to other high-yielding alternatives. "Remarkably 47 per cent of term deposits are now held

by senior citizens, implying the younger cohort is increasingly shying away from traditional avenues like bank deposits," it said, pitching for a change in tax treatment on deposits.

"In line with MF (mutual funds)/equity markets, we are of the considered opinion that the government should tweak the 'tax on interest on deposits and delink tax treatment at the highest income bucket.... And tax treatment should be at redemption and not at accrual basis for bank depositors," it said.

FinMin should identify high risk taxpayers in GST composition scheme: CAG

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has asked the Finance Ministry to identify high risk taxpayers in the GST composition scheme on a periodical basis and verify from other sources, including third parties, their declared value of sales to check tax evasion.

Based on an analysis of 8.66 lakh composition taxpayers under the central jurisdiction between 2019-20 to 2021-22 fiscals, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) found that a significant number of GST taxpayers have a high risk of crossing the turnover threshold for composition levy scheme (CLS).

These high risk taxpayers were identified by audit from the data contained in GST returns viz. GSTR-4A, GSTR-7 along with third party data sources such as IT returns, 'Vahan' database etc.

The GST composition scheme is available to taxpayers whose aggregate turnover, in the preceding financial year, has not exceeded Rs 1.5 crore. For taxpayers in special category states, this limit is Rs 75 lakh.

The CAG said two major risk areas in respect of CLS taxpayers are under-declaration of the 'value of outward supply' by the taxpayers to continue in the scheme; and non-fulfillment of eligibility conditions for availing CLS.

The audit also observed that

there were certain CLS taxpayers who were continuing in the Scheme despite not fulfilling the eligibility criteria prescribed in the Act and the Rules, and a substantial number of CLS taxpayers were not discharging their obligatory responsibilities of filing returns and payment of tax under reverse charge.

"The Ministry should identify high risk taxpayers in the CLS on a periodical basis using a risk-based approach and verify their declared value of outward supply from other sources including third parties to minimize the possibility of misuse by ineligible persons," the CAG said in a report tabled in Parliament recently.

DICV inaugurates mechatronics lab in Chennai

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Commercial vehicle maker DICV on Monday announced the inauguration of a mechatronics lab at its Oragadam manufacturing facility in Chennai.

The newly set up lab would help the company accelerate product innovation and development of new software architecture of vehicles, Daimler Commercial Vehicles (DICV) said in a statement.

Testing and verification process time will now be reduced significantly, resulting in a 70-80 per cent reduction in cost with significant improvements in software feature functionality verification and validation for trucks and buses, the company said. Also, new technologies can be verified and validated before in-vehicle testing, it

added. "Our new Mechatronics Lab signals a transformative phase in our Research and Development operations. Beyond validation, the lab also serves as a hub for innovation, positioning us uniquely on the global stage," said Pradeep Kumar Thimmaiyan, President of Product Engineering & Chief Technology Officer at Daimler India Commercial Vehicles.

The lab's infrastructure includes a flashing station for pre-production verification of all ECUs (electronic control units), ensuring hardware and software compatibility before production, thereby minimising errors and reducing the need for re-releases, the company said. The ADAS (advanced driver assistance systems) setup allows on-road data to be

reproduced in the lab, aiding initial software modifications and reducing vehicle dependency, saving time and cost, it noted.

The lab also enables safe verification of Driver State Monitoring (DSM), avoiding risky in-vehicle trials. "Our lab can verify and validate around 300 features, encompassing over a thousand signals within 10 days, and can verify 600 fault codes in a developing product in just a few weeks, which otherwise would have taken months.

"Our aim is to ensure our software architecture gets verified and validated before it gets embedded in our trucks and buses as early identification of software bugs, which saves enormous developmental cost," said Dilip Shrivastava, Head of Mechatronics and Software Technology at DICV.

India allows Nepal to export additional 251 MW of power

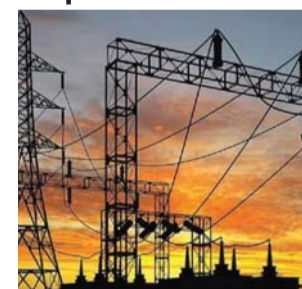
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India has allowed Nepal to export an additional 251 MW of electricity to the country, marking the first time the Himalayan nation will supply power to Bihar under a medium-term sales agreement, an official statement said on Monday.

"India's Designated Authority for Cross-Border Trade has approved an additional 251 MW of power exports from 12 hydropower projects in Nepal," the Indian Embassy in Nepal said in a statement. With this, Nepal would be exporting 941 MW of hydropower from 28 projects. Earlier, Nepal was exporting 690 MW of electricity from 16 projects, it added.

Even before this 251 MW approval, Nepal had already become a net exporter of electricity and net revenue generator in the last fiscal year, selling NPR 16.93 billion worth of electricity, the statement said.

In October 2021, New Delhi approved 39 MW of electricity exports from Nepal to India for the first time, it said, adding that in less than three years, this figure has grown by more than 24 times. Nepal first started its power exports by selling in the Day Ahead Market of the Indian Energy Exchange. Since then, India has also granted access to the Real-Time Market. Nepal Electricity Authority



has also entered into medium-term power sales agreements with discoms in Haryana and Bihar.

India has also opened the provision of counting hydropower imports from Nepal as a part of the Hydropower Purchase Obligation (HPO) for buyers in India, which further incentivises buyers to purchase power from Nepal. India and Nepal had reached an agreement for long-term power trade that envisages the sale of up to 10,000 MW of power from Nepal to India in the next 10 years. This is the first year of the agreement and around 1,000 MW of exports have already been reached. An agreement for the sale of 40 MW of power to Bangladesh has also been finalised and was planned to be signed on July 28 but postponed due to the recent political developments in Bangladesh. With these developments, Nepal is now on track to become the leading hydropower exporter of the South Asian region.

INAUGURAL CHENNAI PRO CHAMPIONSHIP



PGTI regulars Ahlawat, Rashid & Mane among golfers to tee off

PTI ■ CHENNAI The leading Indian professionals in the field include Ahlawat (TATA Steel PGTI Ranking leader), Manu, Rashid Khan, Karandeep Kochhar, Chikkarangappa, Shaurya Binu and Udayan Mane. The prominent foreign names in the field include Sri Lankans N Thangaraja, K Prabakaran and Anura Rohana, Bangladeshis Jamal Hossain and Badal Hossain, Czechia's Stepan Danek, Nepal's Subash Tamang, Canada's Sukhraj Singh Gill, South Korea's Si In Kim, Japan's Makoto Iwasaki and American Dominic Piccirillo, to name a few. The local challenge will be led by Chennai-based professionals Pradyumna Prakash and S Prasanth as well as amateurs Pranav Nandakumar and former India cricketer Murali Vijay. "We're delighted to announce the inaugural Chennai Pro Championship. Chennai has emerged as an important stop on the PGTI in recent years. We look forward to an enthralling contest as the competition gets more intense in the second half of the season," PGTI CEO Uttam Singh Mundy said in a release.

Alexa turns pro after winning NCAA tennis title at University of Miami

AP ■ NEW YORK

NCAA champion Alexa Noel's debut as a professional tennis player arrives next week at the U.S. Open - a decade after she went to Flushing Meadows with a racket in hand for the first time. When she was about 11, the now-21-year-old American recalled, she was invited to a camp run by the U.S. Tennis Association at the site of the year's last Grand Slam tournament. "They let us stand on (the court in Arthur) Ashe (Stadium)," Noel said in a video interview with The Associated Press. "And I was like, This is so cool. I want to be here one day." Noel earned this trip to New York, and a spot in her first Slam singles bracket, by winning a title for the University of Miami as a redshirt junior in May, the same month she graduated with a degree in sociology. She is giving up her final year of NCAA eligibility to go pro; Thursday's draw will determine her first opponent. "She's ready. She's a pretty confident player and she likes challenges," said her coach, Lorenzo Cava, who used to work with 2020 Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin. "To be thrown into such an important event, there can be a question mark: How will she react? To the environment? To the big stage? To the pressure?" MIAMI'S ALEXA NOEL

2024 US OPEN



WANTS TO FOLLOW OTHER NCAA CHAMPS TO PRO SUCCESS: As someone who showed promise at age 16 by reaching Wimbledon's junior final, Noel now aims to emulate the sort of success seen recently for athletes who went to college before heading to the tour. That group includes NCAA champs Ben Shelton of Florida, a 2023 U.S. Open semifinalist; Danielle Collins of Virginia, a 2022 Australian Open finalist; Emma Navarro of Virginia, a Wimbledon quarterfinalist in July; and Peyton Stearns of Texas, who reached the fourth round in New York a year ago. "It allows players to have somewhere to go, grow up, mature, become physically stronger, have some type of responsibility outside of just tennis," Noel said, "and then give pro tennis a shot." HOW MUCH MONEY DO U.S. OPEN PLAYERS EARN?: She will walk away from the U.S. Open, where play begins Aug. 26, with a minimum of \$100,000, the amount earned by players losing in the first round. "That's a ton of money. It's going to support me for a little bit," she said. "It's hard to start from zero." This is, in a sense, a home-court appearance for Noel, who grew up in New Jersey from age 9; she was born in Arizona, lived in Toronto for a

few years - picking up tennis at a summer camp - and now is based in Florida. In addition to her parents and an uncle, there will be childhood friends and college pals in the stands. Ticket requests began pouring in after Noel clinched the wildcard entry the USTA awards to Americans winning college singles championships. "I try and manage that the best way I can without being mean or without being too welcoming," she said with a laugh. "It's such a fine line, you know?" HEADING INTO THE U.S. OPEN, ALEXA NOEL CALLS HERSELF A 'PASSIONATE' PLAYER: Asked to describe herself as a player, Noel doesn't start by mentioning a particular stroke - her serve, say, or forehand - or style, instead offering this: "I'm pretty passionate." "I use a lot of energy. Physically, emotionally, I'm just very invested in every point," she said. "Sometimes I take it overboard, but that's definitely a big part of who I am." Cava, her coach, says Noel "has a clear idea of her level and what the real world out there looks like and what she needs" to rise in the rankings. (She is outside the top 750). "She can attack. She can defend. She has all the strokes," Cava said. "One of her main objectives is to become much more aggressive." He's sure Noel won't be intimidated by the stage, in part because she's been there before.

Switzerland goalkeeper Yann ends national-team career

AP ■ ZURICH

After a decade as Switzerland's No. 1 goalkeeper, Yann Sommer retired from the national team on Monday at age 35 to focus on playing for Inter Milan. Sommer's decision announced by the Swiss soccer federation will likely see Gregor Kobel of Borussia Dortmund step up as the first-choice keeper. Sommer went to three World Cups and three European Championships with Switzerland after making his debut in 2012. The last of his 94 games was a penalty shootout loss to England after a 1-1 draw in the Euro 2024 quarterfinals last month in Germany. Sommer's finest moment for the national team was saving Kylian Mbappé's penalty to seal a shootout win against France after a 3-3 draw in the round of 16 at Euro 2020. Sommer helped Inter win Serie A in his first season in Italy, and also won league titles in Germany with Bayern Munich and four times in Switzerland with Basel. The 26-year-old Kobel has played five times for Switzerland including once at the 2022 World Cup, a 3-2 win over Serbia in Qatar, when Sommer was sidelined by a heavy cold. Switzerland next plays on Sept. 5 and 8, against Denmark and Euro 2024 champion Spain in a top-tier group of the UEFA Nations League.

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia skipper Alyssa Healy has said it might not be right to go ahead with the women's T20 World Cup in Bangladesh in October as it would put a lot of pressure on the country which is still recovering from the large-scale violence and protests that left hundreds dead. The country's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled to India with Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus being made the chief of the interim government. The women's T20 World Cup is scheduled in Bangladesh from October 3-19 with 10 teams, including defending champions Australia, competing in the event. "I'd find it hard to fathom playing there at the moment, as a human being, I feel like it

Find it hard to fathom playing T20 WC in Bangladesh: Healy



might be the wrong thing to do," Healy was quoted as saying by AAP on Cricket Australia. (That would be) taking resources away from a country that is really struggling. They're needing everyone they

can possibly get in there helping people that are dying." Healy, however, said that the final call rests with the International Cricket Council, which is expected to make a decision this week. "There's obviously bigger factors at play than putting a cricket tournament on in Bangladesh at the moment ... But I'll leave it to the ICC to work out," she added. Australia recently played a white-ball series in Bangladesh with all the six matches -- three ODIs and an equal number of T20Is -- being played at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka.

It was Australia's first visit to the country since the 2014 T20 World Cup, and was pivotal to their preparations for the T20 World Cup in Bangladesh. However, Healy was confident that even if the tournament is shifted elsewhere, the entire exercise won't go waste. Australia had won all six matches held in March-April. "Going there and getting used to those conditions and slow turning wickets has probably put us in a good place," Healy said. "It's more about what our team looks like, and what people are working on individually headed into a World Cup on the subcontinent. "Whether it is in Bangladesh, or it's not in Bangladesh, I don't think affects us greatly with the make-up of what we've got. We're well prepared for whatever is thrown at us."

Priority will be improvement in quality of football: AIFF's new secretary general

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

All India Football Federation's (AIFF) newly-appointed secretary general Anilkumar on Monday said his top priority is to "improve the quality" of football in the country while involving each and every stakeholder, such as the FIFA, clubs, state associations and governments. An experienced sports administrator, Anilkumar was welcomed at the Football House by the AIFF treasurer Kipa Ajay in the presence of deputy secretary general M Satyanarayan. "So, the priority will be the improvement of quality of football," Anilkumar, who took charge on Monday, told the AIFF website. "I don't know how long we will take to make it at that level. But still we are starting with the hope that we can do something better. We will not give up until we succeed. "And along with you, all Indian football fans, we will continue to work across India with those who love football, who support Indian football," he added. Anilkumar felt when the quality improves, the spectator turnout and viewership will improve, and the money will come to all areas of football. The newly-appointed secretary general said that though Indian football has been growing since many years, it may not have reached the expected level if one looks at the FIFA rankings. "So, we have a huge



responsibility to improve that ranking. Our focus will be to work together with all the stakeholders to improve the quality of Indian football and make it more acceptable at the international level. "With the executive committee's direction, and along with our team at the AIFF headquarters, we will do better things to improve the system." He said the federation will soon sit with all the clubs and investors for a discussion on the way forward, and will seek help from the state governments as well as the Centre. "The priority is always to improve in all areas, starting from the grassroots to the top division. We will sit and plan

We'll be drawing on Green, Marsh bit more against India: Cummins

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia Test captain Pat Cummins expects greater workload with the ball for all-rounders Cameron Green and Mitchell Marsh against India in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy this summer. Cummins wants both the all-rounders to share the workload with the team's frontline pace attack in the gruelling five-Test series starting November. "It's been huge (having the all-rounders). In some ways we haven't had to use them as much as we thought we would. Which is a great thing. The last couple of summers have been pretty light (with) quick Test matches," Cummins said at the launch of Play Cricket week. "I suspect this summer might be a bit different at time. We'll be drawing on Cam Green and Mitch Marsh a bit



more. "Even someone like Cam basically started in Shield cricket as a bowler but hasn't had to bowl heaps in Test matches. Now he is a few years older, I think we will be leaning on him a bit more," he added. The 25-year-old Green has bagged 35 wickets at 35.31 in 28 Tests so far in his career. "The first point is they (Green and Marsh) both absolutely make the top six on their batting alone which is a luxury," Cummins said.

"We're really lucky that Nathan Lyon bowls plenty of overs, so you don't necessarily have to have an all-rounder, but it makes a big difference to have that fifth bowling option. "And with someone like Cam and Mitch we have six bowling options. It's a really nice thing to have. Top six should always make the team on their batting." Cummins' bowling colleagues have been vocal about how having a bowling captain has benefited the team in managing the workload. "It's nice of them to say that, they'd never say it to my face," Cummins said. "When I'm at the top of their mark asking them to do something, they know I'm also doing it down the other end and wouldn't ask for something I can't do myself. Maybe there's a bit of built-up trust over the last decade or so."

Hideki avoids collapse and rallies to win FedEx Cup playoffs opener

AP ■ MEMPHIS (US)

Hideki Matsuyama could feel the tournament getting away from him, an odd sensation considering he had gone 27 holes without a bogey and had a five-shot lead just an hour earlier. Even more improbable was how it ended Sunday. On the verge of a collapse, Matsuyama rolled in a 25-foot birdie putt on the 17th hole to regain the lead and then hit two shots as precise as any he hit all day for one last birdie to win a wild PGA Tour postseason opener at the FedEx St Jude Championship. Birdies on the final two holes - among the toughest on the TPC Southwind - gave the Japanese star an even-par 70 and a two-shot victory over Xander Schauffele and Viktor Hovland, who thought they were playing for cash and FedEx Cup points until Matsuyama's mini-meltdown. A three-putt bogey on the 12th. A tee shot into the water

on the par-3 14th, where Matsuyama did well to escape with bogey. Two chips to reach the 15th green and a double bogey. When he saw a leaderboard on the 16th hole, it confirmed what Matsuyama feared. "I felt today's victory slipping away at that point because 17 and 18 are difficult holes enough, let alone to birdie them," Matsuyama said through his interpreter. He birdied them both for his 10th career PGA Tour victory and first FedEx Cup playoffs title. The stakes suddenly were high for everyone in the final hour of what had been a sleepy, steamy tournament. It was tight at the top, and just as tense on the bubble to determine the top 50 players in the FedEx Cup who advanced to next week. How tense? Consider Nick Dunlap, who went from a chance to win the tournament to needing his best drive of the week just to stay in



the top 50 and extend his season. He was as clutch as Matsuyama off the 18th tee, closing with a par for a 69 to tie for fifth and move on. "It was weird," Dunlap said. "I went from on 17, I tried to attack the pin. I thought I still had a chance to win the golf tournament. Then not getting up-and-down, and then I'm questioning if I'm inside the bubble or not. It was very stressful." Tom Kim looked certain to finish in the top 50 until a 6-6-6 finish on his card ended his season. Schauffele started nine shots behind and waited to see if he would get in a playoff. Hovland had a one-shot lead with two holes to play. Scottie Scheffler, who shot 66 and finished fourth, was still in the game on the 17th hole. Ultimately, it came down to Matsuyama. The collapse was stunning. So was the response. "He just never seemed to let it get to him. It was really impressive," said Dunlap, who played in the final group with Matsuyama. "That's why he's got a green jacket and a ton of other things. It was definitely cool for me to watch. He deserves it. He was impressive all day. Hovland, the defending FedEx Cup champion, came into the postseason at No. 57 without a

needed par to move from No. 67 into the top 50. A bogey would have bumped the former US Amateur champion out of the top 50. Both split the middle of the fairway. Dunlap hit his approach to just outside 20 feet, while Matsuyama hit 8-iron at the flag, with water to the left. It settled just under 6 feet away. Matsuyama, who finished at 17-under 263, won for the second time this year. He shot 62 in the final round to win the Genesis Invitational at Riviera. Coming off a bronze medal at the Olympic, his performance - except for that awful four-hole stretch - was golden. He won USD 3.6 million and moved from No. 8 to No. 3 in the FedEx Cup. It was quite a week for the Japanese star, who had to find a fill-in caddie and could only work with his coach over the phone. All of them were out to dinner in London on their way home from the Paris Olympics when someone stole their bag when they weren't looking. The thief got Matsuyama's wallet and the passports of his caddie and coach. They had to return to Japan and work on getting expedited replacements. Matsuyama pressed on like it was another work week and came up with his first postseason victory. Hovland, Dunlap and Eric Cole (No. 54) moved into the top 50. Cole did it in style with a 63, despite a bogey on the closing hole. Falling out of the top 50 were Kim (No. 43), Mackenzie Hughes (No. 48) and Jake Knapp (No. 50). Kim was poised to advance until it took him two shots to get out of a greenside bunker on the par-5 16th (bogey), two chips to get to the green on the 17th (double bogey) and a tee shot into the water on the 18th (double bogey). "This season has just been ... It's just been like this," Kim said. "I've played really good golf, and then had some tough finishes."

Deepti shines as London Spirit lift maiden women's Hundred title

PTI ■ LONDON

India all-rounder Deepti Sharma played a crucial role with both bat and ball as London Spirit lifted their maiden Women's Hundred title, beating Welsh Fire by four wickets in the final at the Lord's here.

Deepti snapped a wicket giving away 23 runs and then smashed a run-a-ball 16, including the winning six off Hayley Matthews, as the Indian and England's Charlie Dean jumped into each other's arms in celebration.

Two years ago, Deepti had controversially dismissed Dean after running her out at the non-striker's end during the third ODI against England in 2022, triggering a debate over the spirit of the game.

It was ecstasy for Deepti and despair for Dean that day but here the two were on the same side, engineering the maiden victory after chasing down a victory target of 116 in 98 balls. Besides Deepti, Eva Gray (2/26) and Sarah Glenn (2/17) snapped two wickets each, while Tera Norris (1/18) also chipped in with a wicket to restrict Welsh Fire to 115 for 8 in stipulated 100 balls, which was mainly built on the 41-ball 54 by Australia's Jess Jonassen.



In reply, Georgia Redmayne anchored the chase with a 32-ball 34. Heather Knight (24) and Danielle Gibson (22) also

chipped in with useful contributions even as Shabnim Ismail threatened to derail the chase with figures of three for 24 in her 20 balls.

But Deepti then took the onus on herself and produced the only maximum of the match in the nick of time to take her team home.

Tyson feels good after health scare and ready for his rescheduled bout with Jake Paul

AP ■ NEW YORK

Mike Tyson is 58 years old and coming off a health scare that forced the postponement of his return to the ring.

The boxer once considered the most dangerous man in the world could be putting himself in danger by putting the gloves on again. Yet he was quick to respond Sunday when asked why he was going through with his bout against Jake Paul.

"Because I can. Who else can do it but me? Who else is he going to fight to make this happen?" Tyson said, motioning toward the crowd at a packed press conference where fans cheered the former heavyweight champion and booed Paul.

"We've just got to listen to the facts. We've got a YouTuber fighting the greatest fighter that ever lived."

Tyson and Paul restarted the buildup to their match that is now scheduled for November 15 at the home of the Dallas Cowboys in Arlington, Texas. They had been set to meet July 20 before Tyson became nauseous and dizzy on a flight from Miami to Los Angeles in May, with his representatives attributing the episode to an ulcer problem.

Tyson said on Sunday he resumed training two or three



weeks ago and feels fine.

"Hey listen, I'm just ready," Tyson said.

The undisputed heavyweight champion 1987 to 1990, Tyson (50-6, 44 KOs) retired in 2005 before coming back for an exhibition match against Roy Jones in 2020. Fans seem excited for his return, with a number of them turned away Sunday because too many showed up for their press conference on the final day of the Fanatics Fest event in New York.

Paul (10-1, 7 KOs) sparred as much with the fans who booed him as with the fighter

across the stage.

"Hey New York, you're just like Mike Tyson," Paul said.

"You were good 20 years ago." Tyson's most dominant days are actually longer ago than that, and Paul understands that he probably wouldn't get much credit for a victory against such a diminished opponent. Yet the former Disney Channel star who insists he will become a boxing champion said there is benefit to fighting Tyson even now.

"Big moments, big pressure, big stages, one of the greatest to ever do it, more experience than me, more fights than me,

I'm going to learn a lot in this fight and through this training camp," Paul said.

"So this is helping me in my future fights and everything that I want to accomplish."

He took a fight after Tyson had to pull out, stopping bare-knuckle fighting champion Mike Perry in the sixth round on July 20. Perry, like many of the fighters on Paul's resume, comes from the mixed martial arts world, rather than from a boxing background.

He preferred to fight Tyson then and is eager now for his second chance.

"I was ready before, you needed a little break," he said to Tyson.

"Your tummy hurt still?" The fight that will stream on Netflix will be an official bout, though contested with eight 2-minute rounds and heavier gloves than usual. The truest boxing match on the card might be the one that precedes it, when super lightweight champion Katie Taylor and Amanda Serrano have a rematch of Taylor's thrilling victory in 2022 in the first women's boxing match to headline at Madison Square Garden.

Then Paul will try to show what he hopes to become in boxing, or perhaps Tyson can demonstrate what he once was. He said his health problems won't prevent that.



Conte has work to do after Napoli melts like snow in the sun at Verona

AP ■ MILAN

Antonio Conte has a lot of work to do.

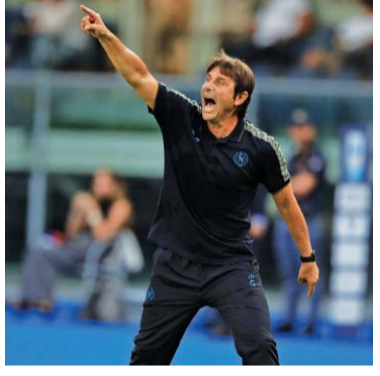
Conte became Napoli's fifth coach in little more than a year when he was hired in June and on Sunday he saw his new team crumble 3-0 at Hellas Verona in his first match back in Serie A.

"We melted like snow in the sun after the first goal," Conte said.

"We should apologise to the Neapolitan people, who follow us with passion. I am the coach and it is right that I take full responsibility. In the second half there was an unacceptable performance.

"We should be ashamed, and I have to be ashamed as I am coach. Those who know me know that today my heart is bleeding, and I hope that some of the players are also bleeding so that would mean that at least we are on the right path."

Dailon Livramento and Daniel Mosquera - twice - scored on their league debuts to hand Verona the win



on the opening weekend of the Italian league season and there was further bad news for Napoli as it lost key player Khvicha Kvaratskhelia to injury. Napoli has been in a slump since Luciano Spalletti left last summer after steering the club to its first title in more than 30 years. The southern team finished 10th last season and it hoped for much better under Conte, who led Juventus and Inter Milan to the title.

However, it drew 0-0 with Serie B side Modena in the Italian Cup on Conte's debut, going through on penalties, before Sunday's second-half horror show.

Conte's side had the better of the early stages in Verona and had chances with Matteo Politano, André-Frank Anguissa and Stanislav Lobotka before the home side almost gifted it the lead in first half stoppage-time.

Verona defender Martin Frese played a woefully short back pass to goalkeeper Lorenzo Montipò and Kvaratskhelia raced onto it but Jackson Tchatchoua came flying in for a heroic last-ditch tackle.

Kvaratskhelia had to come off immediately afterward, appearing to be indicating that he was feeling dizzy. Frese played another poor back pass moments later that forced Montipò into an acrobatic clearance.

Verona came out a different team after the break and Grigoris Kostasos curled just past the far post with its first real chance of the match before the home

side took the lead when Livramento managed to get enough on Darko Lazovic's cross to poke the ball into the bottom right corner.

Anguissa hit the crossbar in the 61st but Verona doubled its lead when it won the ball in a midfield tussle and Ondrej Duda played it through for substitute Mosquera to fire past Alex Meret in the 75th.

Mosquera had only been on the field for less than two minutes. The Colombian forward doubled his tally in stoppages as he was left completely unmarked by the Napoli defense.

Verona was one of only two teams to win so far in the opening round. The other was Lazio, which rallied from conceding an early goal to beat newly promoted Venezia 3-1.

In Sardinia, both Roma and Cagliari hit the woodwork and had other chances but could only draw 0-0. Bologna drew 1-1 at home to Udinese. There were four draws on Saturday, including for defending champion Inter Milan and AC Milan.

Top-ranked Sinner reaches final in Cincinnati, but women's No. 1 Swiatek falls to Sabalenka

AP ■ MASON (US)

Top-ranked Jannik Sinner outlasted Alexander Zverev in a third-set tiebreaker to reach the final of the Cincinnati Open, while No. 1 Iga Swiatek was defeated in the women's semifinals by No. 3 Aryna Sabalenka.

Sabalenka will face American Jessica Pegula in Monday's final, while Sinner will play either American Frances Tiafoe or No. 15 seed Holger Rune.

Sinner on Sunday emerged with a 7-6(9) 5-7 7-6(4) victory after 3 hours, 7 minutes, tying Casper Ruud for the ATP Tour lead by reaching his fifth final of the season. Sinner leads the tour with four titles this season.

The first set lasted more than an hour and the match also was suspended for 30 minutes by rain.

Zverev, the No. 4 seed, had won four straight meetings against Sinner. Sinner finished

with a 124-121 edge in total points. "I think we both raised our level when it counted," Sinner said.

"The tiebreaker can go both ways. I just tried to stay there mentally. Obviously, I'm happy to be in the final."

Sinner, who's been dealing with a right hip issue, was seen grabbing that area early in Sunday's match but said he came through fine physically. "Sometimes I feel it," Sinner said.

"I have to check after this tournament here. I haven't had too much time to recover before coming here. I'm not worried yet. I'm happy to play." Sabalenka reached the finals in Cincinnati for the first time with a 6-3 6-3 victory over Swiatek, ending the five-time Grand Slam winner's 15-match winning streak and avenging losses in the finals in Madrid and Rome.

"Really happy with the win, especially against Iga, who is

always a tough battle," Sabalenka said. "To get the win in straight sets, that's kind of an achievement for me."

Swiatek, who's been on top of the WTA rankings for 116 weeks, was satisfied with her week in Cincinnati.

"I pretty much did better than I expected, honestly, especially on this surface," Swiatek said. "I'm happy with the result anyway, and already focusing on what I need to do to feel even better in New York."

The US Open begins there on August 26. Swiatek won the title in 2022.

Pegula, the No. 6 seed, beat Paula Badosa 6-2 3-6 6-3 after their semifinal was suspended more than an hour by rain.

She is the third American to reach the finals at the Canadian and Cincinnati Open in a calendar year, the first since Serena Williams in 2013.

"We've had a lot of great battles in the past," Sabalenka said.

No goal for Mbappé in his Spanish league debut as Real Madrid draws 1-1 at Mallorca

AP ■ MADRID

Defending champion Real Madrid couldn't manage more than a 1-1 draw at Mallorca in Kylian Mbappé's first Spanish league match.

In his second game with Madrid after debuting midweek, Mbappe failed to break through on Sunday. The France great had scored in Madrid's 2-0 win against Atalanta in the UEFA Super Cup on Wednesday.

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti started with the same squad that beat Atalanta, with Rodrygo, Vinicius Junior and Mbappé in attack.

"They change position from time to time," Ancelotti said of Vinicius and Mbappé.

"Sometimes Mbappé plays more centrally and sometimes one of the two has to occupy this flank, without a particular plan. It depends on how they feel about it."

It was Rodrygo who put

Madrid ahead against Mallorca 13 minutes into the match, but the hosts equalized with Vedat Muriqi's goal in the 53rd.

"We got off to a good start, taking the lead and then had a chance to get the second goal," Ancelotti said.

"We didn't find the balance in the second half. We could have lost as there was no balance at the back. It wasn't a good game. We need to defend better. We're a very attacking

team, but defensive balance is a fundamental factor."

Madrid defender Ferland Mendy was sent off deep into second-half stoppage time for a hard foul on Muriqi.

"I don't want to make excuses for anything, but we just need to do better and with a better attitude," Ancelotti said.

"We can learn a lot from this match. It's quite clear where our problems could come from."

Rafael Nadal, who is from the

island of Mallorca, was among those watching the match at the Son Moix Stadium. Mallorca's players provided a guard of honour for the Super Cup winners, lining up to applaud the Madrid team as they entered the field before kickoff.

Sociedad stunned at home Real Sociedad, which finished sixth last season, was upset 2-1 at home by Rayo Vallecano, which fought to avoid relegation in the last campaign.

Ballester becomes 1st Spaniard to win US Amateur, fending off Iowa's Noah

AP ■ CHASKA (US)

Jose Luis Ballester, a senior-to-be at Arizona State, became the first player from Spain to win the US Amateur, fending off Iowa sophomore Noah Kent 2 up Sunday at Hazeltine in the 36-hole match on his 21st birthday.

Ballester, who was the only player in the top 10 of the world amateur ranking to reach the round of 16, took the lead on the second hole and never trailed. He joined Jon Rahm as the only players from Spain to win a USGA tournament.

Rahm, who also played for the Sun Devils, won the US Open in 2021. "We have many great Spaniards, many great legends," Ballester said. "Being able to add my name into that history is pretty sweet."

Both finalists gained exemptions for the Masters and the US Open next year, and Ballester also got a spot in the British Open.

Ballester trailed at some point in his last three matches before taking control in the grueling final. Wearing a red polo, yellow shorts on loan from Spaniard he beat in the semifinals, Luis Masaveu, and black socks to match his country's colors, Ballester went 3 up after

four holes on two early birdies. He had a 4-up lead at the lunch break on a vintage 82-degree day with a slight late-summer breeze.

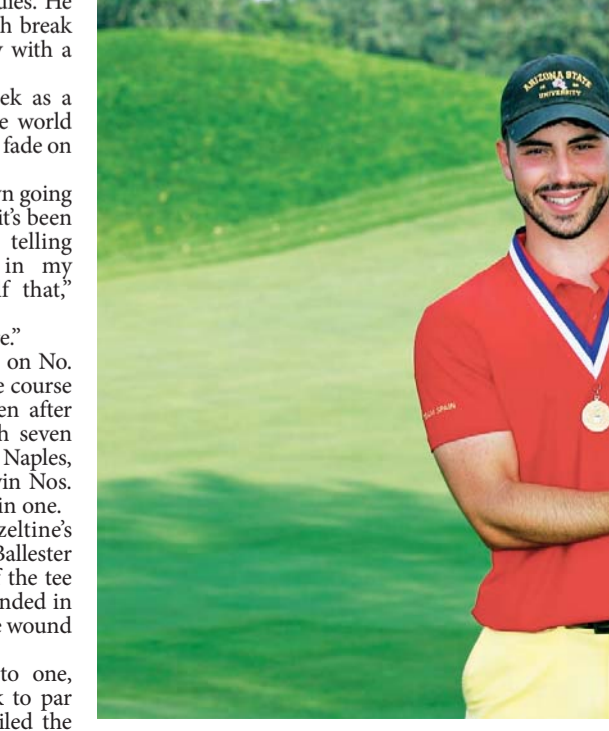
Kent, who entered the week as a long shot at No. 560 in the world amateur ranking, refused to fade on the exhausting final day.

"You don't want to be 4 down going into an 18-hole match, but it's been done before, and I kept telling myself that. Everybody in my corner kept telling myself that," Kent said.

"I thought like crazy out there." He hit a long putt for eagle on No. 25 - the seventh hole on the course - to move within two. Then after falling behind by four with seven holes to go, the player from Naples, Florida, snapped back to win Nos. 31, 32 and 34 and pull within one.

On the 34th hole, Hazeltine's signature lakeside No. 16, Ballester hit into the thick rough off the tee and, after clipping a tree, landed in worse shape in the reeds. He wound up with a bogey.

But with his lead down to one, Ballester got back on track to par the final two holes. He nailed the shot off the No. 17 tee within striking range on the green. "I was juiced. I could feel the



adrenaline in my veins, in my forearms," Ballester said. Kent hit into the bunker off the No. 18 tee, then the rough. His last-chance chip overshot the hole. Once the victory was secured, Ballester began to cry as he thought of friends and family in Spain, including his grandmother who's



been ill this summer. "It was a hard summer back in Spain, so I feel like all those emotions kind of came out," Ballester said. Wearing a white polo with a Hawkeyes logo, Kent was attempting to become first Iowa player to win the event. The 19-year-old had the clear edge in fan support with dozens in gold Caitlin Clark shirts cheering from the gallery. "I knew it was going to be like that from yesterday. I kind of liked it a little bit," Ballester said. "When the other guy is feeling it and he's kind of grabbing that momentum and you see all the supporters that are going for him, it can be a little depressing. So it's important to face it with a nice mindset." Kent hadn't trailed since the 12th hole of his second round match until Ballester took the early lead. Kent beat 17th-ranked amateur and Big Ten rival Jackson Buchanan of Illinois in their 18-hole semifinal match. Ballester, who won the European Amateur last year, took a congratulatory call from fellow Spaniard Sergio Garcia after his

semifinal win. He shined with the short game all week. "I think it's in the blood," Ballester said.

"It has to be." Hazeltine, which was designed by Robert Trent Jones and opened in 1962 in what was then mostly farmland and now a suburb filled with lakes and cul-de-sacs about 25 miles southwest of Minneapolis, last hosted the men's amateur in 2006. Since then, the course has seen the PGA Championship (2009), the Ryder Cup (2016) and the Women's PGA Championship (2019). The Ryder Cup is due back in 2029.

The event began Monday with 312 players over two courses, the 130th edition of the tournament that has helped launch many greats of golf into a decorated career on the pro tour.

Jones, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson are among the dozens of notable names who won the U.S. Amateur. Jones won the event a record five times. Woods won three. The last European to win the US Amateur was Viktor Hovland of Norway in 2018 at Pebble Beach.