

6 WORLD
 ● France's exceptionally high-stakes election has begun
 ● Chinese President Xi Jinping to attend SCO summit in Astana

7 NATION
 ● Parliament set to witness stormy debate from today
 ● Parl should pass law on reservations to exceed 50-pc cap: Congress

Gen Upendra Dwivedi becomes chief of 1.3 million-strong Army

NEW DELHI, June 30: Gen Upendra Dwivedi, who has vast operational experience along the frontiers with China and Pakistan, on Sunday assumed charge as the 30th Chief of the Army Staff at a time India is facing myriad security challenges including along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Gen Dwivedi succeeds Gen Manoj Pande who superannuated after more than four decades of service. "Gen Dwivedi brings with him, a wealth of experience and a proven track record, of effectively planning and executing for the unexpected," the Army said.



Rifles in 1984. He has a unique distinction of balanced command as well as staff exposure across Northern, Eastern and Western theatres in varied operational environments.

The Army said Gen Dwivedi's impetus would be to augment the infusion of critical technologies by leveraging the nation's vibrant, capable and productive technology eco-system to enhance the force's overall capability.

"He takes over as the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), at a time when the global geo-strategic environment remains dynamic, with the challenges in the security domain becoming more pronounced due to technological advancements and the ever-changing character of modern warfare," it said. Gen Dwivedi has taken charge of the 1.3 million-strong Army at a time India is facing various security challenges including along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China. As the Chief of Army Staff, he will (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

New criminal laws come into force from today

Curtain falls on British-era laws ● New laws to give priority to providing justice, says Amit Shah

NEW DELHI, June 30: Three new criminal laws will come into effect across the country from Monday, bringing widespread changes in India's criminal justice system and ending colonial-era laws.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam will replace the British-era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act, respectively.

The new laws will bring in a modern justice system, incorporating provisions such as Zero FIR, online registration of police complaints, summonses through electronic modes such as SMS and mandatory videography of crime scenes for all heinous crimes.

They have tried to address some of the current social realities and



crimes and provide a mechanism to effectively deal with these, keeping in view the ideals enshrined in the Constitution, official sources said.

Union home minister Amit Shah, who piloted the laws, said the new laws would give priority to providing justice, unlike the British-era laws that gave primacy

to penal action.

"These laws are made by Indians, for Indians and by an Indian Parliament and marks the end of colonial criminal justice laws," he said.

Shah said the laws were not just about changing the nomenclature but bringing about a complete

overhaul.

"Soul, body and spirit" of the new laws is Indian, he said.

Justice is an umbrella term that encompasses both the victim and the culprit, the home minister said and added these new laws would ensure political, economic and social justice with an Indian ethos.

According to the new laws, judgment in criminal cases has to come within 45 days of completion of trial and charges must be framed within 60 days of first hearing.

Statement of rape victims will be recorded by a female police officer in presence of her guardian or relative and medical reports have to come within seven days.

Organised crimes and acts of terrorism have been defined, sedition has been replaced with treason and video recording of all search and seizure have been made mandatory. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Brahmaputra river crosses danger level in Dibrugarh

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, June 30: The water level of the Brahmaputra River has crossed the danger mark in Dibrugarh, reaching 105.78 meters as of Sunday morning.

For the fourth consecutive day, Dibrugarh has been reeling under water due to flash floods, with roads waterlogged. Residents are enduring a harrowing experience as the city remains submerged.

The Dibrugarh Municipal Corporation (DMC) has been severely criticised for failing to clear clogged drains, which has exacerbated the situation.

The district administration has deployed five high-level pumps to drain rainwater from the town, but the situation remains critical due to the inadequate and poorly designed drainage systems.

Residents attribute the chronic waterlogging to insufficient planning and outdated infrastructure. "A flash flood and waterlogging have been perennial issues in Dibrugarh, and the district administration has failed to address them," said a (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT BRIEFS

Foundation day

DIPHU: Diphu MLA, Bidyasing Englung attended the 11th foundation day celebration of Taralango Youth Committee (TYC) as the chief guest at KCS office Hall here at Taralango on Sunday. Englung assured the members of TYC that scholarships will be provided to the students through CM Relief Fund. "As we're dedicated to helping all the deserving students achieve their educational goals and other spheres financial assistance under CM Relief Fund will be given to all deserving youths," Englung stated. The MLA also felicitated candidates of HSLC, HS, BA and MA who passed out and are residents of Taralango. Expressing appreciation to the passed-out candidates Englung said, "My Heartfelt congratulations to all the candidates on passing their exams. May this achievement be a stepping stone to greater heights".

Observation home

JORHAT: Five inmates of the observation home at Lichubari, where children in conflict with the law are lodged, escaped on Saturday night. However, police later found two boys and returned them to the home. Principal of the observation home, Dibyajyoti Deori, confirmed that five boys escaped by breaking a window grill. Police were promptly informed.

Boat services

JORHAT: The boat service to and fro between Jorhat's Nimatighat to Majuli's Kamalabari and other ghats has been suspended since Saturday afternoon due to increase in water level of the Brahmaputra. The water level of the river has crossed the danger level. An official source said that the Brahmaputra was flowing at 87.4 m at 6 pm on Sunday evening, which was about 2 m above the danger level.

Sonowal reviews flood situation in Dibrugarh

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, June 30: Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Sunday took stock of the worsening flood situations in the Dibrugarh Lok Sabha constituency as well as the floods affecting the way of life for most in the Dibrugarh city.

Sonowal was updated on various efforts undertaken by the government to minimise the impact of the floods on the way of life and directed the officials for immediate action and emergency measures to secure efforts to minimise damage.

Notably, the city has been reeling under severe flooding as many areas are hit hard. To ensure that the administration is at the top of every possible measure to counter and minimise the damage as a result



of rising flood level with forecast for further expected rain in the region.

"It is a matter of grave concern as the flood situation within many areas of the Dibrugarh Lok Sabha constituency remains grim. With continued rains expected, we must pull up our efforts to ensure emergency measures are in place and relief efforts are provided to the needy and affected," Sonowal said after the meeting.

He further said that the city has also witnessed severe flooding which has concerned all of us, adding, "Today, we had an urgent discussion with the concerned officials (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Modi did not mention people's issues in Mann Ki Baat: Cong

NEW DELHI, June 30: Congress leader Pawan Khera on Sunday alleged Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not mention any of the issues that people wanted to hear about in his radio programme Mann Ki Baat. Taking a jibe at the prime minister after he addressed the first episode of Mann Ki Baat in his third term, Congress' media and publicity head Khera questioned why he did not mention NEET, the railway accident or the "infrastructure collapses".

Khera said even though this is Modi's third term, it is not on his own strength. "The government is walking on crutches. We thought he would say something sensible this time," Khera said.

"He did not say anything on NEET, or railway accident, or the daily infrastructure collapses that we are hearing of," he said.

"He did not speak on the serious incident

that happened at the Delhi airport, in which a person lost his life," Khera said alleging the prime minister did not speak on any issue concerning the people.

"The prime minister did not speak on any issue of people's interest. His method has been to change the agenda. Because everyone is talking about NEET, the scams, to distract attention, you're talking about umbrella from Kerala..." he alleged.

"During the elections, you were pitting the north against the south... Do you think people will forget? What you say during campaign is the truth, what you're doing now is a propaganda," he said.

In his first Mann Ki Baat radio broadcast after assuming office for a third term, Prime Minister Modi said on Sunday that people expressed their unwavering faith in the country's (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Atul Bora to meet Union agriculture minister today for consultation on farm sector

By: Hiranya Barman

GUWAHATI, June 30: State agriculture minister Atul Bora will meet Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan on Monday at his Krishi Bhawan office for consultations on issues related to farmers and agriculture, sources said.

The meeting follows an invitation from the Agriculture Ministry to state ministers to discuss farm sector issues, marking a

significant departure as such consultations had not occurred in the past 10 years of BJP-led government.

As per the sources, state ministers have been requested to prepare power point presentations and share their views and suggestions on the farmers' and agriculture's situation in their states.

"State agriculture minister Atul Bora will go to Delhi to meet Union agriculture minister on issues relating to farm sector,"

sources familiar with the matter told The Hills Times.

Chauhan will also meet the agriculture minister of Chhattisgarh on the same day.

Consultation meetings with ministers from other states are scheduled to follow in the coming days, sources added. It is worth mentioning that shortly after taking office on June 11; Chauhan expressed his intention to engage with all stakeholders, including state (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'Whenever a launch is held, there is a lot of external pressure'

P Saraniya: From dreaming about oceans in Port Blair to building rockets for Agnikul

NEW DELHI, June 30: From dreaming about the immense possibilities offered by ocean studies while growing up in Port Blair to being at the helm of building rockets to put satellites in orbit, it has been a formidable learning curve for Saraniya Periaswamy, a young engineer at the Chennai-based space start-up Agnikul Cosmos.

The 30-year-old Saraniya is in charge of development of the 3-D printed launch vehicle -- Agnibaan Sub-Orbital Technology Demonstrator (SOTeD) -- that had its first flight on May 30, overcoming a series of challenges over more than a two-month pe-



riod. The launch of Agnibaan-SOTeD was first scheduled on March 22, but had to be put on hold on May 20 after "certain minor observations from the full countdown rehearsals". "Whenever a

launch is held, there is a lot of external pressure. Everyone is looking forward to the launch and if you are unable to pull it through, it is not like you are failing somewhere. But, it becomes a little difficult at that

time," Saraniya told PTI on the sidelines of the India Space Congress organised by SIA-India here.

Saraniya did her schooling and graduation in Port Blair, the capital of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the place of her birth. She studied civil engineering at the Dr B R Ambedkar Institute of Technology, Port Blair and did her masters in ocean technology from IIT-Madras. Agnikul Cosmos took shape at the IIT-Madras campus under the guidance of Satyanarayan Chakravarty, the Head of the National Centre for Combustion Research and Development. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

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-Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

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Mcap of nine of top-10 most valued firms jumps ₹2.89 lakh cr; Reliance biggest winner

NEW DELHI, June 30: Nine of the top-10 most valued firms together added ₹ 2,89,699.42 crore in market valuation last week, with Reliance Industries emerging as the biggest gainer, in line with a rally in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,822.83 points or 2.36 per cent. The BSE Sensex recorded the best monthly gain in June by climbing 7.14 per cent. The Sensex breached the historic 79,000 mark on Thursday.

While Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever and ITC were the gainers, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) emerged as the laggard.

The market capitalisation



(mcap) of Reliance Industries jumped ₹ 1,52,264.63 crore to ₹ 21,18,951.20 crore. TCS added ₹ 34,733.64 crore taking its valuation to ₹

14,12,845.09 crore. The mcap of ICICI Bank soared ₹ 30,286.99 crore to ₹ 8,44,201.88 crore and that of Bharti Airtel surged ₹ 18,267.7 crore to ₹

8,22,530.35 crore.

The market valuation of Infosys climbed ₹ 14,656.3 crore to ₹ 6,50,602.10 crore and that of HDFC Bank zoomed ₹ 13,808.74 crore to ₹ 12,80,865.43 crore.

State Bank of India's valuation rallied ₹ 11,111.14 crore to ₹ 7,57,565.68 crore.

The mcap of Hindustan Unilever went up by ₹ 7,953.37 crore to ₹ 5,81,570.83 crore and that of ITC climbed ₹ 6,616.91 crore to ₹ 5,30,475.82 crore.

However, the valuation of LIC tumbled ₹ 22,042.61 crore to ₹ 6,25,573.90 crore.

Reliance Industries remained the most valued firm, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Infosys, LIC, Hindustan Unilever and ITC. (PTI)

Economy poised for potentially stable high growth phase: RBI's MPC member

NEW DELHI, June 30: Indian economy is poised for potentially a stable high growth phase and it is also in a strong position in the context of significant risks that the country is facing, RBI's monetary policy committee member Shashanka Bhide said on Sunday.

Bhide further said with the growth of income that would support domestic demand and additions to production or supply capacity reflected by high levels of investment spending in the last couple of years, domestic economic activity is expected to sustain its momentum.

"In terms of growth momentum and inflation trajectories Indian economy is poised for potentially a stable high growth phase.

"It is also in a strong position in the context of significant risks that are also facing us," he told PTI.

The current official estimate of GDP growth in 2023-24 is 8.2 per cent, accelerating from 7 per cent in the preceding year.

Earlier this month, the Reserve Bank of India pegged the GDP growth rate for FY25 at 7.2 per cent.

Bhide noted that the monsoon rainfall, which is expected to be normal this year, is a significant positive factor for growth as well as bringing down food inflation.

While noting that improvement in global demand conditions are necessary to spur external demand for goods and services, he said sizable capital inflows supporting investment, reflect both the supply side efficiencies and high growth potential of the economy both in terms of domestic demand as well as India's exports.

Responding to a question on inflation, Bhide said the concerns are mainly in terms of the impact of risks from any adverse weather and climate events, disruptions in global supply chains due to international conflicts and the slow recovery of the global economy from the recent high inflation period.

"Our own overall CPI inflation is marked by high levels of food inflation and a decline in this component of the overall inflation is crucial going forward," he opined. Bhide said while food inflation is at a high level, averaging about 8 per cent during Jan-May 2024, the overall CPI-based inflation has moderated to below 5 per cent during March-May 2024.

"The prevailing policy rate combined with the gradual decline in inflation rate does mean higher real interest rates, but continued focus on keeping the inflation aligned with the target in a sustained way is important at this point to support growth as well," he said.

In its latest bi-monthly review earlier this month, the six-member monetary policy committee (MPC) of Reserve Bank of India left the key interest rate (repo rate) unchanged for the eighth time in a row at 6.5 per cent. The RBI has projected Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based retail inflation at 4.5 per cent for FY25 with 4.9 per cent in Q1 (April-June), 3.8 per cent in Q2, 4.6 per cent in Q3, and 4.5 per cent in Q4. Retail inflation was 4.75 per cent in May.

The RBI, which has been mandated to ensure inflation remains at 4 per cent (with margin of 2 per cent on either side), mainly factors in CPI while arriving at its monetary policy. (PTI)

JSW Infra to re-evaluate strategy for Tajpur port project 'if it comes for re-bidding': Official

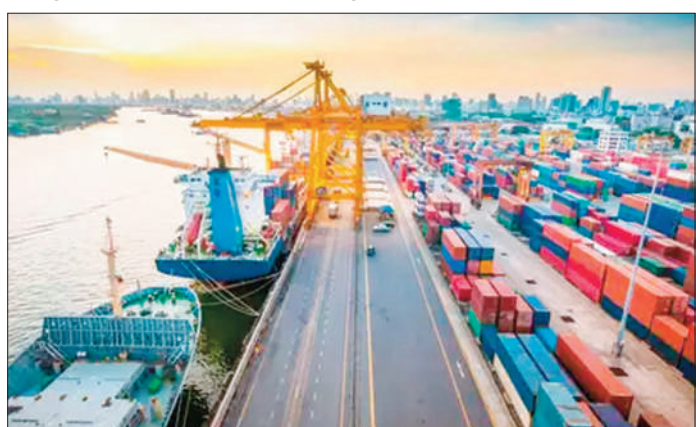
KOLKATA, June 30: Indicating that the company is still interested in the mega Tajpur deep sea port in West Bengal, JSW Infrastructure Ltd said that it remains open to re-evaluate its strategy for the project "if the project comes for re-bidding", a senior official said.

JSW Group had failed to emerge as the winning bidder in the last tendering round, where Adani Ports and SEZ Ltd (APSEZ) had emerged as the L1 bidder in October 2022, and a Letter of Intent to Award (LOIA) was handed over to the company.

However, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's announcement at the Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS) in November 2023 that a tender would soon be launched for the development of the port. This has led to a cloud of uncertainty around the mega deep-sea port project.

Banerjee had announced that the proposed deep-sea port at Tajpur is ready for tender, which would attract an investment of USD 3 billion or ₹ 25,000 crore.

JSW Infrastructure Joint Managing Director and CEO Arun Ma-



heswari told PTI: "We will re-evaluate our strategies. Previously, when we bid, it was 2-3 years back."

He was in Kolkata to attend a CII Young Indians event.

Since the chief minister's announcement, there has been no official word on the next steps, though Adani officials said they were in touch with the state administration.

"There has been no official clarification since the CM's announcement. However, we remain

committed to the project and are still waiting for an award," Adani group sources said, declining to be identified due to the sensitivity of the matter.

The Tajpur deep sea port project is a challenging one, and the state government needs to be forthcoming to make the project a reality, sources said.

APSEZ is the country's largest private port operator with an installed capacity of about 550 million tonnes per annum, while JSW Infra is also a major player boast-

ing an installed cargo handling capacity of 170 million tonnes per annum.

The proposed port's main features include a location five km from NH-116B and around 170 km from Kolkata. The port will have a deep draft of 12.1m, an 18-km channel, and tidal support of 3.9m, enabling large capesize vessels of one lakh DWT.

The project is expected to entail an investment of ₹ 15,000 crore, with an additional ₹ 10,000 crore for related port-led infrastructure development, totalling ₹ 25,000 crore. It is expected to create around 25,000 direct jobs and over one lakh indirect jobs.

The Tajpur deep sea port was touted to usher in a new era of growth in the state, extending its benefits to the hinterland areas. As a deep sea greenfield port, its linkage to the Industrial and Economic Corridor from Dankuni to Raghunathpur, being developed by the state, will enhance regional logistics and export efficiency, unlocking vast industrial and economic opportunities once operational, the state had said in the past. (PTI)

Bihar to host mega investor summit in Dec; roadshows from today

NEW DELHI, June 30: Bihar will roll out the red carpet for domestic and foreign investors at a mega event in December as it looks to lure investments in sectors like textiles, food processing and EVs that will create jobs and boost business in the state.

After the grand success of the 2023 edition, the state will host the two-day Bihar Business Connect event on December 11 and 12 in Patna. And before that, it will hold roadshows in different cities, beginning with Kolkata on Monday. "Bihar has a strategic locational advantage. Through Bihar, we can cater to the entire northeast, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan, and con-

nectivity is excellent now in terms of roads and we have now three functional airports in Gaya, Patna and Darbhanga," said Nitish Mishra, Bihar's Minister for Industry and Tourism, who would be leading the roadshows. Being a land-locked state, Bihar is giving export subsidies to bear the cost of moving goods to the nearest port, he added. This, together with a very progressive industrial policy, makes the state an ideal investment destination. "We are having Bihar Business Connect on December 11-12 in Patna. Before that, we are going to big cities for investors' meet starting from Kolkata on July 1."

Contd. from Page 1...

Gen Upendra Dwivedi

also have to coordinate with the Navy and the Indian Air Force on the government's ambitious plan to roll out theatre commands. The Army said operational preparedness to counter security threats to a rising nation would figure prominently as a key focus area for the COAS.

"Concurrently, a focused response strategy, to myriad non-traditional security challenges, too shall be a priority, towards augmenting the nation's defence," it said. "Gen Dwivedi has tenanted critical appointments and played a pivotal role in combating grey zone manifestations in the national security canvas," it said in a release.

The Army said the officer has a deep understanding of modern and emerging technologies in the security domain and possesses a thoughtful approach to harnessing and integrating cutting-edge technologies into military systems to enhance operational effectiveness.

"This vision finds congruence to the ongoing pursuit of the Indian Army to fulfil its modernisation and capability development needs through Atmanirbharta," it said. "A firm believer and follower of the Chetwode Motto, the General will also focus on promoting a culture of trust, empowerment of junior Officers, well-being of the soldiers and welfare of veterans and Veer Naris," it said.

In his long and distinguished career spanning nearly 40 years, he has served in a variety of command, staff, instructional and foreign appointments. The command appointments of Gen Dwivedi include command of regiment (18 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles), Brigade (26 Sector Assam Rifles), Inspector General, Assam Rifles (East) and 9 Corps. He has been decorated with the Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and three GOC-in-C Commendation Cards. As Northern Army commander, Gen Dwivedi provided strategic guidance and operational oversight for the planning and execution of sustained operations along the northern and western borders, besides orchestrating the dynamic counter-terrorism operations in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

During this period, the General officer was actively engaged in the ongoing negotiations with China to resolve the vexed border issue, they said. He was also involved in the modernisation and equipping of the largest Army command of the Indian Army, where he steered the induction of indigenous equipment as part of Atmanirbhara Bharat (self-reliant India). (PTI)

Brahmaputra river crosses

senior resident. "Every year during the rainy season, our locality faces severe waterlogging. The Dibrugarh Town Protection drain is overflowing, inundating many houses in our area," he added.

Notably, all 22 wards under the Dibrugarh Municipal Corporation are affected, with numerous houses submerged, leaving residents in distress.

Atul Bora to meet Union

agriculture ministers. "I am not proud or arrogant that I know everything or that only the IAS officers sitting in my office know everything. I am thirsty for knowledge. I want to take the best from wherever I can, for the welfare of agriculture and farmers," he stated on June 22.

Since assuming charge, he has met NITI Aayog member Ramesh Chand and former agriculture secretary Sanjay Agrawal, who heads the 26-member 'MSP panel' established after the repeal of the farm laws.

Chand, a supporter of farm sector reforms, is also a member of the committee, which is yet to submit its report. Earlier, three crucial farm sector laws were introduced through an ordinance in June 2020; however, they were repealed later.

Modi did not mention

Constitution and democratic process in the world's biggest polls in which more than 65 crore voters exercised their franchise. (PTI)

Sonowal reviews flood

regarding the steps taken to mitigate the impact of flood situation in the city. While the administration is trying to negate the impact of floods with emergency measures, I have directed the officials to ensure that those affected are offered support and relief at the earliest."

He discussed the situation with the MLA of Dibrugarh, Prashanta Phukan along with top officials of Dibrugarh Municipality Corporation (DMC) including the Mayor, Saikat Patra; the deputy mayor, Ujjwal Phukan; ward commissioners; and the other senior officials. The chief secretary, Assam government, Ravi Kota as well as the district commissioner, Birkram Kairi were also present during this meeting as the Union minister directed all the officials to take immediate measures and offer relief to the victims.

New criminal laws come

A new chapter on crimes against women and children have been added, buying and selling of any child has been made a heinous crime and there is a provision for death sentence or life imprisonment for gang rape of a minor. The offences against women and children, murder and offences against the State have been given precedence in the new law. Overlapping sections have been merged and simplified and will consist of only 358 sections against 511 in the Indian Penal Code, the sources said.

For example, definitions scattered from sections 6 to 52 have been brought under one section. Eighteen sections already stand repealed and four relating to weights and measures are covered under the Legal Metrology Act, 2009. Instances of false promise of marriage, gang rape of minors, mob lynching, chain snatching, etc are reported but the current Indian Penal Code did not have specific provisions for dealing with such incidents. These have been addressed in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the sources said. A new provision has been made for cases such as abandonment of women after making sexual relations on the false promise of marriage. The three laws were based on justice, transparency and fairness, the sources said.

Under the new laws, a person can now report incidents by electronic communication, without the need to physically visit a police station. This allows for easier and quicker reporting, facilitating prompt action by the police. With the introduction of Zero FIR, a person can file a First Information Report (FIR) at any police station, regardless of jurisdiction. This eliminates delays in initiating legal proceedings and ensures immediate reporting of the offence. An interesting addition of the law is that in the event of an arrest, the individual has the right to inform a person of his choice about his or her situation. This will ensure immediate support and assistance to the arrested individual.

Besides, arrest details will now be prominently displayed within police stations and district headquarters, allowing families and friends of the arrested person easy access to important information. To strengthen cases and investigations, it has become mandatory for forensic experts to visit crime scenes for serious offences and collect evidence. Under the new laws, victims of crime against women are entitled to regular updates on the progress of their case within 90 days. This provision keeps victims informed and involved in the legal process, enhancing transparency and trust. The new laws guarantee free first-aid or medical treatment to victims of crimes against women and children at all hospitals.

This provision ensures immediate access to essential medical care, prioritising the wellbeing and recovery of victims during challenging times. Summonses can now be served electronically, expediting legal processes, reducing paperwork and ensuring efficient communication among all parties involved. For certain offences against women, statements of the victim are to be recorded, as far as practicable, by a woman magistrate and, in her absence, by a male magistrate in the presence of a woman to ensure sensitivity and fairness, creating a supportive environment for victims.

Both the accused and the victim are entitled to receive copies of the FIR, police report, charge sheet, statements, confessions, and other documents within 14 days. Courts grant a maximum of two adjournments to avoid unnecessary delays in case hearings, ensuring timely justice delivery. The new laws mandate all state governments to implement witness protection schemes to ensure the safety and cooperation of witnesses, enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of legal proceedings. The definition of "gender" now includes transgender individuals, promoting inclusivity and equality. By conducting all legal proceedings electronically, the new laws offer convenience to victims, witnesses and accused, thereby streamlining and expediting the entire legal process. To provide more protection to the victim and enforce transparency in investigation related to an offence of rape, the statement of the victim shall be recorded through audio-video means. Women, persons below 15 years, persons above 60 years and those with disabilities or acute illnesses are exempt from attending police stations and can receive police assistance at their place of residence. (PTI)

P Saraniya: From dreaming

Saraniya, who had studied oil rigs, offshore engineering, and naval architecture as part of her masters course, started her career in Agnikul as a systems engineer, in charge of the oversight of the launch systems.

"I started off studying systems first because I had to get some knowledge and understand the different parts of a rocket," she said. As a Vehicle Director, Saraniya worked on several aspects -- from the initial design development of the rocket to producing a completely working vehicle.

"There are different sub-systems in the vehicle. Getting all the sub-systems done, integrating them correctly, carrying out a functionality test on each and every sub-component and then integrating the complete vehicle into the launch pad falls within the domain of the Vehicle Director," she said. A unique offering from Agnikul is its mobile launchpad 'Dhanush' which allows small satellites to be put in orbit from literally anywhere on land. "Designing this was not easy. The launchpad and the vehicle had to be structurally mobile. The vehicle also had to be made easy to move around safely. Also, the vehicle was designed to use easily available fuel -- aviation grade fuel and industrial oxygen," Saraniya said.

After the successful launch of technology demonstrator AgniBaas SORTeD, Saraniya and her colleagues have started working on developing the orbital rocket to place satellites in low earth orbit. "I was not very sure that I could go to the space industry without having any background," she said, adding that she was enjoying every bit of time spent developing and building rockets. (PTI)

Guv Kataria reviews Tezpur University's academic trajectory



HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, June 30: To assess the academic progress of Tezpur University (TU), Gulab Chand Kataria, Governor of Assam and Chancellor of TU, visited the university campus. Governor Kataria, who arrived on Saturday, held a meeting with Prof Shambhu Nath Singh, vice chancellor of TU, on Sunday.

Later, he engaged in interactive

sessions with statutory officers of the university, students, faculty members, deans, and heads of departments.

Governor Kataria also addressed state government teachers currently undergoing the Science Teachers Training program at the university.

Addressing the teachers at the KBR auditorium of the university, the Governor emphasised that

teaching is the noblest profession, drawing references from Indian philosophy.

He cited the example of Lord Krishna and Sudama studying together in a Gurukula, underscoring that India traditionally had no class divisions, which he attributed to a colonial mindset. Governor Kataria urged teachers to empower weaker students, emphasising their duty in this regard.

Welcoming Governor Kataria to the TU campus, vice chancellor Prof Singh expressed confidence that his visit would uplift the spirit of TU's academic community.

During the interactive session, students, faculty members, and academic heads had the opportunity to discuss concerns and suggestions directly with the Governor. Topics included initiatives to bridge academia-industry gaps, increased research opportunities, updated infrastructure, funding, research grants, and university collaborations. Governor Kataria assured the TU community that their feedback would be seriously considered, with efforts made to address their concerns.

Hul Divas observed nationwide

New Delhi and Kokrajhar events pay tribute to Santhal community's pivotal contributions



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 30: The National Integration Day of Santals, known as Hul Divas, was observed on Sunday across the country to commemorate the 169th anniversary of the Santhali community's pivotal role in the Indian independence movement.

In New Delhi, Hul Divas was organised at the Constitution Club by the All Santhal Students Union (ASSU), with leaders and members from various Santhal community

organisations participating. Pramod Boro, chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), graced the occasion as the chief guest.

In his address, CEM Boro recalled the contributions and sacrifices of the Santhali community in India's struggle for independence. He emphasised the significant role played by the Santhals in India's journey towards freedom, particularly highlighting the Santhal Hul or rebellion of June 30, 1855, led by Sido

Kanhu against the British Raj, during which many heroes sacrificed their lives.

"It was an honour to attend the Hul Divas commemorating the 169th National Integration Day of Santals organised by the ASSU at Constitution Club, New Delhi," said Boro. He also acknowledged the community's ongoing contributions to the cultural and socio-economic development of the Bodoland Territorial Region.

"I hope that the community continues to grow and contribute even more to the region's progress, with its language and culture gaining prominence globally. My best wishes on the National Integration Day of the Santals," Boro added.

The event in New Delhi was attended by Rajya Sabha MP Rungwa Narzary, BTR executive member Wilson Hasda, and several dignitaries.

Meanwhile, in Kokrajhar, Hul Divas was observed at Kachugaon Community Hall, with a large gathering of community participants. BTR executive member Ukil Mushahary, Gosaigaon LAC MLA Jiran Basumatary, and BTR MCLA Madhab Chandra Chetry were present at the event, which also honoured the contributions and sacrifices of Sidhu Murmu and Kanhu Murmu in the Indian independence movement.

Torrential rains cause severe flooding in Margherita

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, June 30: Due to torrential rainfall over the last couple of days, the floodwaters of the Buri Dehing River in Margherita have submerged the Margherita town area, including Old Colony, Dehing Puria Gaon, Ledo 1 and 2 No Maulang, Ledo Khamti Maulang Gaon, Maulang Reserve, etc.

Various areas of the 83 number Margherita constituency under Tinsukia district are currently affected by the floodwaters.

About 64 families living in the upper and lower Dehing Puria areas under Ward No 8 of Margherita Municipal Board have been affected by the flood, with water entering their homes.

Margherita Municipal Board chairman Ananda Kumar Sharma and Margherita Sub-Divisional Administration (Civil) assistant commissioner Pritam Gogoi have visited the area and taken stock of the situation.

Meanwhile, relief camps have been set up at the Margherita Town Primary School and several other locations for the flood-affected people.

Inclusive, equitable development of all communities needed for Assam's holistic growth: Governor

GUWAHATI, June 30: Governor Gulab Chand Kataria has stressed on the development of all communities for holistic growth of the state. He underlined the importance of bringing together the leadership of different communities to ensure inclusive, equitable development. The governor was speaking at the valedictory ceremony of a two-day conference of autonomous councils, which are not covered under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, here on Saturday, an official release said.

Leaders of Rabha-Hasong, Mising, Tiwa, Deuri, Thengal-Kachari, Sonowal-Kachari, Bodo-Kachari, Moran and Motock communities and Kamatapur area, which have been formed into autonomous councils, participated in the meet. Lauding the initiative

of Assam Assembly in organising the meet, he said it will also help in spreading awareness about the spirit associated with the establishment of the Autonomous Councils. The conference has helped in reorienting different functionaries of the autonomous councils about the legislative, administrative and financial powers. The conference has also acted as a learning curve for different stakeholders about the provisions of the Autonomous Councils Act, Kataria added. The governor hopes that the outcome of the conference would help in contributing in a decisive way in achieving the objectives of the Autonomous Councils, i.e. the social, economic, academic and cultural advancement of the scheduled demographic entities under it. (PTI)

Hemanta Dutta to receive Baan Theatre Award at Natasurya Drama Festival

TEZPUR, June 30: The prestigious Baan Theatre Award 2024 will be bestowed upon eminent playwright, director, and lyricist Hemanta Dutta during the upcoming Natasurya Phani Sarma Memorial Drama Festival scheduled from July 31 for a five-day duration.

This announcement was made by Jitumani Deva Choudhury, general secretary of Baan Theatre, during a special function held on Saturday evening. As part of the festival's events, the opening ceremony

featured the unveiling of three plays to be staged, including 'Purani Bakulor Subas' scripted by Mrinal Kumar Bora, 'Kanai' scripted by Aditya Ankur Nath, Priyakshi Madhukalya, and Jagriti Kaundinya, and a play authored by Hemanta Dutta to be presented by Majgaon Srimanta Sankardev Mandir Anusthan.

The ceremonial inauguration included the breaking of a coconut by Bankim Sarma, president of Baan Theatre, and the lighting of a ceremonial lantern by noted playwright Karuna Saikia.

Jorhat CPE Study Chapter of ICAI celebrates 75th anniversary

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, June 30: The Jorhat CPE Study Chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) donated 14 ceiling fans, a collection of books, maps, and saplings to Malowkhat Higher Secondary School, Sahnuria Gaon, Khutiapota, as part of its three-day celebrations marking 75 years since the establishment of ICAI. The National Chartered Accountants Day, celebrated annually on July 1, commemorates ICAI's

founding in 1949.

A representative from the Jorhat CPE Study Chapter stated that a delegation visited the school to deliver these donations and also planted saplings on the school campus. The delegation included Nitesh Lakhota, convener of Jorhat CPE Study Chapter; Gaurav Jain, deputy convener; Sushil Kumar Kalani, CPE Committee chairman of Guwahati Branch EIRC; Sharad Bajaj, former chairman of Guwahati Branch ICAI; and other prominent members of

the Jorhat CA fraternity.

Kushal Kumar Pachani, principal of Malowkhat Higher Secondary School, Sahnuria Gaon, Khutiapota, expressed gratitude to the Jorhat CPE Study Chapter of ICAI for their initiative. The initiative, conducted as part of the organisation's Corporate Social Responsibility activities under the motto of 'Give back to society', is part of a series of events organised by the Jorhat CPE Study Chapter during their three-day celebration titled 'Vibrant 75'.

Sivasagar Marwari Sanmilian organises blood test camp

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, June 30: The Marwari Sanmilian in Khemka Matri Sadan, Doulmukh Chariali, organised a blood test camp that received commendation from the local community. The camp, conducted in collaboration with DR Lal PathLab, Dibrugarh, was part of their social service initiative. Blood samples were collected from donors at a nominal price, which was 70

percent less than other laboratories, and the reports were delivered online. The initiative was led by office bearers of Marwari Sanmilian, including Rupchand Karmani (secretary), Gopal Krishna Chandak (vice president), Pradip Khemka (president, Matri Sadan), Nanda Kishore Shahu (proprietor, Nidan), Rajiv Bhat-tacharya (manager, DR Lal Pathlab), Rabi Sarmah, Bijay Sankar



Bharali, Sabal Bora, and Jitu Baruah.

Gameripal Gaon Sangathan marks 90th foundation day

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, June 30: The 90th foundation day of Gameripal Gaon Sangathan, a prominent socio-cultural and educational organisation in the greater Gameripal area, was celebrated on Sunday at Gameripal Natya Mandir under the chairmanship of Dal Bahadur Chetry, president of the organisation.

During the event, 10 meritorious students who excelled in the recently declared HSLC, HS, and NEET examinations were honoured with citations, gamosas, and packets of books by the organisers. The session featured speeches by Anjan Baskota, recipient of Sahitya Akademi's Yuva Puraskar, Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan, emerging writer, Narayan Sarma, novelist, and Dr Binod Sarma.

In addition, Gameripal Gaon Sangathan also recognised three local residents—Sushil Chamlagain for agriculture, Kamal Acharya for business, and Sunil Dewan for social service—with citations and gamosas for their outstanding contributions to their respective fields.

The program was attended by notable individuals such as Chakrapani Sarma, Padma Sarma, Hemanta Sarma, Naren Pokhrel, Dharani Adhikari, and Mi-



tradev Kafle among others. Dr Tilak Sarma, Nityananda Das, and Sukhdev Karki also addressed the gathering. Raju Sarma, secretary of Gameripal Gaon Sangathan, conducted the proceedings, and Dilip Kafle delivered the vote of thanks.

It is noteworthy that the celebration coincided with Ashar Pandhra (15th Ashadha), an agri-based festival of the Gorkhas, observed with a community feast of curd and flattened rice. The event was attended by parents, members of the organisation, and dignitaries from the area.

ABSU calls off protest against Dudhnoi gang rape and murder case

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 30: The massive protest demonstration demanding stringent punishment for the accused involved in the Dudhnoi gang rape and murder case, organised under the aegis of the All-Bodo Students Union (ABSU), was called off on Saturday. The demonstration, held at Bodoifa Children Park in the heart of Kokrajhar town, concluded on its second day.

The protest, which began on Friday and was scheduled for two days, saw participation from leaders of ABSU, All Assam Tribal Sangha (AATS), Dularai Boro Somaj, Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS), and prominent citizens from various communities.

Among them were Amiya Khaklary, elder brother of Hiranmoy, and survivors of the brutal Dudhnoi incident, Narendra Daimary, Himanta Khaklary, and Raja Mahan Khak-

lary. ABSU president Dipen Boro, addressing the media, stated that ABSU had been demanding severe punishment for the accused rapists and murderers—Dhan Ali Talukdar, Rahman Ali, and Bahar Ali—but expressed surprise that the Assam government had not taken any action against them.

He criticised the government's lack of response despite visits by cabinet ministers to other locations affected by similar incidents. "The failure of the government to act in Dudhnoi for 56 days following the rape and murder at Balapara reveals an anti-tribal bias," he remarked.

He emphasised the need for impartiality in addressing criminal activities and called upon chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to take stringent measures to ensure justice for victims.

Boro further demanded capital punish-

ment and financial compensation of ₹ 20 lakhs for the victim's family, warning that ABSU would continue its agitation until justice was served.

He announced the cessation of the protest dharna on Saturday, citing assurances from concerned authorities regarding decisive action. The Dudhnoi gang rape occurred on the night of May 3, 2024, when tribal girls returning from a Bwisag function in Balapara village were attacked.

Subsequently, on May 5, Hiranmoy Khaklari and others were brutally attacked at the residence of prime accused Dhan Ali Talukdar in Tangabari village, resulting in Khaklari's death on May 16 at GNRC in Guwahati.

Meanwhile, the district police administration has initiated strong actions in response to the incidents, including demolishing the houses of the accused.

Workshop at St Theresa's School, Morigaon

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, June 30: St Theresa's School, Morigaon, in collaboration with Eupheus Learning, hosted a workshop on 'Effective Classroom Management through Personalised Learning: Impacting Behavioural Changes' at the school premises on Sunday.

The inaugural session was graced by the presence of the district commissioner, Morigaon Debashish Sharma, IAS.

Over 200 school teachers from Morigaon, Kamrup, and Nagaon districts participated in the event.

Addressing the teachers, the district commissioner emphasised the pivotal role of educators in shaping students' beliefs and fostering rational thinking. He highlighted the importance of nurturing critical thinking, promoting open-mindedness, and cultivating an appreciation for evidence-based reasoning.

These efforts, he noted, are crucial not only for academic excellence but also for preparing students for personal and professional success, enabling them to navigate life's challenges with confidence and wisdom.

The workshop featured insightful presentations by prominent academicians Laldinmawla Hnialum and Sandeep Gulia. They shared their expertise on classroom management, personalised learning, and effective strategies to bring about behavioural changes among students.

Nagaon hosts District Science Model Competition

Elora Vigyaan Mancha and Nowgong College collaborate to promote science education & advocate for organ donation

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 30: In a bid to promote scientific awareness and advocate for altruistic contributions, the Elora Vigyaan Mancha, Nagaon branch, in collaboration with the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of Nowgong College (Autonomous), successfully organised a significant district-level science model competition at Nowgong College (Autonomous) last Saturday. Over 300 students, educators, and research scholars from educational institutions across Nagaon district participated in the competition.

As part of the district science conference, a popular talk on 'Importance of Organ and Body Donation' was also organised, where noted physician Dr Mihir Kumar Goswami, principal of Nagaon Medical College and Hospital, spoke passionately on the need for organ and body donation. Dr Goswami underscored the critical shortage of donors in India and emphasised the profound impact of blood, organ, and body



donations on healthcare advancements.

The competition showcased innovative science models created by 55 teams representing various educational institutions. Professor Haliram Hazarika,

former head of the Physics Department at Nowgong College, inaugurated the science model competition, setting the tone for a day of scientific exploration and discovery. Dr Sarada Bhagawati

from the College of Fisheries, AAU, Dhrubajyoti Bora, Dr Rashmirekha Bora, and Dr Lalit Mohan Goswami from Nowgong College (Autonomous), and Gunendra Chakraborty from Nagaon Government Boys' School served as judges.

Addressing the gathering, Elora Vigyaan Mancha, Nagaon branch executive president Jaineswar Sharma encouraged students to cultivate a scientific mindset through active participation and presentation of their scientific models. The event was moderated by Dr Bhuvan Chandra Chutia, coordinator of the Internal Quality Assurance Cell of Nowgong College (Autonomous), and presided over by Elora Vigyaan Mancha president Amarendra Nath Sharma.

Dr Ranjit Kumar Majinder, principal in charge of Nowgong College (Autonomous), expressed gratitude to the organisers for their initiative in organising the science exhibition. He highlighted the importance of raising

awareness about organ and body donation, citing it as a noble cause that benefits medical education and research.

During the event, the secretary of Elora Vigyaan Mancha, Satyajit Roy, acknowledged families who had donated bodies for medical purposes and presented them with certificates of recognition. The ceremony also included the distribution of cash prizes sponsored by Dr Sanjay Dey, Sutapa Basu, Satyajit Roy, and his wife Mina Paul, honouring outstanding participants in the science model competition. Pradip Agarwal, president, Ajay Mittal, secretary, and Mulchand Agarwal, treasurer of the Marwari Sanmilian, were present at the event. The day concluded with a commitment from all stakeholders to continue promoting scientific education and fostering a culture of giving through organ and body donation. The success of the conference underscored the community's dedication to advancing scientific knowledge and humanitarian causes in Nagaon district, asserted in a press note here.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Progress was all right. Only it went on too long.
- James Thurber

A tale of two chairmen

In the hallowed halls of India's Rajya Sabha, where debates shape policies and legislative decisions resonate nationwide, the role of its Chairman assumes paramount importance. This position not only symbolizes authority but also embodies the values of decorum, impartiality, and democratic stewardship. Recently, the contrasting tenures of Venkaiah Naidu and Jagdeep Dhanekar as Chairmen of the Rajya Sabha have sparked significant public interest and debate, highlighting stark differences in leadership approach and style. Venkaiah Naidu, a seasoned politician renowned for his eloquence and extensive political experience, brought to the role a deep commitment to parliamentary decorum and procedural integrity. His tenure was marked by a statesman-like demeanor, emphasizing consensus-building and upholding the sanctity of parliamentary traditions. Naidu's speeches often resonated with quotes from Indian scriptures and historical references, underscoring his belief in the gravity of legislative proceedings. During moments of turbulence, such as unruly disruptions within the House, Naidu's response was notably emotional yet firm, reflecting his unwavering dedication to democratic ideals. His tenure witnessed a significant improvement in legislative productivity, a testament to his efforts in fostering constructive debate and maintaining order. In contrast, Jagdeep Dhanekar's approach to the Chairmanship has been characterized by assertiveness and a confrontational stance towards parliamentary challenges. Coming from a legal background, Dhanekar brought a sharp understanding of procedural matters to his role, often confronting opposition members directly and demanding accountability. His speeches were marked by directness and impatience with what he perceived as inefficiencies in legislative processes. Dhanekar's tenure, while drawing attention for its provocative handling of disruptions, highlighted his determination to expedite decision-making within the House.

The difference in leadership styles between Naidu and Dhanekar is stark and reflective of broader philosophical contrasts in governance. Naidu's emphasis on consensus-building and tolerance towards dissenting voices stood in contrast to Dhanekar's more combative approach, which prioritized expediency and accountability. Naidu's emotional breakdown during a tumultuous session underscored his deep-seated belief in the dignity of parliamentary democracy, whereas Dhanekar's confrontations underscored his urgency for action and reform. The impact of their respective tenures on legislative productivity further illuminates these differences. Under Naidu's leadership, the Rajya Sabha witnessed a steady improvement in sessional productivity, reflecting his efforts to foster an environment conducive to meaningful debate and decision-making. In contrast, Dhanekar's tenure, while marked by proactive engagement and direct challenges to opposition, also saw continued scrutiny over the confrontational nature of his leadership style. As we reflect on these contrasting leadership styles, it becomes evident that the role of the Rajya Sabha Chairman extends beyond mere procedural oversight. It embodies the essence of democratic governance, where the manner of conducting proceedings shapes public perception and influences legislative outcomes. Naidu's tenure underscored the importance of upholding parliamentary decorum and preserving the integrity of democratic institutions, while Dhanekar's tenure highlighted the imperative for bold action and reform in response to contemporary challenges.

In conclusion, the study in contrast between Venkaiah Naidu and Jagdeep Dhanekar as Chairmen of the Rajya Sabha offers valuable insights into the diverse approaches to leadership in parliamentary settings. Their respective tenures not only reflect personal philosophies but also mirror broader debates on the role of leadership in democratic governance. As we navigate the complexities of modern democracy, the lessons gleaned from their experiences serve as guiding beacons for future parliamentary leaders, emphasizing the critical balance between consensus-building and decisive action in advancing the nation's legislative agenda. In the annals of India's parliamentary history, the legacies of Naidu and Dhanekar as Rajya Sabha Chairmen will endure as testament to the enduring principles of democracy and the evolving dynamics of legislative leadership.

Bihar sees clashes between upper castes and Dalits after LS polls

After a long gap of more than 50 years Bihar is once again witnessing emergence of class war though of not that magnitude and dimension that the state witnessed in early seventies. The basic character of upper caste oppression continues to be same as was evident in those days. If during those years the upper caste feudal lords and landed gentry had come together to foil the OBCs and EBCs to emerge in a strong way on the political horizon of the state and control the instrument of production and decision making mechanism, this time, they have started attacking the Dalits and proletariat for preventing them to grow and expand.

There is no denying that the upper caste people have been contemplating to assert their rights and power under the stewardship of BJP. But their desire received a major setback with BJP not performing well. Even in the midst of the electoral exercise, the saffron supporters and Modi Bhakts were sure of BJP crossing 400 seat target set up by Modi. But the realisation of losing the ballgame as the Dalits and OBCs have shifted their allegiance to INDIA bloc, made them belligerent [as1].

They shed away the façade of being democratised under Modi rule. The Dalits and OBCs turned out to be the main target of upper castes led by the BJP. With the upper caste dominated police and bureaucracy coming to their aid, they were not to worry. The first incident of revenge killing took place in Saran. The violent incident that took place in Saran made it abundantly clear that poll violence, booth capturing and influencing elections through muscle power continues to dictate the politics of Bihar.

A day after polling on

May 21, violence broke out between the Yadav and the Rajput communities in Badi Telpa village, in which a Yadav youth Chandan lost his life when goons of other community fired on them.

It was alleged that Dalits and voters from the marginalised communities were being prevented from casting their votes at Badi Telpa. After getting the information, RJD candidate Rohini Acharya reached the spot. Police restored peace but only for the time being. Next day the revenge turned violent.

In the post-election violence one development that has featured prominently is the BJP supported landlords have been quite aggressive against the CPI(ML) cadres and local level leaders. Sukar Ram of remote Dumraon in Buxar was implicated in false case and sent to jail on June 18. He was implicated in a petty case of a drain. He tried to intervene and settle the dispute. The dispute aggravated and one person Bitan Ram was killed. The BJP leaders used the opportunity to implicate Sukar. He is now languishing in jail. But the local poor, dalits are restive and they see the incident as a move to silence them and finish CPI(ML).

In another incident 65 year old Shivnath Ram, a small vendor selling eggs, of Sahebganj in Muzaffarpur was killed on July 2. His crime was he had dared to drink water from the tap of an upper caste lord Anesh Thakur. He was not only chased away but was killed by a group of upper caste people close to Anesh. So far police has not arrested any culprit.

The CPI(ML) fact-finding team after visiting the village, alleged that police has in fact terrorising the family members and relatives of deceased. It is really shocking that in a state which claims to have leaders like Lalu Yadav and Nitish Kumar, who swear



by the names of the Dalits, such atrocious incidents are taking place.

In village Tekari under

Gaya, once the red bastion, the hands of Sanjay Manjhi were cut. This is the home district of Union minister Jitan Ram Manjhi. The village has 120 houses of Manjhis and two of Paswan's. The bone of contention has been the government waste land allotted to the pasis and other 25 families in earlier years. But recently the entire land was allotted to Indradeo Mishra of a village Chirali. Manjhis fought the case. But it was not corrected by the local land officials. Only 55 Manjhi families were allowed to live on the land. The other land was declared as vacant land.

Taking advantage of the situation, Shivendra Mishra took control of the land. Sanjay Manjhi's father had raised a two feet high mud wall for keeping his pigs. In the afternoon of June 5 Shivendra Mishra descended on the scene with 10 people. Getting information Sanjay also reached. But the moment Sanjay came he was attacked with a sword by Shivendra.

While defending his head his left hand was chopped from near elbow. The CPI(ML) fact finding team led by its legislator Ram Bali Yadav is of the view that it was deliberate attempt of the local officials to deny the right of

land to the Manjhis.

These incidents may be small in nature. But these have wider political impli-

cation. The Dalits, pro-

letariats and OBCs

have come to nurse the feeling that upper caste people and landlords are planning to punish them for raising their voice against them. The top BJP leaders strongly hold the view that CPI(ML) emerging as a major political force in Bhojpur and Central Bihar would endanger their existence.

Bhojpur peasant uprising is the first major class conflict that took place in seventies in the villages of the district of Bihar. Agricultural labourers and the poor peasants had rebelled against the tyranny and oppression of feudal landlords primarily belonging to upper-castes. Two issues that triggered the class struggle were, fight to protect dignity and assert the right of self-determination and exercising voting rights.

The rightist forces and anti-poor political leadership tried to present the clashes as purely of the nature of caste skirmishes and caste-based oppression. They made every effort to dilute and confuse the basic character of the clash. Belchi episode is the classic example. It was projected as a clash between two criminal gangs. It is a historical fact that the criminals who nursed antagonistic caste differ-

ences with the other lower castes were used by the feudal lords to serve their interest. Most of the landlords were from the upper caste; they were Rajput, Bhumihar, Brahmin and Kayastha. The agricultural labourers belonged to the Schedule Caste or the Backward Castes like Yadav, Kurmi and Koeri.

The first major class struggle took place in village Ekwari. Majority of landowners were upper caste Bhumihars. The genesis lies in the attempt of a school teacher Jagdish Mahato to prevent the goons of Bhumihars from rigging the election. He was brutally assaulted by their goons. Jagdish Mahato, popular among the Dalits and poor as Jagdish Master, had also protested control the power structure of the village by the landlords.

In those days the landlords and their men, even from surrounding villages will combine together to attack the Dalits and labourers. The landlords of one particular date would send "newata" (invitation) to their castemen in other villages. In almost cases the plan to attack the dalit ghettos would have the tacit support of the local government officials specially the police.

As recently Congress leader Rahul Gandhi unravelled that 90 per cent of the important government posts were filled with upper caste people, in those days the situation was worse. They dictated the course of rule and governance. With increase in the feudal tyranny, the dalits also started asserting. Determination of the agricultural labourers and poor peasants to protect their dignity and improve their social status got its manifestation in struggles between them and the elite "upper caste". From 1971 to 1973, nearly fifteen big Zamindars were killed in retaliatory actions.

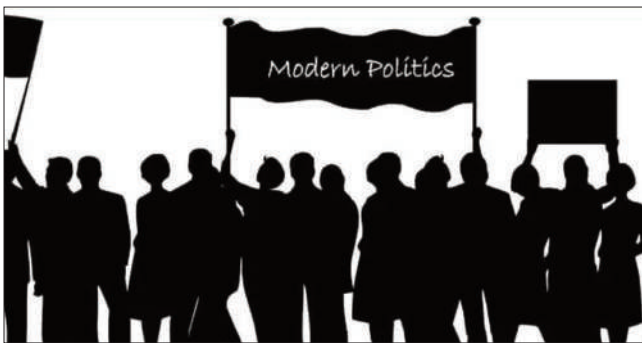
For electoral compul-

sions the CPI(ML) may have joined hands with RJD and its chief Lalu Yadav, but the fact cannot be ignored that under his rule, when he was chief minister, the Dalits and proletariat led by CPI(ML) suffered most. It was in this phase the Yadavs became aggressive and targeted the Dalits. Coinciding with his rule dreaded Ranavir Sena of Bhumihars launched reign of terror in central Bihar and carried out a number of gruesome massacres.

The 1980s witnessed a meteoric rise in political violence: "violent incidents increased from 260 in 1977 to 617 in 1984, nearly 100 people were killed in the 1985 election, compared with 34 in 1977, including 4 candidates". Between 1988 and 1989, Bihar saw the rise of caste armies like the Lorik Sena (Bhumihars) and Kunwar Sena (Rajputs). The class struggle in Bihar had two prominent features; it was political struggle for control of the state pitting the forward castes against the backward castes, and a socio-economic struggle of the landless lower castes against the land owning forward and backward castes.

Now after the Lok Sabha elections this year, the victory of two CPI(ML) Liberation candidates in Bihar by fighting the upper caste NDA nominees has led to big enthusiasm among the dalits. These are not limited to the two constituencies, the message that the upper castes can be defeated in both electorally and politically at ground level, has reached the other parts of Bihar. There is a sense of resurgence among the oppressed people. CPI(ML)-L as a part of the INDIA bloc has been fighting the NDA on all fronts. This new resurgence among the dalits will have its impact on the coming assembly elections in Bihar next year. (IPA Service)

The impediments of modern politics: Blame games to governance failures



By: Dipak Kurmi

While I firmly support democracy, it seems that the way it currently operates in our country has become counterproductive to effective governance. The relentless cycle of elections and the deep-seated animosity between the ruling NDA and the Opposition raise concerns about whether we can anticipate a concerted effort to address the real needs of the populace. The constant blame game and the obsession with securing victory in the next state election are making genuine progress increasingly unlikely.

Despite internal discord, a democracy must still function. As political parties persist in their blame games post-national elections, and the upcoming parliamentary session is expected to be stalled by the contentious standoff between a weakened BJP and a resurgent Opposition, millions of ordinary citizens in the nation's capital—part of the world's fastest-growing economy—are struggling for something as basic as water. Disturbing images of crowds chasing a water tanker in the scorching heat are commonplace, while politicians are preoccupied with debating whether Rahul Gandhi should have retained Wayanad or Rae Bareilly, and dissecting the implications of Mohan Bhagwat's latest speech.

The endless cycle of blame games obstructs any meaningful solution. The BJP blames the AAP for the water crisis in Delhi, while the AAP accuses the BJP of exacerbating the situation. This issue extends beyond the capital, with Maharashtra facing a looming drought. Farmers and rural communities are scraping dry wells, while politicians focus on the upcoming Assembly elections. Water scarcity is becoming a major challenge for both rural areas, where groundwater levels are plummeting, and urban areas, with their deteriorating infrastructure. Addressing this crisis requires long-term planning, vision, and dedicated groundwork—efforts that may not yield immediate, headline-grabbing results. But do our leaders have the patience or willingness to commit to these long-term solutions?

Politicians prefer quick fixes they can flaunt before the next elections, ready to label any slow-progress efforts as failures. Sometimes, in moments of radical frustration, I think the only way to push our leaders toward systemic solutions is to cut off water supply to the luxury bungalows of Lutyens Delhi for 48 hours each week. This might make finding a solution an urgent priority, though it risks benefiting only their comfort zones.

Every issue is overshadowed by futile name-calling.

Take the recent train accident in West Bengal: the Opposition immediately blamed the BJP, and the BJP fired back. Yet, those in power refuse to come together to discuss critical topics like improving railway safety, accelerating the replacement of outdated equipment, or addressing the dismal conditions of most trains—conditions that do not affect the elite Vande Bharat Express, which ordinary citizens rarely use.

Headlines are dominated by stories like Revanna, grandson of Deve Gowda, and his alleged sexual misconduct, or PM Modi's reduced victory margin in Varanasi. Yet, do our politicians genuinely care about the rising frequency and duration of power cuts nationwide, including in the capital? Major cities enjoy relatively stable electricity, but venture just fifty kilometers beyond the urban centers, and power outages become more common than reliable supply, with severe voltage fluctuations. Is this the democratic promise we were led to believe in?

Election priorities dictate a focus on promising freebies, regardless of whether they are ever implemented. Currently, around 80 crore people rely on monthly ration handouts from the central government, a measure intended to be temporary post-COVID. Yet, no political party appears to have a vision beyond perpetuating these freebies to address the root problems that make them necessary.

How do we tackle rampant rural distress and low agricultural productivity? How do we generate more jobs and better skill our youth? How do we enhance primary healthcare and improve the quality of our education system? How do we address unacceptable economic inequality and the rising prices of basic commodities?

What solutions are there for the countless young people whose futures are in jeopardy due to recurring exam paper leaks and inadequate testing systems?

With the monsoons approaching, the country will inevitably experience widespread flooding and the ensuing misery. Lutyens Delhi, where policymakers reside, will be largely unaffected. However, some issues do impact even them. Later this year, we will once again face severe pollution. Delhi and large parts of northern India will become unbreathable, leaving millions struggling to breathe. Every year, this crisis prompts a flurry of accusations between political parties. The solutions are well-known, and planning to address this crisis must begin immediately after Diwali.

The central government needs to establish an interstate committee involving affected states like Punjab, Haryana, and UP, along with specialized experts working under a fixed deadline. However, such an effort is often undermined by the political landscape, where Delhi and Punjab are governed by opposition parties while the BJP controls the central government. This leads to a familiar chorus of political blame, leaving citizens as helpless victims of short-sighted politics.

A drastic change is essential. We cannot continue to exist in a state of euphoric denial on one hand and an ineffective policy framework on the other. The reality is that today's political practices have become a barrier to effective governance. The patience of the populace is wearing thin. Ultimately, it is up to the people to declare: Enough is enough. (The writer can be reached at dipakurmi@gmail.com)

Trump silences raspy voiced President Joe Biden in first debate

By: Sushil Kutty

United States Vice President Kamala Harris admitted President Joe Biden could have won the CNN presidential debate on June 27. "Yes, there was a slow start," she told a top CNN anchor. Yet Harris will not replace Biden on top of the Democratic ticket in case President Biden is persuaded to step off the presidential election stage. It was a possibility discussed widely post the disastrous Biden performance. The debate saw a fumbling Biden get hammered by a forceful Donald Trump.

That said, Trump walked away with the brickbats and the bouquets. America's dominant left-liberal media wasn't forgiving Trump though media outlets across the United States acknowledged Biden was the loser and the former President clear winner by more than a mile and a half. The debate was brutal in an understated manner. The moderators gave the two candidates the chance to clobber each other without imposing themselves on the two combatants and from what was on show Trump took full advantage.

The Democrats' worries about Biden's age and mental agility, which is different from mental acuity, largely came true. President Joe Biden's descent into incoherence spelled doom. The President's mind, more than once, meandered and wandered as if with a mind of its own, unable to stay on path. Apparently, the "preparations" at Camp David, the presidential retreat, left Biden more like a zombie, an answering machine, rather than as a sharp as nails super-duper debater.

President Joe Biden's age stayed with him throughout the 90-minute debate. In contrast, former President Trump raced through with his answer to the same question without old age casting a shadow on his mental acuity. Trump said he had "aced" not one but "two cognitive tests" even as the CNN Presidential Debate was getting closer and closer. At least one Democrat strategist remarked that President Biden and First Lady Jill Biden will be missing "Air Force One" come November.

Meaning, it is only in the United States of America that the Presidential Stage can be dismantled for one can-

didate by a debate with both candidates at each other's throat. Americans look forward to and pay attention to the candidates' views and plans for the country spelled out in the debates. The debates lay bare the candidates' inner makings. And with a skilled moderator asking the questions, there is no escaping public scrutiny. Victory in even one Presidential debate can make or break a potential White House residency.

Debates won't work in India. It is unimaginable in China and Russia. Presidential debates are "Only in America" like the saying goes. Some media are going with the "trading insults" narrative with this CNN Presidential Debate with Donald Trump getting more flak than President Joe Biden, who unfortunately had to fight an overnight cold and a "raspy voice". What went wrong for the media was that Trump kept his cool and refused to grab Biden by the scruff of his neck.

In fact, to tell the truth, Trump actually could succeed in keeping President Biden in check because of the rules of the debate set by CNN. Moderators Tapper and Bash faced flak, later after the debate, for being lacklustre like the Dodo. CNN might have got unprecedented viewing numbers but the moderators could have at least pasted smiles on their "mugs". It was ironic that Trump who had taken CNN to the Russian cleaners got away with the accusation "Russia, Russia, Russia" twice during the debate.

So what's in store? Among take-aways there is talk of Democrats panicking and President Joe Biden giving them the creeps by saying "We won the debate" and "We have to defeat this guy, which we can if you are with me". Most Democratic strategists have given up on Joe Biden. They should blame themselves for waiting till after the debate to conclude that Biden wasn't the world-beater they had made him into. The manner in

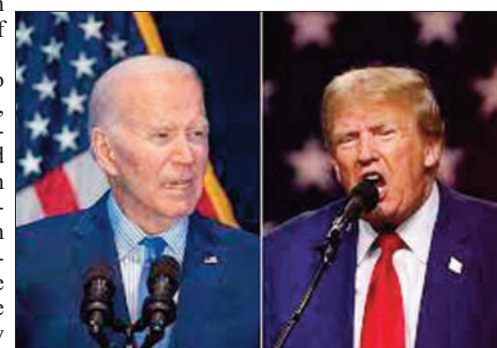
which Biden struggled through the first debate has put a question mark on the second one to be held in September.

That second debate is history even as the first one made history. And one newspaper wrote the epitaph - "Bye Bye Biden". President Biden's chances for a second term were dashed - that is the thinking - by his meandering, mumbly and fumbling. Question is whether Biden will be replaced with a more mentally alert Democrat at the top of the Democrat ticket? Talk of Michelle Obama entices the Democrats though she isn't willing. There is also California Gov Gavin Newsom but Newsom doesn't want to hurt Biden's debilitating mental acuity. And Kamala Harris is playing coy.

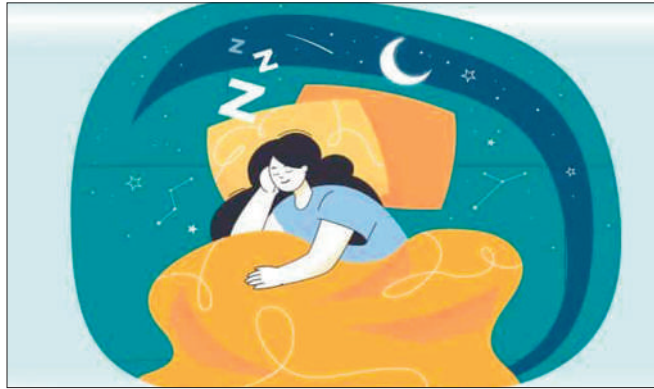
The debate questions touched abortion, inflation, climate change, foreign affairs and immigration. Trump stole with "confident and forceful" though the media later hit him for misleading with falsehoods. For millions of Democrats, it was painful watching President Joe Biden go

down the tube in full public view of a TV audience that must have included the almost entire United States of America - Biden's halting voice, eyes closed, brow knitted, pupils the size of saucers versus Trump's assertive diction including the frequent use of "greatest" for himself and the "worst" for Biden.

The number of times President Joe Biden stumbled on his words, he shouldn't have been standing on his own two feet at the end of the debate, but the President walked off the stage full of oats and brimming with confidence. Appears like Biden is not going out of the Democratic spotlight and Democrats have something to hang on to, after all. There is always the chance of a slip between the cup and the lip. Best of all, Kamala Harris might beat all the odds. (IPA Service)



Sleep: A crucial factor in physical and mental well-being



By: Pranidhi M

Approximately 50 to 70 million people are chronically deteriorating from sleep disorders and wakefulness, hindering regular functioning and sceptically affecting health and long lives. Around 90 distinct sleep disorders are present according to the International Classification of Sleep Disorders; almost all of these are marked by one of these symptoms that are excessive daytime sleepiness, and difficulty in initiating or maintaining sleep.

The aggregation of the long-term effects of loss of sleep and sleep disorders has been related to a wide range of harmful health consequences that include expanding the risks of hypertension, diabetes, obesity depression, heart attacks, and stroke. After doing some research for decades, the case can be positively made that sleep loss and sleep disorders have profound and widespread effects on health issues.

In this article, we are going to discuss or mainly focus on manifestations and prevalences, aetiology and risk factors, and comorbidities of the most common sleep conditions, which encompasses loss of sleep, there will be difficulty in breathing, insomnia, narcolepsy, restless leg syndrome, parasomnias, sleep-related psychiatric disorders, sleep-related neurological disorders.

Sleep loss: Usually, sleep loss occurs by sleeping less than 7 or 8 hours of sleep at night. The preeminent syndrome for this is more excessive sleep in the daytime, but another symptom includes a depressed mood and poor memory or concentration. Chronic sleep loss, while either it is a formal syndrome or a disorder, is a serious consequence related to health, performance and safety.

Loss of sleep is an eminently prevalent problem which is continuously worsening the frequency in individuals growing older. Recent studies have found that at least 18% of adults report that receive insufficient sleep. Ironically, there have been a limited number of nationally representative surveys that provide reliable information on sleep patterns in the population.

For suppose we sleep less than four hours of sleep or 5 hours of sleep in men they will have smaller testicles. In case a man sleeps 4.5 hours they will get high in testosterone. If we are getting enough sleep for 7 to 8 hours we will be living for more than 10 or 50 years.

There are some tests conducted on a few people after and before learning that are related to studies. After learning if we sleep or by taking a nap we will remember more effectively. Before studying or learning in case we sleep for some time we will remember so quickly.

There is another study conducted on a few people by dividing them into two groups. In the first group, people conducted a test with 8 hours of sleep another group of people were made to not sleep but for them, they were not given any caffeine or coffee. when they did this people who had enough sleep had a higher rate of learning when compared to the other group with a 40% reduction in the learning rate of the memory.

In our brain, we will have the HippoCampus which is the information to the brain. In our deepest periods of

sleep, there are sleep sandals. We will get strong waves as we get a good memory with a good memory.

If we don't get any deep sleep or normal sleep there are higher chances of getting dementia and we will become older than expected. Alzheimer's is also another disease related to sleep. In this there is no sleeping pills are added to this as this will be so addictive. In case you are sleeping only for 4 to 5 hours there is a high risk of getting cardiovascular diseases.

Sleep and immune system:

There are some natural killer cells which are similar to the secret agents like Bond 007. This kind of cell helps people which helps in killing the cells that cause the tumour cells of cancer. With the lack of sleep, the natural killer cells are reduced to 70%. WHO also confirmed that there is a reduction of these cells with the increase of cancerogen. If we sleep less we have short sleep.

Sleep and genes:

Genetics have a significant influence on normal sleep and several sleep disorders. Genes regulate sleep by affecting neural functions, some studies have identified specific genes. These genes with lack of sleep will increase the effect of insomnia, narcolepsy, and obstructive sleep apnea. Research suggests that heritability may account for 31-58% of a person's likelihood of experiencing insomnia.

Oversleeping side effects:

The extent of sleep we require throughout our lifetime. This depends on our age and activity levels including our general health and lifestyle habits. At some particular point where during some periods of stress or illness, we will or may feel an increased need for sleep. Although sleep needs to differ over time and from person to person.

Some people sleep more than required as this is one kind of medical disorder called hypersomnia. Whereas in insomnia people sleep less than required. This condition that is causing people to suffer from extreme sleepiness throughout the day which is not usually relieved by napping. It also causes them to sleep unusually long periods at night. Many people with hypersomnia experience symptoms of anxiety, low energy, and memory problems as a result of their almost constant need for sleep.

It does not mean that everyone who oversleeps more has a disorder of sleep. There could be other possible reasons for sleeping more including the use of certain substances like alcohol and medication. There are some other medical conditions such as depression, that can cause people to oversleep.

Tips:

Regardless of sleeping more or sleeping less, we need to practice good sleep hygiene that will help us reap healthy sleep of at least 7 hours every night. Maintaining regularity means sleeping at the same time and waking up at the same time. Also by avoiding the caffeine and alcohol close to bedtime.

Doing the exercises regularly and making our bedrooms a comfortable environment that's conducive to sleep will help us get the amount of sleep we need. Also maintaining our body temperatures at minimum cold temperatures that helps us to sleep more better. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

Michael Mosley reportedly died from heat exhaustion. How can extreme heat turn deadly?

By: Lily Hospers and Jem Cheng

British television host and celebrity doctor Michael Mosley went missing last Wednesday while holidaying on the Greek island of Symi.

Four days later his body was found. The coroner stated Mosley most likely died from natural causes. Greek police say they believe Mosley died around 4pm local time on Wednesday, just hours after he had set off on a walk.

The coroner suggested that, given Mosley's age (67) and the fact he was walking in the sun in a rocky environment, "at some point the body will be exhausted".

While a full coroner's report has not yet been finalised, heat has been implicated as a factor that may have contributed to Mosley's death.

Greek police said Mosley is believed to have died of heat exhaustion after losing consciousness while walking in 40°C temperatures.

This tragedy serves as a timely reminder of the dangers of extreme heat.

When do hot conditions become dangerous?

Physical activity levels and conditions in the environment significantly affect our risk of developing heat-related illness.

When we're doing physical activity, such as walking, the body creates heat as a by-product.

The more vigorous the activity, the more heat is generated. If this heat is not lost, the body can experience dangerous and potentially life-threatening increases in core temperature.

The human body has two main ways to lose the heat generated by the body or gained from the environment.

First, the body attempts to lose heat to the surrounding environment by pumping warm blood to the skin surface. However, when air temperatures are higher than skin temperature (around 35°C), this method becomes ineffective. Instead, the body starts gaining heat from its surroundings.

Second, the body can produce sweat, which has a cooling effect when it evaporates. However, in humid conditions, the sweat on our skin evaporates less readily, as the air already contains plenty of moisture.

Hot temperatures, sun exposure, humidity and physical activity can all present challenges for the human body. When these factors combine, it can be a recipe for disaster.

How is heat exhaustion different from heat stroke?

Heat exhaustion and heat stroke form part of the continuum of heat-related illness. When heat exhaustion is left untreated it can progress to heat stroke.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion can involve weakness, headaches and nausea.



The more serious progression to heat stroke involves reaching an internal body temperature over 40°C and central nervous system dysfunction. This dysfunction can present as confusion or disorientation, and can cause a person to lose consciousness.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency, where central nervous system dysfunction and organ failure can ultimately lead to death. In one study, 58 per cent of people who developed heat stroke died within one month.

Who is most vulnerable?

People may be more vulnerable to the heat due to physiological or behavioural factors. A combination of both can compound the risk.

Physiological vulnerability to the heat can be complex. A person might have a reduced ability to respond to heat stress, such as a reduced capacity to sweat, which is often seen in older adults. Someone may also

be more vulnerable because heat worsens their underlying health issues, such as heart disease.

People who are unable to respond behaviourally to heat are also at a greater risk. Regulating activity (such as stopping exercise), changing environment (moving into the shade, for example) and adopting cooling strategies (like cooling the skin with a wet cloth) all offer protection.

Someone may not be able to respond appropriately if they don't sense the need to act, or are unable to regulate activity and their environment.

For example, people may be limited in their capacity to regulate risk if they're carrying out paid manual labour, taking part in sporting events, or don't have access to shelter or cooling resources.

Underestimating the risks of extreme heat

When the symptoms of heat illness are not responded to

quickly, a dangerous cascade of events can occur, which can ultimately lead to death.

Early action is especially important given the symptoms of heat stroke involve confusion and disorientation, which can impair decision-making. A person who is affected by heat stroke may not be well placed to adapt their behaviour, such as by seeking shade.

Be conservative when contemplating going out in hot weather. This includes not underestimating the environmental conditions, but also not overestimating your capacity to handle them.

Importantly, the air temperature reported on a weather forecast is measured in the shade and does not reflect the added power of the sun.

5 ways to protect yourself

1. Plan ahead - avoid activity during the hottest part of the day

2. If you're feeling hot and bothered, get out of the heat to a cooler area. This might be indoors or a shaded area outdoors

3. Stay hydrated by ensuring access to, and drinking, non-alcoholic fluids

4. Remove or loosen clothing if you are feeling hot and uncomfortable

5. Attempt to cool down in any way possible. Near a cool body of water? Take a super-wet dip. Alternatively, use cold water spray or apply a cool, damp cloth to the skin. (Courtesy: Down To Earth)

Healthy lifestyle is the way towards heart healthy life



By: Dr. Balbir Singh

Apart from family history, the poor lifestyle choices that one makes has been the leading cause of cardiac ailments among the younger generation in India. With changing lifestyle and poor socio-economic factors, there is a rapid increase in the number of patients living with ischemic heart disease.

Acute Coronary Syndrome (ACS) or commonly known as heart attack, is one of the leading deadly diseases in developing countries like India.

Over 20% of the population especially in the age bracket of 40-50 years is developing several cardiac ailments that ultimately lead to heart failure.

Cardiac ailments among the Indian population still remain the leading cause of premature mortality and morbidity. Attributing to a plethora of reasons including poor lifestyle habits like smoking, bingeing on alcohol, poor eating

habits and sedentary lifestyle, has led to patients with high cholesterol, hypertension and high blood sugar levels.

While a person's genetic disposition and family history remain the most common and uncontrollable risk factors, the majority of heart diseases in the younger generation which is on the rise is due to excessive stress.

Creating awareness among the masses about the advancements can save many lives. Advancements in the field of cardiac sciences has been a boon to patients with end stage heart problem.

The only and the easiest way to prevent heart failure are avoiding the lifestyle and food habits that encourage obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure.

Early detection & timely intervention is the key

While heart disease or failure sounds dangerous, it can be treated with better care and diagnosis. The only and the easiest way to prevent heart failure is avoiding the lifestyle and food habits

that encourage obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure.

With availability of different biomarkers like Hs Troponin, Myocardial perfusion studies and CT angiography, early non-invasive detection of coronary artery disease is possible.

Effective management includes a combination of lifestyle changes, medicines and non-invasive treatments. Invasive and surgical treatments are required in more severe cases.

In most cases it is possible to eventually resume normal life. Some simple lifestyle changes include eating a healthy balanced diet, being physically active, doing regular exercise, no smoking and controlling blood cholesterol and sugar levels.

Cardiac Hospitals in India perform more than 2 lakh open heart surgeries and are increasing annually by 25% but they are not able to control the numbers of heart attacks.

The surgeries done are only palliative. Educating the essentials about Heart disease and its risk factors is important to eradicate the casualties from the root.

What are the symptoms?

Not every CHD patient has the same symptoms and angina chest pain as its most common feature. Symptoms may vary from nil to severe, some may have an uncomfortable feeling like indigestion and some cases may be experiencing severe pain, heaviness or tightness.

The pain is usually felt in the centre of the chest, that spreads to the arms, neck, jaw and even to stomach, and is accompanied by palpitation and unusual breathlessness.

If arteries become completely

blocked, it can cause a heart attack that can cause permanent damage to the heart muscle.

The discomfort or pain of a heart attack is usually similar to that of angina, but is often more severe and may be associated with sweating, lightheadedness, nausea and breathlessness. This is more common in people with diabetes. Heart attack if not treated straight away can be fatal.

How to manage the heart ailments?

Although coronary heart disease cannot be cured, treatment can help manage the symptoms, improve the functioning of the heart and reduce the chances of problems such as heart attacks.

Effective management includes a combination of lifestyle changes, medicines and non-invasive treatments. Invasive and surgical treatments are required in more severe cases and the outcomes are favorable in most of the cases, where the person is able to resume their normal life.

Some simple lifestyle changes include eating a healthy balanced diet, being physically active, doing regular exercise, no smoking and controlling blood cholesterol and sugar levels. These can reduce the risk of CHD, stroke and dementia and also have other health benefits.

Heart Failure or Cardio Vascular disease refers to the fact that your heart is not as healthy as it should be. You have to take better care of it for better functioning. But the best part is that you can prevent it with a healthy lifestyle. (The author is the Chairman, Cardiac Sciences, Max Hospital, Saket, New Delhi)

Smartphones – A major reason for pediatric vision problems

By: Dr Pradeep Sharma

Taking utmost care of your eyes is essential as they are the most delicate and important organs of the body. But the rising menace of electronic gadgets in personal and office life is turning everyone into gadget addicts. It is important to know that gadgets do not emit any harmful rays or radiations (monochrome or color), the causes of the trouble are constantly gazing at a near distance and decreased rate of blinking.

"Kids now a days are highly susceptible to digital eye strain, and hence it is the duty of the parents at utmost priority to ensure keeping them away from being addicted to digital screens. It is almost impractical to separate children and technology, be it for educational purpose, or fun time, staring at digital devices like smart phones, tablets, LED screens and computers are trending.

Kids may feel eye fatigue, pain in the eyes, loss of concentration, disturb in sleep, headaches, forehead pains, irritability in eye. It may aggravate myopia in pre disposed children. Childhood blindness is one of the priority targets of Vision 2020-Right To Sight due to its impact on the psychological and social growth of the child. Global estimates on childhood

blindness show that there are around 1.42 million and 17.52 million children suffering from blindness and moderate to severe visual impairment, respectively. It has been observed that unlike adult blindness that is 80% avoidable (either preventable or treatable), in children, less than 50% of the causes are avoidable.

One unique aspect of how children use computers may make them more susceptible than adults to the development of vision problems. Because of the limited degree of self-awareness of children, most of them keep performing an enjoyable task (e.g. playing video games) with great concentration, for many hours, until exhaustion, with few, if any, breaks, leading to accommodative problems and eye irritation.

The addiction! Often parents provide their mobile phones to kids for entertainment and keep them occupied, assuming that they gain knowledge listening to the rhymes and informative videos. But it may not be completely true, as in the process of digital learning, kids often get addicted to the digital screens, be it mobile phone, smart TV's or computer.

Average age at which children start using screens has fallen over past decade from 3-5 years

to 12-18 months. Study revealed around 70% Indian parents were worried about impact of screen time on children's eyes.

Parents should know that a developing child around the age of 2-3 years still has their retina developing and prolonged usage of such devices with bright light has 70% chances of affecting their vision (by damaging a part of the retina). Depending on the age bracket of kids, parents should ensure that they (kids) spend minimum time in front of digital screens. A 2-3-year-old kid is highly attracted towards videos and activities online be it on the big screen or mobile phone. Parents are required to minimize that time period in order to protect their vision.

Taking precautions amid the Digital schooling

While the pandemic has forced the schools to learn the digital way, it is necessary to take safety measures in the usage of digital devices for online learning, which has become a necessary part now.

1. The posture of sitting, and neck bending should be proper.

2. The devices should be kept at a reasonable distance depending on it being a mobile, I-pad or laptop. TV monitors at about 7 times the diagonal distance are the safest.

3. Children should follow the simple 20-20-20 rule: Look

every 20 minutes at an object at 20 feet for at least 20 seconds to relax the accommodation and convergence muscles.

4. Use lubricant eyedrops as children forget to blink their eyes and constant state caused dryness of eyes.

Signs that a child may have vision problems include:

- constant eye rubbing
- extreme light sensitivity
- poor focusing
- poor visual tracking (following an object)
- abnormal alignment or movement of the eyes (after 6 months of age)
- chronic redness and tearing of the eye
- a white pupil instead of black

It's important for parents to watch their child for signs of poor vision or crossed eyes and get their child examined right away so that the problem doesn't become permanent. If caught early, eye conditions often can be corrected.

Safe time with digital screen

While there is no safe time limit for screen time especially among kids under the age of 5 years, it is strictly advised to keep them away from gadgets in order to protect them from developing any predisposed eye ailment. Kids under 5 years of age having any kind of vision problems should be examined properly at the right time. This

problem can be managed by maintaining visual hygiene, less screen times, screen distance should be proper and eye exercise. School going kids can have a screen time of around 1 hour daily be it for educational purpose or relaxation and the time can be extended to upto two hours during holidays.

Once the kid is over 12 years, various apps and video games have started consuming their valuable time as well as eye health. Restricting their time spent on digital games, parents should encourage their kids for physical activities and outdoor sports.

In India, it is estimated that there are 0.8 blind for 1000 children. Whole globe lesions, corneal scarring, retinal pathology and afflictions of the lens are important anatomical sites in children. Early detection and prompt management are critical for the success of programs targeting avoidable blindness in children.

A regular visit to the ophthalmologist is must for kids of any age after 5 years of age. It is in the hands of the parents as to how to take care of their kids. Timely detection of poor vision at early age can help in better treatment. (The author is the Director - Paediatric Ophthalmology, Centre For Sight, New Delhi)

France's exceptionally high-stakes election has begun

Far right dominated preelection polls

PARIS, June 30: Voters across mainland France were casting ballots Sunday in the first round of exceptional parliamentary elections that could put the government in the hands of nationalist, far-right parties for the first time since the Nazi era.

The outcome of the two-round elections, which will wrap up July 7, could impact European financial markets, Western support for Ukraine and how France's nuclear arsenal and global military force are managed.

Many French voters are frustrated about inflation and economic concerns, as well as President Emmanuel Macron's leadership, which they see as arrogant and out-of-touch with their lives. Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration National Rally party has tapped that discontent, notably via online platforms like TikTok, and dominated preelection opinion polls.

A new coalition on the left, the New Popular Front, also poses a challenge to the pro-business Macron and his centrist alliance Together for the Republic. It includes the French Socialists and Communists and the hard-left France Unbowed party and vows to reverse a deeply unpopular pension reform law that raised the retirement age from 62 to 64, among other economic reforms.

There are 49.5 million registered voters who will choose 577 members of the National Assembly, France's influential lower house of parliament, during the two-round voting.

Turnout at midday at the first



round stood at 25.9 per cent according to interior ministry figures, higher than the 18.43 per cent at midday during 2022 legislative elections.

Macron voted in Le Touquet, a seaside town in northern France, along with his wife, Brigitte. Le Pen cast her ballot in her party's stronghold in northern France.

The vote takes place during the traditional first week of summer vacation in France, and absentee ballot requests were at least five times higher than in the 2022 elections.

The first polling projections were expected at 8 pm (1800 GMT), when the final polling stations close. Early official results were expected later Sunday night.

Voters at a Paris polling station had issues from immigration to inflation and the rising cost of living on their minds as the country has grown more divided between the far right and far left blocs, with a

deeply unpopular and weakened president in the political centre. The blitz campaign was marred by rising hate speech.

"People don't like what has been happening," said Cynthia Justine, a 44-year-old voter. "People feel they've lost a lot in recent years. People are angry. I am angry."

She added that with "the rising hate speech," it was necessary for people to express their frustrations with those holding and seeking power.

"It is important for me because I am a woman and we haven't always had the right to vote," Justine said. "Because I am a Black woman, it's even more important. A lot is at stake on this day."

Pierre Leclercq, a 78-year-old retiree, said he cast his ballot for the simple reason of "trying to avoid the worst," which for him is "a government that is from the far right, populist, not liberal and not very Republican."

Macron called the early elections after his party was trounced in the European Parliament election earlier in June by the National Rally, which has historic ties to racism and antisemitism and is hostile toward France's Muslim community. It also has historical ties to Russia.

Macron's call was an audacious gamble that French voters who were complacent about the European election would be jolted into turning out for moderate forces in national elections to keep the far right out of power.

Instead, preelection polls suggested that the National Rally is gaining support and has a chance at winning a parliamentary majority. In that scenario, Macron would be expected to name 28-year-old National Rally President Jordan Bardella as prime minister in an awkward power-sharing system known as "cohabitation."

While Macron has said he won't step down before his presidential term expires in 2027, cohabitation would weaken him at home and on the world stage.

The results of the first round will give a picture of overall voter sentiment, but not necessarily of the overall makeup of the next National Assembly. Predictions are difficult because of the complicated voting system, and because parties will work between the two rounds to make alliances in some constituencies or pull out of others.

In the past, such tactical maneuvers helped keep far-right candidates from power. But support for Le Pen's party has spread deep and wide.

Bardella, who has no governing experience, says he would use the powers of prime minister to stop Macron from continuing to supply long-range weapons to Ukraine for the war with Russia.

The National Rally has also questioned the right to citizenship for people born in France, and wants to curtail the rights of French citizens with dual nationality. Critics say this undermines fundamental human rights and is a threat to France's democratic ideals.

Meanwhile, huge public spending promises by the National Rally and especially the left-wing coalition have shaken markets and ignited worries about France's heavy debt, already criticized by EU watchdogs.

In the restive French Pacific territory of New Caledonia, polls closed earlier due to a curfew that authorities on the archipelago have extended until July 8. Violence there flared on May 13, leaving nine people dead after two weeks of unrest, due to attempts by Macron's government to amend the French Constitution and change voting lists in New Caledonia, which the Indigenous Kanaks feared would further marginalize them. They have long sought to break free from France.

Voters in France's other overseas territories from Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, Saint-Barthélemy, Saint-Martin, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyana, French Polynesia and those voting in offices opened by embassies and consular posts across the Americas cast their ballots on Saturday. (AP)

Chinese President Xi Jinping to attend SCO summit in Astana



BEIJING, June 30: Chinese President Xi Jinping will attend the 24th summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Kazakhstan's capital Astana this week, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced on Sunday.

He will also pay a state visit to Tajikistan, it said.

From July 2 to 6, President Xi will attend the 24th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO in Astana, the ministry said.

Officials say the situation in Afghanistan, the Ukraine conflict and boosting overall security cooperation among the SCO member countries are expected to figure in the summit.

The SCO, comprising India, China, Russia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, is an influential economic and security bloc that has emerged as one of the largest trans-regional international organisations.

India will be represented by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) earlier said.

Officials say there is a likelihood of a meeting on the sidelines of the summit between Jaishankar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who is expected to accompany Xi. If it takes place, it will be the first high-level meeting between Indian and Chinese officials after the formation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 3.0 government following the recent general elections in India.

Generally, the Indian prime minister participates in the SCO summit, providing an opportunity for Indian and Chinese leaders on the sidelines of the heads of the state meeting of the eight-member bloc.

But since Modi has decided to skip it, significance is attached to the likely meeting between Jaishankar and Wang in the light of a four-year-long frozen relations between the two countries over the

standoff in Eastern Ladakh.

Relations between the two countries hit a low except for trade ever since the eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong Tso (lake) area near Galwan.

Since the May 2020 clashes, the two sides have so far held 21 rounds of Corps Commander-level talks to resolve the standoff. The 22nd meeting is due to be held.

According to the Chinese military, the two sides have so far agreed to disengage from four points namely the Galwan Valley, the Pangong Lake, Hot Springs, and Jiantan Daban (Gogra) in eastern Ladakh.

India is pressing the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to disengage from the Dapsang and Demchok areas, maintaining that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the state of the borders remains abnormal.

For its part, China continues to maintain that the boundary question does not represent the entirety of China-India relations, and it should be placed appropriately in bilateral relations and managed properly.

Kazakhstan is hosting the summit in its capacity as the current chair of the grouping.

India was the chair of the SCO last year. It hosted the SCO summit in the virtual format in July last year. India has shown a keen interest in deepening its security-related cooperation with the SCO and its Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS), which specifically deals with issues relating to security and defence.

The SCO was founded at a summit in Shanghai in 2001 by the presidents of Russia, China, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Pakistan became its permanent member along with India in 2017. (PTI)

I draw inspiration from my Hindu faith: PM Sunak at London's Neasden Temple on campaign trail

LONDON, June 30: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and wife Akshata Murty sought divine blessings on the last weekend ahead of the July 4 general election at the iconic BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in London, popularly known as Neasden Temple.

The couple were greeted with loud cheers as their convoy drove into the mandir grounds on Saturday evening and went on to perform puja guided by the priests.

After a tour of the grand temple complex and interaction with volunteers and senior community leaders, cricket fan Sunak began his address to the congregation with a reference to India's victory in the T20 World Cup being speaking about the inspiration he draws from his faith. "I am Hindu and like all of you, I draw inspiration and comfort from my faith," said Sunak.

"I was proud to be sworn in as a member of parliament on the 'Bhagavad Gita'. Our faith teaches us to do our duty and not fret about the outcome as long as one does it faithfully. That is what I was brought up to believe by my wonderful and loving parents and that is how I live my life; and that is what I want to pass on to my daughters as they grow up. It is dharma which guides me in my approach to public service," he said.

Sunak went on to reference his general practitioner (GP) father and pharmacist mother's community service and also the "wonderful work" his philanthropist mother-in-law, Sudha Murty, does in India.

"My wife is not only the greatest support that any husband could ever have but also someone committed to public service," he added.

As Britain's first Indian heritage Prime Minister, the 44-year-old expressed his gratitude to the community for their "prayers and love" and pledged to try and continue making them proud.

"You have been with me every step of

the way. On the hardest days in this job, I have felt your backing. And I know the pride that there is to have a British Asian Prime Minister and I am determined to never let you down," he said.

Alluding to the recent controversy around a far-right Reform UK activist attacking him with a racist slur during the election campaign, the British Indian leader stressed on the country's multi-faith credentials.

"I'm proud to be the first British Asian Prime Minister, but I'm even prouder that it is not a big deal. The events of the last few days should not make us forget that the United Kingdom is the world's most successful multi-ethnic, multi-faith democracy and we should all be uplifted by that," said Sunak, amid applause.

"With your support, I will create a secure future for our country where Hindus, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, and Jains, of all religions and none, feel equally at home, where everyone has the security they deserve," he said.

On the election pitch for his incumbent Conservative Party, he name-checked some of the Tory candidates contesting from constituencies in and around the temple in north London and reiterated some of his core policy themes around tax cuts and education. He also drew parallels between the values of his party and the Indian diaspora: "Education, hard work, family, those are my values. Those are your values. Those are Conservative values." Sunak and Murty had last visited a BAPS temple during his visit to India for the G20 Summit in September, when they offered prayers at the Akshardham Temple in New Delhi. During their visit to the London temple, they performed abhishek of Shri Nilkanth Varni Maharaj, the teenage form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, and concluded their visit by mingling with the crowds. (PTI)

Pak's defence minister slams Afghanistan for not taking action against militants

ISLAMABAD, June 30: Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has slammed the Afghan Taliban-led government in Kabul for not taking action against militants along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, despite repeated requests made by Islamabad.

Asif made the comments in an interview with BBC Urdu on Saturday in which he also said that Pakistan even offered to grant ₹ 10 billion to shift the militants towards the western border.

"Pakistan hoped for cooperation from the Afghan government, however, the latter was not ready to take action against the militants," Asif was quoted as saying by the Geo News.

Pakistan has repeatedly called on the Afghan interim government to prevent its soil from being used against it by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other terrorist groups — a claim denied by Kabul.

Asif said that the government even offered to give ₹ 10 billion to transfer the militants to the western border areas, but it feared the militants could return to the Pakistan border from there as well. In an interview with the Voice of America last week, Asif said that under "Operation Azm-e-Istehkam", Pakistan could target terrorist hideouts across the border in Afghanistan. He had also dismissed the possibility of negotiations with the TTP.

In March, Pakistani air force jets carried out air strikes against terrorists in the border regions of Khost and Paktika inside the neighbouring country.

Soon after the strike, Asif said that Pakistan wanted to convey to the Afghan interim government in Kabul that "we cannot continue like this."

Islamabad's action came following a deadly attack on Pakistani forces which resulted in the killing of seven soldiers, including a Lieutenant Colonel and a Captain. (PTI)

Taliban delegation attends a UN-led meeting in Qatar

ISLAMABAD, June 30: A Taliban delegation on Sunday attended a United Nations-led meeting in Qatar on Afghanistan after organisers said women would be excluded from the gathering. The two-day meeting is the third UN-sponsored gathering on the Afghan crisis in the Qatari capital of Doha. Zabihullah Mujahid, the chief spokesman for the Taliban government who leads its delegation, wrote on social media platform X that the delegation met with representatives from countries including Russia, India and Uzbekistan on the sidelines of the meeting.

The Taliban were not invited to the first meeting, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said they set unacceptable conditions for attending the second one in February, including demands that Afghan civil society members be excluded from the talks and that the Taliban be treated as the country's legitimate rulers. The Tal-

iban seized power in August 2021 as US and NATO forces were in the final weeks of their pullout from the country following two decades of war. No country has officially recognised the Taliban as Afghanistan's government, and the UN has said recognition is almost impossible while bans on female education and employment remain in place. Mujahid on Saturday in the capital, Kabul, told reporters the delegation was going to Doha "to seek understanding and resolve issues."

"We urge all countries not to abandon the Afghan people in difficult times, and actively participate in Afghanistan's reconstruction and economic strengthening," he said.

He said they would discuss issues including international restrictions imposed on Afghanistan's financial and banking system, challenges in growing the private sector and government actions against drug trafficking. (AP)

Suspected female suicide bombers kill at least 18 in Nigeria, authorities say

MAIDUGURI, June 30: At least 18 people were killed and 30 injured, including 19 seriously, in coordinated attacks by suspected female suicide bombers in the northeastern Nigerian town of Gwoza on Saturday, local authorities said. The first suicide bomber detonated an explosive device during a marriage celebration at about 3 pm, Barkindo Saidu, director-general of Borno State Emergency Management Agency, told reporters.

"Minutes later, another blast occurred near General Hospital," Saidu said, and then there was a third attack at a funeral service by a female bomber disguised as a mourner. Children and pregnant women were among those killed.

No one has so far claimed responsibility for the attacks, but Gwoza is in Borno state, which has been heavily impacted by an insurgency launched in 2009 by Boko Haram, an Islamic extremist group.

The violence, which has spilled across borders around Lake Chad, has killed over 35,000



people, displaced over 2.6 million and created a massive humanitarian crisis.

Boko Haram, which has one branch allied to the Islamic State group, wants to install an Islamic state in Nigeria, West Africa's oil giant of 170 million people divided almost equally between a mainly Christian south and a predominantly Muslim north.

In the past, Boko Haram has used women and girls in suicide bombings, prompting suspicions that some from the many thousands that they have kidnapped over the years. The resurgence

of suicide bombings in Borno raises significant concerns about the security situation in the region. Saidu said the degree of injuries ranged from abdominal ruptures to skull and limb fractures. "I am now coordinating for a chopper tonight," Saidu said. "I have mobilised emergency drugs to complement the shortage of drugs in Gwoza."

Authorities imposed a curfew in the city, and the community remained on a high alert following reports of another suspected bomber in Pulka, a town about 2 kilometres (just over a mile) away from Gwoza.

Gwoza is located a few kilometres from Chibok, in southern Borno, where 276 schoolgirls were abducted in 2014. Nearly 100 of the girls are still in captivity.

Since then, at least 1,500 students have been kidnapped across the country as armed groups increasingly find the practice a lucrative way to fund their criminal activities and take control of villages. (AP)

Hurricane Beryl forecast to become a Category 4 storm as it nears southeast Caribbean

SAN JUAN, June 30: Hurricane Beryl is forecast to strengthen into a powerful Category 4 storm as it approaches the southeast Caribbean, which began shutting down Sunday amid urgent pleas from government officials for people to take shelter.

Hurricane warnings were in effect for Barbados, St. Lucia, Grenada, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

"This is a very serious situation developing for the Windward Islands," warned the National Hurricane Centre in Miami, which said that Beryl was "forecast to bring life-threatening winds and storm surge ... as an extremely dangerous hurricane."

Beryl strengthened into a Category 3 hurricane on Sunday morning, becoming the first major hurricane east of the Lesser Antilles on record for June, according to Philip Klotzbach, Colorado State University hurricane researcher.

Beryl is now only the third Category 3 hurricane ever recorded in the Atlantic in June, following Audrey in 1957 and Alma in 1966, according to hurricane expert Michael Lowery.

Beryl was located about 465

miles (750 kilometres) east-southeast of Barbados. It was a Category 2 storm with maximum sustained winds of 100 mph (155 kph) and was moving west at 21 mph (33 kph).

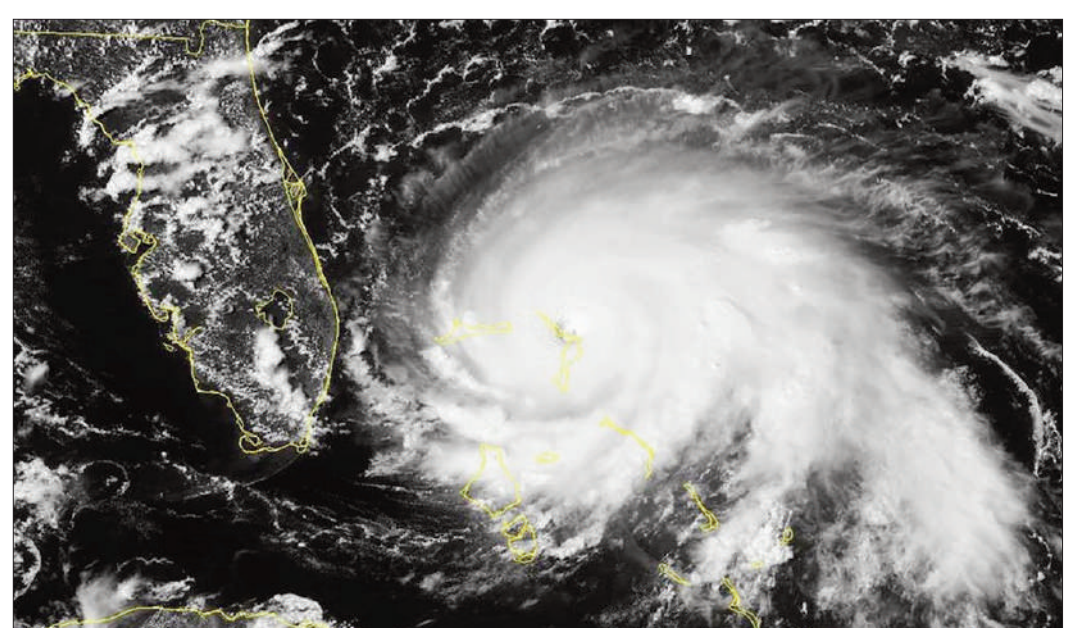
Two hurricane hunters were en route to the storm to gather more details about its intensity, according to the National Hurricane Centre.

Beryl is expected to pass just south of Barbados early Monday and then head into the Caribbean Sea as a major hurricane on a path toward Jamaica. It is expected to weaken by mid-week but still remain a hurricane as it heads toward Mexico.

Forecasters warned of life-threatening storm surge of up to 9 feet (3 metres) in areas where Beryl will make landfall, with up to 6 inches (15 centimeters) of rain for Barbados and nearby islands.

Long lines formed at gas stations and grocery stores in Barbados and other islands as people rushed to prepare for a storm that has broken records and rapidly intensified from a tropical storm with 35 mph winds on Friday to a Category 1 hurricane on Saturday.

Warm waters were fueling Beryl, with ocean heat content in the deep



Atlantic the highest on record for this time of year, according to Brian McNoldy, University of Miami tropical meteorology researcher.

Beryl marks the farthest east that a hurricane has formed in the tropical Atlantic in June, breaking a record set in 1933, according to

Philip Klotzbach, Colorado State University hurricane researcher. If Beryl's winds reach 125 mph, it would be the second earliest such storm in the Atlantic on record, surpassing Audrey in 1957, he said.

In addition, if Beryl reaches a Category 3, it would only be the

third storm to do so in the Caribbean prior to August; Dennis and Emily both did so in July of 2005, according to Klotzbach.

"We have to remain vigilant," Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Mottley said in a public address late Saturday. "We do not want to put

anybody's life at risk."

Thousands of people were in Barbados for Saturday's Twenty20 World Cup final, cricket's biggest event, with Mottley noting that not all fans were able to leave Sunday despite many rushing to change their flights.

"Some of them have never gone through a storm before," she said. "We have plans to take care of them." Mottley said all businesses should close by Sunday evening and warned the airport would close by nighttime.

Kemar Saffrey, president of a Barbadian group that aims to end homelessness, said in a video posted on social media Saturday night that those without homes tend to think they can ride out storms because they've done it before.

"I don't want that to be the approach that they take," he said, warning that Beryl is a dangerous storm and urging Barbadians to direct homeless people to a shelter.

Echoing his comments was Wilfred Abrahams, minister of home affairs and information.

"I need Barbadians at this point to be their brother's keeper," he said. "Some people are vulnerable."

Meanwhile, St. Lucia Prime Minister Philip J. Pierre announced a national shutdown for Sunday evening and said schools and businesses would remain closed on Monday.

"Preservation and protection of life is a priority," he said.

Caribbean leaders were preparing not only for Beryl, but for a cluster of thunderstorms trailing the hurricane that has a 70% chance of becoming a tropical depression.

"Do not let your guard down," Mottley said.

Beryl is the second named storm in what is forecast to be an above-average hurricane season, which runs from June 1 to Nov. 30 in the Atlantic. Earlier this month, Tropical Storm Alberto came ashore in northeastern Mexico with heavy rains that resulted in four deaths.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts the 2024 hurricane season is likely to be well above average, with between 17 and 25 named storms. The forecast calls for as many as 13 hurricanes and four major hurricanes.

An average Atlantic hurricane season produces 14 named storms, seven of them hurricanes and three major hurricanes. (AP)

Navy chief Admiral Dinesh Tripathi begins 5-day visit to Bangladesh

NEW DELHI, June 30: Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi began a five-day visit to Bangladesh on Sunday with an aim to further consolidate the bilateral defence engagement and explore new avenues of cooperation in the maritime domain.

The trip comes more than a week after Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited India during which both sides vowed to expand the overall defence and strategic ties.

It is Admiral Tripathi's first official visit abroad after he took the reins of the Navy two months ago.

The Navy chief is scheduled to hold wide-ranging talks with his Bangladeshi counterpart, Admiral M Nazmul Hassan, and other top officials of Bangladesh's military, including the Army chief and Air Force chief.

Admiral Tripathi will also review the passing-out parade at the Bangladesh Naval Academy (BNA) in Chittagong on July 4.

The Chief of Naval Staff's engagements in the neighbouring country include an address at Bangladesh's National Defence College in Dhaka and visits to a few key defence facilities.

"The visit is aimed to consolidate bilateral defence relations between India and Bangladesh and to explore new avenues for naval cooperation," the Indian Navy said in a statement.

Naval cooperation between India and Bangladesh has been traditionally strong, encompassing a wide span including operational interactions, bilateral naval exercises and capacity-building programmes.

"The visit of the Chief of the Naval Staff, Indian Navy will further strengthen the strong bonds of friendship between the navies of both countries," the statement said.

Bangladesh has been an important partner under India's Neighbourhood First policy. It is clearly visible in both the defence and maritime domains.

The maritime cooperation between the two countries has grown from strength to strength in recent years, with a significant ramp up on joint efforts towards protection of maritime interests.

Both sides have recognised the value of such cooperation and are poised to enhance the efforts even further. More broadly, in all efforts under the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision, Dhaka has been a natural partner and source of support for New Delhi, a military planner said.

The visit of the Navy chief is an affirmation of the positive trajectory of the naval relationship as well as an indication that both sides will significantly enhance their bilateral efforts at sea, he said on the condition of anonymity. (PTI)

Parl should pass law on reservations to exceed 50-pc cap: Congress



NEW DELHI, June 30: The Congress on Sunday said Parliament should pass a law to enable reservations to exceed the 50-per cent cap, a day after NDA constituent JD(U) demanded that the quota increase in Bihar be included in the 9th schedule of the Constitution.

At a meeting of the Janata Dal-United's national executive here on Saturday, the party expressed concern over a recent Patna High Court verdict striking down the Bihar government's decision to increase the quota for the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) to 65 per cent from 50 per cent.

In a political resolution passed at the meet, the JD(U) urged the BJP-led Centre to put the state's law under the Constitution's 9th Schedule to rule out its judicial review.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said throughout the Lok Sabha poll campaign, the opposition party has been saying that all state laws related to reservation for

the SCs, STs and all backward classes should be included in the 9th Schedule, as was the case for a Tamil Nadu law in 1994.

"It is a good thing that JD(U) has made the same demand in Patna yesterday. But its ally BJP, both in the state and at the Centre, is completely silent on this matter," Ramesh said.

"However, bringing reservation laws beyond the 50 per cent limit into the Ninth Schedule is also not a solution, because according to a 2007 Supreme Court decision, such laws are also subject to judicial review," the former Union minister said, adding that a Constitution amendment law is required for the purpose.

"In such a situation, the only way out is for the Parliament to pass a Constitution Amendment Bill which will enable the reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and All Backward Classes to exceed 50 per cent," he said.

Ramesh said the current limit of 50 per cent is not explicitly mandated by the Constitution, but has been decided through various Supreme Court decisions.

"This was and remains one of the main guarantees of the Indian National Congress for the Lok Sabha elections."

"Will the non-biological Prime Minister clear his stand? Our demand is that such a bill should be introduced in the next session of Parliament. JD(U) should not be limited to just passing resolutions," he added. (PTI)

Parliament set to witness stormy debate from today

Parliament has been rocked by protests over the NEET issue



NEW DELHI, June 30: Parliament is set to witness heated debates on a range of issues like the NEET paper leak row, the Agni path initiative and inflation when both houses reconvene on Monday.

Besides the paper leak matter, the opposition is also likely to raise the issue of unemployment.

In the Lok Sabha, BJP member and former Union minister Anurag Thakur is set to initiate the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address.

The Motion will be seconded by first term Lok Sabha member Bansuri Swaraj, the daughter of BJP stalwart late Sushma Swaraj.

The Lok Sabha has allocated 16 hours for the debate on the Motion of Thanks, which will conclude with the reply by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday.

In the Rajya Sabha, 21 hours have been set aside for the debate and the prime minister is likely to reply on Wednesday.

Parliament has been rocked by

protests over the NEET issue.

NEET-UG was conducted by the NTA on May 5 with around 24 lakh candidates appearing. The results were announced on June 4, but they were followed by allegations of question paper leaks in states such as Bihar, besides other irregularities.

Initiating the debate in the Rajya Sabha, BJP member Sudhanshu Trivedi had described Modi as "atunliya" (matchless) and asserted that there was a vast difference in

his approach towards dealing with issues facing the nation and the one adopted by the first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

BJP member Kavita Patidar seconded the motion and nine others have participated in the discussion so far.

Opposition INDIA bloc members forced adjournment in the Lok Sabha on Friday, when the House was to take up the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address, demanding a dedicated discussion on the NEET issue. The Rajya Sabha had witnessed vociferous protests during the debate with the opposition demanding a discussion on the NEET row and Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge trooping into the Well of the House to join fellow members.

Congress member Phulo Devi Netam from Chhattisgarh fainted in the Rajya Sabha while raising slogans, apparently due to high blood pressure, and was rushed to the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital.

Opposition members slammed the government for not adjourning the proceedings of the House and showing lack of concern for the health of a Rajya Sabha member. (PTI)

Centre should have state-specific financial approach for development: Kerala FM

NEW DELHI, June 30: Seeking more funds to tide over the state's financial woes, Kerala Finance Minister K N Balagopal on Sunday said the Centre should have a state-specific rather than a uniform financial approach towards states as each of them has different kinds of developmental activities.

Balagopal, part of the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) which is in power for the second consecutive term in the southern state, emphasised that monolithic thinking about overall development is not practical and also called for flexibility in utilisation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) depending on the requirements of the state. Flagging serious concerns about reduced central fund transfers and borrowing restrictions, Kerala has demanded a special package of ₹ 24,000 crore in the upcoming Union Budget to tackle the liquidity stress.

"A monolithic thinking about the total development and administration of the country is not practical in India because different states should be considered differently, keeping in mind the country's whole development and unity..." he told PTI in an interview in the national capital.

According to the senior CPI(M) leader, Kerala's share from the divisible pool came down to 1.92 per cent during the 15th Finance Commission period compared to 3.87 per cent during the 10th Finance Commission. He expressed hope that the central government might look at the issues faced by the states very seriously because different state issues were very evident from the election results. In the Lok Sabha polls, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) came back to power for the third straight term but BJP got less seats than expected.

Balagopal stressed that Kerala's activities in terms of revenue management and generation are among the best and that the state has a very good number of social security measures as well as a very good Panchayati Raj system.

During the period between 2020-21 and 2023-24, the state's tax revenue rose from around ₹ 47,660 crore to ₹ 74,258 crore while its non-tax revenue shot up from ₹ 7,327 crore to ₹ 16,318 crore.

Also, the state's revenue deficit declined from ₹ 20,063 crore to ₹ 17,348 crore during the same period.

"The people and government of Kerala

are being affected not because of their doings but because of the policy of the Finance Commission on dividing income among the states," he said and hoped the central government will take some positive steps that are specific to the state.

For Kerala, rapidly aging population which will require resource allocation for prompt elderly care, coastline erosion, disaster preparedness, flood management and man-animal conflict are among the crucial issues. Against this backdrop, Balagopal said the state should have the flexibility in utilising CSS. Citing an example, the minister said that when the central government was planning to provide toilets to every house, the state achieved the target much earlier. "Whether we have to wait for more time to get the next set of development. These are the issues".

"Different states have different kinds of development activities, style... you cannot have a uniform deciding factor. In a country with diversities, there is a spirit of India that is unifying us. The difference of the state historically, traditionally that has to be kept in mind... how states are to be supported through different (approaches)," he said. (PTI)

Cong, Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) to jointly contest Maharashtra polls: Pawar



A monthly allowance of ₹ 1,500 to women in the 21 to 60 age group, three free LPG cylinders a year for households, farmer-friendly steps and a stipend of ₹ 10,000 per month to youths for skill training were highlights of the Maharashtra government's budget for 2024-25 presented on Friday, four months ahead of the state polls.

Asked if he will participate in the Wari (pilgrimage) 'palkhi' procession which began here on Friday, Pawar said, "The palkhi travels to Pandharpur from my village in Baramati (in Pune district). I will welcome the Wari procession in Baramati."

The 'palkhis' (palanquins) carrying the footprints of revered saints Tukaram and Dnyaneshwar Maharaj set out from Pune's Dehu and Alandi, respectively, to Pandharpur in Solapur district over the last two days.

They will reach Lord Vitthal's temple in Pandharpur on the occasion of Ashadi Ekadashi on July 17. Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Friday said the state government will send a proposal to United Nations agency UNESCO for world heritage nomination for the annual Pandharpur 'wari' which has a tradition of 1,000 years.

He said the government will also set up a separate corporation to provide facilities to devotees of Lord Vitthal (called warkaris), who undertake the annual pilgrimage from Alandi and Dehu in Pune district to the Vitthal-Rukmini temple in Pandharpur.

The Deputy CM also said the government has decided to provide a sum of ₹ 20,000 per 'dindi' (group of devotees) of the pilgrimage from this year. An allocation of ₹ 36.71 crore has been made for this in the budget. (PTI)

From being farmer's son to Vice Prez, Venkaiah Naidu's journey inspiring: PM Modi

HYDERABAD, June 30: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday released three books on the life of M Venkaiah Naidu and recalled his contributions, including the fight against imposition of Emergency and as Union Minister and Vice President. Recalling that the 50th anniversary of Emergency was observed recently, he said Naidu was even in jail for about 17 months during the fight against Emergency.

The Emergency was imposed by the Congress by tarnishing the image of the country's Constitution, he said. The books, including a biography, were released on the eve of Naidu's 75th birthday.

Expressing happiness over releasing the biography and two other books, Modi exuded confidence that the books would inspire people and show the right direction for national service.

The journey of Naidu, from being a farmer's son to occupying high-ranking positions as Union Minister and Vice President, is filled with many

experiences, he said.

Naidu chose to take up the Rural Development ministry in the cabinet of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, despite being a senior in the party, as he wanted to serve the villages, farmers and the poor, he said.

During Naidu's tenure as Urban Development Minister as his senior cabinet colleague, several initiatives, including Swachh Bharat Mission and Smart Cities Mission, were started, Modi said.

Praising Naidu's oratory, wit, alertness and spontaneity, he recalled the latter's comment of 'ek hath me BJP ka jhanda aur doosre hath me NDA ka agenda' (BJP's flag in one hand and NDA's agenda in another hand) during the Vajpayee regime.

During Naidu's tenure as Chairman of Rajya Sabha, the bill to abolish Article 370 was passed with majesty, dignity and honour though the government did not have majority in the upper house,

he said. BJP grew as a 'vatvriksh' (banyan tree) that it is today, due to the efforts of lakhs of activists like Naidu, he said.

He hoped that the country would emerge as a developed nation in 2047 when Naidu celebrates his 100th birthday. In his response, Naidu thanked the Prime Minister for releasing the books.

Appreciating Modi's endeavour for the country's development, he said skill development is the need of the hour.

"Development and welfare must go hand in hand. We should not be tempted by these freebies and then make the people lazy. Yes, we must give them a helping hand. You have been giving free ration to crores of people across the country. That should continue as long as it is required. But, at the same time, skill development is the need of the hour," the former Vice President said.

Naidu also favoured promoting Indian languages. (PTI)

PUNE, June 30: NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday said his party, Congress, and the Shiv Sena (UBT) led by Uddhav Thackeray will jointly contest the Maharashtra assembly polls, due in October this year.

Addressing a news conference here, Pawar also said it is the moral responsibility of the major opposition parties in Maharashtra to protect the interests of smaller allies, which were part of the coalition in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

The NCP (SP), Congress and the Shiv Sena (UBT) are constituents of the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), which was in power in the state from November 2019 till June 2022 before the collapse of the Thackeray-led government.

Pawar said the opposition will keep a collective face before the people of Maharashtra.

There is need for a change in the state and it is the moral responsibility of the opposition coalition to discharge it, Pawar said.

"As Arjuna's target (in the epic Mahabharata) was an eye (of a

fish), our eyes are all set on the elections in Maharashtra. The Congress, NCP (SP) and Uddhav Thackeray's Sena (UBT) will jointly contest the Vidhan Sabha polls," he said.

The former Maharashtra chief minister said talks on seat-sharing in the state have not begun, but will commence soon.

The people gave a good response to the NCP (SP), Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, he noted.

"But like these three parties, the Left parties, Peasants and Workers Party (PWP) were also a part of the coalition but we could not give them seats in the Lok Sabha. It is our moral responsibility to protect the interests of these parties," he said.

"So the efforts will be to go ahead with them (in the state assembly polls)," Pawar added.

Asked about the state budget presented on Friday by the Eknath Shinde government, the NCP (SP) chief said, "What happens if you go with an empty pocket in a market? It's a matter of a few days, reality will be seen soon."

Cheetahs receive special ointment treatment to prevent deadly infection

Ointment, imported from South Africa, is being applied to all 13 adult cheetahs

SHEOPUR (MP), June 30: In an effort to protect the cheetah population at Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh, a new initiative has been launched to apply imported ointment to their fur, an official said. This measure aims to prevent a recurrence of septicemia, a deadly bacterial infection that claimed the lives of three cheetahs last year.

The cursorial predators at the Kuno National Park, brought to India as part of a translocation project from South Africa and Namibia, are receiving Anti Ecto Parasite Medicine to combat the threat of septicemia.

The ointment, imported from South Africa, is being applied to all 13 adult cheetahs in the park to ensure their well-being during the rainy season.

"We have started applying the 'Anti Ecto Parasite Medicine' (anti maggot) imported from South Africa to the cheetahs by immobilising them with the onset of the rainy season," KNP director Uttam Sharma

told PTI over phone on Sunday. Despite facing setbacks in the past year, Kuno National Park remains committed to the conservation and preservation of cheetahs in India. The loss of three cheetahs to septicemia underscored the need for proactive measures to safeguard the remaining population.

"We are going to apply this medicine to the bodies of all 13 adult cheetahs in the KNP, spread over an area of 1,235 sq km including buffer zone in Sheopur district," he said, adding "the effect of the ointment lasts for three to four months".

However, he did not share details of the immunisation plan duration and the date it started but confirmed that the KNP lost three cheetahs to septicemia, caused by blood poisoning due to bacterial infection, last year.

As the monsoon season progresses, efforts to protect the cheetahs from environmental risks are paramount. The collaboration between wildlife ex-



perts, park officials, and meteorologists aims to ensure the well-being of the cheetahs amidst changing weather conditions. Despite facing challenges in tranquillising the swift creatures for treatment, the dedicated team at KNP is determined to carry out the immunisation process efficiently.

The history-making reintroduction of cheetahs in India aims to revive the species,

which was declared extinct in the country back in 1952. The last in the cat family had died in Koriya district of present-day Chhattisgarh, once part of MP, in 1947.

Last year's unfortunate incident of cheetah deaths due to septicemia underscored the importance of taking proactive measures to safeguard these magnificent animals.

KNP outright denied that the

radio collar caused the septicemia the last time around.

"It was not the cause of the outbreak. It might have aggravated it," KNP director Sharma said. "Last year, initially many experts doubted the radio collars caused the infection. But later the air was cleared," he said. The fur of African cheetahs grows in June, July-August which is winter in the southern hemisphere. These months are hot, humid and rainy here in the northern hemisphere, the official said.

"So, the hostile weather plus rain caused dampness in the thick fur of the cheetahs. They rubbed their bodies for relief and in the process wounded themselves last year," he added.

"No sooner, the blood oozes from the wound, the flies come in the picture and lay eggs in them and then come maggots which killed cheetahs in 48 hours last year," the official recalled. Eight Namibian cheetahs - five female and three male - were released into quar-

antine enclosures at KNP on September 17, 2022, at a high-profile event in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the chief guest. With the monsoon season already underway in Madhya Pradesh, the authorities are leaving no stone unturned to protect the cheetah population from potential health risks.

Sheopur has received 78.4 mm of rain against the normal rainfall of 77.6 mm between June 1 and June 30 morning, as per the India Meteorological Department Bhopal centre's forecast in-charge Divya Surendran. She said the rain-bearing system, which hit the state on June 21, has covered the entire Madhya Pradesh by June 28.

With the ongoing advancements in conservation practices, KNP is determined to secure a future for cheetahs in India. By addressing health concerns and implementing strategic interventions, the park strives to create a safe habitat for these iconic predators. (PTI)

PM speaks to Indian cricket team after T20 World Cup win

NEW DELHI, June 30: Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to the Indian cricket team on the phone on Sunday and congratulated its members on their T20 World Cup win. Modi congratulated Rohit Sharma for his splendid captaincy and appreciated his T20 career. He also lauded Virat Kohli for his innings in the final, besides his overall contribution to Indian cricket. Both the greats announced their retirement from T20 internationals following the win. Modi praised Hardik Pandya for his final over and Suryakumar Yadav for his splendid catch on the boundary line to dismiss David Miller. He also talked highly of Jasprit Bumrah's contribution. The prime minister thanked coach Rahul Dravid for his contribution to Indian cricket. In posts on X, the prime minister lauded Sharma, Kohli and Dravid. He told Sharma, "You are excellence personified. Your aggressive mindset, batting and captaincy has given a new dimension to the Indian team. Your T20 career will be remembered fondly. Delighted to have spoken to you earlier today."

Addressing Kohli, he said, "Like the innings in the finals, you have anchored Indian batting splendidly. You've shone in all forms of the game. T20 cricket will miss you but I am confident you'll continue to motivate the new generation of players."

Praising Dravid, he said his incredible coaching journey shaped the success of Indian cricket. His unwavering dedication, strategic insights and nurturing the right talent have transformed the team, the prime minister added.

"India is grateful to him for his contributions and for inspiring generations. We are happy to see him lift the World Cup. Happy to have congratulated him," he said. (PTI)



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Department of Food, Public Distribution & Consumer Affairs

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towards ensuring Food Security



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Beneficiaries covered
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- Collect receipts generated by e-Pos machines against the rice received

'To do' for Fair Price Shops

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- Keep the shop open throughout the day during Anna Sewa Din
- Ensure full distribution of rice entitled to beneficiaries during Anna Sewa Din
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