

King Charles, Prince William meet mammoth queue for queen's coffin

LONDON: King Charles III and his oldest son Prince William were on Saturday greeted by cheers as they shook hands with people queueing for hours through London to see Queen Elizabeth's coffin as it lies in state ahead of her funeral.

Cries of "God Save the King" came from the crowd as the new monarch and heir to the throne thanked members of the public before attention turns to the stream of world leaders arriving for the grand state send-off on Monday.

"I'm so happy. He was so calm, and friendly and he was so gentle," said Geraldine Potts-

Ahmad, a secretary in her late 50s, as she struggled to contain her emotions after shaking hands with Charles.

"He is going to make the best king. That gentleness and that tenderness, I saw the queen in that."

The queen's death on September 8 aged 96, after a record-breaking 70 years on the throne, has sparked an outpouring of emotion.

Members of the public are braving waits that have stretched to more than 25 hours, and chilly night-time temperatures, to view her flag-shrouded coffin.

Princes William and Harry were later set to lead a vigil of Queen Elizabeth II's eight grandchildren at her coffin, joining tens of thousands of members of the public who have been queueing round the clock for days.

Lines have snaked for miles along the River Thames since Wednesday, when her coffin was brought to the UK parliament complex.

Those inside parliament's Westminster Hall for the lying-in-state received a shock late on Friday when a man burst out of the line and approached the coffin, which sits topped with the Imperial State Crown.

A live television feed of the mourners briefly cut away around 10:00 pm (2100 GMT) as police detained the man, two hours after Charles and his three



Naveen Bats for Tribal

Bhubaneswar(KCN): Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Saturday urged Union Minister of Tribal Affairs, Arjun Munda to include more than 160 proposals recommended by the State Government for inclusion in the ST list of Odisha.

Since 1978 onwards, Government of Odisha has recommended more than 160 Communities of the State to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs for their inclusion in the ST list of the State with approval of Tribes Advisory

under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs had recommended 9 proposals from Odisha as priority cases for inclusion in the ST list of the State in the year 2014, but the same is yet to be notified in the Presidential Order," said Mr.Patnaik.

Because of the delay in their inclusion in the ST list, he said, all these 160 plus communities of the State are becoming victims of historical injustice.

He requested the Union Minister to look into this long pending matter and expedite the scheduling of these left out communities to deliver social justice to them in accordance with the provisions of the Constitutions of India.



Council, the Chief Minister said in a letter to Munda.

Among these some are new entries. Some others are sub tribes/subsets, synonyms and phonetic variations of the existing ST communities residing in different parts of the State who are being deprived of the benefits availed by STs though they have the same tribal characteristics as their respective notified STs, he pointed out.

"I am given to understand that a Task Force

This shall go a long way in helping these deprived communities by giving them their much needed recognition as ST and ensure social justice, he added.

Informing about his previous letters written to the Union Tribal Ministers since the year 2011, the CM said he had made communications with the Government of India on this sensitive matter in 2011, 2012 and 2021.

"I would like to bring the above matter for your kind perusal and urge for urgent action addressing the long-standing pending matter and do justice to the communities who are waiting for decades to get their due grievances redressed," he wrote.

HM greets PM

New Delhi(KCN): Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah has wished Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his birthday.

"I pray for his good health and long life. Shri Modi has made impossible tasks possible with

unwavering faith of the people in his leadership.

Shri Shah also said that the life of Shri Modi, the creator of a safe, strong and self-reliant New India, is a symbol of service and dedication. For the first time since Independence, by giving crores of poor people their Rights, Shri Modi has instilled a sense of hope and faith in them, today every section of society is firmly standing with Shri Modi like a rock.



his India-first approach and determination for the welfare of the poor," said Shri Shah. Union Home and Cooperation Minister said that by making simultaneous and continuous efforts for the welfare of the poor, good governance, development, national security and historic reforms, Shri Modi has fulfilled his resolve of taking India to the top position. This has been possible only because of the

The Union Home and Cooperation Minister said by championing and promoting Indian culture, Shri Modi has taken the country forward in every field of development by connecting it to its original roots. Today's New India has emerged as a world power under the vision and leadership of Shri Modi and he has made his mark as a global leader, which is respected by the world.

SCO summit: US media praises PM Modi for telling Putin this is not time for war in Ukraine

WASHINGTON(KCN): The Modi-Putin conversation in Samarkand was

the time for war in Ukraine. The Modi-Putin conversation in Samarkand was

era is not an era of war, and I have spoken to you on the phone about this," the

in SCO Summit Responding to Modi, Putin said, "I know your position on the conflict in Ukraine, about your concerns that you constantly express. We will do our best to stop this as soon as possible.

Only, unfortunately, the opposing side, the leadership of Ukraine, announced its abandonment of the negotiation process, and declared that it wants to achieve its goals by military means, as they say, 'on the battlefield.' Nevertheless, we will always keep you informed of what is happening there.



widely carried by the mainstream American media. The mainstream American media on Friday praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for telling Russian President Vladimir Putin that this is not

widely carried by the mainstream American media. "Modi rebukes Putin over war in Ukraine," The Washington Post reported in a headline. "In a stunning public rebuke, Modi told Putin: "Today's

daily reported. "The rare reproach showed the 69-year-old Russian strongman coming under extraordinary pressure from all sides," the Post said. "Today's era is not of war, Modi tells Putin

President Murmu leaves for London to attend funeral of Queen Elizabeth II.



NEW DELHI(KN): President Droupadi Murmu left for London on Saturday to attend the state funeral of Queen Elizabeth II and to offer condolences on behalf of the Indian government.

Queen Elizabeth II, who died aged 96 at her summer residence Balmoral Castle in Scotland on

September 8, will be laid to rest at Westminster Abbey on September 19. "President Droupadi Murmu emplanes for London, United Kingdom, to attend the state funeral of H.M. Queen Elizabeth II and offer condolences on behalf of the Government of India," the Rashtrapati Bhavan

tweeted along with a picture of Murmu. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had visited the British High Commission here on September 12 to convey the country's condolences. India had also observed a day of national mourning on Sunday. In the 70 years of

reign of Queen Elizabeth II, India-UK ties have evolved, flourished and strengthened immensely. She played an important role in the welfare of millions of people around the world as Head of the Commonwealth, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had said in a statement.

Between Hirakud dam and climate change, spillway plan stutters

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): Depleted water holding capacity of Hirakud Dam reservoir and extreme rainfall events induced by climate change can present an unprecedented challenge of flood management in Mahanadi river, if the medium level flood of August was any indication. Dam safety is a whole different issue in such a scenario. That was the reason Central Water Commission (CWC) had recommended construction of additional spillways to protect world's longest earthen dam. Yet, the first of the two proposed spillways is yet to get off ground; or rather far from it. Construction work of the left spillway under the World Bank (WB)-funded Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP) was left mid-way due to displacement issues. It was being carried out by

a joint venture of Tata Projects Limited and Turkey-based AGE Group.

Sources said, after the Tata-AGE JV backed out of the `369 crore WB-funded project in 2020, the State government cancelled the work contract and decided to construct the additional spillway with its own funding through Odisha Construction Corporation (OCC). Subsequently, the project was also dropped from DRIP.

The estimated cost of the single spillway has now been revised to `786 crore. The project involves rehabilitation of 716 households and 1429 families which was the bone of contention behind the delay in carrying out the work.

While the JV has moved the tribunal against cancel-

lation of work contract alleging delay in handing over of land for the project by the government, officials in Water Resources department said the firms withdrew after realising the bid amount was too less.

The spillway is critical to Hirakud's health because it can decrease load of water on the dam in case the reservoir reaches a peak maximum flood (PMF) level caused by extreme precipitation events. As per available data, the CWC had reviewed the inflow design flood and pegged PMF at 69,632 cubic metre/sec (24.5 lakh cusec) in 1997. Against it, the existing total discharge capacity stands at 42,450 cubic metre/sec (15 lakh cusec) but effective discharge is about 36,806 cubic metre/sec (13 lakh cusec) due to operational constraint of few gates. This effectively means, in case of extreme rainfall events, the dam will have to grapple with management of about 12 lakh cusec flood water per second.

Hirakud dam safety spillway plan stutters
Additional Chief Secretary of Water Resources de-

partment Anu Garg said construction of additional spillways is priority of the government. "The work will start soon once the revised estimate gets Finance department's nod," she told The New Indian Express. Recently, the dam safety division had alerted Hirakud dam authorities about cracks in gate operation gallery and suggested drone based inspection for frequent monitoring of seepage quantity and further study of foundation gallery, gate shaft and sluice barrels. Though survey was to be taken up at least once in every five years, it pointed out, no fresh survey for mapping of new cracks and checking status of old cracks has been undertaken since 1999. Chief Engineer of Mahanadi basin Anand Chandra Sahu said, revised estimate for the first additional spillway is in the final stage of approval. "Since the revised estimate is more than 15 per cent of the primary estimate, the Finance department sought some clarifications, which we submitted recently. Hopefully, the OCC will soon get the administrative and financial approvals soon," he said.

CJI Opens Paperless Courts

Cuttack(KCN): As part of the celebration of 75th year of the High Court of Orissa, the Chief Justice of India Uday Umesh Lalit inaugurated 34 paperless courts in all the 30 districts here at Odisha Judicial Academy on Saturday.

The concept of paperless court has been successfully implemented in the Supreme Court and different High Courts including the High Court of Orissa. However, launching of paperless courts in all the districts in Odisha is a first in the country.

The Chief Justice of India (CJI) has inaugurated the courts in the presence of Dr Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, Judge, Supreme Court

Justice MR Shah hailed the e-initiatives of the High Court of Orissa and expressed hope that those would be replicated in other states. Sharing his experience Justice Shah said age is never a barrier in learning the use of IT which has become essential for making the justice administration friendly for all the stakeholders.

Enumerating the advantages of paperless courts, he emphasized on the need for advancement of courtroom technology.

Justice Chandrachud who heads the e-Committee, Supreme Court of India was all praises of the e-initiatives of the High Court of Orissa saying that the High Court has estab-

NILD, Kolkata Conducts Free Distribution of AIDS & Assistive Devices

Kolkata (KCN): The Department of Empowerment of PwDs (Divyangjan), Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment organized SAMAJIK ADHIKARITA SHIVIR for free distribution of Aids and Assistive Devices to Divyangjan under ADIP Scheme of

National Institute of Speech and Hearing Disabilities (Divyangjan), National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities (Divyangjan) free distribu-



the Government of India in different places of the country today.

The National Institute for Locomotor Disabilities (Divyangjan) or NILD, Kolkata conducted in association with Artificial Limb Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO), Regional Centre-Ali Yavar Jung

tion camp under ADIP Scheme today at NILD campus. The NILD, Kolkata also conducted free distribution camp under ADIP Scheme in Haroa, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal. Free Aids and appliances were distributed to 584 Divyangjan persons through a distribution camp at NILD campus.

Orissa High Court directs AIIMS to treat 15 kids suffering from DMD



BHUBANESWAR: The Orissa High Court on Friday directed AIIMS, Bhubaneswar to treat 15 children suffering from Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD). Acting on a PIL filed by lawyer Anshuman Ray, the division bench of Chief Justice S Muralidhar and Justice Chittaranjan Dash also ordered that the cost of treatment be reimbursed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The HC asked the

Director of AIIMS, Bhubaneswar to draw up a schedule for consultation of the 15 children suffering from DMD with specialists for receiving the antisense oligonucleotide (AON) therapy in a time-bound manner. "This is to be done in consultation with Assistant Solicitor General of India (ASGI) PK Parhi as well as the petitioner's counsel DP Dhal," the order stated. The High Court also sought an affidavit of compliance to be placed on



of India and Chairperson, e-Committee, Justice M.R. Shah, Judge, Supreme Court of India, Dr. Justice S. Muralidhar, Chief Justice and Justice S. Talapatra, Chairman, Artificial Intelligence and Information Technology Committee of the High Court of Orissa.

Judges of the High Court of Orissa and Members of the Artificial Intelligence and Information Technology Committee of the High Court were also present. District Judges and judicial officers of the state joined the event through virtual mode.

The CJI said technological advancement has become essential for the functioning of the judiciary. Speaking about the evolution of IT in Indian judiciary, CJI shared his experience of working as a young lawyer in the pre-IT period and the ease of work that technological advancement has ensured over the years. He also highlighted the positive impacts of paperless courts on the environment.

The CJI said he was happy to know that the judicial officers in Odisha voluntarily came forward for the paperless courts.

Lauding the e-initiatives of the High Court of Orissa, he said the High Court has shown the Indian Judiciary new direction, new light. In his welcome address Dr. S. Muralidhar thanked the e-Committee, Supreme Court of India for the guidance and encouragement to the High Court of Orissa in expanding the horizon of digitization and using information technology for other initiatives like paperless courts, e-payment of court fee, virtual hearing, vulnerable witness deposition centres, e-custody certificates, e-traffic challans and voluntary witness deposition centres in all the districts of Odisha.

Chief Justice Dr. Muralidhar announced that shortly all the judicial officers in Odisha would be provided with screen-touch laptops to facilitate them to function paperless. Stressing upon the need of paperless court for balancing the ecosystem and its other advantages Dr Muralidhar said paperless courts in the district judiciary of Odisha is a significant milestone for the Indian judiciary and thanked the state government and OCAC for the cause.

He thanked the Department of Posts for releasing the Special Cover and Picture Post-cards featuring the High Court of Orissa.

lished itself as the pioneer in implementing the decisions of e-Committee and termed the High Court's initiatives as 'path breaking' for the rest of India.

In a lighter note, Justice Chandrachud said it's been like 'monsoon of e-initiatives' in the High Court of Orissa and also said the event of launching paperless courts in the districts was the best way of celebrating 75th year of the High Court.

Enumerating the advantages of paperless court he said, it is cost effective for litigants, time saving for lawyers, effective in space management, makes case information easily accessible at fingertips and most importantly, it is environment friendly, and said paperless court in district level is doubly beneficial, given the volume of cases.

Justice Chandrachud informed that about 75 lakhs judgments of various High Courts have been made available in National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) for easy access of lawyers and judges and Real Time Virtual Justice Digital Clocks have been devised for updated information about functioning of every leg of Indian judiciary.

Citing examples of the training of lawyers being held in the Supreme Court on the functioning of green benches (paperless) he stressed upon the need of bridging the digital divide in India.

To mark the 75th year of the High Court a Special Postal Cover and cancellation cachet along with 6 picture post cards featuring the High Court of Orissa was also released by the Chief Justice of India and other dignitaries in presence of Suvendu Kumar Swain, Chief Postmaster General, Odisha Circle.

The function was attended by Advocate General Ashok Kumar Parija, Assistant Solicitor General of India for the High Court of Orissa Prasanna Kumar Parhi and Office bearers of High Court Bar Association.

Senior officials of the state government including Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra, Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department, Principal Secretary, Finance Department, Secretary, Department of Information & Technology, Chief Executive Officer, OCAC, Director General of Police, along with senior officials of the Department of Posts were also present on the occasion.

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Film Celebrity Shradha Rani Sharma will show her talent in Navratri's 'Garba' programs

Bombay (KCN, Sanjay Sharma Raj): Film Celebrity Shradha and talks are going on in some places. Due to which she is go-

places have been finalized and many places will be finalized civilization of our country is shown through this festival



Rani Sharma is getting a lot of... ing to have a very busy sched-



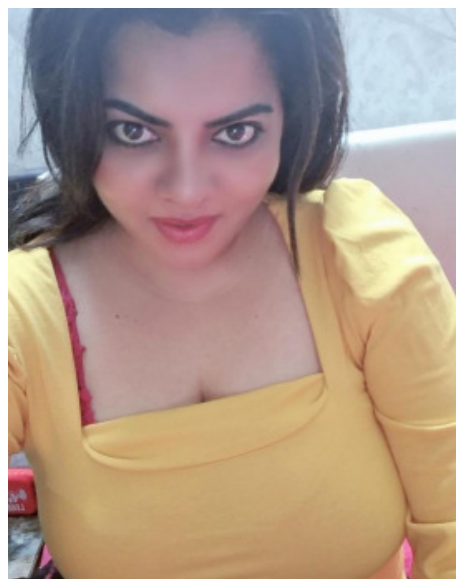
offers as a guest in the Garba... ular in Navratri. Regarding this,



programs in Navratri these days, out of which she has agreed to participate in the program of Surat and Vadodara in Gujarat

Shradha Sharma Says, "It is the grace of Durga Maa that in Navratri, I am invited as a guest in many programs. Now two

"Government should take strict action, especially against drugs." - Actress Shradha Rani Sharma

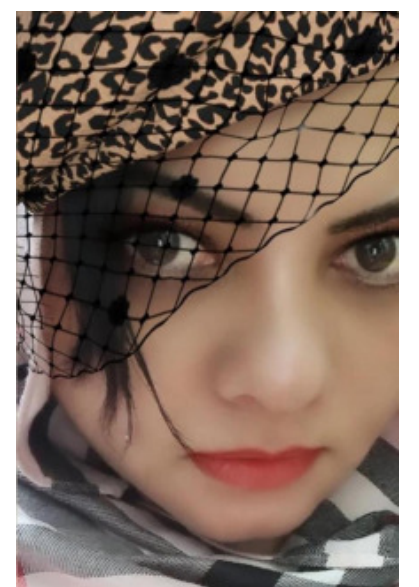


Mumbai (KCN, Sanjay Sharma Raj): Actress Shradha Rani Sharma is deeply hurt by the death of Bigg Boss contestant Sonali Phogat in Goa. Responding to this, Shradha said, "What happened to Sonali is very bad. Drugs and alcohol are making the

industry hollow day by day. Crime is getting worse. Girls should be careful, if they go to a party or anywhere, they should not drink any food given by someone. Today, a dark age is going on. We should always stay alert of our surroundings. In the last few years, many accidents have happened in the film industry. We should take lessons. I would advise everyone to stay away from drugs and alcohol and save their lives from being wasted in vain."

Further Shradha Sharma says, "Government should take strict action especially against drugs and pass the law of life imprisonment or death penalty and make a provision of punishment within 15 days or a month by running the case on fast track. Otherwise our youth generation will be ruined." By the way, glamorous, sexy and versatile talented actress Shradha Sharma has acted

in 'Suno Har Dil Kuch Kehta Hain', 'Saarthi' & 'Har Shakra Pay ullu Baitha Hai', 'Comedy Classes', 'Neeeli Chatriwale', 'Bigg Boss season 5', 'Emotional Atyachar' etc and played lead role in many hit serials and made her own identity, apart from three Kannada films 'Jeeva', 'Jai Ho' and 'Aniveshi'. She has also starred in a Tamil film 'Maiyum Kunte'.



that Woman is also powerful and always becomes the reason for the destruction of the world. Therefore, she should be respected. Happy Navratri to all. Jai Mata Di."

soon." Regarding the festival of Navratri, Shradha says, "Nine days in Navratri, all the goddesses are worshipped. Through this women power is told all over the world. The culture and

Benchmarking Healthcare System

The right to health has so far not been accorded the status of a Fundamental Right to the Indian citizens. It is not even a statutory right, unlike education. Moreover, health is a subject which is assigned to State Governments as per our Constitution. This is reflected in the way we finance it, with about two-thirds of the total governmental expenditure on health coming from the State Governments and the balance one-third being provided by the Government of India. De-

rability among similar entities.

A range of indicators such as the neo-natal mortality rate (deaths occurring in the first 28 days of life), full immunisation coverage, treatment success rate of confirmed tuberculosis cases, stability of tenure of key administrators, vacancy of doctors and specialists in health facilities, and functionality of primary health centres, first referral units and car-

Alok Kumar Sheena Chhabra

fosters competition among states by comparing similar states to each other but also nudges them to better their own performance in the previous year. For example, though Kerala remained the "healthiest state" in 2014-15, 2015-16 as well as 2017-18, a slight decline in the composite Health Index score value was observed in each of the successive periods. Large Gap Between the "Healthiest" and the "Ailing" States/UTs There are wide disparities in overall performance across States and UTs. The gap between the bestperforming states and the leastperforming states is very wide - Kerala and Uttar Pradesh are separated by 45 points, Mizoram and Nagaland by 36 points, and Chandigarh and Daman and Diu by 22 points as indicated by the Overall Performance Scores for 2017-18 (Health Index, June 2019). Scope for Improvement Based on the composite Health Index scores range for the reference year (2017-18), the States are grouped into three categories: Aspirants, Achievers, and Front-runners. Aspirants are the bottom one-third States and six of the eight Empowered Action Group States fall in this category. Given the substantial scope for improvement, these States require concerted efforts. Achievers represent the middle one-third States. Overall, these States have made good progress and can move to the next group with sustained efforts. Front-runners, the States falling in top one-third score range are the best performing States.

Despite relatively good performance, however, even the front-runners could further benefit from improvements in certain indicators (Health Index, June 2019). Different Levels of Momentum to Improve Performance Only around 58% of the States and UTs had an improvement in the overall score between 2015-16 and 2017-18 (Health Index June 2019).

The degree of changes in incremental performance scores differed across the three

improvements in health outcomes.

Note: West Bengal did not submit data, the overall and incremental performance scores were generated based on pre-filled indicator data for 13 indicators and for the remaining 10 indicators, the data from the base year was repeated for the Reference Year. Variable Progress Across States Towards Achieving SDG Goals Several States have made good

progress towards achieving SDG goals included in the Index. Kerala and Tamil Nadu have already reached the 2030 SDG goal for Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR), which is 12 neonatal deaths per 1000 live births. Maharashtra and Punjab are also close to achieving the goal. Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Punjab have already achieved the SDG goal on Under-Five Mortality Rate (U5MR), which is 25 deaths per 1000 live births. Other States and UTs still need significant improvements to meet SDG targets. Incentivising Incremental Performance The Health Index has the potential to be gamechanger as it can shift the focus from budget spends, inputs and outputs to outcomes by shining the light on States that have shown most improvement. The MoHFW's decision to link the Index to incentives under the National Health Mission sends a strong signal to States in the shift towards outcome based monitoring and performance linked incentives.

In 2019-20, 40% of the incentives or INR 3200 crore of the National Health Mission (NHM), MoHFW's flagship federal initiative, was linked to the incremental performance of the states and UTs on the Health Index. In 2019-20, MoHFW has taken a decision to link 70% of the NHM incentives to the incremental performance of the states and UTs on the Health Index. Need for Improving Data Quality The process of Index development and implementation highlighted the large gaps in data availability on health outcomes and health systems performance. The need of the hour is to make outcome data available for smaller states and union territories more frequent and updated outcomes for non-communicable diseases, financial protection, and other priority areas, and the robust programmatic data that can be used for continuous monitoring.

Conclusion

The Health Index is a useful tool to measure and compare the overall performance and incremental performance across States and UTs over time. It is an important instrument in understanding the variations and complexity of the nation's performance in health. The critical factors that contributed to the success of the Health Index include: a) Timelines of the report so that it stimulates action and not merely academic discussions; b) Provision of financial incentives based on the annual incremental performance of states under the National Health Mission; and; c) Verification of self-reported data by states by a thirdparty, independent verification agency to enhance credibility. However, there are limitations to the Index as no single index can purport to comprehensively capture the complex story of evolution of health system.

Also, due to constraints of availability of quality data critical areas such as non-communicable diseases, mental health, and private sector service utilisation could not be captured. Thus, the Health Index is a work in progress and continuous refinements will be made as additional quality data becomes available and data systems improve. ?



spite this, it is also a reality that the Government of India has significant influence in the policy space with pathbreaking schemes such as the National Health Mission (NHM) and Ayushman Bharat, with its twin prongs of the Health and Wellness Centres to deliver comprehensive primary health care and Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY). India is also a signatory to with similar levels of economic development. Furthermore, there are huge variations across States in their health outcomes and health systems' performance. It is unfortunate that by and large, health has not received the kind of political and administrative salience that this vital sector deserves.

With the federal compact among the Central and the State Governments having been clearly defined in the Constitution, the key questions that motivated the team involved in the design of Health Index were as follows:

- Can we develop a tool to bring health into greater political focus to ensure that what gets measured gets done?
- Can we benchmark the performance of the health system of various States which can be put forth in the public domain in a timely manner? Is it possible to capture the diversity and yet ensure that high performing states do not get complacent and the low performing States are not discouraged?
- Can appropriate instrument or incentives be put in place that can nudge the States to try and radically improve their health system performance? Can this be done in a manner that respects the federal compact and allows autonomy to individual State Governments to make policy choices to achieve the specified benchmarks?
- What are the parameters that could credibly capture the complex story of health system performance? The answer to these questions – admittedly imperfect – was to craft a Health Index – a journey which NITI Aayog embarked upon in 2017 in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and the World Bank. It is the first ever systematic exercise for tracking the progress on health outcomes and health systems' performance across all the States and Union Territories (UTs) in India on an annual basis. The Health Index is a weighted-composite Index based on select indicators in three domains: a) Health Outcomes; (b) Governance and Information; and (c) Key Inputs and Processes, with the health outcomes carrying the most weight across the different category of States/UTs. For generation of ranks, the States are classified into three categories (Larger States, Smaller States and UTs) to ensure compa-

diac care units, are included in the Index. In February 2018, the first round of the Health Index report on ranks and scores was released which measured the annual and incremental performance of the States and UTs over the period of 2014-15 (base year) to 2015-16 (reference year).

This was followed by the second round of Health Index that tracked performance for the period 2015-16 (base year) and 2017-18 (reference year). The same set of indicators and weights were used for the first two rounds. However, as the index is work in progress, some refinements for subsequent rounds are likely. Enabling Tool The vision behind establishing the annual sys-

The NITI Aayog has established the Health Index as an annual systematic tool to leverage cooperative and competitive federalism to accelerate the pace of achieving health outcomes and encourage cross-learning among states. The Health Index can be a gamechanger as it can shift the focus from budget spends, inputs and outputs to outcomes. Tracking incremental performance ensures that there is no room for complacency among historically better performing states, while at the same time providing opportunity to states that have lagged in performance to demonstrate perceptible improvement.

tematic tool is to propel States towards undertaking multi-pronged interventions and drive efforts towards achievement of SDG Goal 3. It can be viewed as being akin to an annual health checkup diagnostic report; providing the State Governments to identify parameters in which States have improved, stagnated, or declined. The Health Index report provides the direction and magnitude of change at a composite level as well as for each of the indicators of the Health Index. An analysis of this can help States in focusing attention on better targeting of interventions and improving the delivery of health services and also an opportunity of sharing best practices.

Room for Improvement

The introspection is useful for all States and UTs, as both the first and second annual Health Index report indicates that even the States and UTs that are doing comparatively well have substantial scope for improvement. For example Health Index (June 2019) report on ranks of States and UTs indicates, even Kerala, Mizoram, and Chandigarh, the "healthiest" among large states, small states and UTs respectively, all have quite a distance from the frontier and have room for improving their performance. The Index is an innovative tool as it not only

categories of States. The magnitude of changes was bigger in UTs compared to Larger and Smaller States. Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra were the only two states that were among the top one-third States on both overall performance and incremental performance. Andhra Pradesh had the highest proportion of indicators (63 percent) among the Larger States which fell in the category of most improved or improved.

Among the UTs and Smaller States, there was a divergence in Health Index Scores from base year to reference year across States (UTs), that is, better performing States (UTs) tended to get better whereas leastperforming States (UTs) tended to get worse. Among the Larger States, there was neither divergence nor convergence in Health Index Scores over time.

Shake Complacency and Nurture Hope It is envisaged that tracking progress on incremental performance will also help shake complacency among "Healthiest Large States" such as Kerala, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu that have historically done well. At the same time, it is expected that it will nurture hope and optimism among large states such as Haryana, historically lagged in performance but are demonstrating greater im-

The writ is the Advisor Health, NITI Aayog, Government of India. Email: alokkumar.up@ias.nic.in Sheena Chhabra is the Senior Health Specialist and Task Team Leader, Universal Health Coverage, World Bank. Email: schhabra1@worldbank.org

Project Cheetah is govt's endeavour towards environment and wildlife conservation: PM

Sheopur (Madhya Pradesh): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said that the 'Project Cheetah', under which the BJP government at the Centre reintroduced big cats in the country with the support of Namibia, is the government's endeavour towards environment and wildlife conservation. PM Modi, in an address to the nation following the release of cheetahs into Kuno National Park Saturday, said, "We lose certain things when we move away from our roots. Hence, we should take pride in our heritage."

The Prime Minister thanked the Namibia government for cooperation in relocating eight cheetahs to India and also congratulated the citizens of India for the successful release of the cheetahs in Kuno National Park.

He said that the cheetahs will add to bio-diversity and boost tourism and generate income for locals.

"The biodiversity that had become extinct and the link that got disconnected for decades, today we have a chance to reconnect it. Today the cheetah has returned to the soil of India. And I would also say that along with these cheetahs, the nature-loving consciousness of India has also been awakened with full force," said PM Modi.

He further said that the Kuno National Park was chosen for the release of cheetahs after a detailed study by experts.

"It is unfortunate that we declared Cheetahs extinct from the country in 1952, but for decades no meaningful effort was made to rehabilitate them. Today, as we celebrate Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, the country has started rehabilitating Cheetahs with new energy," said the PM. The Prime Minister said that the grassland ecosystem

will be restored again, and biodiversity will increase further," said PM Modi. PM Modi appealed to people for patience before visiting Kuno National Park to have a glimpse of cheetahs and referred to them as 'India's guests'. "These Cheetahs have come as guests, unaware of this area. For them to be able to make Kuno Na-

the basis of our sensibility and spirituality." "This is a historic moment. Cheetahs will make us more environmentally conscious", he added.

The cheetahs were declared extinct from India in 1952 but today 8 cheetahs (5 females and 3 males) were brought from Africa's Namibia as part of 'Project Cheetah' and the government's efforts to revitalise and diversify the country's wildlife and habitat.

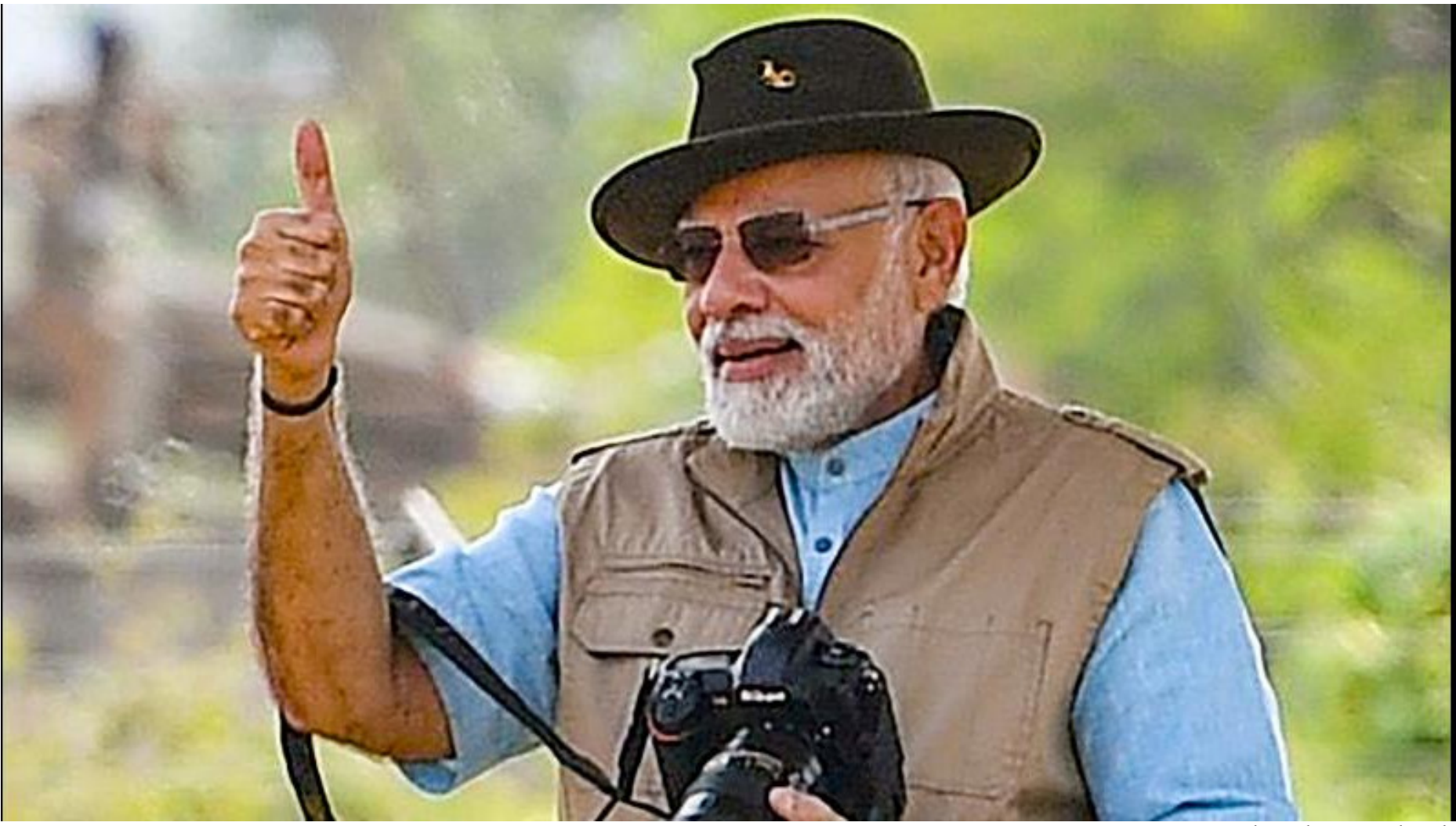
The eight cheetahs were brought in a cargo aircraft in Gwalior as part of an inter-continental cheetah translocation project. Later, the Indian Air Force choppers carried the cheetahs to Kuno National Park from Gwalior Air Force Station.

Radio collars have been installed in all the cheetahs to be monitored through satellite. Apart from this, there is a dedicated monitoring team behind each cheetah who will be monitoring their location for 24 hours. Cheetahs have been brought under an MoU signed earlier this year.

Under the ambitious Project Cheetah of the Indian government, the reintroduction of wild species particularly

cheetah was undertaken as per the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) guidelines.

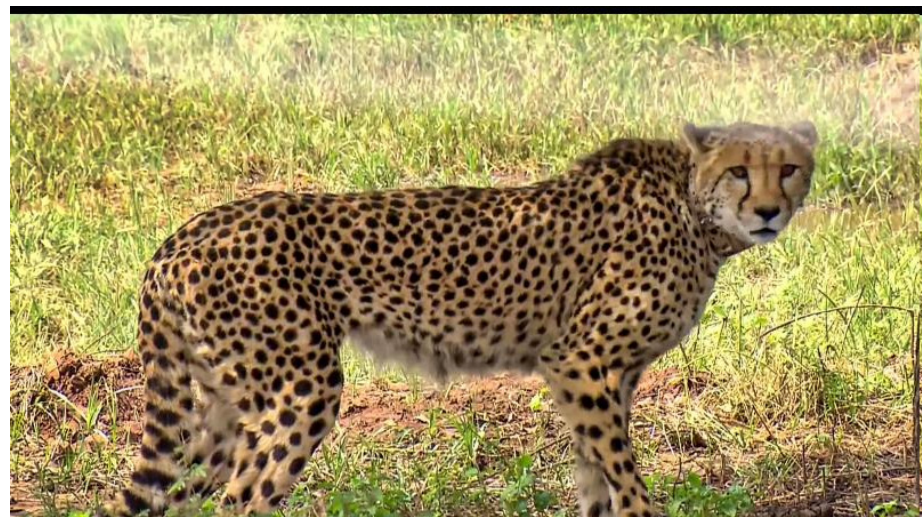
India has a long history of wildlife conservation. One of the most successful wildlife conservation ventures 'Project Tiger', which was initiated way back in 1972, has not only contributed to the conservation of tigers but also of the entire ecosystem. In continuation of this, the reintroduction of cheetahs is one step ahead and a milestone in the history of wildlife conservation in India.



PM Modi releases cheetahs brought from Namibia in Kuno National Park

Sheopur (MP): Eight cheetahs from Namibia landed here on Saturday, as part of the programme to reintroduce the feline in India seven decades after it was declared extinct in the country.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is celebrating his birthday, released three cheetahs



in quarantine enclosures of the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh around 11.30 am.

After the modified Boeing 747 landed at the Gwalior airbase at 7.47 am, the felines were flown in two Air Force helicopters to Palpur near the Park.

A viral video showed the crates carrying the cheetahs stacked in what was earlier the 'economy' section of the Boeing aircraft. After the plane landed at Gwalior, the ground personnel were seen helping transfer the crates, marked Live Animals, to the waiting choppers.

The aircraft, which took off from the African country Friday night, carried the cheetahs in the special wooden crates during the around 10-hour journey.

Before their flight from Namibia, the cheetahs, the fastest land animals in the world, were treated with a tranquilizer that lasts for three to five days.

The animals were flown to the park in Sheopur district, 165 km away from Gwalior.

tem would be restored again and biodiversity will increase further.

"It is true that, when nature and environment are protected, then our future is also secure. The avenues for growth and prosperity also open up. When cheetahs run again in Kuno National Park,

the journey took about 20-25 minutes, an official said. The cheetahs remained without food during the transcontinental journey and will be given something to eat now that they have been released in the enclosures, the official said.

A dais was set up in the Park under which special cages carrying cheetahs were kept and Modi, who turned 72 on Saturday, released three of them in an enclosure by operating a lever. After that, other dignitaries released the remaining cheetahs in other enclosures.

The cheetahs were brought in a special flight of Terra Avia, an airline based at Chisinau, Moldova in Europe that operates chartered passenger and cargo flights. Officials battled heavy rain and inclement weather to complete the preparations for Modi's programme to release the big cats in their new home in Kuno.

Two days before Modi's arrival, heavy rain lashed the Gwalior-Chambal region of Madhya Pradesh. The Kuno National Park is situated on the Northern side of Vidhyachal mountains with an area of 344.686 sq km. It was named after a tributary of Chambal River, Kuno, a forest official said.

The last cheetah died in the country in 1947 in Korea district in present day Chhattisgarh, which was earlier part of Madhya Pradesh, and the species was declared extinct from India in 1952.

The 'African Cheetah Introduction Project in India' was conceived in 2009. A plan to introduce the big cat in the KNP by November last year had suffered a setback due to the COVID-19 pandemic, officials said.

HYDERABAD: The three-day sponsored Telangana National Integration Day celebrations began on a grand scale across the state on Friday. Rallies were taken out in all the 119 Assembly constituencies to mark the commencement of the celebrations.

Ministers, MLAs, collectors, SPs, police commissioners and other officials, students, youth and women took part in the rallies to mark the 75 years of merger of the erstwhile Nizam-ruled Hyderabad State with the Union of India on September 17, 1948.

The rallies saw participation of about 15,000 people in every constituency, totalling to about 20 lakh people throughout the state. People from different walks of life participated holding national flags. They raised slogans of

at Sircilla, said at a public meeting that there was a need to protect Telangana from disintegrating in the name of caste and religion. He said people should be alert about the leaders provoking them with religious overtones. Finance minister T. Harish Rao took out a rally in Siddipet and ad-

ressed a public meeting. He said Telangana State was maintaining communal harmony since its formation but 'communal forces' are now trying to divide people based on religion and instigate

communal violence. He cautioned people that if communal forces are allowed to rule the state, it will only lead to destruction and bloodshed.

In Hyderabad, ministers Talasani Srinivas Yadav, Mohd. Mahmood Ali, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, MLA Danam

Nagender, mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi, GHMC commissioner Lokesh Kumar, Hyderabad collector Amoy Kumar, GHMC corporators and other officials participated in the rally along with students and locals from



Spectacular start to TS National Integration Day celebrations

Prasad's Imax to People's Plaza on Necklace Road. The AIMIM held a bike rally in the Old City on Friday. The rally, led by AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi, and attended by thousands of locals and party workers, started from Mir Alam Idgah grounds and culminated into a public meeting at Teegalakunta.

Global leaders head to UK for queen's funeral as public pays tribute

LONDON: World leaders begin gathering in London from Saturday for the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II, as princes William and Harry are set to lead a vigil of her grandchildren at her coffin.

The queen's death on September 8 aged 96, after a record-breaking 70 years on the throne, has sparked an outpouring of emotion.

Members of the public braved waits that at one point were estimated to be up to 24 hours and chilly night-time temperatures to view her coffin.

Lines have snaked for miles along the River Thames since Wednesday when her coffin was brought to the UK parliament complex to lie in state.

Police are mounting Britain's biggest-

The vigil will be repeated on Saturday evening by eight of the queen's grandchildren, including the new heir to the throne Prince William and his estranged brother Harry.

Harry -- who served two tours with the British army in Afghanistan -- has reportedly also been given special permission to wear his military uniform despite no longer being a working royal.

The move appeared to be the latest olive branch offered to Harry by the royals after he and his wife Meghan launched accusations of racism in interviews from their new home in the US.

The personal sorrow of the queen's family has been playing out in the glare of intense international attention.



ever security operation for Monday's funeral, as hundreds of dignitaries including US President Joe Biden are set to jet in.

The queen's successor, King Charles III, will meet on Saturday with the prime ministers of the Commonwealth realms -- the 14 former colonies over which he now reigns in addition to Britain.

From Australia and New Zealand to Canada, they have formally proclaimed him their new sovereign.

But republican movements are gaining ground, and efforts to keep them all in the royal fold will likely be a feature of his reign.

Charles on Friday wrapped up his maiden tour as monarch to the four nations of the United Kingdom with a visit to Wales, part of an operation dubbed "Spring Tide" to launch him in his new role.

Large crowds in Cardiff chanted "God save the king" as he shook hands with well-wishers following a multi-faith service in Llandaff Cathedral, and at Cardiff Castle.

Charles met Welsh First Minister Mark Drakeford, an avowed republican, and there was isolated booing on the streets after the new monarch was quick to declare his son William the new Prince of Wales.

But Drakeford said questions over the future of the monarchy were "a footnote to the dominant feelings of the day".

'Tide of emotion'

Back in London, Charles held a 15-minute vigil with his siblings -- Princess Anne, Prince Andrew and Prince Edward -- around their mother's casket on Friday night.

They stood, eyes lowered and silent, while members of the public filed past. Andrew -- stripped this year of his royal titles over a sex assault scandal -- was allowed to wear military uniform for the only time during the 11-day mourning period.

The Duke of York, as he is also known, flew Royal Navy helicopters during the 1982 Falklands War with Argentina.

But the queen's youngest son Edward said: "We have been overwhelmed by the tide of emotion that has engulfed us and the sheer number of people who have gone out of their way to express their own love, admiration and respect."

Beckham joins queues

The most striking manifestation of public reverence for the queen has been the vast queues of the hundreds of thousands of people wanting to bid her farewell.

Officials warned on Friday that expected queuing time had reached over 24 hours and briefly paused admission when the lines reached capacity.

Those paying their respects included former England football captain turned fashion icon David Beckham, who spent 12 hours to reach Westminster Hall.

"It's very emotional, and the silence and the feeling in the room is very hard to explain," he told reporters after filing past the coffin.

"We're all there to say thanks to Her Majesty for being kind, for being caring, for being reassuring throughout the years."

June Nayler, 76, a retired former local authority worker from Milton Keynes in central England was undaunted by the long wait she faced as she joined the back of the line in Southwark Park.

"I'm here now and going to make it all the way -- it's my duty to do it," she told AFP. "I'm just overcome by the crowds and number of people turning out."

The public have until Monday morning to view the coffin before the queen is honoured with Britain's first state funeral in nearly six decades.

The spectacular ceremony at Westminster Abbey -- expected to be watched by millions around the globe -- will see 142 sailors pulling the gun-carriage bearing her lead-lined coffin.

It will be attended by more than 2,000 guests, but leaders from countries at loggerheads with the UK such as Russia, Belarus and Afghanistan have not been invited.

A private burial will follow at Windsor Castle after a committal service.

6 lakh hectare of deemed forest to be granted to farmers

BENGALURU: Revenue Minister R Ashoka informed the assembly on Friday that the government would denotify 6 lakh hectares deemed forest -- around 15 lakh acres -- of 9 lakh hectares deemed forest in Karnataka, and grant it to farmers who have been cultivating the land for decades.



"In 15 days, a meeting will be held to take a decision on demarcation, and about 3,000 surveyors will be absorbed on contract basis to conduct the survey on a war footing. The land which coffee planters and pepper growers in Kodagu and Chikkamagaluru have been cultivating for over 70 years, will be leased to them," he told the House. Leader of the opposition Siddaramaiah, who welcomed the move, claimed that his government had made a move to lease out up to 10 acres in the region. "If we continue to lose forest cover for development and illegal encroachments, it will have an impact on the state. The 15th Finance Commission has indicated in one of the guidelines that loss of green cover will eventually reflect in a cut in grants to the state," a top official told TNIE.

Bill to regularise unauthorised lands passed
The Karnataka Land Revenue (Amendment) Bill was passed in the assembly to extend by a year, time to apply for regularisation of unauthorised cultivation of government lands. MLAs cutting across

party lines welcomed the move as there is a huge number of applicants waiting in their constituencies. Ashoka informed that there are 7,15,705 applications for grants of government lands under Form-57, 1,12,545 under Form-53 and 6,302 under Form-50. JDS leader G T Devegowda asked the government to relax norms on gomala lands. "When mutts are granted gomala lands easily, why cannot farmers who have been cultivating them for decades?" he questioned.

Deputy leader of the opposition UT Khader was the lone MLA to raise an objection. "Affluent people are more likely to misuse the law to get government lands granted. There needs to be strict scrutiny in this regard," he insisted.

He also expressed concern over government lands getting exhausted across the state. If there is rampant grant of land to private parties, there will be nothing left for public utilities, including hospitals and schools, he said.

New Act makes financial fraud non-bailable offence
With the Karnataka Protection of Interest of Depositors in Financial Establishments (amendment) Bill, 2022, passed in the ongoing Assembly session, any offence under the new law will be cognisable and non-bailable. The Act provides for setting up of a special court in each district with the consent of the Karnataka High Court. It also aims to protect the interest of depositors and prevent them from being defrauded by unscrupulous bankers and financial establishments. "It will not be retrospective, but prospective, Act as the law was brought through an ordinance in May 2022. Now, FIRs filed against individuals and institutions at different places will be clubbed together to be tried before special courts," said Law Minister JC Madhu Swamy, who presented the Bill for discussion.




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UP mills owe Rs 4,832 crore to cane farmers as on September 1

National Logistics Policy has potential to usher in 'ease of moving': India Inc

NEW DELHI: Sugar mills in Uttar Pradesh owed Rs 4,832 crore to cane farmers as on September 1 for the crushing season runs from October to September. The cane crushing season runs from October to September. Ali had raised the issue of sugarcane ar-

which was later posted on the social media platform Twitter by the latter. The cane crushing season runs from October to September. Ali had raised the issue of sugarcane ar-

At present, an amount of Rs 4,832.49 crore is yet to be paid by mills to cane farmers. The figures are based on the data collected by the state government as on September 1.

dues at the earliest, she said. The minister said that the UP government is conscious and committed to ensure the payment of cane dues to the farmers. In a tweet, Ali said that



30,368.73 crore or 86.27 per cent of the total due has been paid, according to Minister of State for Food and Consumer Affairs Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti. The minister informed the same to BSP MP Kunwar Danish Ali in a letter dated September 8,

rears in Lok Sabha on August 5. In response to the same, the minister stated that out of a total payable of Rs 35,201.22 crore for 2021-22 marketing year (October-September), mills in Uttar Pradesh have paid Rs 30,368.73 crore to the farmers.

Further, Jyoti informed that Simbhaoli Sugars Ltd has paid Rs 263.60 crore, while an amount of Rs 238.09 crore is yet to be paid by the sugar mill. Notices have been issued to the mills for the clearance of

all mills are exploiting sugarcane farmers. The government is not listening to the farmers demand on clearing their cane dues, he said, in a roughly translated tweet in Hindi. "Why are sugarcane farmers being forced to commit suicide?" he added.

Lower Kharif sowing calls for deft management of foodgrain stock, prices: FinMin Report

NEW DELHI: A Finance Ministry report on Saturday underlined the need for deft management of stocks of agriculture commodities in view of lower crop-sowing for the Kharif season, stressing there should be no room for complacency on the inflation front. Overall, inflationary pressures in India appear to be on a decline with a pre-emptive set of administrative measures by the government, agile monetary policy and easing of interna-

Pradesh (2.61 lakh ha), and Bihar (2.18 lakh ha) so far this kharif season. Paddy is the main kharif crop and its sowing begins with the onset of the southwest monsoon from June and harvesting from October onwards. Observing that India's growth has been robust and inflation in control at a time when slowing growth and high inflation are afflicting most of the major economies of the world.



tional commodity prices and supply-chain bottlenecks, according to the monthly Economic Review released by the Finance Ministry.

However, it said, there is no "room for complacency on the inflation front as lower crop-sowing for the Kharif season calls for deft management of stocks of agricultural commodities and market prices without unduly jeopardising farm exports."

India's rice production could fall by 10-12 million tonnes during the Kharif season this year due to a fall in paddy sowing area, Food Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey had said earlier this month.

The Kharif season contributes about 80 per cent of India's total rice production.

There was a huge lag in paddy sowing in the states of Jharkhand (9.80 lakh ha), Madhya Pradesh (6.32 lakh ha), West Bengal (4.45 lakh ha), Chhattisgarh (3.91 lakh ha), Uttar

Pradesh (2.61 lakh ha), and Bihar (2.18 lakh ha) so far this kharif season. Paddy is the main kharif crop and its sowing begins with the onset of the southwest monsoon from June and harvesting from October onwards. Observing that India's growth has been robust and inflation in control at a time when slowing growth and high inflation are afflicting most of the major economies of the world.

Export ban on broken rice to ease pressure on domestic retail prices: Govt official. The report further said inflation in India, a net commodity-importing country, has been a by-product of externally situated exogenous pressures. "Increase in international prices was reflected in an uptick in domestic prices, though the increase in domestic prices was relatively modest on account of the timely interventions taken by the government. Further, as these external pressures ease, inflationary pressures in India are also likely to subside," it said.

Several indicators are already pointing to the easing of external pressures, the report said, adding, industrial metals and edible oil prices after peaking in March 2022, have softened, led by recessionary fears in advanced economies.

Crude prices have dropped 19.1 per cent by August since the peak in the month of June 2022 and supply chains are getting restored with decline in port congestion.

The impact is already reflected in the decline in retail and WPI inflation since April 2022. Retail inflation eased to 7 per cent in August as compared to 7.8 per cent in April 2022.

NEW DELHI: The National Logistics Policy unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday will substantially reduce transportation costs across the entire supply chain and has the potential to usher in "ease of moving" in the country, India Inc said.

The prime minister unveiled the National Logistics Policy that seeks to address challenges facing the transport sector and bring down the logistics cost of businesses from 13-14 per cent to a single digit.

At a grand launch event, he said the policy aims to expedite the last-mile delivery, helping businesses save time and money.

While the new policy addresses challenges of the logistics sector, it together with the infrastructure augmentation plan PM GatiShakti will address gaps, he said. CII Director General

Chandrajit Banerjee said besides improving ease of doing business and ease of living, the policy along with other pillars of the PM Gati-

erhouse. Assocham secretary general Deepak Sood described the National Logistics Policy as a major structural transfor-

gistics policy for consultation in 2019, but it was delayed due to Covid-19 pandemic. The National Logistics Policy was once



Shakti has the potential to usher in an unprecedented era of 'ease of moving' in the country, ensuring the speedier and seamless movement of cargo and people across various modes of transport. He said the reduced logistics cost and increased efficiencies will energise the economy across sectors in multiple ways and take us many steps closer to emerging as a global manufacturing pow-

erhouse. Assocham secretary general Deepak Sood described the National Logistics Policy as a major structural transfor-

gistics policy for consultation in 2019, but it was delayed due to Covid-19 pandemic. The National Logistics Policy was once

again announced by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Budget for 2022-23.

The draft policy provides for the government creating a single point of reference for all logistics and trade facilitation matters, reducing costs for the logistics sector to 10 per cent in five years. The logistics sector is estimated at 13-14 per cent of GDP.

King Charles, Prince William meet mammoth queue for queen's coffin

Continued from page-1

siblings had held their own vigil in the cavernous hall.

"He was arrested for an offence under the Public Order Act and is currently in custody," London's Metropolitan Police said.

Fainting

Some 435 people have needed medical treatment, often for head injuries after fainting in the queue, the London Ambulance Service said.

But Jenna O'Sullivan, a charity worker from Pontypridd in Wales, said her 14-hour wait was well worth it after paying her final respects at the coffin.

"It was so emotional, with such a nice atmosphere of peace and calm," the 36-year-old said.

"The queue was long but it felt like a celebration. We made some lovely friends."

Police are mounting Britain's biggest-ever security operation for Monday's funeral, as hundreds of dignitaries including US President Joe Biden are set to jet in.

Less than two weeks into her premiership, British Prime Minister Liz Truss was on Saturday beginning a packed weekend of meetings with world leaders including her counterparts from New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern, and Australia, Anthony Albanese, at the government's Chevening country residence. On Sunday she was due to meet Biden, Irish Taoiseach Micheal Martin, Canadian premier Justin Trudeau and Polish leader Andrzej Duda in Downing Street.

Charles, meanwhile, was on Saturday scheduled to meet the prime ministers of the Commonwealth realms -- the 14 former colonies over which he now reigns in addition to the United Kingdom -- including those of Australia, The Bahamas, Canada, Jamaica and New Zealand.

From Australia and Canada to Jamaica and Papua New Guinea, they have formally proclaimed him their new sovereign.

But republican movements are gaining ground in many of the countries, and efforts to keep them all in the royal fold will likely be a fea-

ture of his reign. Charles on Friday wrapped up his maiden tour as monarch to the four UK nations with a visit to Wales, part of an operation dubbed "Spring Tide" to launch him in his new role.

"Tide of emotion"

Back in London, Charles joined the 15minute vigil with his siblings -- Princess Anne, Prince Andrew and Prince Edward -- around their mother's casket on Friday night.

They stood, silent and eyes lowered, while members of the public filed past.

The vigil will be repeated on Saturday evening by the eight grandchildren, including the new heir to the throne Prince William and his estranged brother Harry.

Harry -- who served two tours with the British army in Afghanistan -- has been given special permission by his father to wear military uniform despite no longer being a working royal.

The move appeared to be the latest olive branch offered to Harry by Charles after the prince and his wife Meghan, now living in California, accused the royal family of racism.

The personal sorrow of the queen's family has been playing out in the glare of intense international attention.

But the queen's youngest son Edward said: "We have been overwhelmed by the tide of emotion that has engulfed us and the sheer number of people who have gone out of their way to express their own love, admiration and respect."

The public have until early Monday to view the coffin before the queen is honoured with Britain's first state funeral in nearly six decades.

The spectacular ceremony at Westminster Abbey -- expected to be watched by billions around the globe -- will see 142 sailors pulling the gun-carriage bearing her lead-lined coffin.

It will be attended by more than 2,000 guests, but leaders from countries at loggerheads with the UK such as Russia, Belarus and Afghanistan have not been invited. China's vice president Wang Qishan will attend, Beijing's foreign ministry confirmed, after a diplomatic spat saw Chinese officials barred from visiting the coffin inside parliament.

Ramkumar loses second singles, Indian team stares at defeat in Davis Cup tie against Norway

LILLEHAMMER: The Indian team is staring at a heavy defeat in its Davis Cup World Group I First Round tie after conceding a 0-2 lead to hosts Norway following Ramkumar Rammathan's loss to Viktor Durasovic in the second singles here.

Ramkumar, the number one singles player for India, failed to live up to expectations as he suffered a 1-6, 4-6 loss to his lower-ranked opponent Durasovic in one hour and 16 min-

utes on Friday to world No.2 and result in the first tie by winning the city.



night.

After Prajnesh Gunneswaran lost

US Open runner-up Casper Ruud 1-6 4-6 in an expected re-

sult in the first tie by winning the city.

second match.

But it was not to be as Ramkumar, ranked 276 in the world, was no match for 325th-ranked Durasovic who broke Ramkumar's serve thrice and sent down 12 aces as compared to three of his Indian opponent at the Hakons Hall Hard Court indoor facil-

Durasovic sent down five aces in the first set while breaking Ramkumar's serve twice.

In the first set, Ramkumar was able to hold only his first service to make it 1-1 but after that it was Durasovic all the way.

Ramkumar also had

two double faults which made things worse for him as Durasovic took the first set easily.

Ramkumar tried to come back in the second set but he failed to hold his second service game to hand Durasovic a 2-1 lead.

The Indian was unable to break Durasovic's serve as the Norwegian fired seven aces.

Leading 5-4, Durasovic held onto his serve to close out the match. Earlier, in the first singles on Friday, world no.

2 Casper Ruud expectedly was too good for India's Prajnesh Gunneswaran, giving Norway a 1-0 lead.

Ruud, who finished runner-up at the US Open after going down to Carlos

Alcaraz on Monday, turned up for national duty four days later and did the job for his team. He beat the 335-ranked Indian 6-1, 6-4 in one hour and two minutes.

After being totally outplayed in the first set, Prajnesh lifted his game in the second to make Ruud's task tougher. While the Indian failed to get a break point, his more accomplished opponent converted three out of the five opportunities he got.

On day two, Yuki Bhambri and Saketh Myneni will face Ruud and Durasovic in the doubles.

In the reverse singles, also to be played on Saturday, Ramkumar will be up against Ruud while Prajnesh faces Durasovic.

Pele, Neymar, Real Madrid come out in support after racist attack on Vinicius Jr

MADRID: Real Madrid have condemned racist and xenophobic language and behaviour in football and expressed disappointment at a racist comment on their star forward Vinicius Junior during a TV programme.

Real Madrid were responding after a Spanish agent used a

reaction in Brazil, Vinicius' native country, with big names like Pele and Neymar commenting on the issue.

"Real Madrid C. F. condemns all types of racist and xenophobic language and behaviour in football, sport and life in general, such as the regrettable and unfortunate comments

said he "won't stop dancing".

In an emotional statement in response to the racist abuse, the Real Madrid ace released a powerful statement via video that reads: "As long as the colour of the skin is more important than the brightness of the eyes, there will be war.

spect it! Or freak out... In any case, I will not stop!"

In Vinicius's native Brazil, Pele, Neymar and other big names voiced outrage over the alleged racist comments on Real Madrid forward.

"Football is joy. It's a dance," living legend Pele wrote on Instagram.

"Although unfortu-



racial slur while criticising the Brazilian forward Junior's celebrations on live TV.

When discussing the Brazilian during a live broadcast on the controversial Spanish channel El Chiringuito, Bravo said: "You have to respect your opponents. When you score a goal, if you want to dance the Samba, you should go to the sambodromo in Brazil. You have to respect your mates and stop playing the monkey."

The comments have also evoked a strong

made against our player Vinicius Junior in the last few hours," the club said in an official communication.

"Real Madrid would like to express its affection and support for Vinicius Junior, a player who regards football as an attitude towards life through joy, respect and sportsmanship," the statement said.

The club has directed its legal services to take legal action against anyone who makes racist remarks toward our players. Meanwhile, Vinicius Junior too responded to the comments and

"I have that phrase tattooed on my body. I have this thought permanently in my head. And I have attitudes in my life that turn this philosophy into reality," he responded on Twitter.

"They say that happiness bothers. The happiness of a black Brazilian being successful in Europe bothers much more. "But my will to win, my smile and the sparkle in my eyes are much bigger than that. Don't even try to imagine how much.

"They are dances to celebrate the cultural diversity of the world. Accept it! Re-

nately, racism still exists, we will not allow that to stop us from continuing to smile. And we will continue to fight racism every day in this way: fighting for our right to be happy and respected."

Paris Saint-Germain striker Neymar tweeted "BAILA VINI JR" -- Portuguese for "dance" -- echoing a hashtag, #BailaViniJr, that was the top trending topic on Twitter in Brazil. The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBC) too expressed its solidarity with the player in a statement, condemning the "racist statements."

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