

WORLD 5

TEXAS SC BLOCKS ORDER
THAT RESUMED ABORTIONS

MONEY 6

LANKA TO GET TWO FUEL
CONSIGNMENTS IN JULY

SPORT 7

HOCKEY WC: INDIA EYE
REVENGE AGAINST ENGLAND

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Udaipur like murder in Amravati

MHA hands over
probe to NIA

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Belatedly though, another Udaipur-like killing — involving the brutal murder of a 54-year-old medical shop-owner at Amravati over a WhatsApp message supporting suspended BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma — came into sharp focus on Saturday, as the number of arrests in the macabre incident mounted to seven, including the mastermind. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) directed the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to take over the probe.

On a day when the four accused in the Kanhaiya Lal murder were attacked by an angry crowd while they were being escorted by the police to the court and the court sent them to the NIA's custody for 10 days, Maharashtra — eclipsed by the major political developments in the State — began to come to terms with the gruesome murder of Amravati-based shop owner Umesh Prahladrao Kolhe at Amravati in eastern Maharashtra on June 21.

Announcing the handing over of the probe into the Amravati incident to the NIA, Home Minister Amit Shah's office tweeted, "The MHA has handed over the investigation of the case relating to the barbaric killing of Umesh Kolhe in Amravati on 21st June to NIA. The conspiracy behind the killing, involvement of organisations and international linkages would be thoroughly investigated."

Soon after, an NIA team visited Amravati to probe the ghastly killing.

Interestingly enough, the Kolhe killing took place exactly a week prior to the murder of tailor Kanhaiya, who was beheaded in Udaipur.

However, the inhuman incident was overtaken by the



An accused in Kanhaiya Lal killing case being manhandled by the public, as police take him away after he was produced at an NIA court, in Jaipur on Saturday. The court remanded killers Riaz Akhtari and Ghouse Mohammad and two others in 10-day police custody

PTI

hectic political developments involving rebellion Eknath Shinde-led MLAs, resignation by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and subsequent change in the Government.

The Amravati police have so far arrested seven persons, including the mastermind Shaikh Irfan Shaikh Rahim, owner of an NGO from Nagpur. The others have been identified as Muddasir Ahmed (22), Shahrukh Pathan (25), Abdul Taufiq (24), Shoaib Khan (22) Atib Rashid (22) and Shamim Firoz Ahmed — in connection with the murder of Umesh Kolhe. The six prime accused have been booked under sections 302 (murder), 120 B (criminal conspiracy) and 34 of the IPC.

The police made the arrests on the basis of a complaint lodged by Kolhe's son Sanket with the City Kotwali Police Station. Amravati's Deputy Commissioner of Police Vikram Sali said prima facie Kolhe's murder was an offshoot of a social media post supporting Nupur, who had made

controversial comments on Prophet Mohammad in a television debate.

The incident took place around 10.30 pm on June 21 when Kolhe was on his way home after closing his shop — Amit Medical Store. Sanket (27) and his wife Vaishnavi were accompanying him on another scooter.

Two motorcycle-borne assailants waylaid Kolhe. One of them stabbed him on the left side of his neck. In his complaint, Sanket told the police, "We were moving from Prabhat Chowk and our scooters had reached the Mahila College New High School's gate. Two men on a motorcycle suddenly came in front of my father's scooter and stopped him. One of them stabbed him on the left side of his neck with a knife."

"My father fell and was bleeding. I stopped my scooter and started shouting for help. Another man came and the three fled the spot on the motorcycle. With help from passers-by, I rushed my father to nearby Axon Hospital where

he died during treatment."

The investigations have revealed that Kolhe inadvertently posted the message supporting Nupur in a WhatsApp group in which his Muslims customers were members. One of the arrested accused reportedly said that Kolhe's post was an insult to Prophet Mohahammad and hence he must be killed.

Apart from arresting six persons in connection with the incident, the Amravati police have seized the knife with which the murder was committed, mobile phones, vehicle and clothes used for the crime, and obtained CCTV footage from the scene of crime.

"We have sent the seized electronic devices to for forensic tests, while the scrutiny of technical evidence is currently on. We have sought details of the bank accounts of all arrested accused and their family members were obtained and scrutiny is in progress," a senior police officer said.

Continued on Page 2

Cong links Udaipur killer with BJP, party rejects allegation

Cong shares photo of killer with BJP leaders, party calls it fake news

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A fresh row has erupted in the ghastly Udaipur beheading incident as the Congress on Saturday alleged that one of the main accused in the brutal killing of tailor Kanhaiya Lal is a "BJP member". The BJP summarily dismissed it as "fake news".

Allegations have been levelled upon the BJP that one of the killers Riyaz Attari also called Riaz Akhtari had links with BJP Minority Morcha leaders of Rajasthan.

The Congress has sought to know whether the Centre had moved quickly to transfer the case to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) due to the reasons that Attari is seen in pictures with Rajasthan BJP leaders and wanted to join the party.

Addressing a Press conference at the Congress head-

quarters here, party's media department head Pawan Khara said a very sensational disclosure has been made by a media group in connection with the Udaipur incident which pointed to the BJP links with Attari.

Some reports have also referred to the accused as Attari. "The killer of Kanhaiya Lal, Attari is a member of the BJP," Khara said in a tweet after the Press conference.

He cited pictures and posts linking Attari with the said BJP Minority Morcha leaders — Irshad Chainwala and Mohammad Tahir.

"It has also come to the fore in the same disclosure that the main accused Attari often participated in the programmes of Rajasthan BJP leader and former Minister Gulabchand Kataria," he alleged.

"Through the posts of BJP leader Irshad Chainwala on Facebook on November 30, 2018, and Mohammad Tahir on February 3, 2019, October 27, 2019, August 10, 2021, November 28, 2019, and other posts, it is clear that Attari was not only close to BJP leaders, but was also an active member of the BJP," Khara alleged.

Continued on Page 2

Modi raps KCR graft politics, announces Har Ghar Tiranga op



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the BJP's National Executive meeting in Hyderabad on Saturday

PTI

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP's two-day National Executive meet that kicked off in Hyderabad on Saturday lauded India's economic growth story, targeted Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's "family-run corrupt politics" and announced a countrywide public outreach "Har Ghar Tiranga" (Tricolour in every home) campaign in view of the impending Assembly polls in many States and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

That the battle lines between the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) and the BJP are clearly drawn were evident as Rao for the second-time did

not adhere to the customary protocol of going to the airport to receive Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and rather choosing to host the joint Opposition's presidential candidate and former Minister Yashwant Sinha in the State Capital.

While Rao termed the BJP meet a "circus", the BJP termed him a "fox" who feared the arrival of a tiger, in an apparent reference to Prime Minister Modi.

The BJP slammed KCR for not adhering to the protocol. The TRS countered it saying a representative had been deputed as part of protocol.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

PC GEORGE HELD IN MOLESTATION CASE

Kochi: PC George, a seven-term member of Kerala Legislative Assembly and who heads a faction of the Kerala Congress was arrested by the Kerala Police on Saturday in connection with a molestation complaint filed by Saritha Nair, of the solar scam 'fame'. "This is nothing but political vendetta. I'll fight it out in the Court room," George told reporters while he was being led to the police vehicle.

INDIA SLAMS USCIRF FOR BIASED COMMENT

New Delhi: India on Saturday slammed the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) for its "biased" and "inaccurate" comments on the country. The strong reaction from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) came a day after the USCIRF alleged "repression" of critical voices, especially religious minorities and those reporting on and advocating for them in India.

LANDSLIDE TOLL 29; RAIN HITS RESCUE OP

Imphal: The toll in the landslide at a railway construction site in Manipur's Noney district climbed to 29 on Saturday after eight more bodies were recovered from under the debris, officials said. Thirty-four people are still missing after a massive landslide hit the Tupul yard railway construction camp on the night of June 29.

DERA SACHA BEHIND 2015 SACRILEGE INCIDENTS: SIT

Chandigarh: The final investigation report of the Punjab Police on the 2015 desecration cases has pinned blame on Sirsa-based Dera Sacha Sauda. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Saturday handed over the 467-page report of the SIT of the Punjab Police to Sikh leaders.

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Zubair's bail plea rejected, sent to jail for 14 days

STAFF REPORTER ■
NEW DELHI

A city court on Saturday rejected a bail plea of Alt News co-founded Mohammed Zubair and sent him to 14 days of judicial custody citing the nature and gravity of the offences against the accused and observing that the matter is at the initial stage of investigation. Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Snigdha Sarvaria pronounced the judgement after the open court reconvened late in the evening.

The Delhi Police had on Saturday produced Zubair before the court on expiry of his five-day custodial interrogation in a case related to an objectionable tweet he had posted in 2018 against a Hindu deity.

"Since the matter is at the initial stage of investigation and overall facts and circumstances of the case and nature and gravity of the offences alleged against the accused, no ground for grant of bail is made out. Bail application of accused is accordingly dismissed. Accordingly, accused is remanded to judicial custody for 14 days," the CMM Sarvaria said in the order while rejecting his bail application.

In the order, the court also noted the submission of the public prosecutor that investigation was at initial stage and that there was every likelihood that police custody of the accused would be required. The judge considered addition of new sections during the course of investigation while rejecting the bail application.

cation.

On arguments that the seizure of laptop and mobile phone were illegal and affecting the privacy of the accused, the court observed that it was part of the police file that the mobile phone seized from the accused initially on June 27 was found to be having no data. In response to the accused's claim that his previous mobile was stolen, the court said, "Nothing was found on record to show that any mobile phone of the accused was lost, although said plea has been taken now in the present application."

The court further said that the accused's concern about sealing of electronic devices could not be decided at the present stage since the investigation regarding the data is at

the initial stage and the electronic devices seized during execution of search warrants are still being looked into.

"As regards the plea that the alleged tweet of the accused for which accused has been arrested is of the year 2018 and part of Hindi movie 'Kissi Se Na Kehna' and so offences under sections 153A (Promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc.) and 295A (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) IPC are not made out, are of no assistance to the accused as Section 35 (Punishment for contravention of any provision of the) FC(R) Act have also been added and

investigation qua it is also pending," the court said.

The judge had reserved the order earlier in the day after the hearing in the case in which the police did not seek immediate extension of his police custody and instead asked that he be sent to 14-day judicial custody. Earlier, opposing the bail application Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) Atul Shrivastava, representing the Delhi Police, informed the court that Zubair "accepted payments through RazorPay from Pakistan, Syria, Australia, Singapore, UAE, which all require further investigation". He further informed that the police have invoked new offences under criminal conspiracy, destruction of evidence and violation FCRA act and they may seek Zubair's

further custody in the future.

During the argument, Srivastava said "If you accept something - donation, etc from a person of foreign country - then it's a contravention. As per our CDR analysis, he has accepted through Razor gateway, from Pakistan, Syria, etc which all things require further investigation," he argued. Grover argued that the investigation has to be to prosecute a crime and not harass or bismarch someone. She said that the police were giving updates to the media and this was "a practice the court must deprecate".

Appearing for Zubair, senior counsel Vrinda Grover argued that police misled the court as they had earlier released a statement stating that the funds were received by



a media company.

Grover submitted that the entire exercise was mala fide. "It all starts with a 2018. I am summoned under subterfuge. Is it a crime to change SIM or phone? You can't cast asper-

sions on someone being clever. Why I am saying mala fide is writ large that FIR is of June 20. A Section 41A notice is issued on June 24. They then entice me to join investigation (in another case)," Grover said.

Alt News parent firm received over ₹2L donation from foreign countries: Police

STAFF REPORTER ■
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police's Special Cell in its investigation have found out that Alt News' parent company Pravda Media has received a total donation of Rs 2,31,933 from foreign countries. Police team during social media analysis, have also noticed that Twitter handles that supported Alt News co-founder Mohammad Zubair and had tweeted in his support after his arrest were mostly from the middle eastern countries like the UAE, Bahrain, and Kuwait as well as countries like Pakistan.

Delhi Police have invoked new provisions -- sections 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 201 (destruction of evidence) of the Indian Penal

Code and section 35 of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act -- against Zubair.

Police said that the analysis of the Pravda Media's donations was done as there were allegations of Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) violations by the fact-checking portal Alt News.

From the analysis of a reply received from Razorpay payment gateway, it was revealed that there were various transactions in which either the mobile phone number was of outside India or the IP address was of foreign countries and cities, including Bangkok, Australia, Panama, North Holland, Singapore, Victoria, New York, England, Riyadh Region, Sharjah, Stockholm, Abu Dhabi,

Washington, Kansas, New Jersey, Ontario, California, Texas, Lower Saxony, Bern, Dubai, Scotland, a statement issued by the police said.

"A total of Rs 2,31,933 was received by Pravda Media through these transactions wherein either the mobile phone number or the IP address was of these foreign countries," said a senior police official. Police said that during social media analysis, most of the Twitter handles that tweeted in support of Zubair were from middle eastern countries.

"Police team found that after the arrest of Zubair, most of the twitter accounts that came in his support were from countries like UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait and countries like Pakistan," said a senior

police official.

Delhi Police arrested Alt News co-founder Mohammed Zubair on June 27 in a case related to an "objectionable tweet" he had posted in 2018 against a Hindu deity.

Earlier, a case was registered against him under sections 153A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, language, etc) and 295A (deliberate and malicious act intended to outrage religious feelings) of the Indian Penal Code).

On Thursday, police teams flew to Bengaluru along with Zubair to recover his electronic devices from his residence. Police searched his house located in Bengaluru's Chinnanna Layout in (DJ) Halli police limits, for more than two hours.

Zubair's lawyer accuses police of leaking order

STAFF REPORTER ■
NEW DELHI

The lawyer of the fact checker and Alt News co-founder Mohammed Zubair on Saturday expressed shock after a Delhi Police official leaked the news to the media that Zubair was denied bail and his judicial custody was extended, even before the court order was pronounced.

"I am shocked to see that DCP KPS Malhotra has leaked in the media 'ki hamara bail reject ho gaya hai. Aur 14 din ka JC grant hui hai (that the bail plea has been rejected and judicial custody has been extended by 14 days). I have learnt this from the Twitter posts of news channels and some law reporters. They all are citing KPS Malhotra as source," lawyer Soutik Banerjee said outside the courtroom here.



"It is extremely scandalous and it speaks of the status of rule of law in our country today. That even before the judicial magistrate has sat and pronounced the order, the police have leaked the order to the media. How KPS Malhotra knows what the order is. This calls for serious, serious introspection," the lawyer said.

Meanwhile, the senior Delhi Police official KPS Malhotra, DCP, IFSO unit of Special Cell admitted to incorrectly informing the media that Zubair was sent to 14-day judicial custody.

Following the allegations, Malhotra admitted to informing reporters incorrectly about Zubair's judicial custody. "I had a word with my IO (investigating officer), I misheard it due to noise and inadvertently the message was posted in the broadcast," he said.

Benito underpass set to reduce commuting time

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday inaugurated the 1200 metre long Y shape underpass Benito Juárez Marg underpass that is set to reduce commuting time between Central and South Delhi. The underpass saw the light of the day after missing eight deadlines. The underpass starts near Delhi University's Sri Venkateshwara college and goes beneath at the Durga Bai Deshmukh South Campus Metro Station on to the Ring Road. One of its arms opens on the San Martin Road while the other one on the Ring Road towards Moti Bagh. The newly constructed underpass is likely to save around eight to 10 minutes for commuters.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that this is one of the first underpasses in Delhi which has been built in Y-shape and helps



commuters use it for two directions. Apart from reducing the commuting time for locals, this underpass will also benefit lakhs of other commuters in Delhi daily. The total cost of the project was Rs 143.78 crores. The two lane underpass in Y shape carriage-way on both sides of is covered from above

road hump design to prevent rain water from entering the underpass.

Currently, people coming from Gurgaon and the Indira Gandhi International Airport have to take the Dhaula Kuan route to reach AIIMS and Central Delhi. Commuters travelling to AIIMS,

Chanakyapuri, Yashwant Place from the airport and Gurugram will now be able to bypass traffic bottlenecks at the Outer Ring Road, Dhaula Kuan, and Rao Tula Ram Marg by using this facility.

"The Deputy CM said that the smooth movement of vehicles at the new underpass will reduce fuel consumption by 2181 liters per day and lessen capital's carbon emissions by 5 tons per day.

"As per an estimate, the project will help in saving Rs 18 crores annually. An individual commuter will be able to save money in the range of Rs 100-Rs 5000," he added.

The newly inaugurated underpass is also aesthetically appealing with paintings and other things. Not only this, as a part of the project, a 670 meter skywalk connecting the two parts of the underpass on San Martin road and Benito

Juárez route has also been built. The construction of the underpass, which was part of the corridor development of IIT to NH-8, was started in 2016. The project conceived in 2013 was one of the most-delayed projects of the Public

Works Department, after having missed several deadlines due to clearance issues, departmental approvals, Covid lockdown and the ban on construction activities among others.

Benefit of Benito Juárez Underpass:

- ✳ Every day 2-3 lakh people will get relief from traffic
- ✳ 2181 liters of fuel will be saved daily, which will reduce the emission of 5.11 tons of carbon dioxide gas;
- ✳ There will be a saving of about 3624 manhours per day;
- ✳ Vehicles coming from the airport side from the underpass will get relief from the jam under Rao Tularam flyover on Ring Road;
- ✳ There is a skywalk above the underpass which will connect BJ Marg to South Campus Metro station and Satya Niketan Marg with a foot over bridge;
- ✳ There will be at least 25% reduction in traffic load at Dhaula Kuan intersection from Benito Juárez Marg underpass

Govt plans to engage e-commerce platforms to curb SUP use

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government plans to engage with various e-commerce firms and food delivery platforms, including Zomato, Swiggy, Amazon and Flipkart, for effective implementation of the ban on single-use plastic (SUP) items in the capital.

These firms have a huge business in Delhi and it has only increased after the Covid pandemic, they said, stressing that it is important to bring them on board to ensure that the campaign is a success.

The government will be holding a roundtable conference with the e-commerce companies along with other

stakeholders like market associations, self-help groups, and industrial associations to encourage and promote use of alternatives to single-use plastics, officials said.

Legal experts, MCD, enforcement officials from DPCC will also be part of the roundtable will be held under the chairmanship of Environment minister Gopal Rai, they said.

The government is holding a 'Plastic Vikalp Mela' at Thyagraj Stadium, which will culminate on July 3 and the conference will be held at the venue, officials said.

Interestingly, some online platforms have already started the concept of 'plastic neutral deliveries'.

Make drainage system foolproof to avoid waterlogging, LG instructs officials

STAFF REPORTER ■
NEW DELHI

Noting that Minto Bridge is among the worst waterlogging sites in Delhi, Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Saturday flagged technical flaws in the drainage system there and warned of strict action against engineers concerned in case the issue recurs, an official statement said.

Saxena inspected Delhi's chronic waterlogging sites - Indraprastha/WHO stretch, Railway underpass at Pul Prahladpur and Minto Bridge and instructed officials to make the water drainage system foolproof.

Reviewing long-term solutions that have been placed at each of these sites to prevent waterlogging and flooding, Saxena said any negligence will be viewed seriously and action will be taken against the erring officials.

Saxena appreciated the work done at Indraprastha and Pul Prahladpur but 'expressed displeasure' at the water drainage system developed at Minto Bridge that is among the worst waterlogging sites in the capital, it said.

He flagged technical flaws in the drainage system developed at the site and warned that engineers concerned will be held responsible and strict action will be taken in case waterlogging takes place at the site, it added.

During the inspection, the LG was informed that a new underground pipeline has been installed to drain out the rainwater from Minto Bridge to Bhavbhuti Marg towards New Delhi Railway Station.

The new pipeline is connected to a bigger PWD drain. He was also informed that four pumps of 75 HP each have been automated at this site and with increasing level of water, the pumps automatically become operational, the statement said.

He, however, pointed out that the single outlet was insufficient to drain out the huge quantity of water coming in from four heavy duty pumps installed at the site. Earlier, the entire water from Minto Bridge was diverted towards DDU Marg.

The LG was also unhappy with the garbage dumped in the sump at Minto Bridge and issued strict instructions to



remove all garbage and sludge in three to four days and report it along with photographic and video evidences, the statement said.

At Indraprastha and Pul Prahladpur too, the LG directed officials to immediately remove all debris and sludge lying near the drains so that they do not flow back into the drains along with the rainwater and further choke the drains, it said.

The LG first visited the IP-WHO stretch on ring road where four pumps of 100 HP each have been installed to clear the water from the roads

and store it in a newly constructed sump adjacent to the Ring Road.

The LG instructed officials to utilize the 5 lakh liters of water stored in these pipelines for greening purposes after the rainy season, the statement said.

At the railway underpass at Pul Prahladpur that witnesses nearly 5-6 feet deep waterlogging during the monsoon, the LG inspected the newly developed pumping station where six pumps of 100 HP capacity each have been installed to clear the overflowing water, it said.

MCD to continue with Central Govt's mandate regarding ban on SUPs

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi will "continue to do" as mandated by the Central Government norms on ban on single-use plastic (SUP), even as the city government has said it will grant a 10-day grace period to units found violating the ban before initiating punitive actions.

Civic authorities on Friday had seized nearly 689.01 kg of plastic items and issued over 368 challans in its jurisdiction in view of the countrywide ban on

SUP.

"These items were largely seized from traders in markets who keep a stock of plastic bags. Once the ban has come into place, markets are switching to paper bags or cloth bags, as expected," a senior official said on Saturday.

"It was just day one of the ban kicking in. We are raising awareness from our sides, as also other necessary steps will be taken accordingly in the coming days," he said.

However, Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Friday



had said that the Delhi government will issue warning notices to units found violating the ban on 19 SUP items till July 10 and punitive action will be taken thereafter against repeat offenders. Another senior MCD official when asked if MCD would

continue to take action against such violators, said, "We will continue to do in accordance with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and central government norms on the ban on single-use plastic".

"The MCD is conducting ICE (information, communication and education) activities anyway to raise awareness and steps will be taken according to the norms," he said. "A total of 125 enforcement teams have been constituted at zonal level to eliminate stocking, sale and usage of banned items," it said.

Schools creating awareness on ban on single use plastic

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Organising poster-making competitions, encouraging students to make speeches, signages warning about the use of plastic -- these are some of the ways through which schools in the national capital are creating awareness about the ban on single-use plastic that kicked in from July 1.

The resident welfare associations (RWAs) are also doing their bit by making their members aware about the ban. The principal of a government school in Shahdara said that they have been working to create awareness about the single-

use plastic ban among students by talking about it in the school assembly. Now that schools have reopened after the summer vacations, they will impress upon students the importance of using alternatives to plastic.

Similarly, another government school in north Delhi is planning to organise poster-making competitions, speech competitions to highlight the importance of the ban.

"We have been talking about the ban to our students in the assembly but we plan to hold competitions on the issue. Students learn about something very quickly if they get to know about it from their peers. For

instance, if a student will give a speech about the plastic ban issue, his friends and other school students will take a note of it while if teachers tell them, it would sound a boring lesson for them," he said.

The principal also said that they have asked students to desist from using plastic bottles and disposable glasses and use their alternatives for the sake of the environment.

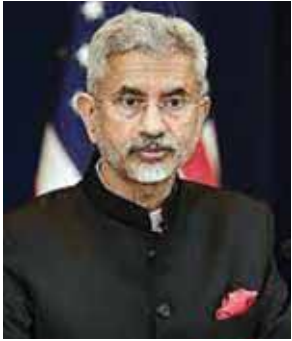
In May, the Delhi government had issued an order asking all schools in the national capital to set up a separate room within their premises to store reusable utensils as part of its plan to phase out single-use plastic (SUP).

Ukraine likely to dominate G-20 FMs' meet in Bali next week

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine and its effect on food and energy supply is likely to dominate the G-20 Foreign Ministers' meeting next week. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will attend the conclave in Bali ahead of the G-20 summit to be held in November.

Indonesia is hosting the summit and is keen that Russian President Vladimir Putin also attend the high-profile event. Prime Minister



Narendra Modi along with other world leaders will take part in it. Indonesia is the Chair of G-20 this year while

India will head it next year and host the summit.

At the Foreign Ministers meet on July seven and eight, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will be present. Indonesia has also invited Ukraine's foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba for the event.

Incidentally, Indonesian President Joko Widodo held bilateral talks with Modi last week on the sidelines of the G-7 summit in Germany. The two leaders discussed the G-20 chairmanship. India is the chair of the grouping for next year and will hold the summit in

Delhi. The Indonesian President recently visited Ukraine's capital Kyiv and Moscow.

India has all along favoured dialogue and diplomacy to end the Ukraine conflict. Modi reiterated this stand on Friday in his talks on the telephone with Putin. The two leaders have talked to each other on the phone four times since the Russian military action in Ukraine started on February 24. Modi had also urged Putin to hold one on one talks with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

India raps US body for 'repression of religious minorities' remark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Saturday slammed the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) for its "biased" and "inaccurate" comments on the country. New Delhi said the comments reflect a "severe lack of understanding" of India.

The strong reaction from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) came a day after the USCIRF alleged "repression" of critical voices, especially religious minorities and those reporting on and advocating

for them in India.

"We have seen the biased and inaccurate comments on India by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)," MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said.

Replying to media queries on USCIRF's comments on India, Bagchi said the comments reflect a "severe lack of understanding" of India and its constitutional framework, its plurality and its democratic ethos.

"Regrettably, USCIRF continues to misrepresent facts



time and again in its statements and reports in pursuance of its motivated agenda. Such actions only serve to strengthen concerns about the credibility and objectivity of the organisation," Bagchi said. The report, released in

June, recommended to the Biden Administration to designate India, China, Pakistan, Afghanistan and 11 other nations as "countries of particular concern" in the context of religious freedom.

The recommendations, however, are not binding on the US government.

During a special virtual congressional briefing, USCIRF Commissioner Anurima Bhargava had alleged that Indian government officials were tolerating and engaging in religious persecution of minorities.

Cong warns BJP of legal action if party fails to say sorry for circulating Rahul's doctored video

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday went on an offensive and asked BJP president JP Nadda to apologise over party leaders circulating a doctored video of Rahul Gandhi and warned the saffron party of legal action if it failed to say sorry.

In a letter to Nadda, Congress general secretary and chief spokesperson Jairam Ramesh said that the BJP party leaders were "deliberately and enthusiastically" sharing a modified report that was aired on Zee News at 9 pm on July 1.

"The original video was Rahul Gandhi's comment on the SFI [Students Federation of India] violence on his Wayanad office, but it was deliberately and mischievously doctored to appear as if it was a comment on the heinous murder of Kanhaiya Lal in Udaipur," Ramesh wrote.



On June 24, Rahul Gandhi's office was vandalised by members of SFI. The members wanted Rahul Gandhi to intervene on behalf of farmers in a Supreme Court verdict about having 1-km boundaries around forest tracts and wildlife sanctuaries. The boundaries could harm the life and livelihood of many inhabitants, especially in the densely-populated Idukki area.

In Udaipur, on June 28, a tailor was killed for supporting suspended BJP

spokesperson Nupur Sharma. She had made disparaging remarks about the Prophet Mohammed in May.

Ramesh on Saturday said that BJP leaders like MP Subrat Pathak and MLA Kamlesh Saini had shared the doctored video of Rahul. Ramesh also said that Lok Sabha MP Rajyavardhan Rathore propagated the fake video.

"Despite being cautioned by my party colleagues that the clip was maliciously false and misleading, Rathore persisted with amplifying the same, first deleting and then re-uploading the same," Ramesh wrote.

"This leaves no doubt that his actions were deliberate and part of your party's strategy to defame the former Party president to defame the Congress party and to further polarise an already sensitive, communal situation," Ramesh added.

Pakistan summons Indian envoy to protest against blocking of its twitter handle in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/ISLAMABAD

Days after India blocked Pakistani twitter handles in the country, Islamabad on Saturday summoned Indian Charge d'Affaires (CdA) Suresh Kumar to lodge a "strong" protest over this action.

"The Indian Charge d'Affaires (CdA) in Islamabad was called to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs today and a strong demarche was made on the Indian government's blocking of access to the content of 80 accounts on Twitter, including accounts of Pakistan's diplomatic missions in Iran, Turkey, Egypt, UN-New York and the national broadcaster Radio Pakistan, by activating geo-blocking and censorship laws," a statement issued by Pakistan Foreign Office (FO) said.

India banned official Twitter accounts of several Pakistani diplomatic missions, journalists and some prominent personalities under the Information Technology Act, 2000.

"The CdA was conveyed that these Indian actions were against the international standards, obligations, norms, and framework of the flow of information and reflected the alarming pace of shrinking space for pluralistic voices and curbing of fundamental freedoms in India," the Pakistan FO said.

It also urged the Indian government to immediately reverse its actions relating to the blocking of Pakistan's diplomatic missions' Twitter accounts in India, calling India's move "illegal" and one that is "completely against the rights to access to information and fundamental freedom of



opinion or expression."

The Twitter handle was blocked some days ago for reportedly spreading fake and unverified news. Moreover, 16 YouTube news channels, including six Pakistan-based channels were blocked for spreading disinformation related to India's national security, foreign relations, and public order.

Sarvana Stores booked for defrauding Indian Bank ED attaches properties of Sarvana Stores worth ₹234.75 cr for money laundering

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached immovable properties of Saravana Stores (Gold Palace) Chennai amounting to Rs 234.75 crore in relation to a money laundering case for defrauding Indian Bank.

The ED initiated an investigation under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) based on the FIR dated April 25 registered by the CBI, Economic Offences Wing (EOW), Chennai.

The agency had recorded the PMLA case on May 26.

Late Pallakudurai, P Sujatha and YP Shiravan Partners of Saravana Stores (Gold Palace) allegedly had

conspired with unknown public servants and unknown others with the criminal intention to cheat Indian Bank, T Nagar Branch, Chennai, the ED said in a statement.

"Investigation revealed that Saravana Store (Gold Palace) Chennai has applied for sanctioning of loan by fabricating Balance Sheet and projecting sound financial health of the firm. There is a huge mismatch between the sales reported and credit entries of the firm. The said firm has presented a cosmetic picture of expected turnover for upcoming financial years at the time of availing loan," it said.

Further, in order to cheat the Indian Bank, a significant wrongful loss and deriving

personal gain, the firm in collusion with property valuer, bank officials, and certain private persons proposed to purchase assets at a price which is clearly much higher than the real fair market value, it said.

"The investigation conducted by the Enforcement Directorate under the PMLA, 2002 has adequately established the ill motives of accused individuals and Bank officials from the inception," it said.

Investigation further revealed that the accused persons overstated the inventory, transferred the assets without the knowledge of the Bank, used the OCC limits to repay the term loan, misappropriated and diverted the funds for



which it was not sanctioned, and committed other irregularities. Through these acts, the said accused persons and firms cheated the bank and caused wrongful loss to the Bank and

corresponding wrongful gain to themselves.

The accused company has generated 'Proceeds of Crime' amounting to Rs 240 crore out of criminal activities, it added.

ED attaches ₹173.48 cr assets under PMLA in Kerala case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached movable and immovable properties worth Rs 173.48 crore under provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in a case against S Martin and others of Kerala.

Attached properties consist of various movable and immovable properties in the form of bank accounts and land situated in Tamil Nadu standing in his name as well as in the name of his various companies.

The ED had initiated investigation under the provisions of PMLA against S Martin and others based on the chargesheet

filed by Anti-Corruption Branch, Central Bureau of Investigation, Cochin.

"The PMLA probe revealed that the Partners of M J Associates S Martin and N Jayamurugan made unlawful gain with a corresponding loss to the Government of Sikkim to the extent of Rs 910,29,87,566 on account of inflating the Prize Winning Tickets claim for the period from 01.04.2009 to 31.08.2010, which is nothing but proceeds of crime as defined under Section under Section 2(1)(u) of the PMLA, 2002," the ED said in a statement.

Martin and others have invested the said parts of the proceeds of crime that they had earned from their lottery busi-

ness in immovable properties by floating various companies by joining with his family members or through his family members to project the same as untainted properties. So far, four provisional attachment orders have been issued for the attachment of properties worth Rs 278 crore, it said.

Martin had maintained credit balance of Rs 20.22 crore in his various bank accounts and his companies have acquired immovable properties worth Rs 153.26 crore from the loans and advances given by Santiago Martin and his family members with the intention to launder proceeds of crime amounting to Rs 910,29,87,566, it added.

Assets of Madhucon Group worth ₹96.21 cr attached in money laundering case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached 105 immovable properties and other assets worth Rs 96.21 crore belonging to Madhucon Group of companies, its directors and promoters in a money laundering case against Ranchi Expressway Ltd Bank Fraud on money laundering charges.

The ED has identified land assets of Rs 88.85 crore at Hyderabad, West Bengal and

Visakhapatnam, Prakasham, Krishna District and movable assets of 7.36 crore including shareholding of the promoters in Madhucon Projects Ltd, totalling to Rs 96.21 crore and has issued the Provisional attachment order on Friday to preserve the 'proceeds of crime'.

The PMLA investigation was initiated in this case on the basis of a CBI FIR registered on March 12, 2019 by the Anti-Corruption Branch, CBI, Ranchi, against Ranchi Expressways Limited (A

Madhucon Group company) and its Directors.

Subsequently, the CBI filed chargesheet on December 30, 2020 before the Special Judge for CBI cases, Ranchi against Ranchi Expressways Ltd. and others.

In this case, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) had awarded project of four-laning of NH-33 from 114 Km to 277.50 KM (approximately 163.50 KM) on Ranchi-Rargaon-Jameshpur Section on annuity basis on design,

build, finance, operate and transfer (DBFOT) pattern to Madhucon Project Ltd. on March 18, 2011.

A Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) Ranchi Expressway Ltd. was incorporated by Madhucon Group, to execute this project. Kamma Srinivasa Rao, Nama Seethaiah and Nama Prithvi Teja were the founder directors of the said company and Madhucon Project Ltd. was the Engineering Procurement Construction (EPC) contractor

of the project.

The Madhucon Group couldn't complete the project despite availing the full loan amount, and subsequently, their contract was terminated and an FIR was registered based on the directions of the High Court which were in turn based on the reports of SPIO and NHAI.

The ED conducted searches, recorded the statements of multiple bankers, forensic auditors, engineers, sub-contractors and promoters of Madhucon

Group and conducted a fund trail investigation.

During the search operations in June 2021, the ED seized incriminating evidence and unaccounted cash of Rs 34,00,000 from the residential premises of Madhucon Group's Chairman Nama Nageshwar Rao.

The ED investigation revealed that Ranchi Expressways Limited represented by its directors and promoters obtained loans of Rs 1,030 crore from the consor-

tium of banks led by Canara Bank.

The Madhucon Group did not utilize the entire loan amount for its stated purposes, and diverted it to its associated entities and utilized it for other works and also directly siphoned off the loans by giving bogus works to its related shell entities.

The work on the ground suffered and they could not complete the work despite drawing the entire loan amount. They also managed

the maintenance reports and work progress reports to falsely claim higher expenses.

Multiple inspections by the Forensic Auditors and NHAI have revealed that the on ground progress of the work achieved by Madhucon Group was only 50.24 percent whereas, they had already drawn a loan amount of 90 percent.

Through round-tripping, the Madhucon Group diverted Rs 361.29 crore from the loan funds and received in its accounts.

Pesticides, heavy metals in soil linked to heart disease: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Pesticides and heavy metals in soil may have detrimental effects on the cardiovascular system, according to a review paper published on Saturday in Cardiovascular Research, a journal of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC).

The study makes the case for wearing a face mask to limit exposure to windblown dust, filter water to remove contaminants, and buy food grown in healthy soil.

"Soil contamination is a less visible danger to human health than dirty air," said author Professor Thomas Münzel of the University Medical Center Mainz, Germany. "But evidence is mounting that pollutants in soil

may damage cardiovascular health through a number of mechanisms including inflammation and disrupting the body's natural clock."

Pollution of air, water and soil is responsible for at least nine million deaths each year. More than 60% of pollution-related disease and death is due to cardiovascular disease such as chronic ischaemic heart disease, heart attack, stroke and heart rhythm disorders (arrhythmias). This paper highlights the relationships between soil pollution and human health, with a particular focus on cardiovascular disease. Soil pollutants include heavy metals, pesticides, and plastics.

Dirty soil may enter the body by inhaling desert dust, fertilizer crystals, or plastic particles. Heavy metals such as

cadmium and lead, plastics, and organic toxicants (for example in pesticides) can also be consumed orally. Soil pollutants wash into rivers and create dirty water which may be consumed.

Pesticides have been linked with an elevated risk of cardiovascular disease. Cadmium is a heavy metal that occurs naturally in small amounts in air, water, soil and food, and also comes from industrial and agricultural sources. Food is the main source of cadmium in non-smokers. Lead is a naturally occurring toxic metal with environmental contamination through mining, smelting, manufacturing and recycling. Studies have found associations between high blood lead levels and cardiovascular disease, including coronary heart disease, heart attack and

stroke, in women and in people with diabetes.

Further studies have indicated a higher risk of death from cardiovascular disease associated with exposure to arsenic, a naturally occurring metalloid whose levels can increase due to industrial processes and using contaminated water to irrigate crops.

The paper states: "Although soil pollution with heavy metals and its association with cardiovascular diseases is especially a problem low- and middle-income countries since their populations are disproportionately exposed to these environmental pollutants, it becomes a problem for any country in the world due to the increasing globalisation of food supply chains and uptake of these heavy metals with fruits, vegetables and meat."

Several States, UTs used AYUSH medicine during Covid-19 peak

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Several States and UTs made Substantial use of Ayush medicines in the fight against Covid-19 when it was at its peak.

For instance, if Kerala made Raksha Clinics functional to manage the pandemic, hilly State Uttarakhand distributed Ayush Raksha Kits along with AYUSH-64 (a poly-herbal medicine) as an immunity enhancer drugs to its locals.

Similarly, Gujarat established Dhanwantari Rath mobile vans to provide basic health services at the doorstep while Goa set up post-Covid-19 clinics (Ayush) at all Ayush dispensaries co-located at every Health Centres at all lev-

els.

Recognising the efficacy of immune booster alternative traditional medicines in keeping the infection at bay, Delhi established dedicated Ayush Covid Healthcare Centres at teaching hospitals of Ayush Government Institutes and established 175 Ayush post-Covid Centres.

These are some of the information about various Ayush-based initiatives and practices adopted by the States and Union territories in India for containing and managing the COVID-19 outbreak. These have been detailed in a compendium prepared by the Niti Aayog.

The compendium was released on Saturday by Suman Bery, Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog and Dr. Munjpara

Mahendrabhai Kalubhai, Minister of State for Ayush. The event was also attended by Dr. V K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, and officials of NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Ayush.

"It is critical to communicate the learnings from the testing times during Covid-19 outbreak about how Ayush practices implemented at national and State level benefited people.

"The compendium provides information focused on practices adopted by various States and UTs of India for strengthening the country's fight against COVID-19, using Ayush's resources and interventions," said Bery.

He hoped that the document will significantly aid the country's fight against Covid-

19, other epidemics, and pandemics in future.

While the contemporary medical system is playing a vital role in combating Covid-19, it is equally important to take note of practices of Ayush systems adopted by various States and UTs. Sharing of these practices provides States and UTs with the opportunity to learn from one another, and to equip themselves against the Covid, added Amitabh Kant, Chief Executive Officer of the Commission.

"I hope that these collective efforts of traditional and conventional healthcare systems will pave the way for the world by providing a holistic healthcare system model," said Minister of State for Ayush Dr. Munjpara Mahendrabhai Kalubhai.

Texas SC blocks order that resumed abortions

AP ■ TALLAHASSEE (US)

The Texas Supreme Court blocked a lower court order that said clinics could continue performing abortions, just days after some doctors had resumed seeing patients after the fall of Roe v Wade.

It was not immediately clear whether Texas clinics that had resumed seeing patients this week would halt services again. A hearing is scheduled for later this month.

The whiplash of Texas clinics turning away patients, rescheduling them, and now potentially canceling appointments again - all in the span of a week - illustrated the confusion and scrambling taking place across the country since Roe was overturned.

An order by a Houston judge earlier this week had reassured some clinics they could temporarily resume abortions up to six weeks into pregnancy. That was quickly followed by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton asking the state's highest court, which is stocked with nine Republican justices, to temporarily put the order on hold.

"These laws are confusing, unnecessary, and cruel," said Marc Hearron, attorney for the Center for Reproductive Rights, after the order was issued Friday night.

Clinics in Texas had



stopped performing abortions in the state of nearly 30 million people after the U.S. Supreme Court last week overturned Roe v. Wade and ended the constitutional right to abortion. Texas had technically left an abortion ban on the books for the past 50 years while Roe was in place.

A copy of Friday's order was provided by attorneys for Texas clinics. It could not immediately be found on the court's website.

Abortion providers and patients across the country have been struggling to navigate the evolving legal landscape around abortion laws and access.

In Florida, a law banning abortions after 15 weeks went into effect Friday, the day after a judge called it a violation of the state constitution and said he would sign an order tem-

porarily blocking the law next week. The ban could have broader implications in the South, where Florida has wider access to the procedure than its neighbors.

Abortion rights have been lost and regained in the span of a few days in Kentucky. A so-called trigger law imposing a near-total ban on the procedure took effect last Friday, but a judge blocked the law Thursday, meaning the state's only two abortion providers can resume seeing patients - for now.

The legal wrangling is almost certain to continue to cause chaos for Americans seeking abortions in the near future, with court rulings able to upend access at a moment's notice and an influx of new patients from out of state overwhelming providers.

Even when women travel

outside states with abortion bans in place, they may have fewer options to end their pregnancies as the prospect of prosecution follows them.

Planned Parenthood of Montana this week stopped providing medication abortions to patients who live in states with bans "to minimize potential risk for providers, health center staff, and patients in the face of a rapidly changing landscape."

Planned Parenthood North Central States, which offers the procedure in Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska, is telling its patients that they must take both pills in the regimen in a state that allows abortions.

The use of abortion pills has been the most common method to end a pregnancy since 2000, when the US Food and Drug Administration approved mifepristone - the main drug used in medication abortions. Taken with misoprostol, a drug that causes cramping that empties the womb, it constitutes the abortion pill.

"There's a lot of confusion and concern that the providers may be at risk, and they are trying to limit their liability so they can provide care to people who need it," said Dr. Daniel Grossman, who directs the research group Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health at the University of California San Francisco.

Russians press assault on eastern Ukrainian city

AP ■ KYIV

Russian forces are pounding the city of Lysychansk and its surroundings in an all-out attempt to seize the last stronghold of resistance in eastern Ukraine's Luhansk province, the governor said on Saturday.

Ukrainian fighters have spent weeks trying to defend the city and to keep it from falling to Russia, as neighbouring Sievierodonetsk did a week ago. The Russian Defence Ministry said its forces took control of an oil refinery on Lysychansk's edge in recent days, but Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai reported on Friday that fighting for the facility continued. "Over the last day, the occupiers opened fire from all available kinds of weapons," Haidai said on Saturday on the Telegram messaging app.

Luhansk and neighbouring Donetsk are the two provinces that make up the Donbas region, where Russia has focused its offensive since pulling back from the northern Ukraine and capital Kyiv in the spring.

Pro-Russia separatists have held portions of both provinces since 2014, and Moscow recognises all of Luhansk and Donetsk as sovereign republics.

Syria's government said on Wednesday that it would also recognise the "independence and sovereignty" of the two areas and work to establish diplomatic relations with the separatists.

In Sloviansk, a major



Donetsk city still under Ukrainian control, four people died when Russian forces fired cluster munitions late Friday, Mayor Vadym Lyakh said on Facebook.

He said the neighbourhoods that were hit did not contain any potential military targets. Elsewhere, investigators combed through the wreckage from a Russian airstrike early Friday on residential areas near the Ukrainian port of Odesa that killed 21 people.

Ukrainian Prosecutor-General Iryna Venediktova said the investigators were recovering fragments from missiles that struck an apartment building in the small coastal town of Serhiivka. They also were taking measurements to determine the trajectory of the weapons, she said.

"We are taking all the necessary investigative measures to

determine the specific people guilty of this terrible war crime," Venediktova said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said three anti-ship missiles struck "an ordinary residential building, a nine-story building" housing about 160 people.

The victims of Friday's attack also included four members of a family-staying at a "typical" seaside campsite, he said. "I emphasise: this is a deliberate direct Russian terror, and not some mistake or an accidental missile strike," Zelenskyy said.

The British Defence Ministry on Saturday said air-launched anti-ship missiles generally do not have precision accuracy against ground targets. It said Russia likely was using such missiles because of a shortage of more accurate weapons.

US announces \$820M in aid to Ukraine, missile systems

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The US announced on Friday that it will provide Ukraine with \$820 million in new military aid, including new surface-to-air missile systems and counter-artillery radars to respond to Russia's heavily reliance on long-range strikes in the war.

Russia in recent days has launched dozens of missiles across Ukraine and pinned down Ukrainian forces with continuous fire for sometimes hours at a time. Ukraine's leaders have publicly called on Western allies to quickly send more ammunition and advanced systems that will help them narrow the gap in equipment and manpower.

All told, the U.S. Has committed more than \$8.8 billion in weapons and military training to Ukraine, whose leaders have sought more help from Western allies to repel larger and heavily equipped Russian forces. About \$7 billion of that aid has been announced since Russia's February invasion.

"We are going to support Ukraine as long as it takes," President Joe Biden said this week at a press conference during the NATO summit in Madrid. He argued that Russia had already suffered a blow to its international standing and major damage to its economy from Western sanctions imposed over the invasion.

4 military personnel held in Lanka rehabilitation centre death

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Two Army and two Air Force personnel have been arrested over the suspicious death of an inmate of a drug rehabilitation centre run by the military last week, Sri Lankan Army said on Saturday.

On Wednesday, more than 600 inmates escaped from the heavily guarded drug rehabilitation centre at Kandakadu in the northeastern region of Welioya after the suspicious death of a 34-year-old inmate. The centre, with nearly 1,000 people run by the military, undergo rehabilitation upon being convicted for drug consumption.

The inmates alleged that the authorities were ill-treating them and claimed their col-



league had died due to assault.

As the violence broke out on June 29, police used tear gas to quell the riot at the centre surroundings while a search operation was launched to nab those who had fled the centre.

The Army said over 650 inmates who were arrested

after the search were remanded after being produced in court.

Illegal drug use has become a menace in Sri Lanka where officials say some 300,000 people -- around 1.5 per cent of all Sri Lankans -- are addicted to drugs.

Lanka civil society expresses displeasure over 22nd Amendment to Constitution

PTI ■ COLOMBO

A group of civil society representatives on Saturday met Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe to express displeasure on the proposed 22nd Amendment to the Constitution, saying it does not curtail the unfettered powers of the president nor does it place any checks and balances on the power structure.

Sri Lanka's Cabinet on Monday approved the proposal presented by the Minister of Justice, Prison Affairs and Constitutional Reforms, to publish the bill in the Government

Gazette.

The new legislation sets out a broad definition of the issues to be considered and met in the appointment of the President, the powers of the Prime Minister and the nature of the post, the new commissions and how the Cabinet will be collectively accountable.

"We told the Prime Minister that this does not address the serious governance issues the country is facing. Although some of it appears progressive it is not so in most areas," Rohana Hettiarachchi, a civil society leader, told reporters.

The 22A has been gazetted

and is expected to be presented in Parliament after the due process for enactment, the government announced last week.

The 22nd Amendment was originally named 21A and meant to replace the 20A. The amendment was formulated amid the ongoing economic crisis in the country which also caused a political crisis.

The amendment will be called 22nd as another draft 21st Amendment has already been gazetted. The 20A adopted in 2020 had given unfettered powers to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa after abolishing the 19th Amendment.

Pope urges Congo, South Sudan to work for peace, prosperity



AP ■ ROME

Pope Francis urged the people and leaders of Congo and South Sudan on Saturday to "turn a page" and forge new paths of reconciliation, peace and development.

Francis issued a video message on the day he had planned to begin a weeklong pilgrimage to the two African countries. He cancelled the scheduled trip last month because of knee pain that makes walking and standing difficult.

In the message, Francis said he was "greatly disappointed" by the turn of events and promised to visit "as soon as possible."

He urged the people of both countries not to allow themselves to be robbed of hope despite the violence, political instability, exploitation and poverty that he said had pained them for so long.

"You have a great mission, all of you, beginning with your political leaders: It is that of turning a page in order to blaze new trails, new paths of reconciliation and forgiveness, of serene coexistence and of development," Francis said.

He said political leaders owed the pursuit of such goals to young people who dream of peace "and deserve to see those dreams come true"

"For their sake, above all, it is necessary to lay down arms, to overcome all resentment, and to write new pages of fraternity," the pope said.

While Francis was unable to travel, he is due to celebrate a special Mass at St. Peter's on Sunday for Rome's Congolese community.

He sent his No. 2, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, to visit both Congo and South Sudan on the days Francis was supposed to have been there.

For now, wary US treads water with transformed Covid-19

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The fast-changing coronavirus has kicked off summer in the U.S. With lots of infections but relatively few deaths compared to its prior incarnations.

COVID-19 is still killing hundreds of Americans each day, but is not nearly as dangerous as it was last fall and winter.

"It's going to be a good summer and we deserve this break," said Ali Mokdad, a professor of health metrics sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle.

With more Americans shielded from severe illness through vaccination and infection, COVID-19 has transformed -- for now at least -- into an unpleasant, inconvenient nuisance for many.

"It feels cautiously good right now," said Dr. Dan Kaul, an infectious diseases specialist at the University of Michigan Medical Centre in Ann Arbor. "For the first time that I can remember, pretty much since it started, we don't have any (COVID-19) patients in the ICU."

As the nation marks July Fourth, the average number of daily deaths from COVID-19 in the United States is hovering around 360.

Last year, during a similar summer lull, it was around 228 in early July. That remains the lowest threshold in U.S. Daily deaths since March 2020, when the virus first began its U.S. Spread.

But there were far fewer reported cases at this time last year -- fewer than 20,000 a day. Now, it's about 109,000 -- and likely an undercount as home tests aren't routinely reported.

3 police officers killed in Kentucky by suspect with rifle

AP ■ ALLEN (US)

Three law enforcement officers were killed and five wounded in eastern Kentucky when a man with a rifle opened fire on police attempting to serve a warrant, authorities said.

Police took 49-year-old Lance Storz into custody late Thursday night after an hours-long standoff at a home in Allen, a small town in the hills of Appalachia.

An emergency management official was also injured and a police dog was killed, according to the arrest citation.

The responding officers encountered "pure hell" when they arrived on the scene, Floyd County Sheriff John Hunt told reporters Friday afternoon.

"They had no chance," he said.

Hunt said four deputies initially responded, then called for backup when they were shot at. The sheriff said Storz surrendered after negotiations that included his family members. Hunt had told local media the deputies were serving a court-issued warrant Thursday evening related to a domestic violence situation.

Hunt said one of his deputies, William Petry, and Prestonsburg Police Capt. Ralph Frasure were killed in the shooting. Frasure worked for 39 years in law enforcement in Floyd County. Another Prestonsburg officer, Jacob Chaffins, died after being hospitalised, the police department said in a social media post Friday night.

Storz was arraigned Friday morning by a judge in Pike



County. He pleaded not guilty to two counts of murder of a police officer and was jailed on a \$10 million bond. One of the charges was originally attempted murder of a police officer, but a judge said at the hearing that was upgraded to murder. He is also facing another attempted murder charge and assault on a service animal.

Few details were available Friday. State police had said in a brief statement that they were investigating an officer-involved shooting.

"This is a tough morning for our commonwealth," Gov. Andy Beshear said in a social media post Friday morning. "Floyd County and our brave first responders suffered a tragic loss last night. I want to ask all of Kentucky to join me in praying for this community."

Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron posted on social media that he was heartbroken over news of the officers' deaths.

"Our law enforcement exhibited unimaginable heroism and sacrifice last night in the face of evil," he said.

Trump social media firm subpoenaed by feds

AP ■ NEW YORK

Donald Trump's social media company and some of its employees received subpoenas from both a federal grand jury and securities regulators, according to a public disclosure, possibly delaying or even killing a deal promising a cash infusion needed to take on Twitter.

Trump Media and Technology Group received subpoenas from a grand jury in New York and the Securities and Exchange Commission, according to a securities document filed by Digital World Acquisition Corp. On Friday, Digital World has plans to buy Trump Media, releasing USD 1.3 billion for its fledgling business, but the deal is unlikely to be done during two legal probes. Trump, who is Trump Media's chairman, was not among the employees who received subpoenas, according to a Trump Media statement.

On Monday, Digital World announced it had received subpoenas from the same grand jury convened by the Manhattan US Attorney's Office. Digital World has been under investigation by the SEC for possible violations for months, a development that has weighed on the stock.

Digital World stock closed Friday at USD 5.78, down 25% in a week. It had been at over USD 100 last year after the company announced it had a deal to buy the former president's social media firm.

Iran condemns Israeli airstrike, opposes any Turkish move into Syria



AP ■ DAMASCUS

Iran's foreign minister on Saturday condemned an Israeli airstrike on Syria earlier in the day and said Tehran opposes any military operation by Turkey in Syria's north.

Hossein Amirabdollahian made his comments at the start of a visit to the Syrian capital Damascus, where he was expected to discuss mutual relations and regional affairs with top Syrian officials.

Iran has been one of Syrian President Bashar Assad's strongest backers, sending thousands of fighters from around the region to help his troops in Syria's 11-year conflict. The war has killed hundreds of thousands and displaced half the country's pre-war population of 23 million.

Amirabdollahian's visit came hours after Israel carried out an airstrike on a coastal Syrian village near the border with Lebanon wounding two people, Syrian state media reported.

It also comes after Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has repeatedly said he's planning a major military operation to create a 30-kilometer (19 mile) deep buffer zone inside Syria along Turkey's border.

He said he would do that by way of a cross-border incursion against US-allied Syrian Kurdish fighters -- an attempt that failed in 2019.

"We understand the concerns of our neighbour Turkey but we oppose any military measure in Syria," Amirabdollahian said, adding that Iran is trying to solve the "misunderstanding between Turkey and Syria through dialogue."

Analysts have said Erdogan is taking advantage of the war in Ukraine to push his own goals in Syria. Turkey agreed this week to lift its opposition to Sweden and Finland joining NATO, saying

the Nordic nations had agreed to crack down on groups that Ankara deems national security threats, including the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and its Syrian extension.

Turkey has demanded that Finland and Sweden extradite wanted individuals and lift arms restrictions imposed after Turkey's 2019 military incursion into north-east Syria.

Amirabdollahian blasted Israel saying that through its airstrikes it is trying to destabilise Syria and show that the country lacks security.

The Israel attack was the first since a June 10 airstrike on the international airport in the Syrian capital of Damascus caused significant damage to infrastructure and runways and rendered the main runway unusable. The airport was closed for two weeks and flights resumed on June 23.

State news agency SANA said Israeli warplanes flying over northern Lebanon fired missiles toward several chicken farms in the village of Hamidiyeh south of the coastal city of Tartus. The attack happened a few kilometers (miles) north of the border with Lebanon.

SANA said two people, including a woman, were wounded and there was material damage.

Israel has staged hundreds of strikes against targets in Syria over the years but rarely acknowledges or discusses such operations. Israel says it targets bases of Iran-allied militias, such as Hezbollah, which has fighters deployed in Syria fighting on the side of Assad's government forces and ships arms believed to be bound for the militias. The Damascus International Airport strike marked a major escalation in Israel's campaign, further ratcheting up tensions between Israel on one side and Iran and its Lebanese ally, the militant Hezbollah group, on the other.

Sri Lanka to get two fuel consignments in July: IOC

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka will receive two fuel consignments this month and another in August, the Chairman of Lanka IOC, the subsidiary of Indian Oil Corporation, said on Saturday, which will provide much-needed relief to the people facing an unprecedented economic crisis and acute fuel shortages.

On Monday, the Sri Lankan government announced that only essential services will operate from midnight till July 10 and all other operations will be temporarily suspended as the country of 22 million did not have enough fuel supplies.

"Two consignments of fuel (petrol and diesel) are expected to arrive on July 13 or 14, and another shipment will arrive sometime between July 28 to 30. Each vessel will be carrying 30,000 metric tonnes of fuel," Lanka IOC Chairman Manoj Gupta was quoted as saying by news portal Economy Next.

Another consignment is also scheduled to arrive on August 10, Gupta said.

All these shipments will be arriving from Singapore and the UAE, he added.

Last week, state-owned refinery Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) informed the Sri Lankan



government that there will be an indefinite delay in the arrival of fuel shipments due to banking and logistical reasons, with existing

stocks being prioritised for public transport, power generation and industries.

Sri Lanka's unprecedented eco-

nom ic crisis caused by forex shortages has led to a severe crisis in the energy sector.

Fuel shortages have led to ser-

pentine queues at retailers and with the end of the credit line worth USD 700 million granted by India, the pumps have run dry.

The Sri Lankan government is exploring options to purchase discounted oil from Russia, as the island nation desperately looks to replenish its dwindling fuel stocks amid an unprecedented economic crisis due to a crippling shortage of foreign exchange reserves.

Sri Lanka's Power and Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekera flew to Qatar last week to negotiate a long-term fuel supply deal with the Gulf nation.

The Lanka IOC has expanded its distribution network by providing fuel continuously when the CPC pumps went largely dry.

The nearly-bankrupt country, with an acute foreign currency crisis that resulted in foreign debt default, had announced in April that it is suspending nearly USD 7 billion foreign debt repayment due for this year out of about USD 25 billion due through 2026.

Sri Lanka's total foreign debt stands at USD 51 billion.

Sri Lankans continue to languish in long fuel and cooking gas queues as the government is unable to find dollars to fund imports for fuel and other essentials.

Next round of India-EU FTA talks at Brussels in Sept



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India and the European Union concluded the first round of talks for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) on Friday and the next round of talks is scheduled at Brussels in September, the Commerce Ministry said on Saturday.

India and the 27-nation bloc resumed negotiations on June 17, after a gap of over eight years, on the proposed agreements on trade, investments and Geographical Indications (GI). The first round of talks, which began on June 27, concluded on July 1.

India's FTA negotiations were led by Chief Negotiator Nidhi Mani Tripathi, Joint Secretary in the Department of Commerce and the EU was represented by its Chief

Negotiator Christophe Kiener, the ministry said in a statement.

The week-long negotiations were held in a hybrid fashion - with some of the teams meeting in Delhi and the majority of officials joining virtually.

During the first round, 52 technical sessions covering 18 policy areas of FTA and seven sessions on investment protection and GIs were held, it added.

India's bilateral trade with the EU amounted to USD 116.36 billion in 2021-22. Currently, the EU is India's 2nd largest trading partner after the US, and the second largest destination for Indian exports.

"The trade agreement with the EU would help India further expand and diversify its exports of goods and services, including securing the value chains.

GM scraps deal to sell plant in Maharashtra to Great Wall Motor

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

General Motors (GM) on Friday said it has called off the sale of its Maharashtra-based manufacturing plant to China's Great Wall Motor after the parties failed to obtain necessary regulatory approvals.

In 2020, GM had inked a deal to sell the Talegaon facility to Great Wall Motor (GWM).

"We have been unable to obtain required approvals within the timeframe of the deal. The term sheet for the sale of the Talegaon site has previously been extended," a GM spokesperson said when contacted



over the matter.

GM's strategy in India remains unchanged and it will explore further options for sale of the site, the

spokesperson noted.

Great Wall Motor, which had committed to invest USD 1 billion in India, had agreed to acquire GM's

plant in January 2020 and subsequently inked an MoU with the Maharashtra government later in June that year for the facility.

However, the company could not get an approval from Indian authorities as relations between India and China deteriorated over border issues.

India had made it stricter for investments coming from its neighbouring countries, which includes China. India has even banned over 300 Chinese mobile apps, including the popular Tik Tok, citing security threat.

In May 2017, General Motors decided to stop selling its vehicles in India. The automaker has already sold its Halol-based plant to MG Motor.

Financial services an exciting aspect of UK-India FTA, says Rishi Sunak

PTI ■ LONDON

The financial services sector holds out an "exciting" prospect of closer exchange between India and the UK with a free trade agreement (FTA) being negotiated between the two countries, according to British Chancellor Rishi Sunak.

In an interaction with reporters ahead of India Global Forum's UK-India Awards celebrating Indian diaspora success within the UK-India corridor on Friday, the senior British Indian Cabinet minister said he sees enormous opportunity for both countries in

areas such as fintech and welcomed the opening up of the Indian insurance market.

The minister also expressed his confidence over the Diwali timeframe for an FTA draft to be ready. "There's good progress being made and I think one of the exciting things for me in my role is financial services," he told PTI.

"Financial service is an area where there's an enormous opportunity for both of our countries. India's goal is to spread insurance across the entire economy because insurance is a great thing for enabling protection

for individuals and growth. We can help with that in the UK because we have a fantastic insurance industry.

And bit by bit we've been able to provide more of those products, services and expertise to Indian firms and citizens and companies," he said.

He also referred to India's plans for a Sovereign Green Bond and the UK having gone through that journey would want to help India raise that capital.

"It builds on a tradition of us helping provide capital to India from across the world because

one of the defining movements of capital of our time will be the flow of capital from the west into fast growing India.

That's an incredibly exciting and significant event. And the UK can really help be the place which allows India the access to the biggest pool of capital on the best possible terms to drive its growth," he said.

In the interaction with the Indian Journalists' Association (IJA), the senior Cabinet Minister said he is "very supportive of India playing an increasingly influential role in the region, and indeed, in the world".

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is inform to all concern that LATE BISHNI DEVI W/O LATE SHRI ANANG PAL CHAUHAN R/O HOUSE NO 2, KHIRKI VILLAGE, MALVIYA NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110017 was the owner of Residential Plot No. 109-007, Sub Area No. 75, at Noida Dist. Gautam Budh Nagar U.P., LATE BISHNI DEVI has expired on 03.11.2019 She had execut ed a registered WILL of the above noted plot in favour of ABHISHEK CHAUHAN S/O LATE RAM PRAKASH CHAUHAN R/O HOUSE NO 2, KHIRKI VILLAGE, MALVIYA NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110017 vide WILL dated 19.07.2011 duly registered in the Office of Sub Registrar, New Delhi District Court No. 3, Sub Area No. 75, at Noida Dist. 110058 intends to grant Loan facility to Sh. Santu Sharma S/o Sh. Ram Babu, R/o Flat No. 356, Pocket 5, Mayap Vihar, Phase-I, East Delhi-110041 against security of Property Bearing No. 8/3-B, Sub Area No. 77, Sq. Yds. measuring 11.16 sq. Yds. (hereinafter referred to as "Schedule Property"), situated at Jamma Road, Civil Lines, Delhi-110054 who claim to be the Joint-Owners of the Said Property by virtue of three Sale Deeds:(s)-

• Sale Deed duly registered as Document No. 8343 on 29.11.2005 • Sale Deed duly registered as Document No. 8342 on 29.11.2005 • Sale Deed duly registered as Document No. 8341 on 29.11.2005 • Arbitration Award dated 13.04.2012 passed by Id. Arbitrator Sh. Rahul Bajaj and dated 08.05.2012 passed by Honble Court in Test Case No. 152/2005

That the following, Original Title Deed(s) and/or Document(s) pertaining to and/or concerning to title of aforesaid property have been found lost/misplaced and are not traceable:-

• Title Deed in favour of Joint Hindu Family of Sh. Buland Iqbal and his three sons namely, 1) Sh. Raghubans Bahadur, 2) Sh. Harbans Bahadur, 3) Sh. Pukhraj Bahadur in respect of the Scheduled Property • Death Certificate & SMC of Sh. Buland Iqbal issued by the Concerned Authority • Will dated 29.07.1963 executed by Sh. Harbans Bahadur in favour of his Wife namely, Smt. Chand Rani for her lifetime and thereafter to his Son namely, Sh. Jamshed Bahadur in respect of his undivided share in the Scheduled Property • Deed of Partition dated 06.01.1969/05.01.1969 Executed between 1) Sh. Raghubans Bahadur S/o Late Sh. Buland Iqbal, 2) Sh. Harbans Bahadur S/o Late Sh. Buland Iqbal, 3) Sh. Pukhraj Bahadur S/o Late Sh. Buland Iqbal, 4) Smt. Rita Naran D/o Late Sh. Harbans Bahadur, W/o Sh. Pratap Naran & 5) Smt. Vene Dayal D/o Late Sh. Harbans Bahadur, W/o Sh. Kalash Dayal in respect of the Scheduled Property • Will dated 22.02.1987 Executed by the Concerned Authority in respect of the said property along with sub division letter issued by concerned Authority • Certified Copy of Probate of Will dated 29.07.1963 issued by concerned Court • Certified Copy of Probate of Will dated 22.02.1987 issued by concerned Court • Certified Copy of Judgment/Final order in Probate Case No. 136/87 Passed by the Concerned Court • Adoption Deed of Sh. Vedant Agarwal S/o Late Sh. Sogan Agarwal, Any person(s) having any claim(s) with respect to right, title or interest in the said property in any manner whatsoever or found in possession of aforementioned document(s), must immediately contact, and submit the said document(s).

Himanshu Ahuja (Advocate)
Contact No- 9810310373/011-48183049
Email Address- alolegals@gmail.com

UJVN LIMITED
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006, Telephone: 0135-2763808 Fax: 0135- 2763508 CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.ujvnl.com

Ref. No.: 394 **e-Tender Notice** Dated : 02.07.2022

Office of the Manager (A&S), UJJWAL, Maharani Bagh, Dehradun invites online bids from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:

Tender No-04/Manager (A&S)/2022-23
Name of work : Annual maintenance, cleaning and upkeep of all buildings at "UJJWAL" campus at Dehradun
Estimated cost (Rs) : 31,05,055.00 (Exclusive of GST)
Date of availability of bid document on website : 04.07.2022 at 17.00 hrs
Last date for submission of bids on website : 25.07.2022 at 16.00 hrs
For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal "http://uktenders.gov.in" **Manager (A&S)**

"Avoid Wasteful use of Electricity"

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER, CONSTRUCTION WING, UTTARAKHAND PEYJAL NIGAM
E-32, JUDGE FARM, HALDWANI, DISTT.- NAINITAL (263139)

Letter No.: 1225/NIVIDA-ANUBANDH/Ranikhet/125 Date : 2.7.2022

E-Tender Notice

1. Name of the work:- Construction of repairing work of government inter college building at shilakheth, District. - Almora
2. Estimated Cost:- Rs.138.93 Lakh
3. Period of Completion:- 11 Month
4. Date and Time of availability of Bid documents in the portal:- 2.7.2022(12.00 hrs)
5. Online Bid submission: End date:- 22.07.2022 (17.00 hrs)
6. Date & Time of Technical bid Opening :- 25.07.2022 (11.00 hrs)
7. Name and Address of the Officer inviting bid :- General Manager (Kumaon), Nirman Wing, Uttarakhand Pey Jal Nigam, Haldwani.
8. Pre-bid meeting details (if required) Date & Place:- 7.7.2022 (11.00 hrs) Project Manager Construction Unit Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam, Ranikhet.
9. For further details, details of subsequent Amendment / correction documentation etc. may be obtained from the e-Procurement portal www.uktenders.gov.in

GENERAL MANAGER

SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
No. SECR/HQ/Engg/G-3/Consultants/22-23/01, Dated 24.06.2022

Notice inviting application for Empanelmet/ Registration of consultants to undertake private siding works over South East Central Railway.

1. South East Central Railway, and on behalf of the President of India are invited application for Empanelment/ Registration of consultant in connection with survey and construction management of private sidings works to be submitted latest by 26.07.2022 up to 16.00 hrs from interested Consultants/ Consulting firms with eligible documents i.e. Form for empanelment ("FFE") documents No. SECR/ HQ/ Engg/ FFE-1 of 2022.
2. The FFE document will be available for download on from the South East Central Railway website (www.secr.indianrailways.gov.in) from 27.06.2022.
3. The FFE document will be submitted with document fee Rs. 1000/- (Rupees one thousand only) in the form of Demand Draft in favour of PFA/SECR/BSP/ issued by nationalize Bank, which will be non-refundable.

Executive Engineer (Genl.), For Principal Chief Engineer CPR/10/98 S.E.C. Railway, Bilaspur
South East Central Railway @secrail

Determined to make cooperative sector more powerful, modern: Shah

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said the government is determined to make the cooperative sector more powerful, modern and transparent by taking many important steps.

Greeting the people on the 100th International Day of Cooperatives, Shah, who also holds the portfolio of home affairs, paid his respects to all the great men who worked tirelessly to strengthen the idea of ??cooperatives in India.

"Along with this, I congratulate all those who have engaged in raising the standard of living of the poorest of the poor through the cooperative sector," the minister said in series of tweets. He further said that the idea of ??cooperatives is the best medium to

realise the vision of all-inclusive development.

Shah said the ministry of cooperation is determined to make this sector more powerful, modern and transparent by taking many important steps

Prepare for possible gas shortage, German regulator tells citizens

AP ■ BERLIN

Fearing Russia might cut off natural gas supplies, the head of Germany's regulatory agency for energy called on residents Saturday to save energy and to prepare for winter, when use increases.

Federal Network Agency President Klaus Mueller urged house and apartment owners to have their gas boilers and radiators checked and adjusted to maximise their efficiency.

"Maintenance can reduce gas consumption by 10% to 15%," he told Funke Mediengruppe, a German newspaper and magazine publisher.

Mueller said residents and property owners need to use the 12 weeks before cold weather sets in to get ready.

He said families should start

talking now about "whether every room needs to be set at its usual temperature in the winter -- or whether some rooms can be a little colder."

The appeal came after Russia reduced gas flows to Germany, Italy, Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia earlier this month, as European Union countries scramble to refill storage facilities with the fuel used to generate electricity, power industry and heat homes in the winter.

Russian state-owned energy company Gazprom blamed a technical problem for the reduction in natural gas flowing through Nord Stream 1, a pipeline which runs under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany.

The company said equipment getting refurbished in Canada was stuck there because of Western

sanctions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

German leaders have rejected that explanation and called the reductions a political move in reaction to the European Union's sanctions against Russia after it invaded Ukraine.

Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck, who is also Germany's economy and climate minister and responsible for energy, has warned a "blockade" of the pipeline is possible starting July 11, when regular maintenance work is due to start.

In previous summers, the work has entailed shutting Nord Stream 1 for about 10 days, he said.

The question is whether the upcoming regular maintenance of the Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline will turn into "a longer-lasting political maintenance," the energy regulator's Mueller said.

Niti Aayog releases compendium of Ayush practices to manage Covid-19

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Government policy think tank NITI Aayog has released a compendium of Ayush-based practices from States and Union Territories for containing and managing the COVID-19 outbreak, an official statement said.

Releasing the compendium, NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman Suman Bery said it is critical to communicate the learnings from the testing times during the COVID-19 outbreak about how Ayush practices implemented at national and state level benefited people.

The compendium provides information focused on practices adopted by various states and UTs of India for strengthening the country's fight against COVID-19, using Ayush's resources and interventions,

Bery added. Also, speaking at the occasion, NITI Aayog member V K Paul said he is hopeful that practices documented in this compendium will be useful to address any future surge of the pandemic and also serve as a model of an integrative approach to health action.

According to the statement, in preparing the compendium of Ayushpractices, NITI Aayog reached out to all state governments and administrations of union territories, requesting them to share Ayush practices they have undertaken for Covid-19 mitigation and management.

The report indicates that traditional healthcare systems in the country to be strengthened further, the statement said, emphasising the potential of the integration of Ayush with the modern system.

12 US lawmakers urge Prez Biden to hold India accountable in WTO for its 'trade-distorting practices'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A dozen American lawmakers have written a letter to President Joe Biden, urging him to file a formal request for consultations with India at the World Trade Organization (WTO) over its "dangerous trade-distorting practices" that they claim have impacted the US farmers and ranchers.

The Congressmen stated that the current WTO rules allowed the governments to subsidise up to 10 per cent of the value of commodity production.

However, the Indian government continues to subsidise more than half of the value of production for several commodities, including rice and wheat, they said.

India's "lack of rule-following" and the Biden administration's "lack of enforcement" have reshaped the global agricultural production and trade channels by driving down prices, depressing production of rice and wheat commodities, and putting American producers at a disproportionate disadvantage, the Congressmen alleged in the letter. "India's practices are dangerously trade-distorting on a global scale and impact US farmers and ranchers," the letter read. The lead in the letter was taken by Congressmen Tracey Mann and Rick Crawford.

"We urge the administration to file a formal request for consultations with India at the WTO and to continue monitoring other WTO members' domestic support programmes that undermine fair trade practices," they said.

The US must not yield for the sake of reaching a consensus. Instead, America must work to promote solutions that will alleviate the global supply chain and food shortages.

It must take actions that will address those consumers most impacted by inflation and rising food prices, the lawmakers demanded. "It is up to the American agriculture to contribute to building resilient conditions for food security for the US and throughout the world," they said. India has defended its stand at the WTO. Several countries and organisations across the world have applauded India for taking a firm stand in protecting the interests of its farmers.

INDIA IN COMMAND AS ENGLAND STRUGGLE TO REACH 60/3 AT TEA

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

Ravindra Jadeja reaffirmed his status as India's most valuable player across formats with a superbly crafted hundred before skipper Jasprit Bumrah took centre-stage, first smashing a world record and then blowing away England top-order on a rain-hit second day of the rescheduled fifth Test.

At tea, England were struggling at 60 for 3 as a nicely warmed-up Bumrah first castled opener Alex Lees (6) with a delivery that came in with the angle.

Then, in the post-lunch session, he got twice lucky as he removed Zak Crawley (9) and Ollie Pope (10) with the 'seventh' delivery of his third and sixth overs respectively.

Both were fuller deliveries which enticed the two right-handers to go for drives as Shubman Gill at third slip and Shreyas Iyer at second slip took regulation catches.

In-form batters Joe Root (19 batting) and Jonny Bairstow (6 batting) were at the crease when rain stopped play for the third time on the second



day.

While he once again delivered

with the ball but it was Bumrah (31 no, 16 balls) the batter whose fireworks will be remembered by the capacity Edgbaston crowd for the longest time as he smashed 29 runs off a Stuart Broad over.

In all, that over from Broad yielded 35 runs, including six extras.

In his first match at the helm as captain, Bumrah would have never thought that he would pip Brian Lara's maximum runs (28 runs) in a single Test match over, which remained intact for 18 years.

Bumrah used the bat like a sword and even the edges seemed like 'sweet spot' as he hit four boundaries and two sixes off Broad to give the hosts a dose of 'Bazball' (Brendon McCullum's attacking philosophy), which had become a trending lingo in English cricket during the past few weeks.

While Rishabh Pant's century for the ages and Jadeja's third Test ton set up the platform, one can't discount the 93 runs that India added with contributions from number 9, 10 and 11.

In the morning, Jadeja, was cautious as ever before deliberately guiding a Matthew Potts delivery with extra

bounce over the slips for a boundary, and the second four was a lucky one that went over Joe Root in the slips.

A punchy drive through cover-point region got him his third century four months after he got the second one in Mohali.

This hundred, though, was of a far better quality, especially if one factors in the conditions, match situation and quality of opposition bowling.

Jadeja hit 13 boundaries, and his four and half hours stay at the wicket gave Pant an opportunity to play his natural attacking game, even as he dourly defended as and when required. Having already scored 2500 runs in Test cricket alongside taking 242 wickets, Jadeja can safely be termed as the best all-rounder that the Indian team has had since the great Kapil Dev. A Test batting average of 37 plus is better than many specialists who have played for India over the years. As far as England's bowling is concerned, James Anderson (5/60), who is a month shy of turning 40, is still peerless as he got his 32nd five-wicket haul while Broad completed a creditable feat of 550 Test victims.



Bumrah breaks Lara's world record, smashes Broad for 29 runs

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

India captain Jasprit Bumrah bludgeoned a hapless Stuart Broad for 29 runs to create a world record for maximum runs off a single over in Test cricket, beating the legendary Brian Lara's feat by one run.

The world record stayed with Lara for 18 years -- he had hit South African left-arm spinner Robin Peterson for 28 runs in a Test match in 2003-04, which included four fours and two sixes off six legal deliveries.

Former Australia player George Bailey had also scored 28 in an over but he was behind Lara in terms of boundary count.

Broad, who had also been hit for six sixes in an over by Yuvraj Singh in the inaugural World T20 in 2007, gave away 35 runs in the 84th over of the Indian first innings in the fifth rescheduled Test here. There were six extra runs -- five wides and a no-ball.

In the end, the Indian skipper was not out on 31 off 16 balls with four boundaries and two sixes.

It started with a mistimed hook that went for a boundary, and in frustration, Broad bowled a bouncer that went for five wides. The next ball was again dug in short and another top-edge got Bumrah seven runs, including a no-ball.

The next three balls were hit for boundaries in different directions -- one through mid-on, one through fine leg and

the last one through mid-wicket.

To add insult to his injuries, Bumrah did the proverbial "Bazball" (English cricket's current buzzword that lays emphasis on the attacking intent brought about by new coach Brendon McCullum) with a six over deep mid-wicket.

India finished their first innings on 416, riding hundreds from Rishabh Pant (146) and Ravindra Jadeja (104).

Former India head coach Ravi Shastri said what he saw from Bumrah was "bizarre".

"Now don't tell me I was again on the mic when 35 runs were scored. I thought I had seen it all, but not really. 36 (runs) from Yuvraj; 36 I had hit myself," said Shastri.

"And today what I saw was bizarre, it is something you would have never imagined. World record from Jasprit Bumrah, batting at number 10 as captain of India for the first time, going past Lara, George Bailey, Keshav Maharaj," added Shastri, who was on the mic when Yuvraj had hit six maximums in an over in the 2007 T20 World Cup. "29 off the over. The bowler is same, who Yuvraj hit for six sixes -- Stuart Broad, going for that many. And the entire over went for 35, which is world record. Previous highest was 28.

"You feel you have seen everything, but you must realize you are still a student of the game, something will surprise you on another day," said Shastri.

Women's Hockey WC: India eye revenge against England in opener



PTI ■ AMSTELVEEN (NETHERLANDS)

No more considered as pushovers, a rejuvenated India would seek revenge against England when the two sides open their Pool B campaign in the Women's Hockey World Cup here on Sunday.

The Indian women's hockey team would be eager to settle scores against a side which shattered their bronze medal hopes in last year's Tokyo Olympics. India came tantalisingly close to claiming their maiden Olympic medal in Tokyo, only to lose 3-4 against England, who are playing as Great Britain in the showpiece here.

But going into the tournament, the Indians would be high on confidence, especially after finishing a creditable third in their maiden outing in the FIH Pro League.

India's best performance in the World Cup was a fourth place finish at the inaugural edition in 1974, but since achieving a historic fourth place in Tokyo Games, the team has been on a phenomenal rise.

The Indian women's team achieved its best-ever world ranking, a sixth position in May and then gave some top teams of the world a run for their money in the FIH Pro League.

The Indian team finished on the podium ahead of strong sides like Belgium, Australia and England.

Experienced goalkeeper Savita Punia performed captaincy responsibilities brilliantly since taking over from talismanic Rani Rampal, who has been sidelined since the Tokyo Games due to a hamstring injury.

Savita has been in stellar form, while she will have young and energetic back-up in Bichu Devi Kharibam.

Disastrous round sees Shubhankar miss cut at Irish Open

PTI ■ KILKENNY (IRELAND)

India's Shubhankar Sharma seemed all set for a fine second round after a solid first day as he had a birdie-birdie start from the 10th in the second round of Horizon Irish Open at Mount Juliet Estate.

Then everything went downhill with two double bogeys and two other bogeys between the 13th and 18th. He double bogeyed 13th and 16th and bogeyed 14th and 18th and there ended his hopes.

On his second nine, the front stretch of the course, Sharma had one birdie and no more bogeys, but it was too late as he finished 3-over for the day and even for 36 holes,



which was good enough only for tied 89th and he exited early.

It was Sharma's third straight issued cut and sixth one in seven starts with a tied 14th in between at Dutch Open.

Jorge Campillo moved into the halfway lead after the Spaniard carded a four under second round 68, even as 2019 Open winner, Shane Lowry delighted the local fans with birdies on last four holes to just make the cut after himself having resigned to an early exit.

It was a great day for locals as another home favourite Séamus Power, playing with Lowry, put on a thrilling late show for the jubilant fans.

On a day when the weather changed frequently the County Kilkenny saw both heavy rain and cold weather in the afternoon. Earlier, Campillo set the clubhouse target at 11-under in more favourable morning conditions.

Former players laud Pant for his 'special ton under pressure'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Flamboyant India wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant's sublime counter-attacking ton on the opening day of the rescheduled fifth Test against England earned praise from the cricket fraternity, which described the knock as "a special one under pressure".

India were staring down the barrel at 98 for 5 before Pant (146 off 111 balls) scripted a remarkable turnaround in the company of Ravindra Jadeja, who remained not out on 83 on Day 1 at Birmingham.



The duo shared a match-changing 222-run stand off 239 balls.

Pant, who rendered the England bowlers helpless, hammered 20 boundaries and four sixes, in his awe-inspiring effort.

"Simply awesome@Rishabh Pant17! Well done," the iconic Sachin Tendulkar tweeted.

"Crucial innings by @imjadeja. Rotated the strike well and played some amazing shots."

Former India captain and current BCCI president Sourav Ganguly tweeted:

"Special exhibition of test match batting under pressure Rishabh Pant. Ravindra Jadeja can't get better than this."

Following are the Twitter reactions of some more former and current cricketers on Pant's blitzkrieg:

Virender Sehwag: Pant is in a league of his own. The most entertaining cricketer in the world, this is a special one.

Venkatesh Prasad: Box office stuff from Rishabh Pant. One of the best counter-attacking innings that one will ever see. One special player.

Gopichand hopes for historic high in CWG after epic Thomas Cup win



PTI ■ KOLKATA

Chief national coach Pullela Gopichand is hopeful that the country's male shuttlers will be able to reclaim the gold in men's singles and better their record in doubles event at the upcoming Commonwealth Games following India's epic Thomas Cup win.

Indian shuttlers had claimed an unprecedented six medal, including two golds, three silvers and a bronze, at the 2018 edition of Commonwealth Games.

Kidambi Srikanth and the pairing of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy had finished second best at Gold Coast but Gopichand feels they can go the distance this time after fashioning India's epic win in the Thomas Cup in May.

"As a team, for the world, this performance (Thomas Cup) means a lot. We haven't performed this way at the team level, in the men's section especially," the 48-year-old said here.

"It's a huge thing, in general the team is excited and very hopeful after the way we performed in the Thomas Cup. I'm hopeful that we would do better than last time.

"Last year we won two gold medals, can we do better than that? But looking at the Thomas Cup, I'm sure we will have a chance to better our records in the men's singles and doubles."

Prakash Padukone (1978) and Syed Modi (1982) and Parupalli Kashyap are the only Indian men to win the coveted gold at CWG, while Chirag and Satwik had created history by becoming the first-ever Indian pair to win a CWG medal en route to bagging a silver in 2018.

The Birmingham showpiece will be held from July 28 to August 8.

Will speak to Park, hope to sort out Sindhu's issues

French player who beat Serena reaches 4th round at Wimbledon

AP ■ WIMBLEDON, ENGLAND

Whether her opponents are tournament favorites or crowd favorites, Harmony Tan keeps knocking them out of Wimbledon.

First there was Serena Williams, a seven-time champion at the All England Club. Then came 32nd-seeded Sara Sorribes Tormo. On Saturday, it was British player Katie Boulter.

"I think I like grass," said Tan, who won three straight matches at a tournament for the first time in her career. "I really like to play with some slice, volley, everything with my game."

The unseeded Frenchwoman is making her debut at the All England Club. She has played at the French Open four times, reaching the second round once. She also played at this year's Australian Open and again reached the second round. At the U.S. Open, she lost in the first round in 2018 in her only appearance at Flushing Meadows.

On Saturday, Tan beat Boulter 6-1, 6-1 on No. 2 Court. She never faced a break



point in the match and converted five of the 10 she earned.

Tan's debut at Wimbledon came on Day 2 of the tournament on Centre Court, the biggest stadium on the grounds. That's where she eliminated Williams, a 23-time Grand Slam singles champion, in three sets.

"It was really emotional for the first round against Serena, and after it was just play match for match," Tan said on court. "Today was really good tennis. I don't know why, but ... It depends (on) the day."



PTI ■ SILVIS (US)

Indian golfer Anirban Lahiri turned in a solid second round which ended with a painful bogey on his last hole, but still produced a card of 4-under 67 to move up the leaderboard in the USD 7.1 million John Deere Classic event.

The 35-year-old Lahiri, who started birdie-birdie from the 10th, was on a good run. He turned in 2-under and added birdies on first, third and fifth at which point he was 5-under for the day and 7-under for the event.

Another birdie or more could have brought him close to Top-10, but instead a bogey on ninth, his closing hole, dropped him to 6-under

and with the rest of the field also finishing later, he was T-24 at the end of the second day, eight places better than the first day.

Lahiri is now nine shots behind the leader, J T Poston (62-65) who is 15-under and four ahead of second-placed Denny McCarthy (66-65) at 11-under.

The top Asian star was Chinese Taipei's C T Pan who powered into tied seventh place at the halfway stage as he seeks to challenge for a second career PGA TOUR victory.

The 30-year-old Pan fired a flawless 7-under 64 to match for a two-day total of 9-under 133 and T-7.

Notable players to miss the cut were defending champion Lucas



Olympic men's soccer is limited to players under 23, with each nation allowed

three wild cards over the limit. After the U.S. Failed in three straight qualifying cycles

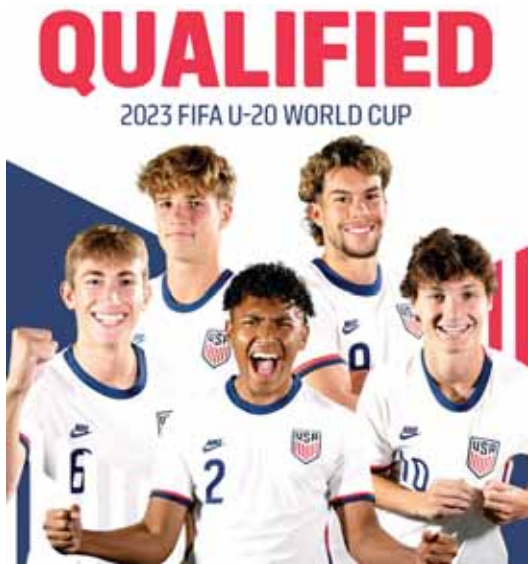
US men's soccer reach 1st Olympics since 2008 with U-20 win

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The United States qualified for its first Olympic men's soccer tournament since 2008 when the Americans beat Honduras 3-0 at San Pedro Sula in the semifinals of the Under-20 championship of North and Central America and the Caribbean.

Paxten Aaronson of the Philadelphia Union, an 18-year-old brother of Leeds midfielder Brenden Aaronson, scored in the third minute on Friday night.

Alejandro Alvarado, who made four appearances last season for Portugal's Vizela, added a goal in the 23rd, and Quinn Sullivan, Aaronson's Philadelphia teammate, scored in the 43rd as the U.S. Earned a berth in the 16-nation field at the 2024 Olympic tournament in France.



as many clubs refused to make top players available, CONCACAF altered qualifying from under-23 teams and included it as part of its under-20 championship.

The U.S. Was eliminated from 2012 Olympic qualifying when Sean Johnson allowed Jaime Alas' goal to go in off his hands in second-half stoppage time, giving El Salvador a 3-3 draw in the Americans' group stage finale.

The Americans lost a 2016 Olympics qualification game to El Salvador 2-0, then were beaten 3-2 by Colombia in a two-leg playoff for another berth.

The U.S. Lost to Honduras 2-1 in last year's Olympic qualification game as goalkeeper David Ochoa gifted a goal when he chipped a ball off an opponent and into his own net.

Lahiri moves up leaderboard with 67 in 2nd round at John Deere Classic

Glover, Cameron Champ, Webb Simpson and Brandt Snedeker.

The top three players not otherwise exempt in the top 10 and ties will qualify for the 150th Open Championship at St Andrews.

Lahiri hit 10 of 18 greens in regulation during his second round. He began well with a drive to the left side of the fairway on the par-5 10th and hit his 73 yard approach to 11 feet for birdie.

On the next, the 432-yard par-4 11th hole, Lahiri had a 145 yard approach shot, setting himself up for the birdie from inside six feet to move to 2-under.

On the 215-yard par-3 12th green, Lahiri suffered from a tough three-putt after missing a putt from

6-feet for a par. He made up on 14th. After a 316 yard drive on the 361-yard par-4 14th, Lahiri chipped his second shot to five feet, which he rolled in for a one-putt birdie on the hole to get back 2-under.

He again gave away a shot on Par-5 569-yard 17th. He got to the green in four and two-putted from 32 feet for a bogey.

He holed a 15-foot putt for birdie on first and then again hit a great approach to six feet on third for yet another birdie. That was followed by another fine approach and a birdie from inside five feet. But on the 503-yard par-4 ninth, Lahiri had a bogey after hitting the green in 3 and two putting to finish 4-under for the round.

SHAKTI ARORA

**‘TV HAS HELPED
ME BECOME WHAT
I AM TODAY’**



When I got a call for this opportunity, I was very skeptical as the popular and long-running show has several characters already and when you

I finished my last show in 2019, after which I wasn't satisfied with the characters I was being offered. So, I decided to wait for the right opportunity. In between, I traveled a lot and I almost turned into a travel influencer, visiting 8 - 10 countries in a short span of time. However, it didn't pan out. I also utilised my break to learn more about the stock market, and start a few businesses, amongst other things as well.

I never had a plan B, I always wanted to be an actor, and hence, I worked hard for it from the beginning. In fact, when I came into acting, I soon realized that the craft will be my most valuable asset. After being part of a few popular projects, people started appreciating my work and that further pushed me to improve my craft furthermore and I will continue to do so.

My fans have been waiting to see me on TV screens for the past 3 years, and I am sure my entry into Kundali Bhagya will surely excite them. I also want to thank them for loving and appreciating my work to date and I hope they continue with the same trend (laughs).

DGTL | NEW DELHI



What: Music
Where: Indira Gandhi Sports Complex, New Delhi
When: December 9 & 10
Time: 2:00 pm - 12:00 am

Dafa Kar (A R Rahman)
Saamna (Akasa)
Mast Nazron Se (Rochak Kohli)
Kya Kar Diya (Vishal Mishra)
Macha Macha Re (Mika Singh)

Psychofreak (Camila Cabello)
Seven Bridge Road (Jake Bugg)
Wings Of Stone (Adam Levine)
FREE (John Legend)
Crazy (Doechii)



Newly launched Blissful Sleep Gummies are perfect bliss to induce restful sleep. With a hectic schedule and long tiring day, sound sleep is all we need to wake up refreshed. Take two beauty sleep gummies 30 minutes before bedtime and dive into your dreamland. Additionally, it also helps in rejuvenating your skin health overnight. You can easily manage your sleep-wake cycle with wholesome ingredients; Vitamin B6 to fall asleep faster, Passiflora Extract that induces restful sleep by relaxing your body and mind, and Melatonin to improve your sleep routine. These non-habit-forming gummies calm your body and mind by coping with daily stress. Passion Fruit Flavour gummies will reverse the skin damage caused by stress and rejuvenate the skin from within, while you sleep tight. These Gummies will help you in getting your dream sleep and managing your sleep disorders. It is a 100 per cent clinically tested & doctor recommended product for managing sleep disorders.



If you observe dark lines under the nails, it could be a symptom of melanoma, which is a malignant form of skin cancer, and requires an immediate visit to the doctor

Every Bollywood celebrity tends to invest heavily in the character's nerves to give justice to the character. To acquire the ideal perspective and location, Bollywood actors may even have to shoot outside in the blazing heat. Due to their outdoor shooting schedules in the gloomy weather, Bollywood actors often get sunburned or injured certain injuries. And that is what Warina Hussain's latest pictures showcase. She took to her social media and posted a slew of pictures of herself in which she is seen donning a hot mini orange bodycon dress.



A black and white portrait of a man with a beard, wearing a white t-shirt and a black baseball cap with a white Batman logo. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera.

With this and attaining new highs, Narula aims to bring more innovation and technological advancement in the events world. Events showcase entertainment by rewarding their work and thus establishing a name in the entertainment industry. They are an important part of the entertainment industry.



I'm a big believer in accepting yourself and not really worrying about it — Jennifer Lawrence

Not many would be 'charitable' to Thackeray who has now been left with a mere rump of Shiv Sena, which is restricted to only commercial Capital Mumbai, writes DEEPAK K UPRETI

UDDHAV THE LAST OF THE THACKERAYS ?

Can Uddhav Thackeray who quit as Chief Minister of Maharashtra, be justified in saying "Et tu Brute ?" to Shiv Sena breakaway group leader Eknath Shinde? Will the average Shiv Sainik buy his allegations that Shinde conspired with the BJP to kill his 'Maha Vikas Aghadi' government? Not many would be that 'charitable' to Thackeray who has now been left with a mere rump of Sena that is restricted to only commercial Capital Mumbai.

Now that Shinde is in the saddles of the Chief Minister, Uddhav will face an enormous challenge in keeping his hold over the cadres of the Shiv Sena. It may seem a tall order for a man who failed miserably in keeping his legislature party united and faced the mortification of seeing two-thirds of his MLAs deserting him.

The Uddhav-led Shiv Sena, which a few months ago had a plan to go national and contest elections outside Maharashtra, is now fighting for its survival as a political party within the western state.

While the question which is the "real Shiv Sena" would be decided by the Election Commission and the court, the Sena of Uddhav Thackeray is gasping for Oxygen on its own political turf that has been successfully invaded by the new-age Shiv Sainik, steered cleverly by a buoyant BJP leadership.

The lightning strike by 'Shinde-Sena' in the last 10-days and cloak and dagger drama that spread and unfolded in Mumbai, Ahmedabad to Gauwhati have made the Shiv Sena 'panth pradhan' poorer with as many 39 MLAs, leaving him to lead a largely Mumbai-based organization.

But in Mumbai, too, newly-anointed chief minister and rebel leader Eknath Shinde himself has a strong base in Thane, his long-time constituency.

Thackeray may find his Mumbai base further squeezed with several Mumbai MLAs- Sada Sarvankar, Prakash Surve, Yamin Jadhav, Mangesh Kudalkar- going along with Shinde.

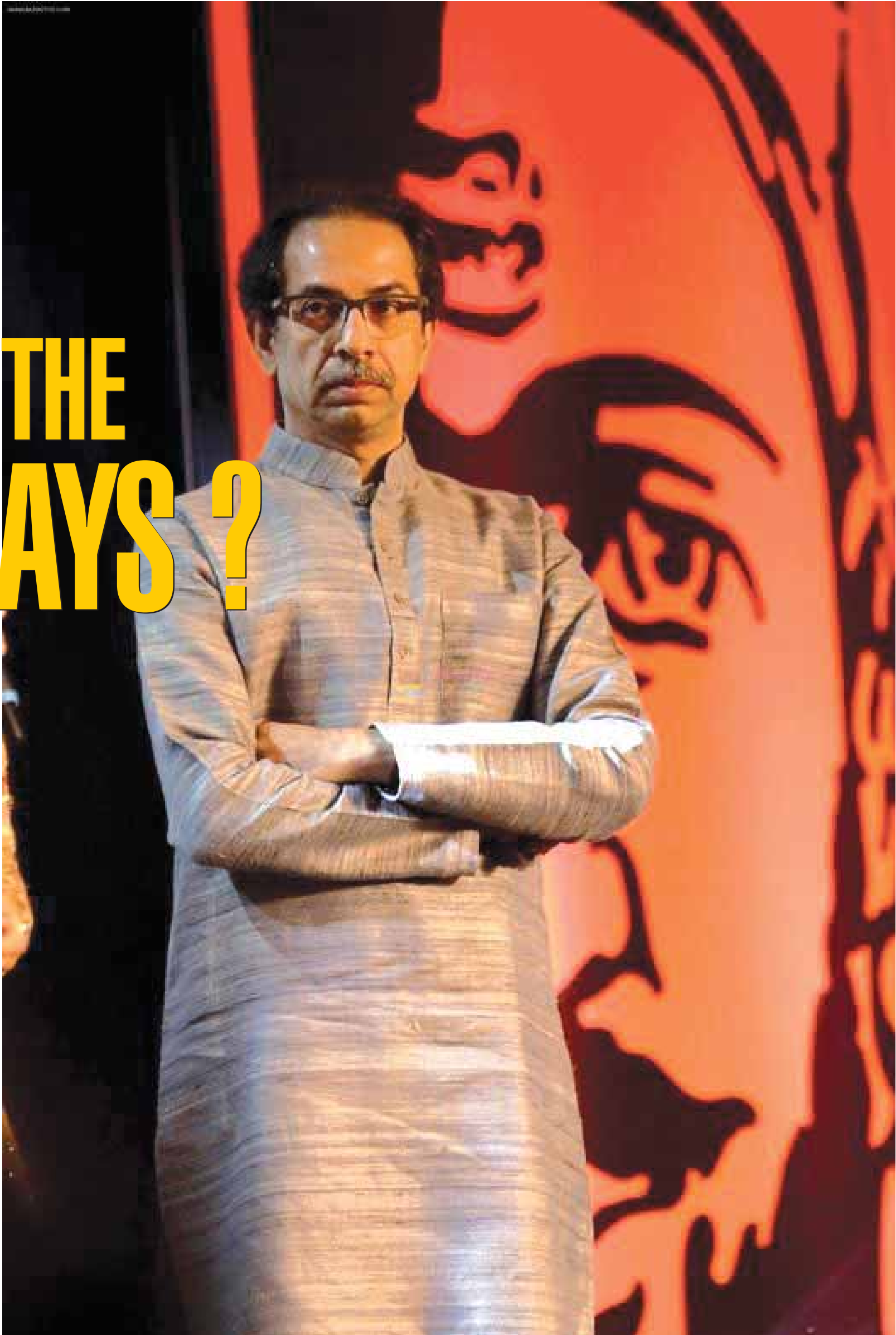
Several senior Shiv Sena MLAs who have rebelled and moved with Shinde have deep district and panchayat-level political roots of decades in north Maharashtra, Vidarbha, and the Konkan region and thus would make it very difficult for Thackeray to re-grow his party outside Maharashtra.

Is Thackeray culpable of complacency and living in his ivory towers and dreaming big without working on the ground ?

As they say coming events cast their shadows before. The straws in the wind were there for all to see, but the Sena chief turned blind eye to the omen. In the hindsight, he looked to be deep in slumber after a two and a half-year run as Chief Minister in 'Varsha Bungalow', cut off him from "Matoshree", the house built by Bal Thackeray, where common Shiv Sainik, corporators, or MLAs would in the past go and get redressal of their grievances on a day-to-day basis.



AS THEY SAY, COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE. THE STRAWS IN THE WIND WERE THERE FOR ALL TO SEE, BUT THE SENA CHIEF TURNED BLIND EYE TO THE OMEN. IN THE HINDSIGHT, HE LOOKED TO BE DEEP IN SLUMBER AFTER A TWO AND A HALF-YEAR RUN AS CHIEF MINISTER IN 'VARSHA BUNGALOW', CUT OFF HIM FROM "MATOSHREE", THE HOUSE BUILT BY BAL THACKERAY, WHERE COMMON SHIV SAINIK, CORPORATORS, OR MLAS WOULD IN THE PAST GO AND GET REDRESSAL OF THEIR GRIEVANCES ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS.



Shiv Sena lost its second Rajya Sabha seat to the BJP in the recently concluded Rajya Sabha elections with its candidate Sanjay Pawar failing to get nine requisite votes.

Team Uddhav then publicly blamed six of its erstwhile supporters for "betraying" the Sena but failed to set its house in order, which was simmering with charges of "inaccessibility" of Thackeray.

The disconnect was too visible to be ignored by coalition partners. Nationalist Congress Party leader Sharad Pawar said he had "warned" Thackeray to watch out lest he is caught by sudden surprises.

Ignoring the deft moves made by BJP leader and former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis who cleverly 'tapped' the unrest within Sena, Thackeray allowed Raut, a loudmouth and part of his coterie, to make unproductive comments like "Give us control of the ED for two days and we'll get even Devendra Fadnavis to vote for us."

This is the lowest point that the Thackerays have seen since senior Bal Thackeray first entered an alliance in 1989 with the BJP for Lok Sabha and came into power for the first time in

1995 with Manohar Joshi, prominent Shiv Sena leader becoming the CM of the state. Narayan Rane was another Shiv Sainik (who is now with BJP) who occupied the CM post.

Uddhav is seen to have committed a cardinal sin and a tactical blunder in 2019 by himself stepping into Chief Minister's post and not nominating someone from Shiv Sena, a tradition set by his father who continued to be in the hallowed 'Matoshree', seen to be the final court of Justice for all Shiv Sainiks until he died in 2012.

Thus, Uddhav lost the 'moral authority' that the senior Thackeray held over Shiv Sainik by 'abstaining' from power.

But a much greater blunder that Uddhav has been accused of committing is tailoring the "Hindutva agenda" to suit his power goals and joining hands with "secularists" in the MVA coalition government.

It would be difficult for Uddhav to answer the charges of Shinde-led Shiv Sainik that it is he "who has betrayed" the 'ideals' espoused by his father and not them "who continue to fight for a Hindu cause".

With Shinde now occupying the

office of the Chief minister, his camp may, as of now, have an edge in convincing average Sainiks that they are battling to save the "real Shiv Sena" from the clutches of those someone whose strings were pulled by 'secular-left-liberal enemies'.

The success of mass mobilization by two Shiv Sena rival factions would depend on as which side can convince the Sena voters on the "betrayal theme". However, Shinde, a Maratha, may be counted on to make a dent in Sharad Pawar's Maratha vote bank. This could give his faction added fillip at the time of election and also serve the BJP in cutting down Pawar to size.

Amidst all these high voltage political theatrics, it will be interesting to see if the BJP astutely ropes in the mercurial Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) leader Raj Thackeray as the third party in the new ruling combination in Maharashtra.

If the breakaway Shiv Sena Group is to be merged into MNS it would gain the respectability of the Thackeray title o counter cousin Uddhav and further legitimize its existence in the eyes of Shiv Sena workers.

Raj Thackeray who has been inter-

acting with top BJP leadership has, for some time, been warning against loud-speakers in the mosques with 'Hanumanchalisa' in Mumbai.

Though Raj Thackeray is doing BJP's bidding vis-vis his cousin, the saffron party yet does not have full confidence in him and is wary of his political intentions. But as of now, though not 'trusted and tested', the other Thackeray may have a place in the BJP game plan for Maharashtra.

The first trial with the fire of Thackeray, post his exit from power, to prove the substance of his side of Shiv Sena to the people of Maharashtra as against the 'Shinde Shiv Sena' would come soon in the BMC, Thane, and Kalyan-Dombivili civic polls.

Uddhav will need to reinvent his politics and prove its 'Hindutva credentials' after he has taken the "secular dip". It is not an easy task after his two and half years of company with MVA allies.

His move to rename Aurangabad city as Sambhaji Nagar and Osamabad city as Dharashiv has come too late with the obvious intent already read.!

(The writer is a special correspondent of The Pioneer)

CHECK THOSE TRIGGER POINTS

The Migraine Awareness Month has just concluded. Owing to lack of awareness around migraine--a headache that can cause severe throbbing pain or a pulsating sensation, usually on one side of the head---people afflicted with the disorder often suffer in silence. Very few know that migraine ranks in the top 10 leading causes of years lived with disability, worldwide. THE HEALTH PIONEER brings a detailed report on this commonly prevalent illness and medications available to manage it.

I feel my head pounding when I try to move or when a door slams. It gets muc worse when curtains are pulled aside. Bright, white lights make it worse, leaving me feeling tizzy.”

“It’s like I am being hit in the head with a hammer before I am totally incapacitated in bed. Sometimes, it is for days that I am unable to carry out even my daily routine.”

These are just a few testimonies shared by the patients suffering with migraine. Astonishingly, around 1 billion people worldwide have migraine. This makes it the third most common illness in the world, allergies and cold flu being the first two respectively.

In India, over 200 million people have migraine, which remains undiagnosed in many cases. Among the age group of 15-49, migraine is the number one cause of YLD (Years Lost due to Disability). Unfortunately, there is still a lack of awareness around this condition.

Untreated, a migraine attack may last for 4-72 hours, and tension headaches may potentially last for a week, impacting more women than men.

Migraines present as severe and debilitating headaches – usually on one side of the head – that cause a painful throbbing and pulsating feeling and is often accompanied by nausea, dizziness, vomiting and sensitivity to light and sounds.

Chronic migraine is defined as a headache occurring on 15 or more days per month for more than three months, which, on at least 8 days per month, has the features of migraine headache.

Episodic migraine is defined as having headaches on fewer than 15 days a month.

According to a recent study, in India, migraine patients have poor awareness of their headache triggers and do not recognise it unless asked specifically.

The doctors suggest Yoga and meditation that can help the body to recover from stressful events such as migraine episodes. In fact, a study published in 2018 found that Yoga paired with Ayurveda, a holistic form of medicine, reduces migraine symptoms and pain intensity and improves quality of life.

Owing to the lack of awareness around the condition, about 40 per cent of the patients in India end up consulting with a general physician or other doctors for issues related to eyes, digestion, or ENT related problems. According to a study conducted by the World Health Organisation (WHO) less than 50 per cent of people suffering from migraine consult a physician and it is very often confused with sinus, cervical headache, hunger headache and even a hangover.

Therefore, 50 per cent of patients self-medicate as they go to chemists for painkillers.

Reaching out to a specialist, that is a Neurologist, can be truly beneficial for patients suffering from migraine. A neurologist can help dive deeper into the intricacies of the condition and find solutions towards managing it.



Underdiagnosis and insufficient treatment is due to gaps in knowledge. Understanding triggers help as they could be related to stress,

hormonal changes, weather changes, sleep cycle, bright lights, etc. There is low awareness regarding the distinction between migraines and home remedies to alleviate symptoms temporarily. With chronic migraine, only 1 in 20 patients find the correct diagnosis and guided treatment. Some chronic and mild conditions have similar symptoms and so, patients are diagnosed with these instead of migraine, which can further delay their treatment therapies.

DR DEBASHISH CHOWDHURY
Head of Neurology Department,
GB Pant Hospital, Delhi



A wide range of migraine treatment is available aimed at stopping symptoms, cutting down intensity and attacks and preventing future episodes. Many medications have been designed to treat migraine, its frequency and intensity. Medications used to combat migraines can be pain-relieving medications and injections such as nerve blocks. Then, there are certain devices that are based on neuro-modulation therapies that can be taken monthly or quarterly basis, preventive therapies, and Botox injections which are approved by the USFDA. These all are safe and result-oriented, but should be taken only after consulting a doctor. But best medicines are lifestyle modifications such as avoiding triggers that cause migraine. Then there are evidences that meditations and some stretching exercises too helps in subsiding the illness.

Asst. Prof. **DR DIVYANI GARG**
Neurology Department, Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi



Owing to its chronic nature, migraine is one of the non-curable diseases like diabetes or epilepsy, but it is preventable and controllable. Migraines can have a negative impact on not just the patient, but also their families, co-workers and the society, which is why it is important to diagnose and treat patients in a timely manner. By identifying and avoiding the triggers, or

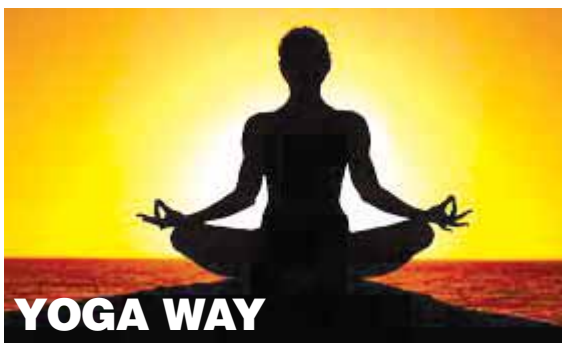
in some cases by using preventive therapy, patients can partially prevent and/or control the disease. Preventive therapy can be highly beneficial for the patients if followed with adherence. As for any other disease, treatment adherence and a healthy lifestyle are two key aspects in order to prevent the disease and live a healthier life.

DR RK DHAMIJA,
Director, Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS) Delhi



People commonly use medication to treat their symptoms. However, other methods such as Yoga may be an effective way to reduce the frequency and severity of migraine. However, someone who experiences migraine should avoid Yoga classes that are vigorous or involve heat, as well as poses that stress the neck.

ISHWAR V BASAVARADDI
Director, Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga,
Union Ministry of Ayush, Delhi



YOGA WAY

● **Loosening Practices:** Neck Movements (Right and left bending/Forward and backward bending)

● **Chest Movements** (Vakshsthal Shakti Vikasaka)

● **Asana:** (Tadasana/Urdhahastattanasana/Kati Cakrasana/ Ardha Ustrasana/Shashakasana/Marjariasana/Vakrasana/ Makrasana/Bhujangasana/Setubandhasana/Saral matsyasana/Saral Pavanmuktasana/Shavasana)

● **Kriya:** Jalneti (twice a week)/Kapalbhati(daily)

● **Breathing** (Abdominal Breathing/Thoracic Breathing)

● **Pranayama** (Suryabhedan Pranayama/Chandrabhedan Pranayama/ Ujjayi Pranayama/Bhramari Pranayama)

● **Bandha** (Jalandharabandha

● **Relaxation/ Dhyana** (Yoga Nidra/Dhyana)

TRIGGERS

Some foods (processed food, ice creams, aged cheeses, salty foods); drinks (alcohol, caffeinated beverages, wines); food additives (monosodium glutamate); stress, bright lights, sounds; missing sleep or too much sleep; intense physical exertion; changes in weather and some medicines like oral contraceptives and vasodilators may trigger migraine.

REASONS WHY MIGRAINE IS LARGELY MISDIAGNOSED

Myth: Migraine is just a headache, and nothing needs to be done about it

Fact: If you do not recognize you have a migraine the frequency of the headache starts to increase with the passage of time and taking pain killers to avoid the pain can prompt the next headache to come faster. The frequency of attacks increases this phenomenon, known as a 'Rebound Headache Phenomenon', also known as 'Medication Overuse Headache' involving from 5 to 10 to 20 attacks a month.

Myth: I cannot have migraine because it is a one-sided headache

Fact: Migraine can be both-sided, front or back condition.

Myth: Only adults have migraine

Fact: Children around 6 years of age can also have migraines.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

◆ Avoid loud noises and bright lights

◆ Take breaks from the TV or computer screen to rest your eyes, and adjust the brightness levels on digital screens. Pay close attention to all visual and audio disturbances, and make sure you can easily avoid them if a migraine arises.

◆ Pay attention to food choices

◆ Keep a headache diary

◆ By keeping a diary, you can easily identify your specific migraine triggers.

◆ Beware of hormonal changes

◆ Take supplements

◆ Pay attention to the weather

◆ Eat and sleep on a regular schedule

◆ Avoid stress: Although we can't always control stressful situations, we can control how we react to them.

◆ Choose relaxing exercises

◆ Plan ahead

NEWS BRIEFS

● Newly-elected MLA from Rajinder Nagar constituency Durgesh Pathak visited Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi recently on the occasion of National Doctor's Day and interacted with medics and other healthcare workers. The hospital in a statement said he met Dr D S Rana, Chairman (Board of Management) of the hospital, and other senior officials..

● Tata 1mg, a digital health company, has announced complimentary health check-ups for more than 1,000 doctors across various hospitals in cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Pune, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Dehradun. The participant doctors would be checked on more than 70 health parameters including liver function test, kidney function test, thyroid profile, glucose, lipid profile, vitamin D and vitamin B12.

● The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi has received a patent from the Indian Patent Office for its nanotechnology-based cancer detection system for early and effective identification of prostate cancer. The order was issued by the patent office after the institution amended its claims and submitted all the required documents in recent months.

Last week, Fortis Memorial Research Institute (FMRI) at Haryana's Gurugram celebrated its completion of 1,000 plus Bone Marrow Transplants (BMTs) at its various sites across the country.

Survivors of blood cancers and blood disorders such as thalassemia or aplastic anemia at the event echoed sentiments and were thankful to their doctors that they got a second chance of life given that the disease is still considered as a death sentence.

In 2020, BLK Super Speciality Hospital in Delhi too crossed 1,000 BMTs. It celebrated the milestone with much fanfare with the BMT recipients who included young, middle-aged as well as elderly persons.

So what's so special about the BMT procedure that is becoming a sort of achievement in the sector?

“BMT is a suitable treatment for both cancerous and non-cancerous conditions such as sickle-cell anaemia or thalassemia. Relapse in BMT is less compared to the relapse in chemotherapy and therefore, BMT is a well-preferred treatment for blood cancers. In recent years, haploidentical BMT has been observed to give as good a result as a full-matched BMT. With scientific progress and better drugs, India is achieving the current BMT success rates,” explained Dr Rahul Bhargava, one of the leading haematologists in the country and Principal Director, Hematology, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram.

However, a lot remains to be done. Though BMTs are on a steady rise in India, with about 3,000 transplants being performed yearly, there remains a gap as a significant number of patients with blood disorders are also adding up, Dr Bhargava said.

He pointed out that while America conducts 930 BMTs in a centre itself, just 3000 BMTs are being conducted in 72 centres across India.

In fact, it is less than 10 per cent of the actual requirement in India. Even today, 90-95 per cent population cannot afford it. No cancer centre is complete without a BMT unit. Unfortunately, 90 per cent cancer centres in the so-called cancer grid

BMT, A Ray of Hope For Blood Cancer Patients

Even today, 90-95 per cent of the population cannot afford Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT), a special therapy for patients with blood cancers or blood disorders. Unfortunately, 90 per cent cancer centres in the so-called cancer grid are neither planning or allowing BMT units to come up. The Government must make it mandatory to have a BMT centre in each State and all the big cancer hospitals, Dr Rahul Bhargava tells THE HEALTH PIONEER



Dr Rahul Bhargava

are neither planning or allowing BMT units to come up. The Government must make it mandatory to have a BMT unit in each State and all the big cancer hospitals, he suggested.

Moreover, the number of physicians dealing with only blood cancers is few and far between in the country – around 350 to 400 for a population of 1.38 billion. The challenge is that the diagnosis gets delayed.

Explaining the BMT procedure, Dr. Bhargava said: “BMT is like blood transfusion where we collect the stem cells from the peripheral blood after giving growth factors. The growth factors allow the stem cells to move out from the bone marrow to peripheral blood. It is collected from the same machine from which the platelets are collected.



“Once these stem cells are collected they are either stored or they are transfused through the veins in the body.”

Talking about the recent advancements in the sector, he said in blood cancer, apart from chemotherapy, BMT needs to be done so that the survival rate is

increased from the existing 40 per cent to 70 per cent. Moreover, recent advancements like CART-T are on the way which promises increased life to more patients.

Besides the costs involved in setting up a BMT, the sustainability, costs of improvement programmes, the required accreditation, HLA and

blood banking; quality assessments, well-trained doctors and nurses are essential. The BMT should be covered under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme, so that more patients can be covered.

Also, there is a need to increase the donor availability, points out the doctor who has helped set up a few BMT centres in Government hospi-

tals like in Bikaner and Indore.

“Only 30 per cent of patients have an HLA-matched sibling or family donor in India. Therefore, large donor registries should be created. Since BMT is not a surgery but involves only changing the blood through the recipient's arms and transporting it to the bone marrow, creating a donor pool and spreading its awareness will make BMT accessible to people.

“With BMTs, we are successfully curing incurable diseases like leukaemia, myeloma, thalassemia and also improving the quality of life for the patients.

“Therefore, large donor registries should be created. Since BMT is not a surgery but involves only changing the blood through the recipient's arms and transporting it to the bone marrow, creating a donor pool and spreading its awareness will make BMT accessible to people,” he stressed.

It's not that there has been no success in the sector. In cancers like Multiple Myeloma, if survival was three years, now it is six to eight years. Similarly, in Chronic Myelogenous Leukemia (CML) where the survival was five, it is now 30 years. So many people are getting cured due to newer sophisticated drugs in the sector. So, one must understand that blood cancer is no longer a death sentence and if detected early, it can be cured. It's time we end the stigma; spread awareness about the disease to ensure early diagnosis and treatment, said the doctor.

Hongkongers' forlorn bid to save democracy

Hong Kong completed 25 years of Chinese rule on July 1 this year. However, it has been an arduous journey for the islanders who have copped all the hassle under the tight reign of China. Initially, the Hongkongers didn't realise the hidden agenda of the Communists, but in the last decade, since the coming of Xi Jinping to power in 2012, they have started feeling suffocated under China's constricting grip.

As per the handover agreement between the Chinese Government and the UK, the basic liberties and freedom would be available to the islanders for the 50 years since 1997. At its halfway mark, even the outside world, international community, has realised that the Hongkongers have lost their basic liberties. Now a Chinese security structure is being imposed on the the Hongkongers and the law-breakers are branded as anti-nationals. Many of the offenders are transported to the mainland for receiving a Chinese sense of "justice".

The new generation of Hongkongers is getting restless under the over-imposing and suffocating Chinese security state as many underline the fact that the promised rights under the Basic Law are being denied by China. But for Beijing, Hong Kong is an integral part of China and what applies to the mainlanders applies to the islanders. So, there is no point of compromise and discussion on this issue neither by the earlier colonial power, the UK nor by any global governance agency.

As per Beijing's reasoning, any disturbance or deteriorating law and order chaos in Hong Kong is an internal issue of China. Therefore, the rest of the world, particularly the West, should no longer be bothered about it.

The moot point is: Is it as simple as the way the Xi regime has projected it to be? Of course, not. Indeed, Hong Kong is an integral part of China; by no stretch of imagination, it is any longer a colony of the UK after the July 1, 1997 historic handover of the territory to China.

However, as per the historic deal, Beijing was supposed to respect and adhere to the basic rights and liberties available to the Hongkongers till 2047. Till this year, Beijing



A girl poses for a photo at a promotional booth commemorating the 25th anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong from British to Chinese rule at a shopping centre on July 2, 2022

AP

should have not touched the democratic ambience so far enjoyed by the island people. To that end, Xi and his cronies are directly violating the basic freedoms of the locals in Hong Kong. Under the Basic Law, a slew of progressive electoral reforms was also promised so as to bring forth a fully franchise system to elect the members of the Legislative Council of the city, popularly known as the Legco. But eventually, what has come to the forefront is a crude National Security Law and a limited franchise reform measures that now allows only the "patriots" to run for the Hong Kong leadership. And on this June 30, the National Security Law completed two years as it was promulgated on the same date in the year 2020. In fact, the National People's Congress (NPC), the rubber-stamp Parliament of China had revealed its plans of bringing such legislation months before its inauguration.

The root of the Umbrella Movement and various democratic protests lies in the blatant violation of the Basic Law or Mini Constitution under which

the NPC had agreed to respect the autonomy of the territory. In fact, since the formal transfer of the territory, it has been administered as the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). Further, the mainland authorities committed to maintaining a unique administrative system "One Country, Two Systems", under which Beijing will follow the Communist pattern and Hong Kong will carry on with the capitalist system of economy and polity. And this autonomy, wherein basic rights and freedoms were to be enjoyed by the Hongkongers will be continued for another fifty years i.e. till 2047. Clearly, many locals were happy that they will be able to have a free life even under the Communist China and will not be affected by the opaque and the authoritarian regime of Beijing.

Today, the international community has voiced concerns against the illegal interference by Beijing in Hong Kong. The most important and far-reaching comment came directly from 10, Downing Street, the office of

the British Prime Minister two years back. In the wake of massive overhauling of the legal administration of Hong Kong, the UK, the former colonial master of the city, proposed a citizenship offer to the islanders in the middle of 2020. The decision has also demonstrated the legacy of British control for nearly a century over this part of China.

When Hong Kong was handed over to China by then UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to Deng Xiaoping, the then President of China, there was a call for issuing this kind of unique citizenship offer from Britain. However, such measures were not considered by the Government of the UK during that time in July 1997.

What has provoked the current Boris Johnson regime to make the citizenship offer to millions of Hongkongers? On November 11, 2020, the Chinese Parliament decided that any Hong Kong legislator who promote or support Hong Kong independence, refuse to recognise China's sovereignty over Hong Kong, seek foreign countries to interfere in the

affairs of Hong Kong, or endanger the national security of Hong Kong, will be in breach of the parliamentary oath and disqualified from the membership of the Hong Kong Legislative Council with immediate effect. This decision of the National People's Congress (NPC) eventually disqualified four members of the Legislative Council.

Back home in London, it was advocated that this sudden move of Beijing was a ploy to harass and stifle all voices critical of the policies adopted by the mainland authorities over the years. Truly speaking, this new rule set by the bosses in China has become another tool to suppress the concerns of the locals in Hong Kong.

Today, the British Government feels that this decision of the NPC directly breaches the legally binding historic Sino-British Declaration signed on 19 December, 1984 in Beijing. The Declaration which came into effect on 27 May, 1985 clearly outlines the administrative arrangement of Hong Kong after the withdrawal of

the UK on July 1, 1997.

What has been highlighted by Westminster today is that China has violated its earlier commitment of providing considerable autonomy to this former colonial territory. In fact, this high degree of autonomy and freedom of speech for Hong Kong was very much guaranteed under the Paragraph 3 and Annex I of the joint Declaration.

The British Government noted that this is for the third time the Chinese Government has breached the legally binding declaration since the handover of the territory in 1997. The first such instance took place in 2016, the second, when Beijing imposed the National Security Law in June 2020, and third, in November of 2020. This clearly indicates what Beijing is aiming to pursue in Hong Kong.

Clearly, China is scared of the democratic spirit of the Hongkongers. It is obvious that the rights and liberties the Hongkongers enjoyed before the Chinese crackdown were ever even imagined for the mainlanders. Hence depriving

islanders of the rights and liberties is a Communist mechanism to assimilate them with the deprived mainlanders.

Now, it is a forlorn hope that there would be a democratic system in the island. The historic "One Country, Two Systems", as mentioned in the Constitution of Hong Kong, has long disappeared. And clearly, Xi, the forever President of China, has directly contributed towards it. The current National Security Law stifles the vibrant civil society of Hong Kong.

The most visible changes are the disappearance of hundreds of pro-democracy groups, activists, newspapers (like Apple Daily and Stand News), websites, booksellers and finally the legislators from the Legco.

The most interesting part of this unwelcoming atmosphere in the city is that today the annual candlelight vigil commemorating the brutal Tiananmen Square of 1989 has been banned by the administration.

Sadly, Hong Kong was ranked at 148th in the world for press freedom index this year. It must be noted here that once the city was known as the beacon of press freedom in Asia. It's tumbling down about 70 ranks in comparison to last year.

To pro-Beijing lawmakers, stringent laws were required to prevent anti-national activities in this part of China. Indeed, to many of them, the island territory was reaching a critical point and its people demanded a peaceful atmosphere. And for many such legislators, the Hongkongers still enjoy enough rights and freedoms in the city state.

Finally, it is apparent that Beijing has prevailed over Hong Kong. It has truly demolished the democratic epitaph of the city. It is certain that the road ahead is arduous for freedom-loving Hongkongers.

(Dr Makhan Saikia has taught political science and international relations for over a decade in institutions of national and international repute after specialisation in globalisation and governance from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. He is the chief editor of the Journal of Global Studies, an international research journal)

It seems China is scared of the democratic spirit of the Hongkongers. Therefore it has buried the historic 'One Country, Two Systems', as mentioned in the Constitution of Hong Kong. And clearly, Xi, the forever President of China, has directly contributed towards it



MAKHAN SAIKIA

PERSPECTIVE

Collaborations key to eliminate malaria

From the tangible progress India's efforts made towards malaria elimination, it is likely that malaria will be history by 2030. What will be required to carry India's progress to the finish line is sustained political will and action, innovative partnerships, strengthened healthcare systems and empowered workers



KALIKESH SINGH DEO

While Covid-19 continues to dominate headlines and the public health agenda, a crucial health summit was held in Kigali, Rwanda, on June 23, 2022. The landmark Kigali Summit on Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) took a step away from talking about the pandemic itself and focused instead on one of its most alarming by-products — the rise in malaria cases and deaths worldwide. Globally, 85 malaria endemic countries witnessed 241 million cases of malaria in 2020, a significant increase compared with 227 million cases in 2019. Malaria deaths also increased, going from 6.96,000 cases in 2019 to 6.27,000 cases the following year.

Recognising the need for immediate action, the global community came together at the Summit to reinforce their commitment to ending Malaria in time to achieve global Sustainable Development Goals. As one of the highest malaria-burden countries in the world, India must consider key takeaways from this Summit and strengthen its efforts to end malaria once and for all.

So far, our commitment to ending malaria has resulted in a steady decline of the disease in India — we were the only high-endemic nation in the world to achieve a 17 per cent

decrease in reported cases between 2018 and 2019 and an even more staggering 45 per cent decrease between 2019 and 2020. Odisha has played a critical role in India's success against malaria. The State reduced its malaria burden by 94 per cent, between 2016 and 2020.

Still, as of 2020, India contributed to 82 per cent of malaria cases and deaths in the South Asian region. This naturally makes us a key player in any global effort to eliminate malaria successfully. As we begin to bring focus back to priority health programmes in India, there are several steps that may be taken to help us achieve our malaria elimination goal. The need of the hour is integration and cooperation, at the programme level and among nations and states, a point that was underscored over and again at the Kigali Summit.

Regional cooperation in India can address several existing barriers to malaria elimination in the country. Given that States have responsibility for implementing public health programmes, the sharing of best practices would ensure that our successes are replicated across the country.

In Odisha, the pioneering DaMAN programme has contributed to considerable learnings and insights on private

sector collaboration and integrated service delivery.

Odisha mobilised components under other health programmes to afford an inter-sectoral approach to ending malaria that could prove useful to other States as well. By involving, for example, the department of urban development and housing, we could ensure insecticidal spraying to disrupt mosquito breeding cycles. Another example could be the department of Panchayati Raj which ensured village-level community mobilisation by involving elected representatives.

At the national level too, policymakers can play a critical role in supporting elimination efforts by reviewing the implementation of programmes in their constituencies. At the Kigali Summit, the use of digital scorecards by parliamentarians to track core indicators for malaria elimination was highlighted as a measure that allowed countries to tailor services based on district-level needs.

This resulted in concerted action and motivation to accelerate malaria elimination. India already has in place an electronic monitoring database

that organises States in categories based on their levels of malaria. The real-time sharing of this data in the form of scorecards with policymakers, who could review progress against the disease in their constituencies, would provide much-needed impetus to eliminate malaria.

At the same time, while policymakers are key champions for malaria elimination, another key idea that pervaded across the summit in Kigali was the need to inspire every community member to act against malaria. Communities constitute the heart of public

health programming. It is with community engagement, empowerment and ownership that we can succeed against malaria. Thus, continued focus on community-based interventions that educate the community about the importance of using insecticide treated bed-nets, allowing indoor residual spraying and accessing care in a timely manner is crucial.

Odisha has also made innovative use of behaviour change communications to better health responses towards malaria, especially in the Bastar district which has one of the

highest burdens of malaria in the State.

This includes the production and dissemination of creative collaterals like posters, flipbooks, game cards, snake & ladder game, question answer booklets among others.

The State also runs mass awareness campaigns through engagement of district and block level "kalakar sangathans". By empowering community members to comprehend the benefits of anti-malarial interventions and serve as champions who foster greater and greater trust among larger numbers of people, we can soon bring safe and effective measures against malaria to every home in India.

From the tangible progress India's efforts have made toward malaria elimination and from the successes of different countries in successfully ending endemic malaria, it is clear that malaria elimination in India is not only possible but probable by 2030. What will be required to carry India's progress to the finish line is sustained political will and action, innovative partnerships, strengthened healthcare systems and empowered workers working closely with the community to meet humanity's shared goals.

(The writer is a former Member of Parliament)



