

## OPINION 6

OF THE FRACTION  
OR THE FACTION?

## WORLD 9

12 KILLED IN UKRAINE AS RUSSIA  
POUNDS REBEL-CLAIMED PROVINCE

## MONEY 10

RBI LIBERALISES NORMS  
TO BOOST FOREX INFLOWS

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY JULY 7, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

## the pioneer

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DHAWAN TO  
LEAD INDIA IN  
WINDIES ODIs  
12 SPORTUddhav camp MP stirs  
fear of fresh rebellionRahul Shewale  
urges Thackeray  
to back NDA's  
Prez candidate

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a development that has triggered fears in the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena camp about a fresh rebellion within the parent party, party MP Rahul Shewale has written to the Sena chief urging him to support the candidature of BJP-led NDA's Presidential nominee Draupadi Murmu.

Currently, the Shiv Sena has 18 Lok Sabha members. Of them, four MPs have already shifted loyalty from the parent Shiv Sena to the Eknath Shinde camp. They comprise Shrikant Shinde, son of current Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Bhavana Gawali, Rajan Vichare. At least half a dozen MPs have either agreed to shift to the side or are in touch with Eknath Shinde.

As the parent Sena grappled with the recent unprecedented Eknath Shinde-staged rebellion that led to the party losing power in Maharashtra, Shewale posed a fresh headache to party chief Uddhav Thackeray by urging him to



Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and disaster management officials during a meeting to review the preparedness to deal with flood situations due to heavy monsoon rain, at Thane collector's office on Wednesday

PTI

extend support to Draupadi Murmu, a tribal woman member of the BJP and former Governor of Jharkhand.

Murmu is taking on the joint Opposition candidate Yashwant Sinha.

Given that Shewale is a loyal party man, his formal request to the party president — made through a letter submitted on Tuesday — has come as a big shock at a time when the Sena leadership has not taken kindly to the manner in which the BJP helped Sena's rebel leader Eknath Shinde engineer a split in the parent

party and formed an alliance government in the State, dislodging the MVA Government.

Behind Shewale's move there appears to be more than what meets the eye, considering that the Sersa MP's request to his party chief coincided with an appeal by the Eknath Shinde camp spokesman Deepak Kesarkar to all legislators and MPs from across parties in Maharashtra to support Murmu in keeping with Maharashtra's tradition of recognising the women's contribution to the society.

In his letter to the Sena

president, Shewale said that Draupadi Murmu hailed from the tribal community and she had made a huge contribution to public life. Before coming to politics, Murmu was a teacher and later served as an honorary assistant professor in the Shri Aurobindo Integral Education and Research, Rairangpur. Thereafter, she worked as a junior assistant in the irrigation department of the Odisha Government. Draupadi Murmu also served in an important position of the Governor of Jharkhand.

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Record 7.5L apply  
for IAF AgnipathNavy to earmark  
20% posts for  
women AgniveersPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

The IAF has received 7,49,899 applications under the newly launched Agnipath scheme rolled out last month. This number of aspirants is more than the last recruitment numbers which stood at 6,31,528.

Also, more than 10,000 women candidates have so far reportedly applied in the Navy, which plans to earmark 20 per cent posts for the women candidates in various wings of the service.

The candidates, who applied through online registration for the Agnipath scheme for the IAF, will now have to clear a written examination. The successful candidates will then appear for physical fitness and medical tests. The shortlisted aspirants will be inducted into the IAF as Agniveers after a year-long training.

"The online registration process conducted by #IAF towards#AgnipathRecruitment Scheme has been completed. Compared to 6,31,528 applications in the past, which was the highest in any recruitment cycle, this time 7,49,899 applications have been received," the



IAF tweeted on Tuesday.

The IAF started the registration process on June 24 after the Agnipath termed as "transformative" was launched by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in the presence of the three Services chiefs here on June 14. The Army and the Navy registration is now on.

The scheme led to mass protests in many parts of the country with the agitators damaging public property.

Several veterans, political parties and others raised doubts about the new policy as it does not provide pension and other benefits provided to regular soldiers.

However, the Government ruled out rolling back the new policy and said it consulted various stakeholders for more than two years before firming up the Agnipath scheme. It

also said the scheme will not impact the operational preparedness of the armed forces and the regimental ethos.

After a stint of mandatory four years, 25 per cent of the Agniveers will be selected for regular service of 15 years or so with full pension benefits.

The remaining 75 per cent Agniveers will be absorbed into various State and Central Government institutions, including the Defence Ministry, which has reserved ten per cent vacancies in various departments and defence public sector undertakings.

The Home Ministry reserved ten per cent vacancies for the demobilised Agniveers in the Central paramilitary. The Government rolled out various beneficiary schemes for demobilised Agniveers.

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PT Usha, Ilaiyaraaja, Bahubali's  
maker, Heggade nominated to RSPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Legendary athlete PT Usha, film composer Ilaiyaraaja, film maker V Vijayendra Prasad, and philanthropist Veerendra Heggade are four eminent personalities nominated to the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi issued congratulatory messages to all the nominated members calling them an inspiration for every Indian. Twelve members are nominated by the President to the Rajya Sabha for a term of six years. These nominees, selected on the advice of the Prime Minister, are people who have made significant achievements in the fields of arts, literature, science etc.

"The remarkable PT Usha Ji is an inspiration for every Indian. Her accomplishments in sports are widely known, but equally commendable is her work to mentor budding athletes over the last several years.



Congratulations to her on being nominated to the Rajya Sabha," Modi wrote on Twitter.

PT Usha lost a historic bronze medal in 400m hurdles at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. Popularly known as Payoli Express, she established herself as the queen of Asian track and field by winning sex medals — five gold and a bronze — at Jakarta in Indonesia a year later during the 1985 Asian championships. She was also awarded the Padma Shri in the same year she starred at the Asian

Championships.

Following her athletics career, Usha remained away from the public eye running her sports academy, Usha School of Athletics in Balussery, Kerala. She is married to Kabbadi player V Sreenivasan.

For Ilaiyaraaja, who hails from Tamil Nadu, the PM said his creative genius has enthralled people across generations. "His works beautifully reflect many emotions. What is equally inspiring is his life journey: he rose from a humble background and achieved so much. Glad that he has been nominated to the Rajya Sabha," Modi wrote in another tweet.

The PM also shared photos from his archives with the newly nominated members on the microblogging site.

Filmmaker Vijayendra from Andhra Pradesh is credited of having scripted the movie Bahubali and is a household name in southern Indian States.

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Naqvi, RCP quit  
Modi Cabinet as  
RS term ends

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Ministers Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and RCP Singh resigned on Wednesday, a day before the end of their tenure as members of the Rajya Sabha.

One of the main Muslim faces of the BJP, Naqvi looked set for a "new assignment", and an announcement to that effect is awaited, sources said. With Naqvi's exit, there is no Muslim member in the Modi Cabinet.

Singh, a JD(U) leader, was denied a Rajya Sabha renomination by party supremo and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. His resignation is a clear signal that the BJP leadership does not want to upset Nitish Kumar at a time when the relationship between the JD(U) and the BJP is hitting a new low every day in Bihar.

Singh has made no secret of his growing closeness with the BJP and was even warmly received by the BJP workers at Hyderabad where the ruling party held its National Executive meeting.

The JD(U) leadership is keeping a close eye on Singh. The Nitish camp suspects that he could try to do a Maharashtra in Bihar by trying to break the JD(U) or help the RJD in dislodging Nitish-led alliance Government in Bihar.

A section in the BJP feels that it was high time when Nitish was shown the door even at the cost of installing an RJD regime in Bihar. This scenario could end Nitish Kumar's bargaining power and free the BJP from his shackles, BJP leaders feel.

Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is understood to have lauded Naqvi and Singh for their contribution to the country and the people during the Cabinet meeting.

BJP demands Mahua's arrest  
for insult to Goddess KaliSaffron party raps  
Mamata for using  
jehad for vote bank

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Opposition Leader Buvendu Adhikari on Wednesday demanded the arrest of Trinamool Congress MP from Nadia Mahua Moitra saying her remarks on Goddess Kali had hurt religious sentiments of the people and that action should be taken against her.

Moitra had made some derogatory statements while trying to justify the portrayal of the Goddess smoking a cigarette in a film. Attacking the TMC leadership for not taking any action against her, Adhikari said he was giving ten days' time to the Government to act "after which we will act."

Saying that this was the last warning to people like Moitra, he said, "This is the last time we will tolerate people using derogatory terms against



Members of BJP Mahila Morcha stage a protest demonstration in front of Bowbazar Police Station demanding immediate arrest of TMC MP Mahua Moitra for her remarks on Goddess Kali, in Kolkata on Wednesday

PTI

Hindu deities in Bengal. Next time, we will not give anyone a chance to speak against our gods and goddesses. We will not stop protesting until she holds her ears and apologises."

He added, "Already cases have been registered against her in many places, including Bengal... we want the Government to take action against Mahua Moitra ... we

will wait for another 10 days ... if they do not take action then we will move the court against her," Adhikari said.

Accusing the State Government of double standards, he said, "The State police had promptly acted against Nupur Sharma. But they have not taken any action against Mahua Moitra."

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## CAPSULE

LPG PRICE HIKED BY ₹50;  
RATES UP BY ₹244 IN 1 YR

New Delhi: Cooking gas LPG price on Wednesday was hiked by ₹50 per cylinder, the third increase in rates since May on firming international energy prices. Non-subsidised LPG now costs ₹1,053 per 14.2-kg cylinder in the national Capital, up from ₹1,003 previously, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

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6-MONTH GAP BETWEEN  
2ND, PRECAUTION DOSE  
New Delhi: The Union Health Ministry has reduced the gap between the second and precaution dose of Covid-19 vaccine for all beneficiaries from nine to six months following a recommendation by NTAGI.

CBI raids 16 spots in  
graft case flagged by  
J&K ex-Guv Malik

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Wednesday conducted a fresh round of searches at 16 locations across India over the alleged graft charges flagged by former Jammu & Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik in the award of ₹2,200 crore civil works contract for the Kiru hydroelectric power project in Kishtwar, Jammu & Kashmir, in 2019.

Malik, who was the J&K Governor between August 23, 2018 and October 30, 2019, had claimed he was offered ₹300 crore bribe for clearing two files.

The search operations were spread across two places in Srinagar, five each in Jammu and Delhi, three in Mumbai and one in Patna on the

premises of middlemen and associates involved in the project, officials said.

The CBI probe so far in the matter has revealed some financial transactions between the accused public servants, including then Chairman of the Chenab valley power projects (P) Ltd Navin Kumar Chaudhary and the middlemen, leading to a fresh round of searches, they said.

"During investigation, evidence was found revealing the alleged role of the middlemen, including the then chairman, and financial transactions between these middlemen and public servants, and accordingly, searches are being conducted at 16 locations," the CBI said in a statement.

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DGCA notice to SpiceJet for  
failure to offer 'safe' flightsPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued a show cause notice to SpiceJet for its failure to offer "safe, efficient and reliable" air services following eight technical malfunction incidents involving the airline's planes in the last 18 days.

The DGCA also reminded the airline that its permit to operate commercial flights in the country is valid only for one more year. In its show cause notice, the DGCA said the various incidents from April 1 this year till date have been reviewed, and it was found that "poor internal safety oversight" and "inadequate maintenance actions" have resulted in degradation of safety margins.

Taking note of the show cause notice, SpiceJet CMD Ajay Singh said the airline



would be "doubly careful" and strengthen inspection of aircraft before they leave for flights. In a press statement, Singh said, "Lot of these incidents being reported are relatively minor in nature and happen to every airline. If the aviation regulator feels that there are any gaps in SpiceJet's system, we will address them."

Reacting to the DGCA notice, Civil Aviation Minister

Jyotiraditya Scindia asserted that passenger safety is paramount. "Even the smallest error hindering safety will be thoroughly investigated and course-corrected," the Minister said in a tweet.

Meanwhile, three more incidents of technical malfunction were reported on Wednesday involving SpiceJet, Vistara and IndiGo.

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Boris Johnson vows  
to 'keep going' amid  
flurry of resignations

PTI ■ LONDON

A defiant Boris Johnson vowed to "keep going" as he cited his "colossal mandate" from voters to carry on as British Prime Minister when he faced off with angry lawmakers in Parliament on Wednesday in the wake of the dramatic resignation of ally Rishi Sunak as Chancellor, followed by a string of resignations by junior ministerial and government aides.

Johnson, 58, appeared at the weekly Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) in the House of Commons just hours after the big blow of losing Sunak, and Health Secretary Sajid Javid in quick succession.

A flurry of junior ministerial and government aide res-



British Prime Minister Boris Johnson leaves 10 Downing Street in London, on Wednesday

PTI

ignations, totalling around 30 and rising, continues to hit the embattled leader even as Javid made a speech in the Commons calling upon his former Cabinet colleagues to reconsider their decision to continue to back Johnson because "enough is enough."

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NCR PULSE

**JMI TO RESUME OFFLINE CLASSES FROM JULY 16**  
New Delhi: Jamia Millia Islamia on Wednesday announced it will resume offline classes for all except for first-year students from July 16. The university has advised all deans of faculties to complete renovation, maintenance, and repair works of classrooms and laboratories before the classes commence. "The Vice-Chancellor, JMI (Najma Akhtar), on the recommendation of the Dean of Faculties has approved to reopen the university in offline mode from July 16, 2022, for all classes except 1st semester/Year, the notification read.

**GOVT INTENSIFIES CAMPAIGN AGAINST SUPS**  
New Delhi: The Delhi Government has on Wednesday intensified its campaign against single use plastic by deploying 48 enforcement teams with special training to deal with single-use plastic to accelerate the imposition of the protocols. However, a helpline number 011-23815435 regarding single-use plastics was issued, enabling the general public to contact the department with any questions they may have about this topic.

**25-YR-OLD WRESTLER COMMITS SUICIDE**  
New Delhi: A 25-year-old wrestler allegedly died by suicide after consuming poison in Delhi's Bindaapur area and uploaded a video on social media citing family issues as the reason. According to M Harsha Vardhan, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Dwarka district, police received information regarding the incident around 1 am on Tuesday stating that a person has consumed poison. "The victim was at his in-laws' house. He was taken to a hospital where he subsequently died. Inquest proceedings under section 174 CrPc are under process and the purported video uploaded by him on Facebook is also being examined. Circumstances around the incident are being looked into," said the DCP.

**SISODIA LAUNCHES MISSION KUSHAL KARMI**  
New Delhi: Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister, Manish Sisodia on Wednesday launched "Mission Kushal Karmi" in the national Capital with the aim to provide construction workers a better and dignified life. A 15 days skill development training will be given to the construction workers under this scheme, said officials. "This skill development program by Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University (DSEU) along with Simplex, NAREDCO and India Vision Foundation to make construction workers skilled is very special. Under this 15 days special training program, workers will undergo up-skilling which will boost their incomes in future," said Sisodia.

**DU TEACHERS STAGE PROTEST OUTSIDE UGC OFFICE**  
New Delhi: Several teachers of Delhi University staged a demonstration outside the UGC office on Wednesday demanding a one-time regulation for absorption of ad-hoc and temporary teachers in the university's departments and colleges. The protest was organised by the Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA).

**NEPALI NATIONAL ARRESTED FOR KILLING MAN**  
New Delhi: A Nepali national was arrested for allegedly killing a person following a scuffle over mobile phone in central Delhi's West Patel Nagar area, police said on Wednesday. The accused has been identified as Surendra Chand, a resident of Nepal, they said.

PT Usha, Ilaiyaraaja...

**From Page 1**  
Heggade is a spiritual activist from Karnataka and the PM shared a photo with him during his visit at Dharmashta Temple. While congratulating him, Modi recalled Heggade's "good work in health, education and culture. "He will certainly enrich Parliamentary proceedings," Modi said in his tweet.

Record 7.5L apply for...

**From Page 1**  
In the first four years, 46,000 Agniveers will be inducted into the armed forces with the Army intake standing at 40,000 and the IAF and the Navy 3,000 each. Officials also explained that the intake of the Agniveers would be progressively increased in the next few years. Intake of recruits under the Agnipath will increase from 46,000 annually in the first 4 years, to 90,000 in the fifth year to 1,25,000 from the sixth year. The main focus of the Agnipath policy is to have a youthful profile and soldiers who are technology savvy to fight modern day warfare.

IT Dept conducts searches at Micro Labs

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
The Income Tax Department on Wednesday conducted searches at the premises of Bengaluru-based pharmaceutical company Micro Labs Ltd, the manufacturers of popular paracetamol Dolo-650 tablet that was widely used by Covid-19 patients during the last over two years, on charges of alleged tax evasion. The department is looking at financial documents, balance sheets and business distributor networks of the company as part of the searches, officials said. Some other locations of the company in other cities and those of its promoters and distributors are also being covered in the search operations, they said. According to the company website, the pharma firm was engaged in the making and marketing pharmaceutical products and APIs (Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients) and has 17 manufacturing units across the country apart from conducting business overseas.

Uddhav camp...

**From Page 1**  
Shewale reminded Uddhav that late Sena chief Balasaheb Thackeray had not backed the NDA candidate when there was a Shiv Sena-BJP alliance. "Balasaheb had supported Pratibha Patil as he hails from Maharashtra. Similarly, the Shiv Sena chief had also backed Pranab Mukherjee. I humbly request that you support Murmu and direct all Shiv Sena MPs to do so, keeping in mind her background and contribution to public life," Shewale wrote in his letter. Currently, the Shiv Sena has 18 Lok Sabha members. Of them, four MPs have already shifted loyalty from the parent Shiv Sena to the Eknath Shinde camp. They comprise: Shrinikat Shinde, son of current Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Bhavana Gawali, Rajan Vichare. At least half a dozen MPs have either agreed to shift to sides or are in touch with

Eknath Shinde. Notwithstanding fears of a possibility of a fresh rebellion within the party, the Shiv Sena will in all likelihood support Yeshwant Sinha's candidature in the polls — especially in the light of the fact that both the NCP and Congress have stood solidly by the Shiv Sena during the recent developments that saw rebel part leader Eknath Shinde walk away with the party's 40 out of the 55 MLAs reducing the Sena to a party with just 15 MLAs. Informed Sena sources said that the party leadership had reached out to Shewale and other party MPs in the state in its bid to ensure against a possible fresh rebellion - this time among the party MPs. It remains to be seen if the Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena is able to hold its flock of MPs together in the face of poaching efforts by the Eknath Shinde camp.

Jor Bagh Metro station flasher arrested

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

The Delhi Police has arrested a 40-year-old man in connection with the alleged sexual harassment of a woman at a Delhi Metro station. Police said that he had fled to Nepal after the incident and also had recently applied for an anticipatory bail. The accused has been identified as Manav Aggarwal and he is currently unemployed. Police said that presently the accused was residing in Gurugram, Haryana. The incident took place on June 2 at Delhi Metro's Jor Bagh station. The woman had taken to Twitter to narrate her ordeal. Addressing a press conference, Jitendra Mani, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Metro unit said that considering the gravity of the incident number of police

teams were constituted and these teams scanned the electronic surveillance system in trains and metro stations and trace the movement of accused in order to identify, trace and nab him. "Further the Special Police Unit for Women and Children (SPUWAC) had been in regular touch with her to counsel her and extend all necessary help. The police teams succeeded in locating the perpetrator while he entered Sikanderpur through an escalator at gate number-1," said the DCP. The CAF, CDR details of the accused and location were taken and the photo affix on the CAF of Manav was found matching with the accused. The house of Manav was raided and the same was found locked. The nearby residents said that he was not seen after June 4," said the DCP. "Thereafter further efforts have been made and it has fur-

ther been found that the accused had left the country on June 4 by Flight to Kathmandu, Nepal. Due to continuous efforts of the police teams, finally, the accused was apprehended near of the Saket Court," said the DCP adding that the investigation of the case is on progressive way. In a series of tweets, the woman had claimed that on June 2, she was travelling in a Delhi Metro train on the Yellow Line when a stranger approached her and sought her help for locating an address. After helping him, she got off the train and sat on a platform to book a cab. Again, the accused approached her and asked about the address further, she had claimed. This time when she tried to help him, the accused flashed his private part, she had alleged. The woman had also alleged that the 'policeman' standing on the platform did not help.

ASI to repair crack in Badrinath temple

**PNS ■ DEHRADUN**

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) will undertake the repairing of the minor crack which has appeared on a wall of the Badrinath temple in Chamoli district. The ASI has prepared an estimate of Rs five crore for this purpose. Earlier, on learning about the crack in the ancient temple, the State's Tourism secretary Dilip Jawalkar had requested the Union Culture secretary to facilitate necessary steps for preservation of the Badrinath temple. The Union secretary has issued necessary instructions to the officials concerned regarding this. Jawalkar informed that Badrinath temple is part of the nation's ancient heritage and that the government is committed to ensuring its preservation. He said that special focus has been laid on protecting the preserving the temple in the Badrinath master plan. After information about the crack was received, the ASI was requested



to repair the same. The repair work is estimated to cost about Rs five crore. The work of repairing the wall will begin after the monsoon season. Jawalkar further said that there is a glacier behind the temple. Considering this, central government organisation DGI has been appointed consultant regarding safety of the temple. To ensure that there is no damage to the temple from the glacier, it is essential to build a protective wall. A plan is being prepared for this purpose.

International Police Expo 2022 starts in national Capital

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

With an aim to strengthen the internal security infrastructure, the International Police Expo 2022 started on Wednesday in the national capital, during which the latest technology in security has been displayed from over 18 countries. In the expo 2022, Mob Controlling equipments and technologies, Anti-Drone Guns, Narco Drug Test, Mobile Forensic Technology, Cyber Security, Armoured Vehicles and a plethora of disruptive technologies in cybersecurity, homeland security, safety and rescue space from over 18 countries have become the key attraction of disaster rescue authorities, law enforcement agencies and central armed forces at the two-day event in New Delhi. The event was organised by Nexgen Exhibitions, the International Police Expo 2022 is scheduled from 6th-7th July 2022 at Pragati Maidan hosting over 350 world-class companies from various countries such as UK, US, Israel, Germany, France, Dubai, UAE, Singapore, Australia, Russia, Spain, Italy, Denmark and Sweden. One of the key attraction. Highlighting the key attractions, the organizer of the event Mukesh Kharia said that with this gala inaugural of our two-day International police expo, we are confident that senior police and law enforcement officials, security agencies, government representatives and professionals will successfully connect and interact with global and domestic manufacturers, suppliers and innovators so as to shape up a bright future for policing and homeland security in India. "With mob violence and riots emerging as a serious challenge for policing in India, companies from various countries are displaying their latest innovations and technologies for face recognition, mob and riot controlling etc," he said. "With significant advances in technology and AI, Facial Recognition today has become increasingly valuable for authorities and agencies to rapidly extract biometric imprints of perpetrators in mob or riot situations. Corsight's technology enables authorities/agencies to quickly run investigations in order to resolve dangerous situations and identify those involved. This can be done in large crowds, poor lighting, obscure camera angles and even with individuals wearing sunglasses or masks," says Prashant Kaul, Regional Sales Director, Corsight.ai.

"The notice said SpiceJet has failed to "establish safe, efficient and reliable air services" under the terms of Rule 134 and Schedule XI of the Aircraft Rules, 1937. "Whereas the reported incidents on aircraft operated by M/s SpiceJet Ltd from 1st April 2022 till date have been renewed and it has been observed that at a number of occasions the aircraft either turned back to its originating station or continued landing to the destination with degraded safety margins," the notice said. The DGCA has also flagged the airline's financial condition that has led to shortage of spare parts. "...financial assessment carried out by DGCA in September 2021 has also revealed that the airline is operating on Cash & Carry and Suppliers/Approved Vendors are not being paid on a regular basis leading to shortage of spares..." the regulator wrote in its notice. The notice comes a day after the airline faced at least three incidents, which included a diversion of a Delhi-

Aghani Sufi cleric shot dead in Nashik

**TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI**

In a ghastly murder, a refugee Sufi cleric from Afghanistan was shot dead by four unidentified persons at Yeola town in Nashik district of north Maharashtra. In a development that caught the local police napping, four armed assailants cornered Khwaja Sayyed Chishti (35), a refugee cleric who had moved to India from Afghanistan four years ago and was living legally, at in an open MIDC industrial plot at Yeola and pumped bullets into him. Chisti, who sustained severe bullet wounds in the head and neck, died instantly. Known locally as 'Sufibaba', Chisti used to preach in several religious gatherings or mausoleums. After gunning down Chisti, the four assailants fled in a SUV parked nearby. The SUV

Chisti, who sustained severe bullet wounds in the head and neck, died instantly

was reportedly owned by the Chishti. Talking to media persons, Nashik Superintendent of Police (Rural) Sachin Patil said: "We have set up a special team to investigate the murder of Chisti. We are on the lookout for the four assailants". An Afghani national, Chishtihad arrived in India from Pakistan four years ago. He had obtained refugee status and lived with a woman, who is believed to be an Afghan national, at Vavi in Sinnar taluka of Nashik district. "Chisti was an Afghanistan passport holder," Patil said.

"After moving to India, Chisti lived in Delhi for a while. Later he moved to Karnataka. He had moved to Nashik some time back. He is a bona fide person. He had taken necessary permission from the Centre to stay in the country," Patil said. The preliminary investigations have revealed that Chisti had - along with four of his aides -- come to Yeola from Yavi for a 'Bhoomipujan' along with three of his followers on Tuesday afternoon. He presided over some religious rituals there. He was shot dead from point blank range late on Tuesday evening, when he was about to leave Chincholi MIDC area in his SUV for Vavi. Though the motive behind the murder has not been established yet, the police suspect that Chisti might have been eliminated over a property-related dispute.

CBI raids 16 spots in graft...

**From Page 1**  
The agency is also conducting searches at the premises of Rupen Patel, chairman and managing director of Patel Engineering Ltd in Mumbai besides those of other accused Vijay Gupta and Amrendra Kumar Singh among others, they further said. Malik had said when he was the Governor two files came to him for clearance, one belonging to Ambani and another to an RSS-affiliated man who was a Minister in the previous Mehbooba Mufti-led PDP-BJP coalition Government and claimed to be very close to the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi). "I was informed by the secretaries in both the departments that there is a scandal and I accordingly cancelled both the deals. The secretaries told me that 'you will get Rs 150 crore each for clearing the files' but I told them that I have come with five kurta-pyjamas and will leave with that only," Malik had told a gathering at an event at Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan in October last year. In its FIR relating to the alleged malprac-

tices in awarding contract for the civil works package of Kiru hydroelectric power project registered in April this year, the CBI had said guidelines related to e-tendering were violated. The CBI had also conducted a round of searches on April 21, a day after the registration of the FIR on April 20 this year. "The case was registered on allegations of malpractices in award of the contract worth Rs 2,200 crore (approximately) of civil works of Kiru hydroelectric power project (HEP) to a private company in the year 2019," the CBI had earlier said. The agency has booked Navin Kumar Chaudhary, M S Babu, former MD, M K Mittal and Arun Kumar Mishra, former directors and the private contractor Patel Engineering Ltd. "Though a decision was taken in 47th Board meeting of CVPPPL (Chenab Valley Power Projects (P) Ltd) for re-tender through e-tendering with reverse auction after cancellation of ongoing tendering process, same was not implemented (as per decision taken in 48th board meeting) and tender was finally awarded to Patel Engineering Ltd," the FIR has alleged.

DGCA notice to SpiceJet...

**From Page 1**  
In the first such incident, a China-bound SpiceJet cargo plane returned to Kolkata on Tuesday morning due to faulty weather radar. The SpiceJet cargo plane of Boeing 737 was scheduled to operate from Kolkata to Chongqing, but after the takeoff it was found that weather radar was unserviceable. The pilot-in-command decided to return to Kolkata and landed the plane safely there. In the second incident, smoke was detected in IndiGo's Raipur-Indore flight after it landed at its destination. All the passengers were able to disembark from the aircraft safely. In the third incident, an engine of a Vistara aircraft on the way from Bangkok failed after it landed at the Delhi IGI airport but all passengers disembarked safely. The DGCA has given the accountable manager of Spicejet, its chairman and managing director Ajay Singh, three weeks to respond to why action should not be taken against the airline.

The notice said SpiceJet has failed to "establish safe, efficient and reliable air services" under the terms of Rule 134 and Schedule XI of the Aircraft Rules, 1937. "Whereas the reported incidents on aircraft operated by M/s SpiceJet Ltd from 1st April 2022 till date have been renewed and it has been observed that at a number of occasions the aircraft either turned back to its originating station or continued landing to the destination with degraded safety margins," the notice said. The DGCA has also flagged the airline's financial condition that has led to shortage of spare parts. "...financial assessment carried out by DGCA in September 2021 has also revealed that the airline is operating on Cash & Carry and Suppliers/Approved Vendors are not being paid on a regular basis leading to shortage of spares..." the regulator wrote in its notice. The notice comes a day after the airline faced at least three incidents, which included a diversion of a Delhi-

Dubai flight to Karachi due to a fuel indicator malfunction, a cracked windshield on a Kandla-Mumbai flight, and a snag in the weather radar on its cargo aircraft flying from Kolkata to Chongqing forcing a turnback. The snags on Tuesday take the total incidents involving SpiceJet to 8 since May 1. "The review (of the incidents) transpires that poor internal safety oversight and inadequate maintenance actions (as most of the incidents were related to either component failure or system-related failure) have resulted in degradation of the safety margins," it added. According to Singh, when you have thousands of flights, sometimes the air conditioning will fail, sometimes a bird will hit the plane, and sometimes a fuel indicator will light up. "These things are going to happen and, of course, we have to minimise that to the greatest extent possible. That is our job and it is the regulator's job to push us to make things better, which we will do," he said.

Johnson vows to 'keep going' amid flurry of...

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That flurry intensified while Johnson appeared for a grilling from the Parliament's Liaison Committee, with five junior ministers resigning collectively through one letter. This was followed up by the BBC confirming that another Cabinet minister, Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove, has asked Johnson to step down as leader. "The job of a Prime Minister in difficult circumstances, when you've been handed a colossal mandate, is to keep going, and that's what I am going to do," said Johnson, in response to repeated demands for him to resign. "It's exactly when times are tough, that when the country faces pressures on the economy and pressures on their budgets and when we have the biggest war in Europe for 80 years, that is exactly the moment that you'd expect a

government to continue with its work, not to walk away, and to get on with the job," he said. Opposition Leader Sir Keir Starmer attacked Johnson over his handling of the latest scandal to hit Downing Street, reading out the accusations levelled at his disgraced former Deputy Chief Whip as a "reminder to all those propping up this Prime Minister just how serious the situation is". In fiery exchanges at PMQs, the Labour leader said the list of resignations had left him with a "Z list cast of nodding dogs" on his frontbench, adding the "sinking ships are fleeing the rat". Several on the Conservative benches also piled the pressure, with former Brexit minister David Davis, who had told Johnson "in the name of God, go" just six months ago, reiterated his demand: "Do the honourable thing [and] put the interests of

the nation before his own interests and before, in his own words, it does become impossible for government to do its job." The exit of Sunak and Javid has left the Conservative Party leader in a precarious position as further resignations are expected. Earlier on Wednesday, Will Quince, who was sent out to defend No. 10 Downing Street's appointment of Chris Pincher as Deputy Chief Whip just hours before Johnson admitted his mistake in appointing him to a government job, resigned as an education minister. Soon after, Robin Walker resigned as the schools minister, warning against a "worrying narrowing of the broad church that I believe any Conservative government should seek to achieve". It came as Tory MP Laura Trott quit as a ministerial aide at the transport department saying the

government has lost trust, adding to a growing number of aides who have similarly stepped down. However, Johnson has moved swiftly to fill the top jobs with Iraqi immigrant minister Nadhim Zahawi stepping in as UK Chancellor of the Exchequer and Steve Barclay as Health Secretary. "The team in government today is the team that will deliver," said Zahawi, in his first set of interviews in the new post. He urged his Cabinet colleagues to unite behind Johnson, saying: "This is a team game, and you play for the team, and you deliver for the team." It follows Johnson's apology on Tuesday, after days of changing messages from Downing Street over the hiring and handling of the now-suspended Chris Pincher, who quit as Deputy Chief Whip in charge of Tory party discipline

last week after being accused of groping two men in a private member's club in London. First to announce his departure was Javid, who in his damning resignation letter said he could "no longer, in good conscience, continue serving in this government". Sunak followed minutes later, saying the public rightly expected the government to be "conducted properly, competently and seriously". More junior ministers and ministerial aides followed, with more exits expected. But Johnson's allies have spoken out in his favour, with Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries saying the Prime Minister "consistently gets all the big decisions right", while Brexit Opportunities Minister Jacob Rees-Mogg said his victory at the 2019 general election "should not be taken away from him because a number of people resign".

BJP demands Mahua's...

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Though the TMC distanced itself from Moitra's statement, the Nadia MP remained defiant saying she was herself a worshipper of Kali and knew what was right and what was wrong. A defiant Moitra, who had earlier stirred a hornets' nest saying that Kali was worshiped with alcohol and subsequently tweeted, "To all you sanghis - lying will NOT make you better Hindus. I NEVER backed any film or poster or mentioned the word smoking. Suggest you visit my Maa Kali in Tarapith to see what food & drink is offered as bhog. Joy Ma Tara (another name and form of Kali)." The BJP's anti-Moitra tirade is seen as a measure to counter the police actions initiated by the Trinamool Congress Government against saffron leader Nupur Sharma who had reportedly made some derogatory remarks against Prophet Muhammad.



# Delhi to host 30-day Shopping Festival from January 28

This will be the biggest shopping festival in India, says Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday announced a 30-day Delhi Shopping Festival which will be organised from January 28 to February 26 next year. “This will be the biggest shopping festival in India. We are starting it now. I expect that in a few years, we will make it the biggest shopping festival in the world,” Kejriwal said.

Addressing a digital presser, Kejriwal said he is in talks with airlines for special packages for passengers who would like to visit Delhi Shopping Festival.

Giving out the details about the mega event Kejriwal highlighted that there would be heavy discounts on all items, 200 concerts in 30 days will be organised along with special food walks. “For the festival, the city will be divided into North, South, East, West and Central

Zone to host different components of the shopping festival. On the basis of the USP, brand awareness, genres of shopping, no of shops, GST collection, space, footfall, connectivity and cleanliness, the Government will further narrow down upon 15 iconic markets and 10 malls across all zones to take this festival to the ground,” said Kejriwal.

“This is great news for employment, business and economy in Delhi. In the beginning of the year 2023, Delhi will host a world-class ‘Delhi Shopping Festival,’” Kejriwal added. “This will create 1,000s of jobs and would give a huge boost to the economy,” Kejriwal claimed. The Delhi Chief Minister said the shopping festival will boost the city’s economy and help the local businessmen, traders and

vendors.

“People will be invited from across the country as well as the world to experience Delhi and its culture. This will be an unparalleled shopping experience. Heavy discounts will be offered. Entire Delhi will be decorated. Exhibitions will also be organised,” Kejriwal said. “The Delhi Government will make it the biggest shopping festival in the world in the coming few years. Exhibitions on spirituality, gaming, technology and health will be organised in Delhi Shopping Festival. All markets, shops and malls of Delhi will be decorated,” said Kejriwal.

“The festival is set to see a world-class extravaganza hosting 20,000 people on ground and millions online. Festival will be a special food walk consisting of cuisines from all parts of the country including Marathi, South Indian, Gujarati, Bengali dishes. Every famous restaurant and hotel industry of Delhi and the entire county will participate,” he said. After the Delhi Chief Minister’s announcement, several traders and restaurant owners in the national Capital on Wednesday welcomed Kejriwal’s announcement of

hosting the ‘Delhi Shopping Festival’, saying it will make markets in the city famous and lead to an increase in business.

However, they expressed concern over the lack of clarity on the festival and urged the Government to hold dialogues with stakeholders to make it successful. Small eateries and big restaurant owners here are also hopeful that the event will lead to a surge in business. “People will come and it will lead to a surge in sales. We are thankful for the Government for thinking in this direction,” Rohit, owner of a food joint in RK Puram, said.

Restaurant owners have also urged the Government to discuss about the festival with them and take their inputs. “Definitely this will help in increasing the footfall. But the major factor is what kind of crowd they can attract.

The business will increase in the small eateries if people from the lower-income group come. If the people from the upper-income group come, there will be good business in high-end restaurants,” said Manpreet Singh, treasurer of the National Restaurants Association of India.

# Pay property tax, dues honestly: LG to Delhiites

Saxena invites suggestions from public to improve MCD’s poor financial health

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Wednesday invited suggestions from the public to improve the Municipal Corporation of Delhi’s (MCDs) poor financial health and also urged people to “honestly pay” their property taxes and dues to make the civic body financially stable.

The L-G said, between financial 2019-2020 and 2021-22, the MCD’s total income was ₹31,861.81 crore, while the expenditure was ₹34,618.17 crore. Hence, the civic body’s cash deficit stood at ₹2,756.32 crore.

The past financial mismanagement and non-payment of property taxes by most residents have led to the current financial crisis, Saxena said on Twitter. “MCD services 94 per cent of Delhi. Past financial mismanagement & non payment of any property tax by 75 per cent residents has made it go in the RED. It’s time

we, one of richest cities in India, pay our dues to the MCD honestly. Your suggestions & participation will help achieve this,” he tweeted. The L-G also urged the public to give suggestions at “mailto:writetol-gdelhi@gmail.Com” \nwrite-tolgdelhi@gmail.Com to improve the civic body’s financial health.

According to data shared by the LG, Delhi has 1,483 sq km area and MCD’s jurisdiction extends to 94.2 per cent of its total area. Around 98 per cent of Delhi’s total population resides in MCD areas.

The civic body’s salaries, pension dues and other financial liabilities amount to ₹ 9,261.95 crore, the L-G said. This is the fifth time Saxena has invited suggestions from the people and sought public participation in solving people-centric issues.

Saxena has also launched the pilot project ‘Smart Model’ schools run by MCD with repair and painting works getting started, aimed at upgrading the corporation schools to highest standards.

According to the statement released by the L-G’s office, the work of upgradation in 25 such schools will be completed for the children of the Capital on August 15 in tandem with the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

“Saxena also announced

that another 400 schools will be fully refurbished and loaded with smart technologies till Republic Day 26th January, 2023,” it said.

“The LG on his first visit to civic body school in H-Block, Ashok Vihar on June 18, announced that 25 MCD schools will be identified at the earliest for re-hauling on a pilot basis.

The school in CP Block, Pitampura where the works of repair, painting and cleanliness were launched on Tuesday is spread over 7,000 Sqm,” it said. “Upon L-G’s direction, MCD schools have been allocated

₹14.85 crore for minor repair, painting, white-wash and Rs. 4.41 crore has been allocated to the Engineering Department to repair 29 worst affected buildings. The schools being overhauled and developed will also include efforts to involve NGOs and Corporate Houses under their CSR funds in a participatory manner,” it read.

“Provided with all modern infrastructure these schools will have uniform colour and design pattern and would make learning more interesting through smart teaching methodologies and pedagogy,” the statement further read.



# DDA holds public meetings on land-pooling policy

Talks to Tigipur, Mohammadpur, Ramzanpur villagers to clear their doubts

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has conducted public meetings in Tigipur and Mohammadpur, Ramzanpur villages to answer public queries and clear doubts pertaining to the land-pooling policy.

In a statement, the authority said, issues pertaining to the land-pooling policy, the proposed amendments, the consortium formation modalities, the External Development Charge (EDC) issue, the 60:40 division of land and the ground-level implementation of the policy were discussed at the public meetings held on

Saturday. DDA Commissioner (Land Pooling) Tariq Thomas and Director (Land Pooling) Amrish Kumar were present at the public meetings, along with other officials and staff of the department and social organisations of Delhi Dehat.

Traders and builders also participated in the meetings and discussed key points regarding the implementation of the policy.

“The commissioner and the director of land pooling listened to the issues and problems of landowners, developers and stakeholders and clarified all the points, including the process for consortium formation and the expected time-

lines, the construction of UER-II section falling in the P-II zone connecting NH-1 to Bandh Road.

“Issues such as levy of stamp duty only on actual sale of land/built-up and not at the time of pooling/redistribution of plot, approval of additional development control norms for land pooling, formulation and notification of SOPs for resumption of mutation, EDC amount issues among others were also clarified,” the statement said. It further said the Delhi Dehat Vikas Manch and the other participating organisations, developers and stakeholders welcomed the public notice for consortium forma-

tion issued by the DDA in sectors 2 and 3 in Zone P-II and sector 10A in Zone-N.

After the meeting, DDA officials were hopeful that the land-pooling policy will kick off soon on the ground and show good progress with positive cooperation from the landowners, developers, investors and stakeholders, the statement said.

The DDA also said five other sectors in three zones -- P-II, N and L -- are under consideration or going through a reconciliation process for the issuance of a provisional notice for the formation of a consortium. “These sectors are sector 1, 7 and 8 in P-II zone, sector

11 in N zone and sector 3 in L zone,” the statement said. The Delhi Land Policy was notified in 2018 with an aim to foster land development in a partnership with the land owners to make them equal partners in the development process. The policy is presently applicable to the urban extension areas of Delhi, comprising 104 villages falling in the J, K-I, L, N, P-I and P-II zones.

The entire area is divided into 129 sectors and, on an average, each sector is anticipated to accommodate a population of 80,000 to one lakh. The total pooled land under the policy is 7,298 hectares, the statement said.

## 44K challans issued under bus lane enforcement drive

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi Government’s Transport department has issued over 44,000 challans under its bus lane enforcement drive that kicked off on April 1. In a statement, the transport department said that as on July 4, a total of 44,594 challans had been issued under the bus lane enforcement drive. These include 1,591 challans issued to bus drivers for lane violations and 43,003 challans issued to private vehicle owners for parking in bus lanes. A total of 526 vehicles have also been towed away for improper parking in bus lanes, it added. Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot inspected bus lanes and Bus Queue Shelters (BQS) on the ITO-Kashmere Gate stretch covering Delhi Gate, Lal Qila

and Daryaganj road, it said. The minister directed Delhi Transport Infrastructure Development Corporation (DTIDC) officials to ensure regular maintenance and repair of all such shelters across Delhi for maximum passenger convenience and also asked them to ensure adequate space for bus passage near the bus stop, the statement said.

The Delhi Transport department started the lane enforcement drive on April 1 this year to ensure bus lane enforcement across the capital. During the inspection, Gahlot directed officials to clear bus lanes of illegally parked private vehicles to ensure seamless traffic movement. He directed DTIDC officials to ensure regular maintenance and repair of

all bus queue shelters across Delhi for maximum passenger convenience and asked them to ensure adequate space for bus passage near the bus stop. This may require that the bus stop be located close to the road.

DTIDC builds, manages and maintains all major BQS in Delhi except those under the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) areas.

“Thirty-five lakh people in Delhi use buses daily to travel and with our dedicated bus lanes in the city, we are ensuring they have safe travel.

“We are also focusing on making our bus stops convenient with bus queue shelters ensuring easy movement of buses and safe pick up and drop of passengers,” the statement quoting Gahlot said. **SR**

# DCW seeks data on HIV testing of rape survivors



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) Chairperson Swati Maliwal on Wednesday issued notices to the Delhi Government’s Health Department and the police, seeking data on HIV testing of rape survivors and accused. It also sought to know the protocols being followed to prevent the spread of HIV among rape survivors.

Observing that several cases of sexual assault are reported in Delhi, Maliwal said that apart from the extreme trauma and injuries sustained by the survivors, they are exposed to an increased risk of

contracting Sexually Transmitted Diseases, including HIV. “If the rape accused is HIV positive, the chances of the survivor contracting the virus increase.

The short and long-term effects of sexual violence and HIV can be both physically and psychologically debilitating for the survivors and steps should be taken by the Government to mitigate the same.

“The commission is of the view that there should be a proper system to ensure timely intervention to prevent the spread of HIV among survivors of sexual assault,” the DCW chief said. In its notice to the Health Department, the

DCW has sought the number of rape cases brought to hospitals for medical examination and the number of cases in which HIV tests were done in the past three years.

According to NACO guidelines, even if the survivor of sexual assault tests negative for HIV initially, they still require follow-up counselling and testing after three months and six months.

The DCW has sought to know the number of cases in which follow-up counselling and tests were done for survivors and details of steps taken by hospitals in this matter.

It has also sought the status of implementation of NACO and WHO guidelines on pre and post-HIV test counselling and detailed protocols followed by the hospitals if the survivor is found to be HIV positive. The panel has sought details of medical officers who have been designated by hospitals to ascertain on a case-to-case basis whether rape survivors need to be given post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) — a 28-day preventive treatment to minimize the risk of HIV in survivors who are not already infected with the dis-

ease. Protocols related to PEP treatment have also been sought. In its notice to the police, the panel has sought the number of rape cases registered since January 2019 along with the number of cases in which HIV tests of the accused have been conducted.

The commission has also sought details of the procedure followed by the Delhi Police in informing hospitals if a rape accused is found HIV positive. This shall further help the hospitals to ascertain the rape survivors who are at higher risk of contracting HIV and to take necessary steps.

“The commission has issued notices on this sensitive issue and shall collate data and give necessary recommendations to the government to help mitigate the spread of HIV amongst rape survivors,” Maliwal said.

A police officer said that conducting an HIV test is not a regular procedure. “The test is carried out in case it is suspected that the accused is HIV positive. During medical examination of accused, if it emerges that he is suffering from an STD, the victim is then tested,” he added.

# ‘46 Govt schools to be set up as hobby hubs’

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 46 Delhi Government schools will set up ‘hobby hubs’ and have been allotted individual academies or NGOs to impart training to students in various activities such as classical music, musical instruments and photography. Besides, indoor classroom games are set to be introduced in primary sections of government schools in Delhi, according to officials.

Chess, carrom, puzzles, scrabble and monopoly will soon be introduced as classroom games for students in classes III to V, while children in younger grades will have soft toys and balls introduced as part of classroom games.

The hobby hubs are being set up under a scheme called “involving private academies and individual NGOs in development of music, theatre, fine arts and crafts in schools of Directorate of Education”. “Forty-six schools will be developed into hobby hubs and have been allotted the individ-

ual academy or NGO to impart training to the students in various categories. The permission has been granted on certain terms and conditions,” a senior official of the Directorate of Education (DoE) said. Under the scheme, each individual academy and NGO will have to obtain a Police Clearance Certificate (PCC) for their trainers before the commencement of imparting training to students in the school.

“The number of days of training as well as time duration will be agreed upon mutually by the academy or NGO with the school principal but it should not be less than two classes per week of at least two hours duration.

One room or hall will be provided in the school premises for usage. No charges will be levied on the academy or NGO on account of usage of the school premises,” the official said. “No subletting, sub-leasing or outsourcing of responsibilities shall be allowed under any circumstances.

# HC refuses to send elephant back to Zimbabwe

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court (HC) on Wednesday made it clear that an African male elephant gifted to India by the Zimbabwean Government in 1998 will not be sent back and proper care of it will be taken here while asking the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) to explore the possibility of importing a female South African elephant.

A Bench of Chief Justice Satish Sharma and Justice S Prasad directed the CZA and Animals Welfare Board of India (AWBI) to jointly conduct an inspection and submit a detailed report regarding the animal and the area where it is kept in the Delhi Zoo. The HC

**The plea filed by Nikita Dhawan, founder of Youth For Animals, said lone African elephant named 'Shankar' is a victim of cruelty and viciousness at hands of caretakers at the zoo, and his present condition is nothing less than illegal imprisonment as he is perpetually chained by two legs for 17 hours a day and does not get adequate space to move around. His mental and physical health is deteriorating**

was hearing a plea seeking the release and rehabilitation of the African elephant ‘Shankar’ who was gifted to India by the

Zimbabwean Government and is kept perpetually chained at the Zoo here. The Bench said it is making it clear that it will not allow repatriation of the elephant.

“We will not permit it. We will keep it in India and take care of him here only. He is ours. We will look after him properly, don’t worry,” the Chief Justice said.

The court asked the CZA and AWBI to mention in the affidavit the possibility of relocation of the elephant to some sanctuary or national park. The court, which listed the matter for further hearing on August 31, was informed by the counsel for CZA that the elephant has been in India for 24 years as he was brought here in

1998. “Counsel for respondent CZA will explore the possibility of importing a female South African elephant of the same age,” the Bench said.

The HC had earlier issued notices and sought responses of the Centre, Delhi Government, the Zoo, the CZA, and AWBI on the petition and had directed the authorities to consider a representation preferred by the petitioner in this regard in November last year.

The plea filed by 16-year-old Nikita Dhawan, founder of Youth For Animals (YFA), said the lone African elephant named ‘Shankar’ is a victim of cruelty and viciousness at the hands of caretakers at the Zoo, and his present condition is nothing less than illegal impris-

onment. Dhawan said it will be a violation of Article 21 of the Constitution if the animal is not rehabilitated in a sanctuary as his mental and physical health is deteriorating day by day.

The plea cited a 2009 circular issued by the CZA which had banned exhibition of elephants in zoos, as well as CZA guidelines prohibiting an elephant to be held in a solitary condition for over six months.

The petitioner, represented through senior advocate Raj Panjwani, has urged the HC to direct the authorities to rehabilitate Shankar in a suitable wildlife sanctuary that houses other African elephants, and to ask the CZA to submit a rehabilitation and translocation

plan for all captive elephants held in zoos across India to implement the 2009 circular.

The plea said the Zimbabwean Government had gifted an African elephant couple, Shankar and Bombai, to India in 1998. However, due to an unyielding environment, Bombai passed away in 2005, and since then, Shankar is held captive alone at the zoo here.

It said an RTI response showed a horrid living conditions in which elephant was kept, and if the same continues, he will also meet the same fate as the female elephant. “He is perpetually chained by two legs for 17 hours a day and does not get adequate space to move around,” the petitioner alleged.

## Govt in profit proof of our honesty: CM

**NEW DELHI:** Citing a CAG report which said the Delhi Government was running in profit, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said the numbers were the “biggest proof of its honesty”. AAP’s honesty has deprived the opponents of their sleep, he said.

“They (CAG) have said that ever since the AAP Government formed in Delhi, the Government has been running in profit. This is the biggest proof of the honesty of the AAP Government. This honesty isn’t letting our opponents sleep in peace,” Kejriwal tweeted in Hindi.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said the Kejriwal Government has been able to keep the national Capital a revenue surplus State because of “honest politics”. “This is the ‘Kejriwal Model of governance’.

When every State Government is facing a huge revenue deficit, it’s only and only the Arvind Kejriwal Government that is in running revenue surplus since 2015. Honest politics brings prosperity,” he tweeted. However, the CAG pointed out that Delhi has been able to maintain a revenue surplus because certain expenditures are covered by the Centre. **SR**



# Health Min reduces gap for Covid booster dose to 6 mths

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Following recommendations from the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI), the Union Health Ministry on Wednesday said that it has decided to reduce the duration of the second dose of Covid-19 vaccine and precaution dose gap to 6 months from the earlier 9 months for all adults.

In a letter to the state and UT authorities, Union Health Secretary said, "It has now been decided that the precaution dose for all beneficiaries from 18-59 years will be administered after completion of 6 months or 26 weeks from the date of administration of second dose at Private Covid Vaccination Centers (CVCs)."

He also added that for beneficiaries aged 60 years and above as well as the Health Care Workers (HCWs) and



Front Line Workers (FLWs), precaution dose would be administered free of charge. "Corresponding changes have been made in the CoWIN system to facilitate the new dispensation," he stated.

Currently, all those above the age of 18 who have completed nine months after the administration of the second dose are eligible for the precaution dose. The Union Government had earlier

allowed citizens and students travelling overseas to get the shot before the stipulated nine-month waiting period as required by the guidelines of the destination country. Meanwhile, the total number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in the country crossed 180.58 crore on Tuesday, according to the Union health ministry.

More than 16 lakh (16,54,073) vaccine doses were

administered yesterday, the ministry had said. India's vaccination drive was rolled out on January 16 last year with the healthcare workers (HCWs) getting inoculated in the first phase. The vaccination of the frontline workers (FLWs) started from February 2 last year.

The next phase of Covid-19 vaccination commenced from March 1 last year for people over 60 years of age and those aged 45 and above with specific co-morbid conditions. The country launched vaccination for all people aged more than 45 years from April 1 last year.

India began administering precaution doses of the vaccines to the HCWs, the FLWs, including the personnel deployed on election duty, and those aged 60 and above with comorbidities from January 10 this year amid a spike in the number of coronavirus cases, fuelled by its Omicron variant.

# ED attaches ₹86.65 crore of Chinese fintech companies

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached Rs 86.65 crore lying in various bank accounts and payment gateway accounts of Chinese fintech companies relating to NBFCs like Kudos Finance and Investments Private Ltd., Acemoney (India) Ltd., Rhino Finance Pvt. Ltd. and Pioneer Financial and Management Services Pvt. Ltd. under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The ED has been conducting money laundering investigations against a number of non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) which are in the business of Instant Personal Micro Loans. "It is revealed that, various fintech companies backed by Chinese funds have made agreements with these NBFC companies for providing instant personal loans of term ranging from 7 days to 30 days. Fintech Companies brought the funds to be lent to the public, did MoU with the defunct NBFCs for their lending license," the ED said in a statement.

Since, the fintech companies were unlikely to get a fresh NBFC license from the RBI, they devised the MoU route with defunct NBFCs as a via media to do large scale lending activities. It was projected that the NBFCs had hired Fintech Companies for Customer Discovery, but in reality the Fintech Companies were piggybacking on the license of the NBFCs and doing large scale lending business, it said.

Entire decisions regarding fixation of interest rate/ processing fee/ platform fee were taken by fintech companies and these companies were operating on the basis of instructions from Chinese and Hong Kong-based persons. "NBFC companies

namely Kudos, Acemoney, Rhino and Pioneer entered into MoUs with foreign backed fintech companies to carry out online lending business in India.

An amount of Rs 940,46,39,498 has been considered to be proceeds of crime as the same was gained by way of predatory lending activities in violation of RBI guidelines," the agency said.

The ED has identified bank balances of Rs 86.65 crore in 155 bank accounts and the same have been attached under the provisions of PMLA to preserve the proceeds of crime. Further fund trail investigation is going on, it said.

Earlier in this case, a provisional attachment order was issued against NBFC Kudos Finance and Investments Private Limited and its fintech partners for a value of Rs 72.32 crore. The total attachment in this case till date is INR 158.97 crore.

## Justice Rohini panel gets another extension

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday decided to grant a fresh six-month extension to the Justice Rohini Commission, set up to examine the sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes and equitable distribution of benefits reserved for them. This is the 13th extension given to the commission to submit its report. The Government had constituted the commission on October 2, 2017 under Article 340 of the Constitution to examine the issues related to the sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes. The extension has been granted up to January 31, 2023.

The commission must examine inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among the castes or communities included in the OBC category with reference to such classes included in the Central List, working out the mechanism, criteria, norms and parameters in a scientific approach.

# PM inaugurates Golden Jubilee celebrations of Agradoot group of papers

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Stating that "well-informed, better-informed society should be the goal for all of us", Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday inaugurated the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Agradoot group of newspapers via video conferencing.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is the chief patron of Agradoot's Golden Jubilee celebration committee, was also present on the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister congratulated the "strong voice of the Northeast in the Assamese language" Dainik Agradoot for the occasion and complimented them for keeping the values of unity and harmony alive through the medium of journalism.

The Prime Minister remarked that under the guidance of Kanak Sen Deka, the Agradoot always kept the national interest paramount. Even during the Emergency, when the biggest attack on democracy took place, even then Agradoot daily and Deka ji did not compromise on journalistic values. He created a new generation of value-based journalism, he said.

The PM empathized that for the past few days, Assam is also facing great challenges and difficulties in the form of floods. Normal life has been greatly affected in many districts of Assam.

The Chief Minister and his team are working very hard day and night for relief and rescue, he said. Prime Minister assured the people of Assam, the readers of Agradoot, that the central and state governments are working together to reduce their difficulties.

He underlined the "sterling contribution" of Indian language journalism to Indian tradition, culture, freedom struggle and the development journey. Assam has played a

key role in the development of language journalism in India as the state has been a very vibrant place from the point of view of journalism. Journalism started 150 years ago in the Assamese language and kept on getting stronger with time, he added.

Modi recalled that the journey of the Dainik Agradoot in the last 50 years narrates the story of the change that has taken place in Assam. People's movements have played an important role in realizing this change.

People's movements protected the cultural heritage and Assamese pride of Assam. And now Assam is writing a new development story with the help of public participation.

He said when there is dialogue, there is a solution. "It is through dialogue that possibilities expand.

Therefore, along with the flow of knowledge in Indian democracy, the flow of information is also flowing continuously. Agradoot is part of that tradition," he said.

On the eve of 75 years of independence, the Prime Minister questioned limiting the intellectual space among a few people who know a particular language.

He further said this question is not only of emotion but also of scientific logic. This may be seen as a reason for lagging behind in research on the three industrial revolutions.

The Prime Minister said the expansion of Indian languages was stopped during the long period of slavery, and in modern epistemology, research was limited to a few languages.

Underlining the biodiversity and cultural richness of Assam and Northeast, the Prime Minister said Assam has a rich legacy of music and that it needs to reach the world at large.

He said efforts of the last 8 years with regard to physical and digital connectivity of the region will be hugely beneficial for the tribal tradition, tourism and culture of Assam.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla after paying tribute to Jana Sangh founder Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee on his birth anniversary, at the Central Hall of Parliament, in New Delhi on Wednesday PTI

## Phase I of video surveillance system at railway stations to be finished by Jan 2023

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

The first phase of Indian Railways' video surveillance system project at stations across country will be completed by January 2023, RailTel said in a statement on Wednesday.

RailTel is the implementing agency for the programme. The first phase of project will cover major stations of category A1, A, B and C numbering 756, and is likely to be completed by January 2023, it said, adding that remaining stations will be covered in the second phase. "In a bid to enhance security at railway stations which are major hubs of transportation, railways is in process of installing Internet

Protocol (IP) based Video Surveillance System (VSS) at stations, that is, waiting halls, reservation counters, parking areas, main entrance/exit, platforms, foot over bridges and booking offices," the statement said. The Ministry of Railways approved project under Nirbhaya funds. "We need to rapidly absorb new technology in railways, be it for rolling stock, construction, safety, cyber security, or in situations where there is a human interface," Railways Minister Ashwani Vaishnav said. CCTV cameras of stations and video feeds will be monitored at three levels to ensure enhanced safety and security at railway premises.

# SC to hear plea of Zee TV news anchor Rohit Ranjan today



**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Supreme Court has agreed to hear on Thursday the plea of Zee TV news anchor Rohit Ranjan, facing several FIRs in some States for playing a doctored clip of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, seeking protection from coercive action for the alleged offence.

"List it tomorrow," a vacation Bench of justices Indira Banerjee and J K Maheswari said when senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, appearing for the TV anchor, sought an urgent hearing of the plea in view of registration of several FIRs against him in many States for telecast of the clip.

"This man was arrested yesterday by UP police at Noida and released on bail as the offence invoked was bailable," he said, adding that the anchor made an error in one of the shows and apologised for that and the news was taken back. "Now Chhattisgarh police want to arrest him. Please list this urgently since otherwise he will be in repeated custody," the senior lawyer said.

On Tuesday, a police team from Chhattisgarh reached Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad town to arrest the anchor from his home but he was instead

arrested by the Noida police who released him on bail later on Tuesday night. Congress MLA Devendra Yadav filed complaint against Rohit Ranjan for misquoting Rahul Gandhi's statement.

In his complaint, Yadav said a video, in which Rahul Gandhi described those attacking his Wayanad office as children and said he had no ill-will against them, was "mischievously" used by the TV channel on July 1 to suggest he was forgiving the killers of Udaipur tailor Kanhaiya Lal. The FIR in Raipur was lodged under

IPC sections including 153A (promoting enmity between different groups), 295A (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class), 467 (forgery), 469 (forgery to harm reputation), 504 (intentional insult).

On July 2, a day after video was aired, Ranjan had apologised for mistakenly playing Gandhi's statement out of context by linking it with Udaipur murder case. "It was a human error for which our team is apologetic. We apologise for it," he had tweeted in Hindi.

## Cong files complaint with NBDSA over doctored video

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Congress has filed a complaint with the News Broadcasting and Digital Standards Authority against Zee News and its anchor Rohit Ranjan for airing a video clip of its former president Rahul Gandhi's comments in Kerala with a "distorted and malicious interpretation" and sought action against them.

In the letter to the Authority chairman, Congress communication department head Pawan Khara raised the matter of "illegal, unethical and malicious" broadcast by Zee News and Ranjan, during their programme titled "DNA" which was aired on July 1.

"The impugned news broadcast by Zee News had sought to falsely and maliciously suggest that former INC President Rahul Gandhi demonstrated sympathy for

the killers of Kanhaiya Lal (tailor killed in Udaipur) by calling them 'children' and saying (they) have acted in an irresponsible way," Khara said.

These comments in their original and correct context, referred to the vandalism of the Congress' office at Wayanad and were in no way connected with the horrifying murder of Kanhaiya Lal in Udaipur, the Congress leader pointed out.

It must be noted that only Zee and its anchor chose to give the clip this distorted and malicious interpretation. No other news agency, channel or newspaper made the same mistake, he said in the letter dated July 4.

Khara said it was only after numerous complaints by the party and the public at large, wherein the "distortion and falsity" of the broadcast was pointed out that impugned news broadcast was taken down.

UN led peace keeping missions over the years, officials said India has, so far, provided 15 Force Commanders, two Military Advisors, one Deputy Military Advisor to the Secretary General of United Nations, two Divisions Commanders and eight Deputy Force Commanders in various United Nations Missions. India is among the largest contributors of uniformed personnel to the UN peacekeeping missions.

The Indian Army continues to play a lead role in United Nations Peacekeeping with presence in eight out of 14 (current) United Nations Missions worldwide and currently has over 5,400 military personnel deployed in challenging circumstances under the United Nations flag.

The Indian Army has large presence in United Nations Missions in Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, South Sudan, Golan Heights, Syria, Western Sahara, Abyei and Cyprus. India is also deploying an infantry Battalion Group in UNISFA (Abyei).

## IN SHORTS

**NO INTERFERENCE WITH BOMBAY HC ORDER: SC**  
**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to interfere with the Bombay High Court order which directed the issuance of a notification for holding of elections to 186 Panchayats in Goa and also to ensure completion of polls within 45 days.

**WITHDRAW OBSERVATIONS AGAINST TEESTA: BABUS**  
**New Delhi:** A group of noted former civil servants on Wednesday in an open statement sought withdrawal of the Supreme Court's "gratuitous observations" against social activist Teesta Setalvad and others while upholding the SIT's clean chit to the then Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi in the 2002 communal riots in the state.

**SC STAYS MADRAS HC ORDER ON AIADMK**  
**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Wednesday stayed the Madras High Court order which restrained the passing of any unannounced resolutions in the meeting of the AIADMK general and executive councils concerning the issue of single leadership of the party.

**SC REFUSES TO CANCEL VIJAY BABU'S BAIL**



**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to cancel the anticipatory bail granted to Malayalam actor-producer Vijay Babu in an alleged rape case by the high court, and asked him not to leave Kerala without prior permission.



# Arrested LeT Commander worked with J&K BJP for four years

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) commander Talib Shah, nabbed by the brave villagers of Mahore area in Reasi district on Sunday, was working with the Jammu and Kashmir Unit of the Bharatiya Janta Party since June 2018.

According to a press note issued by the office of the Bharatiya Janta Party through its press secretary Talib Shah was nominated as constituency Incharge of Darhal along with 36 others.

The press note issued on June 1, 2018 clearly stated, "BJP State Incharge IT and Social Media Department Jaidev Rajwal in consultation with BJP State President and MLA, Ravinder Raina and BJP State General Secretary (Org.) Ashok Kaul today announced Assembly Constituency Incharges of IT and Social Media Department".

Jaidev Rajwal nominated thirty seven assembly con-

stituency Incharges of Jammu Province. According to the press note, Talib Shah was nominated as constituency Incharge of Darhal.

Later in April 2020, BJP Minority Morcha President Sheikh Bashir in consultation with party's J&K President Ravinder Raina, party J&K General Secretary (Org.) Ashok Kaul and other senior leaders of the party announced new Office Bearers, Working Committee Members and District Presidents for BJP Minority Morcha.

According to the press note circulated to the media on April 23, 2020, "Talib Shah was nominated as Morcha Publicity Secretary, whereas Mushtaq Ahmed Sheikh (Kupwara) and Fayaz Ahmed Naik (Banihal) were nominated as Morcha Additional Publicity Secretaries".

Responding to the gesture, Talib Shah posted a tweet on April 25, 2020 thanking the party leadership. "I am high-

ly thankful to Bharatiya Janata party Jammu Kashmir state president Ravinder Raina ji and State or General secretary Ashok Koul ji, BJP minority morcha president Sheikh Mohamed".

Recently, on May 9, 2022, BJP's Minority Morcha President, Sheikh Bashir, had appointed him incharge of the IT and Social media department, Minority Morcha. According to Sheikh Bashir, Shah, later resigned from the post on May 27, 2022.

This correspondent also contacted State Press Secretary, BJP Dr Pardeep Mahotra and also forwarded an email to him to verify whether Talib Shah mentioned in their press notes is the same person arrested by the police or not. Till late evening Dr Mahotra, who was attending a training session in the tourist resort of Patnitop, had not responded despite repeated requests. On the other hand former BJP State Incharge IT and Social Media



Department Jaidev Rajwal when contacted clarified party Chief Ravinder Raina had addressed a press conference on this topic where he had issued a detailed clarification.

After his links surfaced

with the BJP, the Jammu and Kashmir Unit Chief Ravinder Raina immediately rushed to demand National Investigation Agency (NIA) probe into Talib Shah's terror links.

While addressing media

persons in the party headquarters on Tuesday Raina had also claimed that Talib Shah visited the BJP office pretending to be a journalist. Stating that top J&K BJP leaders and office-bearers were on Talib

Hussain's hit-list, Raina had also sought a probe by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in this matter.

"Talib Hussain did recce of my office. He sent videos of my office to his Pakistani handlers. He used to meet BJP leaders by posing as a journalist. We demand a NIA probe," he said.

Raina also said the party has issued a show cause notice to Minority Morcha President Sheikh Bashir and asked him to reply within 48 hours. "He doesn't have the authority to make any appointment. Every appointment in the party is made by the President," the BJP leader said.

When Contacted Sheikh Bashir told The Pioneer, "I will first respond to the show cause notice then only I will speak to the media about this issue".

Significantly, images accessed by this correspondent clearly revealed Talib Shah not only attended party programs along with senior

party leaders in the party headquarters but was also working in the remote areas of Rajouri and propagating schemes of the Union government headed by Narendra Modi in the company of party workers.

His images with Member Parliament from Jammu-Poonch Lok Sabha seat Jugal Kishore Sharma and others have gone viral. In these images he is seen garlanding BJP MP, attending public meetings and party programs being addressed by the former incharge of Jammu and Kashmir unit Avinash Rai Khanna, J&K BJP organisation secretary Ashok Koul, Ravinder Raina and other party leaders and workers. In some of the images Talib Shah is also seen attending training programs in the party office along with other office bearers raising doubts over the claims made by the BJP leaders while washing their hands over their association with him.

## Chemist's killing: NIA conducts searches at 13 locations in Amravati

PNS/T N RAGHUNATHA ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday carried out searches at multiple locations in Amravati district of eastern Maharashtra in connection with the sensational murder of a chemist Umesh Prahladrao Kolhe over a WhatsApp message posted by him in support of suspended BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma.

In an official statement, the NIA said that it had conducted searches at 13 locations in Amravati district after it took over the investigations from the Amravati police and re-registered a case on July 2, 2022 in connection with the murder that took place on the night of June 21.

"During the searches conducted today at the premises of accused and suspects, digital devices (mobile phones, SIM cards, memory cards, DVRs), pamphlets spreading hate messages, knives and other incriminating documents and materials, have been seized," the NIA said. In

all, seven persons, including the master-mind Sheikh Irfan, have been arrested in connection with Kolhe's murder. The six other accused in the case are: Mudassar Ahmed (22), Shahrukh Pathan (25), Abdul Taufiq (24), Shoib Khan (22), Atib Rashid (22) and Yusuf Bahadur Khan. All of them are in NIA's custody now. The NIA has booked the seven accused in the case under Section 16, 18 and 20 of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and Section 34, 153 (A), 153 (B), 120 (B) and 302 IPC has been filed based on a complaint by Kolhe's son Sanket Kolhe.

The incident took place between 10 pm and 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," Sanket said.

The investigations have revealed that Kolhe had circulated on WhatsApp a post supporting BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma, Police Vikram Sali said that prima facie Umesh Kolhe's murder was an off-shoot of a social media post supporting Nupur Sharma, who had made controversial comments on the Prophet in a television debate.

Kolhe inadvertently posted the message in a whatsapp group where there are Muslims who were also his customers. One of the arrested accused reportedly said that Kolhe's post was an insult to the Prophet and hence he must die.

## Govt directs edible oil manufacturers to further cut MRP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Wednesday directed the edible oil manufacturers to further cut the maximum retail price (MRP) of imported cooking oils by up to Rs 10 per litre within a week, and maintain a uniform MRP of the same brand of oil across the country following a fall in global prices.

Taking note of a further drop in global prices, Food Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey called a meeting of all edible oil associations and major manufacturers to discuss the current trend and pass on the falling global prices to consumers by reducing the MRP. "We made a detailed presentation and told them that global prices have declined by 10 per cent in last one week alone. This should be passed on to consumers. We have asked them to reduce the MRP," Pandey said after the meeting.

As India imports more than 60 per cent of its edible oil requirement, retail prices came under pressure in the last few months taking cues from the



global market. However, there has been a correction, resulting fall in global prices.

Edible oil makers had cut prices by up to Rs 10-15 per litre last month and prior to that had also reduced the MRP taking cues from the global market.

Major edible oil makers have promised to reduce the MRP by up to Rs 10 per litre by next week in all imported edible oils like palm oil, soyabean and sunflower oil, he said and added, once the prices of these edible oils are reduced, the rates of other cooking oils will also get reduced.

Besides this, the Secretary asked the manufacturers to maintain a uniform MRP of the same brands of cooking oils across the country as currently there is a difference of Rs 3-5 per litre in different zones.

## Harijans upset over Cherian's statement on Ambedkar

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The anti-Constitution speech made by Saji Cherian, Minister for Fisheries and Culture, at Mallappalli in Pathanamthitta district on Sunday has upset the entire Harijan community in the country.

An apolitical person like Acharya M K Kunhol, a widely respected social leader in the State came out in the open lambasting Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Minister Cherian, as well as the CPI-M over the speech in which Dr B R Ambedkar and other members of the drafting committee of the Indian Constitution including the first President Dr Rajendra Prasad were humiliated and portrayed very poorly.

Saji Cherian in his speech on Sunday alleged that the persons who drafted the Constitution simply copied down what was dictated by the colonial masters and put it as the Indian Constitution, which could be described as the best means for exploitation. "If you do not know about the Constitution, it is better to keep quiet about it. Neither minister Cherian nor his party,

the CPI-M, know the sacredness and serenity of the Constitution. Even EMS Namboodirippadu, the former general secretary of the party had any respect for Dr Ambedkar or the Constitution of India," Acharya Kunhol, who had been honoured with Padma Shree by the President of India, said in a statement on Wednesday. He also pointed out that the CPI-M was not in existence when Baba Saheb Ambedkar crafted the world's best Constitution for the country.

The Acharya recounted the number of Harijan youths murdered by the CPI-M in Kerala. "The CPI-M is a party of high caste communal persons. Harijans always get a raw deal in that party," said the Acharya who pointed out the recent murder of Deepu, a Harijan youth at Kizhakkambalam by the CPI-M activists.

The CPI-M leadership remained tight-lipped over the faux pas committed by the minister even as the demand for his dismissal from the ministry grew louder on the second day. The Congress-led UDF tried in vain to raise the issue in the legislative assembly on

Wednesday. But the Punjab-born Speaker M B Rajesh adjourned the House within minutes of the sitting to deny the Opposition any room to embarrass the treasury benches.

"This is unheard of in the history of Kerala Assembly," said V D Satheshan, leader of the opposition who led the UDF MLAs in a walk out and staged a demonstration in front of Dr Ambedkar's statue. "Jai Bheem" and "Jai Ambedkar" slogans were raised in the House as well as the Secretariat premises for the first time by Opposition who wanted the dismissal of the minister for his speech.

Saji Cherian who had said on Tuesday that it was the local slang in his speech that caused the misunderstanding about his speech made yet another U-turn on Wednesday. While speaking to the reporters, he said it was a slip of the tongue and he was sorry for that. "Saji Cherian is trying to save his skin by one excuse or other. The truth is that there is no options before him other than submitting his resignation," said BJP leader and former Mizoram Governor Kummanam Rajasekharan.

## Gujarat: Heavy rain disrupts normal life in Gir Somnath, Junagadh districts

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Heavy and incessant rains disrupted normal life in several parts of Gir Somnath and Junagadh districts in Gujarat, with Sutrapada taluka in Gir Somnath recording 300 mm downpour in 30 hours till Wednesday noon, officials said.

The Meteorological Centre here said monsoon is now active in Gujarat as a low pressure area was formed over Kutch region, and more downpour is likely over the next five days across the state.

Gir Somnath and Junagadh districts have been witnessing heavy rains since Tuesday, the officials said.

As per the data shared by the State Emergency Operations Centre (SEOC), Sutrapada taluka received 300 mm rainfall in the last 30 hours that ended at 12

pm of Wednesday, including 132 mm rainfall between 6 am and 12 pm.

Similarly, neighbouring Kodinar taluka of the same district received 119 mm rainfall between 6 am and 12 pm on Wednesday. Veraval taluka 106 mm, Mangrol taluka of Junagadh 82 mm, followed by Bhuj(Kutch) with 51 mm, Hansot (Bharuch) with 42 mm and Kalyanpur (Devbhumi Dwarka) with 33 mm, the SEOC said.

Normal life was affected in Mangrol, Kodinar and Veraval towns as well as several villages in Sutrapada and Kodinar talukas due to heavy downpour as low-lying areas, agricultural fields, housing societies and several roads were submerged in knee-deep water, officials said.

Gujarat Revenue Minister Rajendra Trivedi visited the SEOC in state capital

Gandhinagar to take stock of the situation and review the preparedness of the authorities as more rainfall is predicted in the next five days.

"Most parts of Gujarat are likely to receive normal rainfall in the next five days," said Manorama Mohanty, director of the Meteorological Centre in Ahmedabad.

Heavy to very heavy showers, and at some places extremely heavy rains, are likely at isolated places in Gir Somnath, Devbhumi Dwarka, Surat, Valsad and Navsari districts during the next 24 hours.

"On July 8 and 9, extremely heavy rainfall may occur at some places in Valsad, Navsari, Kutch, Devbhumi Dwarka, Jamnagar and Porbandar districts due to the low pressure area over Kutch region," Mohanty said.



Commuters waded through a waterlogged street after heavy monsoon rain in Mumbai on Wednesday.

PTI Photo

## UP Cong faces worst phase in history as its lone member in Legislative Council retires

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Going through its worst phase, Indian National Congress faces yet another major setback as for the first time the oldest political outfit of the country will have no member in the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council.

Deepak Singh, the lone Congress member in the UP Legislative Council retired on Wednesday.

In the last UP Assembly elections, Congress was confined to just two seats.

Not only the Congress, the Bahujan Samaj Party will now have just one member each in both the Houses of the UP legislature as three of its members in the council completed their terms on Wednesday.

A total of 10 members retired from the UP Legislative Council on Wednesday, including Jagjivan Prasad, Balam Yadav, Dr Kamlesh Kumar Pathak, Ranvijay Singh, Ramsunder Nishad and Ramsuddha Prakash of the Samajwadi Party (SP). Apart from this, the tenures of BSP MLCs Atar Singh Rao, Suresh Kumar Kashyap and Dinesh Chandra also ended on Wednesday.

The tenures of two MLCs of Bharatiya Janata Party also ended on Wednesday. However, these two BJP members have been elected to the council again. The two members are Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya and Panchayati Raj Minister Chaudhary Bhupendra Singh.

The legislative council was formed in Uttar Pradesh, then United Provinces, on January 5, 1887 and its first meeting was held on January 8, 1887 at Thornhill Memorial Hall in Allahabad. Then it used to have nine members. Under the provisions made in 1909, the number of members was increased to 46, which included 26 non-official members. Of these members, 20 were elected and six were nominated. Motilal Nehru took the membership of the legislative council on February 7, 1909. He is considered to be the first member of Congress in the legislative council. However, he resigned in 1920 under the policy of non-cooperation with the Congress government. UP was then known as the United

Provinces.

After independence, till 1989, the leader of the house in the legislative council was from Congress, with the exception of 1977 and 1979 when this post was with Janata Party.

In the last 33 years, the Congress strength has been shrinking in the UP assembly. In the assembly elections held this time, Congress reached its lowest position in terms of number of members. Only two MLAs of the Congress won and got less than 2.5 per cent votes. This was bound to have an effect on its membership in the UP Legislative Council.

In view of the current circumstances, hope of Congress representation in the upper House of UP Legislature is a distant possibility.

## UP Govt task forces to enforce drive to curb GST evasion

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

To curb evasion of goods and services tax (GST), the State Government will launch an enforcement drive for which task forces will be set up in each district.

The task force will first identify and gather relevant information about the tax evaders and this will be followed by raids by the tax authorities at the premises of the evaders.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath issued this direction after a presentation on taxation was made by the Commercial Tax department before him on Wednesday. The chief minister said that revenue from the GST and value-added tax (VAT) was steadily increasing and during the last fiscal 2021-22,

the total revenue from GST and compensation was Rs 98,107 crore.

The chief minister said efforts should be made in a mission mode for increasing the annual collection from GST to Rs 1.50 lakh crore. He said the record GST collection in the first quarter of the current fiscal validated the efforts so far made for increasing revenue collection.

For increasing tax collection from GST, the chief minister said, "Since GST is an online taxation system, a huge database is available with the tax authorities and this data should be analysed using the information technology (IT) tools or data analytics. He said the tools of artificial intelligence should also be used for increasing tax collection.

Yogi Adityanath said since the revenue generation from GST was based on consumption and revenue collection was linked to gross state domestic product, planned efforts were needed for increasing the consumption of goods in UP.

He said a congenial environment prevailed in UP for increasing tax collection and with the efforts made by the tax department the number of traders registered with GST had increased to 17.44 lakh -- the highest in the country. The chief minister said efforts should be made for increasing this number to 30 lakh in next one year.

The chief minister also asked the officials about the details of deduction of TDS from the payments made to contractors by the government

agencies and said it should be deposited as per the provisions of GSTR 7.

To curb tax evasion, the chief minister asked the tax authorities to keep an eye on the e-way bills generated by traders and high value bills generated by those newly registered with the GST. He said the turnover of the non-filers of GST return should be examined and it should be ensured that they paid the outstanding tax.

He said tax as per rules should also be realised from coaching institutes, banquet halls, shopping malls who hired big commercial buildings. The chief minister pressed the need for direct communication with the field level officers and said he would himself speak to the field level officers every fortnight.








FIRST COLUMN

EDUCATORS TO DISCUSS NEP IMPLEMENTATION

The policy is focused on human values of Bharatiya civilisation



RAGHAVENDRA P TIWARI

Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam, which will be held in Varanasi July 7-9, will be a 'Maha Kumbh of Higher Education'. The core objective is to extract Amrut (nectar) from a number of quality imperatives enshrined in the National Education Policy 2020. The event will also mark the second anniversary of NEP 2020, which is aimed at making the youth future ready, while focusing on human values, life skills and traits of Bharatiya civilisation.

The event would take stock of gains made from the learning system of India and transform it to empower youth with 'glocal' competencies. Deliberations will be focused on mapping interests, abilities and demands of the younger generation for framing enabling rules for NEP 2020 on the basis of the objectives of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. Also, the event will re-visit and re-strategise already drawn pathways for the implementation of NEP 2020. A key thrust area will be to prepare for a holistic perspective for flawless implementation of NEP 2020. Educational luminaries will look at the ways to ensure speedy and effective implementation of NEP 2020.

In knowledge driven society, the quality of education system provides for economic vitality, health and overall well-being. NEP 2020 was launched on 29th July, 2020 with a view to transform the existing learning system and to actualise the needs of the 21st century learners. The seriousness of this mammoth assembly of Directors and Vice-Chancellors of the higher educational institutions can be appreciated from the fact that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself will inaugurate and address the gathering. Education Minister Dharmendra Kumar will remain present during the course of the event.



India can become Atmanirbhar only when we make our youth competent enough to contribute meaningfully and purposefully and become instrumental in the Industrial Revolution (IR) 4.0 by making use of disruptive digital technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, Intelligent Robotics, Big Data Analytics, Cloud Computing and so on. In IR 4.0, Cyber-Physical Production System (CPPS) is utilized for industrial production. Education 4.0 envisages co-learning, co-creation and innovation; anytime, anywhere, and any type of learning. Also, it calls for the use of flipped classrooms for transforming passive to active learning at home or outside, while institutions are used for skill-development. Besides, the thrust is also on personalized and collaborative learning, as lesson plans become creative, and continuous training ensures updation of domain knowledge and skills.

In nutshell, it can be said that Education 4.0 is outcome-based. Senior academicians and officials at the event will focus on the need to formulate policies to make youth future-ready to face a highly uncertain and volatile future. The speed of changes witnessed by the education sector is outpacing the ability of the existing system to respond adequately and appropriately. Indeed, the educational system faces the risk of becoming outdated if changes are not adopted.

Threadbare deliberations will take place on the student-centric and Bharat-centric reforms, with thrust on skill-development and employability, research, innovation and entrepreneurship, capacity building of teachers. Also, ways to ensure ranking and accreditation along with digital empowerment and online education will be discussed. Indeed, equitable and inclusive education within the Indian knowledge system will also be addressed.

The Ministry of Education and the UGC are burning midnight oil in making provisions/regulations on outcome-based learning with multi-disciplinary curriculum, while offering students multiple exit-entry options. Also, academic bank of credits and education in mother tongue/regional language at least up to primary level are among top concerns of NEP 2020. Emphasis will also be on shift in pedagogy, while learners will have to evolve to think like employees and employees will need to think like learners.

*(The author is Vice-Chancellor, Central University of Punjab.)*

# NATO faces two-front geostrategic challenges

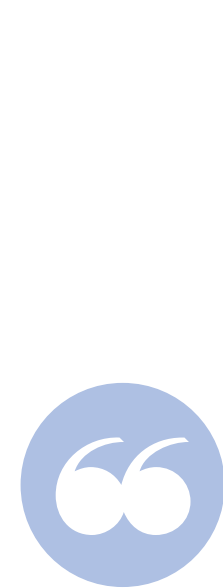
## NATO needs to reimagine its role to defend two fronts, in Europe and the Indo-Pacific region

The Chinese hegemonic intentions are visible from its deteriorating relations with the West and India, the growing tensions in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, apart from the human rights issues in Tibet and the Xinjiang region.

Financial crises in Sri Lanka and Pakistan further worsen matters. In 2020, China replaced the United States as the EU's largest trading partner. By 2021, Beijing had built 50 per cent of the total ships in the world. Through various mechanisms such as design collaboration agreements, cyber espionage, and acquisitions, China has copied advanced innovative ship designs, endangering the West's future naval productions. In a nutshell, the world is witnessing China's coercive policies in international politics and geo-economics, a deeply embedded civil-military fusion through espionage and dual-use production facilities, which raises sovereignty issues for several countries.

On the other hand, from the French President's statement in 2019 that NATO is "brain dead" to the 2022 Russia-Ukraine conflict and the completion of the accession protocols of Sweden and Finland, the alliance has been reinvigorated with its new Trans-Pacific identity through the 2022 Madrid summit. The heads of the states of NATO's Asian regional partners — Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea — attended the NATO Summit, a new development indicating the expanding horizons of Asia's militarization to counter the Chinese hegemonic designs. The message stands clear, NATO is pivoting to Asia. The NATO 2022 'Strategic Concept' minced no words to state that the "PRC's malicious hybrid and cyber operations and its confrontational rhetoric and disinformation target Allies and harm Alliance security". It strongly indicates that NATO now prioritizes the Indo-Pacific region. Before the 2022 summit, the foreign ministers of these four countries met at the North Atlantic Council (NAC) in December 2020 for the first time to push the emerging multilateral interoperability in the Indo-Pacific. This was in the backdrop of the "NATO 2030" expert reflection group that had labelled China as a "full-spectrum systemic rival, rather than a purely economic player or an only Asia-focused security actor."

However, President Barack Obama was the first leader to foresee the Chinese threat and announced the "pivot" policy in 2011, while addressing the Australian Parliament. Further, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton penned an essay titled "America's Pacific Century," where she argued for a "strategic turn to the region", which indicated relocating the US navy from West Asia to the South China Sea. The policy did not receive much attention, given the U.S. engagements in West Asia and Afghanistan. Nevertheless, today, the region's shifting sands, whereby the U.S. has



NATO HAS FINALLY WOKEN UP TO CHALLENGES BUILDING UP IN EUROPE ON ACCOUNT OF RUSSIAN AGGRESSIONS, WHILE CHINA'S EXPANSIONIST ATTEMPTS HAVE ALARMED NEIGHBOURS IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

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snowballed the peace process through the Abraham accords and the Saudi-Turkey peace process, strongly indicate that the upcoming days in the Indo-Pacific will be highly turbulent. From another essential perspective, the militarization of the Indo-Pacific region would also provoke China and Russia to react, thereby offsetting the relative peace on Russia's Eastern and Southern borders. Over the last few decades, Russia has adopted a relatively peaceful approach in the two directions to entirely focus on its Western front. The change in NATO's strategy thus would be testing for the Sino-Russian friendship as Russia is more focused on Europe.

Nevertheless, the prelude to the new Cold War, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, has led to a consensus in Europe that it needs to view Russia as its primary geopolitical challenge. At the same summit, NATO also decided to increase its rapidly deployable troops by 300,000, apart from doubling or tripling to the brigade level in the Baltic States and five other frontline countries. Further, it plans to increase munitions and other supplies in response to Russia's aggressiveness. This overhauling of the deployments would be complete by 2023. Currently, the defence spending of its members will increase by 1.2 per cent in real terms by the end of 2022. Simultaneously, as Europe intends to reduce its energy dependencies, a pertinent question that needs to be pondered over is, at the same point of time, what would be the proportion of financial and military commitments of NATO towards first, the European Defence, and second, the containment of

China in the Indo-Pacific region? Which objective would be a priority for the European countries? Can they counter two threats at the same time? The Ukraine-Russia conflict might continue for a couple of more months, if not years.

Moreover, what if China decides to invade Taiwan during the same period or creates crises in the Indo-Pacific region? It must be recalled that during the Russia-Ukraine conflict's initial phase, France and Germany were reluctant to cut off their gas supplies. The future is hard to predict, and so are the sustenance levels of multiple military alliances. What then happens to the safety of allies in Asia is worth pondering. Thus, NATO needs to develop a genuinely transatlantic China policy in addition to the deployments in the Indo-Pacific, which might make China more reactionary and possibly provoke it to test the unity of NATO.

Three crucial issues emerge regarding South and Central Asia and the recent developments. First, attempts by Russia and China to expand their joint sphere of influence to include countries having an anti-American perspective, such as Iran and Pakistan. The emerging counter quad can present a formidable challenge to the West's allies. Second, the destruction of the agricultural fertility of Ukraine will lead to increased demand for food grains. One of the most critical inputs for good agricultural produce are phosphates, the supplies dominated by China, which can be used as an essential geopolitical tool against the West via the supplier countries, especially in South and Central Asia. Third, the impact of the conflict would be the rise in the

earth's average temperatures, particularly in the Arctic region; hence, melting the ice would be a new strategic issue. The opening of the new sea routes, especially in the arctic, would further bring the Indo-Pacific region to the centre of the gravity of the upcoming new conflicts.

India firmly believes in multipolarity and hence has its presence in China-led SCO, BRICS, and RIC apart from its strategic partnership in the Quad grouping. The multi-alignment policy of PM Narendra Modi has yielded positive results. As the militarization of Asia is imminent and there are increased chances of confrontations, the moment presents India with an opportunity to delicately balance hegemonic tendencies and democratic ideals without compromising India's security and sovereignty. For this, it becomes essential that the country adjusts its budget to soon emerge as a self-reliant defence actor to maintain the strategic autonomy, failing which it might be sandwiched between the arms trade geopolitics of the West and Russia. Even for a couple of years, some hard decisions to divert financial resources towards indigenous development and emergency procurements of cyber and space capabilities is a must. On the flip side, we also need to evolve our policies in case the hegemonic tendencies pose an imminent threat. In such a case, New Delhi's traditional ally, such as Russia, might side with China and hence would allow India to find military and tactical support from the willing partners, thereby bringing profound changes in the South Asian security architecture.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

I DON'T THINK @RRRMOVIE IS A GAY LOVE STORY BUT EVEN IF IT WAS, IS 'GAY LOVE STORY' A BAD THING? —BAAHUBALI PRODUCER SHOBU YARLAGADDA



THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG WITH IT. I MERELY QUOTED...THE BANTER THAT ALREADY EXISTS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN. —OSCAR-WINNING SOUND DESIGNER RESUL POOKUTTY



# Bizarre Cuban Missile Crisis redux in Nicaragua

## Nowadays, both Russia and the United States have ample weapons that they can fire at each other from their homelands

It was a piece of news so obscure and implausible that I missed it when it first surfaced last month. The news was that the Russians are going to put hypersonic nuclear missiles into Nicaragua and terrify the Americans into backing down over Ukraine. Or kill them all if they don't.

"If American missile systems can nearly reach Moscow from Ukrainian territory, it's time for Russia to roll out something powerful closer to the American 'city on a hill,'" said Olga Skabeyeva on the news show on 'Rossiya-1', the most popular Russian TV channel.

The usual crew of panelists hugged themselves with delight at the idea of American cities being blown away. "Objects like the city of New York, a good city, but it would



GWYNNE DYER

*(The author's new book is The Shortest History of War)*

be gone. Completely gone with one rocket," said one.

Then they rambled on about how the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 had brought the Americans to their senses (bet you didn't know that the US lost), and how Russian missiles in Nicaragua might bring Americans to their senses again. They will give in before they really get hurt.

As a substantial majority of the Russian television audience watches the show, that's the news ordinary Russians are getting. But if these people really represent the Russian elite's views of what is possible and necessary, then we're all in trouble. Nuclear war is at hand.

I don't really think nuclear war is at hand, but there is a lot of loose talk about it in Russia at the moment. So let's examine

the optimistic assumption in the West that some people in the Russian military and diplomatic hierarchies — hopefully quite senior people — have a better grasp of reality than the television pundits.

Are there really Russian generals and senior foreign ministry officials who think that "American missile systems can nearly reach Moscow from the Ukrainian territory"? If you mean American nuclear missiles, then of course not.

The United States has given non-nuclear battlefield missiles to Ukraine, but it has deliberately restricted the ammunition to types that cannot reach any significant distance into Russia. There are no American troops in Ukraine, and no nuclear weapons in Ukrainian hands.

The business about moving

American nuclear missiles 'closer' to Russia is complete tripe: they are just as lethal from where they are now. Russian generals and diplomats are not stupid: they know that American nuclear weapons systems have been able to reach Russia from the US homeland or any of the world's oceans since the 1960s.

Well, then, how would putting Russian nuclear missiles in Nicaragua, 'closer' to the United States, give Russia any advantage either? It wouldn't, although it would probably provoke the US government into a massive over-reaction. Like Russian nuclear missiles in Cuba in 1962, you know?

The difference between Cuba in 1962 and Nicaragua today is that 'close' still meant something in 1962, when the

United States already had intercontinental ballistic missiles that could reach the old Soviet Union, but Russia had no long-range ballistic missiles that could hit American cities yet.

The Russians sneaked some shorter-range nuclear missiles into Cuba to even things up, but the Americans spotted them, imposed a blockade, and threatened to invade Cuba. Moscow pulled its missiles out, and everybody lived grumpily ever after.

Nowadays, both Russia and the United States have ample weapons that they can fire at each other from their homelands. 'Closer' no longer confers any advantages. Besides, Nicaragua has not said it will host Russian nuclear weapons, or indeed Russian weapons of any sort.

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega published a decree last month authorising small numbers of troops from Russia, the United States or other Central American countries to deploy to his country for a limited time 'for purposes of training, law enforcement or emergency response'.

Ortega was a Marxist in the 1980s. After the Nicaraguan revolution triumphed, he got Soviet help, and US President Ronald Reagan financed a guerilla/terrorist movement in an unsuccessful attempt to bring him down, but that was long ago.

Now, Ortega is just another dictator like Putin. He rigs elections, jails the opposition, and treats the state budget as his private income. Nicaragua is broke, so Ortega is happy to take

Russian money, but he's probably not stupid enough to let the Russians bring missiles in.

Russia's much-hyped hypersonic missiles are irrelevant anyway, since 'hypersonic' missiles are only useful if a country has good anti-missile defences. In fact, nobody has good missile defences, so, they make little difference strategically. Dumb missiles with some terminal guidance work just fine.

The rational conclusion, therefore, is that this is all just propaganda blather by ignorant Russian TV pundits, but a warning. I predicted that Russia would not invade Ukraine because it would be utterly stupid to do. I am still assuming that Russian leaders are rational, but now I have some doubts.



# Political instability deepens in Lanka as Aviation Min resigns

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Cabinet was on Wednesday thrown into turmoil by the resignation of Aviation Minister Nimal Siripala De Silva while another senior minister demanded that Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe should quit as the finance minister alleging that he halted all the projects that could bring in the much-needed forex to the country facing worst economic crisis.

De Silva, Minister of Ports, Shipping, and Aviation, resigned following an allegation made by main Opposition SJB leader Sajith Premadasa in Parliament on Tuesday that a Cabinet Minister had solicited a bribe from Japan's Taisei Corporation.

De Silva, in a letter addressed to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, said although he was not directly accused of demanding a bribe he was resigning in order to allow an impartial investigation as the allegation concerned his ministry.

According to media reports, the Japanese firm is involved in the expansion of the Bandaranaike International Airport here.

Meanwhile, newly-appointed minister of invest-



ment promotion, Dhammika Perera, addressing a gathering here, demanded that Wickremesinghe should resign as the minister of finance.

Perera, a former business leader, alleged that Wickremesinghe was blocking dollar inflows into the country and he had no cash flow plan to resolve the forex

crisis. Wickremesinghe ignored to respond to the Opposition when asked to react in Parliament on Perera's attack on him.

Sri Lanka is going through the worst economic crisis since its independence from Britain in 1948, and needs to obtain at least USD 4 billion to tide over the acute shortage in foreign

exchange reserves.

The 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 Lankan president calls Russian leader seeking fuel

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa said Wednesday that he had a telephone call with Russian leader Vladimir Putin to request credit support to import fuel for the island nation that is facing its worst economic crisis in memory. "Had a very productive telecon with the Russia President Vladimir Putin. While thanking him for all the support extended by his govt to overcome the challenges of the past, I requested an offer of credit support to import fuel to #lka in defeating the current econ challenges," Rajapaksa said in a tweet.

Western nations largely have cut off energy imports from Russia in line with sanctions over its war on Ukraine. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said earlier that the government would look for other sources first but it has not been successful.

Since Russia's invasion of

Ukraine in late February, global oil prices have skyrocketed, prompting a number of countries to seek out Russian crude, which is being offered at steep discounts.

Sri Lanka's economic crisis has led to a dire fuel shortage forcing the government to shut schools and ask employees other than those in essential services to work from home to cut down on consuming the limited stocks. The government said earlier that no entity is willing to supply oil to Sri Lanka even for cash because its petroleum corporation owes a heavy debt.

Sri Lanka's foreign currency crunch led to its suspending repayment of foreign debt in April pending outcome of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout package. However, Wickremesinghe told Parliament on Tuesday that discussions with the IMF have been complex and difficult because Sri Lanka is now a bankrupt nation.

# Afghan soil won't be used to launch attacks, says Taliban leader

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Taliban supreme leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada said Wednesday that Afghan soil will not be used to launch attacks against other countries, and he asked the international community to not interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

The Taliban say they are adhering to an agreement they signed with the United States in 2020 - before retaking power - in which they promised to fight terrorists.

Since their takeover last year, they have repeatedly said Afghanistan would not be used as a launching pad for attacks against other countries.

"We assure our neighbours, the region and the world that we will not allow anyone to use our territory to threaten the security of other countries. We also want other countries not to interfere in our internal affairs," Akhundzada said in an address ahead of the Eid al-Adha holiday.

The Taliban were ousted by a US-led coalition in 2001 for harbouring Osama bin Laden, mastermind of the 9/11 attacks in the United States. The religious group captured power again in mid-August, during the chaotic last weeks of the U.S. And NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The international community has been wary of any recognition or cooperation with the Taliban, especially after they restricted the rights of women and minorities - measures that harken back to their harsh rule when they were last in power in the late 1990s.

Akhundzada, the spiritual chief of the Taliban, has remained a reclusive figure. He rose to leader of the Islamist movement in a swift transition of power after a 2016 U.S.

Drone strike killed his predecessor, Mullah Akhtar Mansour.

After taking over, Akhundzada secured the backing of al-Qaida chief Ayman al-Zawahiri, who showered the cleric with praise, calling him "the emir of the faithful." The endorsement by bin Laden's heir helped seal his jihadist credentials with the Taliban's long-time allies.

However, in his Eid message Akhundzada said: "Within the framework of mutual interaction and commitment, we want good, diplomatic, economic and political relations with the world, including the United States, and we consider this in the interest of all sides."

A three-day assembly of Islamic clerics and tribal elders in the Afghan capital that concluded Saturday included pledges of support for the Taliban and calls on the international community to recognize the country's Taliban-led government.

In a surprise development, the reclusive Akhundzada came to Kabul from his base in southern Kandahar province and addressed the gathering Friday. It was believed to be his first visit to the Afghan capital since the Taliban seized power.

In an hour-long speech at the assembly carried by state radio, Akhundzada called the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan a "victory for the Muslim world."

A powerful earthquake in June killed more than 1,000 people in eastern Afghanistan, igniting yet another crisis for the economically struggling country.

Overstretched aid groups already keeping millions of Afghans alive rushed supplies to the quake victims, but most countries responded tepidly to Taliban calls for international help.

# EU lawmakers back gas, nuclear energy as sustainable

AP ■ BRUSSELS

European Union lawmakers voted Wednesday to include natural gas and nuclear in the bloc's list of sustainable activities, backing a proposal from the EU's executive arm that has been drawing fierce criticism from environment groups and will likely trigger legal challenges.

As the EU wants to set the best global standards in the fight against climate change, the decision could tarnish the bloc's image and question the region's commitment to reaching climate neutrality by 2050.

The European Commission earlier this year made the proposal as part of its plans for building a climate-friendly future, dividing member countries and drawing outcry from environmentalists over what they criticize as "greenwashing."

EU legislators from the environment and economy committees objected last month to the plan, setting up Wednesday's decisive vote in Strasbourg, France. But MEPs rejected their resolution in a 328-278 vote, with 33 lawmakers abstaining. The result was announced to a salvo of applause.



An absolute majority of 353 was needed to veto the proposal. If the European Parliament and member countries don't object to it by July 11, the so-called Taxonomy delegated act

will enter into force and apply as of next year.

Greenpeace immediately said it will submit a formal request for internal review to the European Commission, and then take legal action at the European Court of Justice if the result isn't conclusive.

"It's dirty politics and it's an outrageous outcome to label gas and nuclear as green and keep more money flowing to (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's war chest, but now we will fight this in the courts," said Ariadna Rodrigo, Greenpeace's EU sustainable finance campaigner.

European Parliament rapporteur Bas Eickhout rued "a dark day for the climate and the energy transition."

The green labeling system from the European Commission defines what qualifies as an investment in sustainable energy. Under certain conditions, gas and nuclear energy will now be part of the mix, making it easier for private investors to inject money into both.

With the EU aiming to reach climate neutrality by 2050 and to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, the commission says the classification system is crucial to direct investments into sustainable energy.

## Jihadis attack jail in Nigeria's Capital, 600 inmates escape

AP ■ ABUJA

At least 600 inmates escaped in a jailbreak in Nigeria's capital city, officials said Wednesday, blaming the attack on Islamic extremist rebels.

About 300 have been recaptured, authorities said. The "very determined" rebels attacked the Kuje maximum prison in Abuja on Tuesday night with "very high-grade explosives," killing one guard on duty, according to Shuaib Belgore, permanent secretary of Nigeria's Ministry of Interior.

Explosions and gunfire were heard at about 10 p.m. In the Kuje area of Abuja when the attackers arrived and forced their way into the prison through a hole created by the explosives.

The Islamic extremist rebels who attacked the prison have waged an insurgency in the country's northeast for over a decade.

Their attack on the detention facility freed many of their members who are inmates, prison officials said.

"We understand they are Boko Haram. They came specifically for their co-conspirators," said Belgore.

"Right now, we have retrieved about 300 out of about 600 that got out of the jail."

## Marcos plays balancing act in meeting with China's FM

AP ■ MANILA

New Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr met with China's top diplomat Wednesday to take up long-simmering disputes in the South China Sea, as he waded into foreign policy dilemmas that include the U.S.-China rivalry in the region.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, wearing a native Filipino formal shirt, met his counterpart for talks at the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila and later met Marcos Jr at the presidential palace. No detailed statement about the talks was immediately released by Philippine officials. Chinese officials have frowned on what they perceive as undue media focus on the territorial conflicts that put Beijing in a bad light.

In Beijing, a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement quoted Wang as telling National Security Adviser Clarita Carlos in Manila that Marcos Jr's election "has turned a new page in China-Philippines relations, and the two peoples are full of expectations for the development of bilateral relations."

The statement did not say if the territorial disputes were taken up. "Our only choice is to be friendly, friendly, and



friendly again," Wang said. Wang arrived in Manila Tuesday night as part of a Southeast Asian swing that brought him earlier to Myanmar and Thailand. He will also visit Malaysia and Indonesia, where he will attend a meeting of G-20 foreign ministers in Bali.

Wang's visit ushers Marcos Jr. Early to touchy foreign diplomacy issues that often had prompted his predecessors to carry out delicate balancing acts. Marcos Jr. Was sworn into office last week after a landslide electoral victory in May. He said in a televised news conference Tuesday that he would discuss with Wang possible ways to resolve Manila's disputes with Beijing in the contested South China Sea but would also propose to broaden ties further.

## Saudi Arabia expecting 1 million in largest Hajj since virus

AP ■ MECCA

One million Muslim pilgrims were converging on Saudi Arabia's holy city of Mecca on Wednesday for the largest hajj since the coronavirus pandemic severely curtailed access to one of Islam's five pillars.

Saudi Arabia's decision to allow some 850,000 Muslims from abroad to

make the annual pilgrimage, which begins on Thursday, marks a major step toward normalcy after two years of a drastically scaled-down hajj restricted to Saudi residents.

The 1 million foreign and domestic pilgrims participating is still far less than the 2.5 million Muslims who traveled in 2019 for the pilgrimage, typically one of the world's largest gatherings.

Those performing the ritual this year must be under 65, vaccinated against the coronavirus and have tested negative for COVID-19 within 72 hours of travel. The pilgrims are chosen from millions of applicants through an online lottery system.

Saudi officials inspected the holy site on Wednesday and stressed their "readiness" to receive pilgrims with the goal of "maintaining public health."

After the coronavirus struck in 2020, Saudi authorities allowed just 1,000 pilgrims already residing in the kingdom to attend, prompting historians to compare the disruption to the site's storming by religious extremists and dramatic closure in 1979.

# Spain's famous Bull Run festival back after 2-year hiatus

AP ■ MADRID

Thousands of revelers erupted in celebration Wednesday as the traditional "chupinazo" firework was ignited to start the San Fermín bull-run festival in the Spanish city of Pamplona, ending a two-year hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Rain did nothing to dampen the atmosphere as crowds, nearly all dressed in the traditional garb of white trousers and shirt with red sash and neckerchief, crammed the tiny town hall square for the noon event.

After the firework exploded, the revellers continued spraying each other with red wine.



The highlight of the nine-day festival are the early morning "encierros," or bull runs, starting on Thursday, when thousands of thrill seekers scramble like mad to avoid six bulls as they charge along a winding, cobblestoned route to the city's bullring.

Spectators watch from balconies and the wooden barricades set up to line the course. The rest of each day is for eating, drinking, dancing and cultural entertainment.

The festival was made world famous by Ernest Hemingway's 1926 novel "The

Sun Also Rises."

Before the pandemic made it impossible to hold in 2020 and 2021, it hadn't been suspended since the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. Former football player and coach Juan Carlos Unzué had the honor of launching the little rocket from the town hall balcony.

Unzué had to retire from coaching in 2018 after being diagnosed with the neurodegenerative disease ALS, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

"This chupinazo" is dedicated to all those health workers and people who helped us during the pandemic, and to all those suffering from ALS. Long live San Fermín," he shouted from a wheelchair to the seething throng below.

## Cairo's historic Nile River houseboats removed in Govt push

AP ■ CAIRO



With verdant gardens on one side and water on the other, they were an anomaly in a city bordered on three sides by desert.

For decades, Cairo's houseboats occupied prime waterfront real estate, offering residents a front-row seat to the passing Nile River, with its water taxis, anglers, sport rowers and occasional family of ducks. But it's coming to an end: A government push to remove the string of float-

ing homes from the city's Nile River banks has dwindled their numbers from several dozen to just a handful.

Houseboats have been a Cairo tradition dating back to the 1800s and government efforts to remove them have drawn

## Israeli army kills Palestinian in West Bank arrest raid

AP ■ JERUSALEM

The Israeli military said it shot and killed a Palestinian man during an arrest raid near the city of Jenin in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday.

The army said that during one of a series of raids carried out across the Palestinian territory, its troops fired at a suspect who attempted to escape arrest in the village of Jaba.

"The force gave medical treatment to the suspect, but later pronounced him dead," the army said. It said the incident was under investigation. The statement said the army was there to arrest suspects involved in terror operations without elaborating.

The Palestinian Health Ministry issued a statement saying it received confirmation of the death of Rafiq Riyad Ghannam from the agency that coordinates affairs with Israel. Wafa, the official Palestinian news agency, said the 20-

year-old man was severely wounded during clashes in the village.

Ghannam was the second Palestinian from Jaba killed in recent days. On Sunday the Palestinian Foreign Ministry said 19-year-old Kamel Abdallah Alwaneh died a day after he was shot by Israeli troops. The army said soldiers came under attack "during routine security activity near the town of Jaba" and shot a man suspected of throwing a firebomb.

The Israeli military has carried out near-daily raids in Palestinian towns and villages in the West Bank following a series of deadly attacks by Palestinians earlier this year that killed 19 Israelis, with several of the attackers coming from the Jenin area. Dozens of Palestinians have been killed in these Israeli army raids. Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war and the Palestinians seek it as the heartland of a future state.

## OPEC secretary-general dies, just weeks shy of departure

AP ■ ABUJA

The Secretary-General of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries has died, Nigerian authorities and the oil cartel announced Wednesday. Only hours before his death, he'd met with Nigeria's president and spoken in defence of the energy industry amid increasing climate change pressure.

Mohammad Barkindo, 63, died late Tuesday in Abuja, a spokesman for Nigeria's petroleum ministry told The Associated Press. The reason for his death was not immediately known.

The Vienna-based oil cartel also confirmed his death, saying he was a "much-loved leader" of OPEC.

His death came as a surprise to industry insiders. His second term as head of OPEC was set to end in three weeks on July 31. He'd held the post for six years since 2016. Barkindo's death was first confirmed in a tweet by the managing director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company, Mele Kyari.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

This is for notice of the general public that a political party is proposed to be registered by the name of "Bharatiya Pravasi Janata Party". The office of The Party is Located at 407, DLF Centre Point, Main Mathura Road, Metro Piller No. 845, Sector-11, Faridabad (Delhi NCR) 121006. This Party has submitted application to the Election Commission of India, New Delhi for its registration as Political Party under Section 29A of the Representation of People Act, 1951- Name/address of the office bearers of the Party are as follows :  
President/Chairman : Dr. AJAY TIWARI  
General Secretary/Secretary : SAPNA TIWARI  
Treasurer : SANTOSH TIWARI  
Add : J-86, DLF Sector-10, Faridabad-121006  
If any one has any objection to the registration of "Bharatiya Pravasi Janata Party" they may send their objection with reasons therefor, to the Secretary (Political) Election Commission of India, Ninadran Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001 within 30 days of the publication of this notice.

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It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Rajjo Sharma W/o. Mr. Ghanshyam Pandey who is purchasing the Plot No.5B, area measuring 30 Sq. Yds. (25.08 Sq. Mtrs.), falling under Khosra No.259, situated in Prakash Nagar, Khora Colony, Teshil and Distt. Ghaziabad (U.P.); from Mr. Phool Singh who is owner of the aforesaid property vide Notarized General Power of Attorney vide dated 10.10.2008 (in which Plot no. 5B is not mentioned) and same to be finance & mortgage by Shubham Housing Development Finance Company Limited. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim / right / title / interest / creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc.

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# 12 killed in Ukraine as Russia pounds rebel-claimed province

AP ■ KRAMATORSK, UKRAINE

Russian shelling killed at least eight civilians in Ukraine over the past 24 hours and wounded 25 more, Ukrainian officials said Wednesday. Pro-Russia separatists said attacks by Ukrainian forces killed four civilians.

The Ukrainian presidential office said Russian forces targeted cities and villages in the country's southeast, with most civilian casualties occurring in Donetsk province, where Russia stepped up its offensive in recent days.

Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said in a Telegram post that two people died in the city of Avdiivka, which is located in the center of the province, and the Donetsk cities of Sloviansk, Krasnohorivka and Kurakhove each reported one civilian killed.

"Every crime will be punished," he wrote.

Kyrylenko urged the province's more than 350,000 remaining residents to flee late Tuesday, saying that evacuating Donetsk was necessary to save lives and allow the Ukrainian army to put up a better defense against the Russian advance.

Donetsk is part of the Donbas, a mostly Russian-speaking industrial area where Ukraine's most experienced soldiers are concentrated. Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday declared the complete seizure of the region's other province, Luhansk, after Ukrainian troops withdrew from the last city under their control.

Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai denied Wednesday that the Russians had completely captured the province. Heavy fighting continued in villages around Lysychansk, the city Ukrainians soldiers withdrew from and which Russian troops took on Sunday, he said.

"The Russians have paid a high price, but the Luhansk region is not fully captured by the Russian army," Haidai said. "Some settlements have been overrun by



each side several times already."

He accused Russian forces of scorched earth tactics, "burning down and destroying everything on their way."

Up to 15,000 residents remain in Lysychansk and some 8,000 in the nearby city of Sievierodonetsk, which Russian and separatist fighters seized last month, Haidai said.

Pro-Russian separatists have fought Ukrainian forces and controlled much of the Donbas for eight years. Before Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, Putin recognized the independence of the two self-proclaimed separatist republics in the region.

Separatist authorities in Donetsk said Wednesday that four civilians were killed and another 14 wounded in Ukrainian shelling over the past 24 hours. News reports said shelling hit an ammunition depot on Tuesday, triggering massive explosions.

Since Russian forces failed to make inroads in capturing Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, Moscow has concentrated its offensive

on seizing the remaining Ukrainian-held areas of the Donbas.

To the north of Donetsk, Russian forces also hit Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, with missile strikes overnight, the Kharkiv regional governor said Wednesday on Telegram.

Three districts of the city were targeted, Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said. One person was killed and three, including a toddler, sustained injuries, according to the governor. A missile struck a building where military registration takes place. A government building next door remained intact, and people just steps away glanced at the wreckage in passing.

Closer to the front line and in a more abandoned district of the city, first responders crunched through the debris of another overnight attack at the national teaching university in Kharkiv. Pages of dusty textbooks flapped in the breeze.

The attacks indicated the city, which is located close to the Russian border, is unlikely to get a reprieve as the war grinds on into its fifth month.



## Putin's aide warns US against pressing for war crimes court

AP ■ MOSCOW

A top Russian official warned the U.S. Wednesday that it could face the "wrath of God" if it pursues efforts to help establish an international tribunal to investigate Russia's action in Ukraine.

Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy secretary of Russia's Security Council chaired by President Vladimir Putin, denounced the U.S. for what he described as its efforts to "spread chaos and destruction across the world for the sake of 'true democracy.'"

"The entire U.S. history since the times of subjugation of the native Indian population represents a series of bloody wars," Medvedev charged in a long diatribe on his Telegram channel, pointing out the U.S. nuclear bombing of Japan during World War II and the war in Vietnam. "Was anyone held responsible for those crimes? What tribunal condemned the sea of blood spilled by the U.S. there?"

Responding to the U.S.-backed calls for an international tribunal to prosecute the perceived war crimes by Russia in Ukraine, Medvedev rejected it as an attempt by the U.S. "to judge others while staying immune from any trial."

"It won't work with Russia, they know it well," Medvedev concluded. "That's why the rotten dogs of war are barking in such a disgusting way." "The U.S. and its useless stooges should remember the words of the Bible: Do not judge and you will not be judged ... so that the great day of His wrath doesn't come to their home one day," Medvedev said, referring to the Apocalypse.

The warning follows a series of tough statements from Putin and his officials that pointed at the Russian nuclear arsenals to warn the West against interfering with Moscow's action in Ukraine.

Medvedev, who served as Russia's president in 2008-2012 when Putin shifted into the prime minister's post due to term limits, was widely seen by the West as more liberal compared with his mentor.

# Blinken sets G-20 meeting with Chinese FM; silent on Russia



AP ■ WASHINGTON

Secretary of State Antony Blinken will see his Chinese counterpart this week at a meeting of foreign ministers from the Group of 20 bloc of nations that will likely exacerbate splits over Russia's war in Ukraine.

While strained US-China ties will be the focus of Blinken's talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, the broader G-20 gathering in Indonesia of leading industrialised nations will almost certainly be overshadowed by the Ukraine conflict and its effect on global food and energy security.

And, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will be there, marking the first time that he and Blinken will be in the same room, let alone the same city, at the same time in nearly six months.

The State Department announced Tuesday that Blinken would meet with Wang in Bali, but had little to say

about the possibility of him seeing Lavrov, who the US has shunned since the Ukraine invasion in February.

US officials have accused Lavrov and other Russian diplomats of a lack of seriousness in the run-up to the Ukraine war.

The Biden administration has ruled out "business as usual" with Russia while it remains in Ukraine and US officials said there would be no formal discussions between Blinken and Lavrov in Bali. But, they could not rule out the possibility of a chance encounter, which would their first since they last met in Geneva in January.

"The secretary intends to engage fully in the G-20. I'm not going to speak to any plans on the part of Foreign Minister Lavrov ... But I can tell you the secretary will be a full and active participant in the G-20, which we see as a valuable forum," State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters.

## EU chief warns of danger of complete cut-off of Russian gas



AP ■ BRUSSELS

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said Wednesday that the 27-nation Europe Union needs to make emergency plans to prepare for a complete cut-off of Russian gas in the wake of the Kremlin's war in Ukraine.

The EU has already imposed sanctions on Russia, including on some energy supplies, and is gearing away from Kremlin-controlled deliveries, but von der Leyen said the bloc needed to be ready for shock disruptions coming from Moscow.

"We also need to prepare now for further disruption of gas supply and even a complete cut-off of Russian gas supply," von der Leyen told the EU legislature in Strasbourg, France.

## Resolution seeking independent probe into Father Stan Swamy's death introduced in US Congress

PTI ■ NEW YORK

A resolution commemorating the life of Indian human rights defender Father Stan Swamy and seeking an independent investigation into the death of the Jesuit priest has been introduced in the US Congress, Congressman Juan Vargas has said.

Vargas, the Representative from the US state of California, announced that he recently introduced the resolution in Congress to commemorate Swamy "and to encourage an independent investigation" into his death.

The resolution, co-sponsored by Representatives Andre Carson and James McGovern, has been introduced in the US House of Representatives and coincides with the first anniversary of 84-year-old Swamy's death in police custody.

Vargas, a Democratic Party Congressman, spoke at a webinar titled "Persecution of Religious Minorities and their Defenders in India: Commemorating Father Stan's Death in Custody" on Tuesday.

UK MP Neale Hanvey, MEP Alviina Alametsa (EU), Senator David Shoebriidge (Australia), and UN Special Rapporteur Mary Lawlor addressed the event.



The webinar was co-organised by Front Line Defenders, Hindus for Human Rights, the Humanism Project, India Civil Watch International, and Survival International, and co-sponsored by Adivasi Lives Matter, Dalit Solidarity Forum, the Federation of Indian American Christian Organizations of North America (FIA-CONA), and the Indian American Muslim Council, a joint press release said.

The panelists noted Swamy's extensive service fighting for the rights of Adivasi people, it added.

"I am appalled by the abuse Father Stan faced while in custody. No one who fights for human rights should face such violence and neglect," said Vargas.

## Russian Foreign Minister stops in Vietnam ahead of G-20

AP ■ HANOI

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Vietnam on Wednesday as part of an effort to bolster ties with a country that has not openly condemned its invasion of Ukraine.

Lavrov, on his way to the Indonesian island of Bali for a G-20 meeting, sought to strengthen ties with Vietnam, which also has a strong relationship with the United States.

Lavrov is currently on a trip to Asia to seek support amid his country's diplomatic isolation by the West and punishing sanc-



tions levelled over its invasion of Ukraine.

He had visited Mongolia a day before arriving in Vietnam's capital Hanoi.

Mongolia also retains ties

with Moscow but has burgeoning relations with Washington.

The visit comes as the two countries marked 10 years since expanding their relationship to a strategic partnership.

The Soviet Union was a close backer of Hanoi's Communist government during the Vietnam War against the capitalist south and its American and other Western allies.

Lavrov is scheduled to depart Vietnam on Wednesday afternoon and travel to Indonesia to attend a meeting of foreign ministers from the Group of 20 leading rich and developing countries.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

The Public at large is hereby informed that Late Balbir Singh Bakshi S/o Harbans Singh R/o H-65, Ground Floor South Extension Part 1, New Delhi-110049 was having residential property in joint ownership along with his son Manee Singh, in our project Vastika Lifestyle homes flat no. S5-005 Ground floor admeasuring 747 sq.ft. which his legal heir Manee Singh requested the company to transfer to entirely on his Name. Any person having any objection on this please may contact the company office details as under within 15 days after which No Claim would be accepted.

**Vatika Limited,**  
A-002, Ground Floor, Block A, Vastika INXT City Centre, Sec.- 83, Gurugram, (HR), India -122012.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

To, be known to all that my client, **SHRI SURESH CHAND GAUTAM S/O LATE GAUR SHANKAR GAUTAM R/O C-2/2A, Gali No. 4, 2ND FLOOR, SONIA VIHAR, DELHI-110044**, is the **mutual/owner of PROPERTY BEHANG INDUSTRIAL PLOT NO.17, BLOCK-B, AREA MEASURING 1625 SQ. YDS., IN THE LAYOUT PLAN OF LAWRENCE ROAD INDUSTRIAL AREA, DELHI**, have applied for Conversion of leased/hold from freehold of the aforesaid property in IDA. The original documents i.e. Original **PERPETUAL LEASE DEED**, and **D FORMS, SANCTION PLAN, DEMAND LETTER, POSSESSION LETTER AND OTHER RELATED DOCUMENTS** of the above said property have been lost or misplaced by my client and is not traceable inspite of his best efforts. An **FLR/NCR** to this effect has been lodged in the Police Station, Crime Branch, Delhi (LR No.55084/2022 dated 04.07.2022. Any persons) claiming any rights, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above Address/Phone No. 9710146782 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to this property, can personally inform or write to Deputy Director (Industrial), Vias Sadan, New Delhi.

**Naveen Agarwal** (Advocate)  
C/o No. M-7, Near SBI, Western Wing, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi-54

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Reg: Plot No. 209, Phase-I, Sector-6, IMT Manesar Plot No. 209, Phase-I, Sector-6, IMT Manesar measuring 1012.50 sq. meter was allotted by the Corporation to Sh. Chaman Lal Chauhan, Prop. M/s. Champion Engg. Works vide Regular Letter of Allotment dated 09.03.2001. The Corporation has been informed that the original allottee Sh. Chaman Lal Chauhan S/o. Sh. late Sh. Dhanpat Rai had expired on 22.01.2018. The only legal heir of the deceased allottee, Sh. Manoj Chauhan S/o. late Sh. Chaman Lal Chauhan R/o. D-9, Naraina Vihar, Delhi-28 has approached the Corporation for transfer of the plot in question in his favour.

The Corporation is in process of considering their request & transferring the said plot in the name of Sh. Manoj Chauhan S/o. late Sh. Chaman Lal Chauhan. Through this public notice it is here by informed that in case, any of the legal heirs of late Sh. Chaman Lal Chauhan or any other person having reservation/ objection to the said transfer may file his/ her objection in writing before the undersigned or/ HoD (Estate), HSIIDC Limited, C-13-14, Sector-6, Panchkula, Haryana along with an affidavit within a period of 30-days from the date of publication of this notice. In case no response is received within the aforesaid period, it will be presumed that no one has any objection to transfer of the said plot in the name of Sh. Manoj Chauhan S/o. late Sh. Chaman Lal Chauhan and the Corporation shall go ahead with transfer of plot in his favour.

**Estate Manager**  
For and behalf of  
**Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Dev. Corp. Ltd.**  
HSIIDC, IMT Manesar, District - Gurugram

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Be it known to all concerned that My client namely Ranjana Jeremiah have gifted the her share of ground floor of B143 C.R.Park, New Delhi to her son and their legal heirs (specifically mentioned in two separate gift deeds) and have also gifted her share of second floor to her daughter and their legal heirs (specifically mentioned in her gift deed). Further my client have also made a registered will of her share of terrace of B-143, C. R. Park in the name of Kaushik Rai Chaudhary @ Kaushik Roy Chaudhary, her nephew. The same attains finality and are irrevocable, if anyone have any objection may object by filling a written claim to undersigned within 3 days of publication of notice. Further it is made clear that in the will wherever Kaushik Rai Chaudhary name comes will be read as Kaushik Roy Chaudhary.

**Sajal Dhamija (Advocate),**  
S-265, L.G.F., Greater Kailash-I,  
New Delhi-110018

**E-TENDER NOTICE**  
**GUJARAT MARITIME BOARD**  
"Sagar Bhavan", Sector 10/A, Chh/ Road, Opp. Air Force, Gandhinagar 382 010  
Phone 079-2323 8346/47/48/51

Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB) invites E-tenders from the NABET accredited consultants for the following works.

Name of Work	
"Obtaining amendment in existing Environmental and CRZ clearance for Modernization of Navlakhi Port, District-Morbi, Gujarat"	
Details	
Bids downloading commencement Date	07-07-2022 from 15:00 hrs
Last Date for On-line submission of Bids through www.nprocure.com	18-08-2022 up to 18:10 hrs
Detailed terms and conditions and other related information is given in bid documents. For bid documents and more details, please visit website www.nprocure.com or www.gmbports.org or contact Deputy General Manager (Env), Environment Cell, Gujarat Maritime Board, Gandhinagar.	
No/INF/VPN/2022/G/798	

**UJVNL LTD.**  
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006  
Telephones: 0135- 2763508, 2763808. Fax: 0135-2763507  
CIN No. U40101UR2007SGC025866, Website-www.ujvnl.com

**RO No.: 403 e-Tender Notice Date: 06-07-2022**  
Office of Executive Engineer (Maint.), Ramganga Power Station, UJVNL Limited, Kalagarh, Dist. Pauri Garhwal invites online tender from interested parties. Detail of tender are given below.  
**e-Tender No. 10/EE(M)/RPSK/2022-23**  
**Name of work/supply/ services etc.-: Major overhauling of Unit-1**  
**Estimated cost : Rs. 3,75,27,277.00 plus GST Extra**  
**Date of availability of bid document on website :06/07/2022**  
**Last date for submission of tender : 28/07/2022 up to 16.00 Hrs.**  
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "http://uktenders.gov.in"

**EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (M)**  
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

**ESAF**  
ESAF SMALL FINANCE BANK  
REGD. OFFICE: ESAF Bhavan, Mananthy, Thrissur- 680 651, Kerala.

**GOLD AUCTION NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given for the information of all concerned that Gold ornaments pledged with ESAF Small Finance Bank and not redeemed by borrowers, despite repeated reminders and notices, of our branches, are listed below. This will be auctioned as per the details given below:

DATE OF AUCTION	08-07-2022	TIME	2 pm to 4 pm
AUCTION VENUE	THROUGH E-AUCTION		
AUCTION ADDRESS	https://gold.motextnet.org/		

To register as bidder for the E-Auction with terms and conditions, and full details of e-Auction please visit the above site

BRANCH NAME - LOAN ACCOUNT NUMBER
New Delhi-Mayur Vihar: 63210000780285, 781303,
New Delhi-Karoli Bagh: 63210000788731, 780405, 799180, 814673

Customers who are interested to release the ornaments by paying the total due amount may do so, at the respective branches, on or two days before the date of the auction.

Bidders who wish to participate in the auction shall produce their KYC documents. GST No. is mandatory for registered firms/companies. Bidders shall deposit a sum of Rs.50,000 as EMD before participating in the auction.

Thiruvur Date: 06/07/2022

**Sd/-**  
Authorized Signatory

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Whereas Hasta Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd. is in the process of undertaking of development of Group Housing Colony in Sector-99A, Gurugram over an area measuring 11.5875 Acres in the revenue estate of village-Gopalpur, Gurugram in accordance with the provision of License no. 37 of 2013 dated 03.06.2013 granted by Director General, Town & Country Planning, Haryana, Chandigarh.

And whereas, several individuals have made bookings/entered into purchase agreement for allotment of property in the said colony (hereinafter referred as allottees).

And whereas, the layout plan earlier approved at the time of grant of license for the said colony is now proposed to be revised.

And whereas, the office of Director General, Town & Country Planning, Haryana, Chandigarh has required seeking of objection against the revision of layout plan as a pre-condition for allowing such revision in the layout plan. Accordingly, vide this public notice objections are hereby invited from any of the allottees in the said colony on the proposed revision of the layout plan of the said colony. A copy of the earlier approved layout plan bearing drawing no. Master Site Layout-SP-1.1, dated 26.05.2014 & the layout plan now proposed to be revised bearing drawing no. Master Site Layout-SP-1.1, dated 01.07.2022 is available for perusal on website www.hastainfra.in. The said layout plan can also be perused at 296, Forest Lane, Neb Sarai, Sainik Farms, New Delhi-110068 as well as in the office of Senior Town Planner at Sector-14, Gurugram, Haryana.

Any allottee having any objection on revised layout plan, may file his objection in the office of Senior Town Planner, Sector-14, Gurugram, Haryana within 30 days of the publication of this notice, failing which it shall be assumed that there are no objections to the proposed revision in the layout plan.

**For Hasta Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd.**  
**Place:** Delhi  
**Date:** 07.07.2022



# RBI liberalises norms to boost forex inflows



**Mumbai:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday further liberalised norms to boost inflows of foreign exchange, including doubling the borrowing limit under the ECB route, amid the rupee falling against the US dollar.

In a statement, the central bank said it has been closely and continuously monitoring the liquidity conditions in the forex market and has stepped in as needed in all its segments to alleviate dollar tightness with the objective of ensuring orderly market functioning.

The measures taken by the central bank comes in the backdrop of rupee depreciating by 4.1 per cent against the US dollar during the current finan-

cial year so far (up to July 5) amid the ongoing geopolitical tensions.

“In order to further diversify and expand the sources of forex funding so as to mitigate volatility and dampen global spillovers”, the central bank said it has decided to undertake five measures to enhance forex inflows while ensuring overall macroeconomic and financial stability.

The measures include easing norms for FPI investment in debt market, and increasing the External Commercial Borrowing (ECB) limit under the automatic route from USD 750 million or its equivalent per financial year to USD 1.5 billion.

**PTI**

# Govt notifies procedural changes in GST rules



**New Delhi:** The Government has notified certain procedural changes in the GST rules, including those related to threshold, for filing annual returns for the 2021-22 fiscal, a move that will help ease the compliance burden on small players.

The changes were vetted by the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council at its meeting last week.

With the amendments notified by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), businesses have also been allowed to make tax payments on the GSTN portal by using IMPS and UPI payment modes.

Businesses with aggregate annual turnover of up to Rs 2 crore in the fiscal ended March 31, 2022 are exempt from filing annual returns for 2021-22, as per the amended rules.

KPMG in India Partner (Indirect Tax) Abhishek Jain said these changes will help the small players in undertaking compliances, and will lighten the burden for taxpayers with less than Rs 2 crore turnover to the extent of filing of annual returns under GST.

**AMRG & Associates**

Senior Partner Rajat Mohan said other important changes include extension of time-limit specified under Section 73 (determination of tax) under the GST Act for issuance of an order for FY 2017-18 to September 30, 2023.

However, no extensions have been provided for any other financial year.

“In relation to the delayed filing of refund applications during the COVID period (March 1, 2020 to February 28, 2022), suitable extension has been granted that will enable numerous exporters to encash the refunds stuck in litigation,” Mohan said.

Jain said that considering the COVID scenario of the last two years for India, the government has extended the limitation period under GST for

issuance of notice to taxpayers who have not paid/ short paid the tax due. Similarly, relaxation in limitation is granted for filing refunds.

“While the intention of the government is to curb revenue leakage, this change keeps the businesses exposed to departmental audits and assessments for some additional time. This being said, this change also ensures that genuine taxpayers are not denied their refund claims,” Jain added.

According to Mohan, the manner of calculation of interest on delayed payment of tax has been notified and that would help taxpayers in making precise calculation of the tax dues.

As per the amended rules, every invoice issued by an MSME supplier will have a standard declaration printed on invoice regarding non-applicability of e-invoice.

Also, cash ledger balance can be transferred from one GST registered entity to another under the same PAN.

The changes were approved by the GST Council, comprising finance ministers of Centre and state, at its June 28-29 meeting.

**PTI**

# Sensex, Nifty rebound over 1% as financials, FMCG shares gain



**Mumbai:** Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded over 1 per cent on Wednesday following buying in FMCG, financials and auto stocks amid softening crude oil prices and foreign funds turning net buyers of domestic equities after a long gap.

The 30-share BSE barometer climbed 616.62 points or 1.16 per cent to settle at 53,750.97 as 25 of its shares ended in the green. During the day, it rallied 684.96 points or 1.28 per cent to 53,819.31.

The NSE Nifty shot up 178.95 points or 1.13 per cent to 15,989.80 with 40 constituents posting gains.

Among Sensex shares, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever, Asian Paints, Titan, Maruti Suzuki India, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Nestle were the major gainers.

Power Grid, NTPC, Reliance Industries, Larsen & Toubro and Tata Steel were the laggards.

Softening crude oil prices, FIIs repositioning to net buyers and strong business data from lenders boosted domestic equities, Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Crude prices fell sharply by 10 per cent on Tuesday which “boosted the appetite for consumption, chemicals, logistics and OMCs as it will reduce the cost burden of these sectors”, Nair said.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.76 per cent and smallcap index climbed 0.94 per cent.

Among the BSE sectoral indices, auto jumped 2.73 per cent, followed by consumer discretionary goods & services (2.47 per cent), FMCG (2.45 per cent), consumer durables (2.42 per cent) and realty (2.39 per cent).

Energy and metal were the only laggards.

“According to preliminary data made public on the NSE, FIIs became net purchasers on July 5 for the first time since May 30, purchasing shares worth Rs 1,295.84 crore,” Mohit Nigam, Head - PMS at Hem Securities, said.

Elsewhere in Asia, markets in Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul ended lower on Wednesday.

European markets were trading higher in mid-session deals.

The US markets ended mostly higher on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 2.43 per cent to USD 105.3 per barrel.

**PTI**

# LPG price hiked by ₹50; rates up by ₹244 in one yr

**New Delhi:** Cooking gas LPG price on Wednesday was hiked by ₹50 per cylinder, the third increase in rates since May on firming international energy prices.

Non-subsidised LPG now costs ₹1,053 per 14.2-kg cylinder in the national capital, up from ₹1,003 previously, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

Common households pay non-subsidised rates for the cooking gas they buy, after the government restricted subsidy to just poor beneficiaries who got connections under the Ujjwala scheme.

This is the third increase in the LPG rate since May and the fourth this year. The price was hiked by ₹50 per cylinder on March 22 and again by the same quantum on May 7. Rates went up by ₹3.50 per cylinder on May 19.

Prices have gone up by ₹244 per cylinder since June 2021. Of this, ₹153.50 increase happened since March 2022.

Petrol and diesel prices, however, continue to be on



freeze for the third straight month. The pause followed rates being hiked by a record ₹10 per litre in a matter of 16 days beginning March 22.

In May, the government cut excise duty on petrol by ₹8 per litre and diesel by ₹6 per litre to cool soaring inflation.

At that time, the government also stated that ₹200 per cylinder subsidy on cooking gas will be limited to only 9 crore poor women and other beneficiaries who got free connections under the Ujjwala scheme and the remaining

users including households will pay the market price (also known as non-subsidised rate).

Originally, non-subsidised cooking gas was the one that consumers used to buy after exhausting their quota of 12 cylinders at subsidised or below-market rates. However, the government stopped paying subsidy on LPG to households in mid-2020. Non-subsidised LPG costs ₹1,052.50 per 14.2-kg cylinder in Mumbai, while it is priced at ₹1,079 a bottle in Chennai and Rs 1,068.50 in Kolkata.

**PTI**

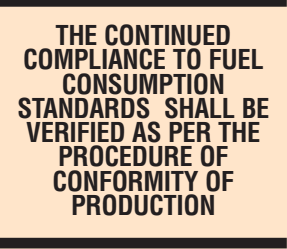
# Govt proposes implementation of fuel consumption standards for all vehicles from April next year

**New Delhi:** With an aim to reduce pollution and introduce more fuel-efficient vehicles, the Government has proposed to make it mandatory for light, medium and heavy duty motor vehicles of various categories to comply with fuel consumption standards from April 2023, according to an official statement.

The statement said the continued compliance to fuel consumption standards shall be verified as per the procedure of conformity of production, outlined in the Automotive Industry Standard 149.

“The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has issued a notification dated 1st July 2022, amending Rule 115 G of the Central Motor Vehicle Rules (CMVR) 1989, to include compliance with Fuel Consumption Standards (FCS), for light, medium and heavy duty motor vehicles of various categories, manufactured in, or imported by, India,” it said.

Prior to this notification, the statement said, compli-



ance with annual fuel consumption standard was applicable to vehicles of M1 category (motor vehicle used for carriage of passengers, comprising not more than 8 seats, in addition to the driver's seat) with Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) up to 3.5 tonnes.

The MoRTH in a statement said the aim of this notification is to expand the ambit of vehicles for compliance with FCS, and hence introduce more fuel efficient vehicles.

The statement further said the date of applicability of this notification is April 1, 2023 and comments have been invited from all stakeholders within 30 days from the date of the notification.

**PTI**

# Gold falls ₹760; silver tumbles ₹1,276

**New Delhi:** Gold prices in the national capital on Wednesday fell by ₹760 to ₹51,304 per 10 grams, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the yellow metal settled at ₹52,064 per 10 grams.

Silver also tumbled by ₹1,276 to ₹56,930 per kg from ₹58,206 per kg in the previous trade.

In the international market, gold was trading higher at USD 1,770 per ounce while silver was flat at USD 19.94 per ounce.

“Gold prices traded firm with spot gold prices at COMEX trading 0.35 per cent up at USD 1,770 per ounce,” said Tapan Patel, Senior Analyst (Commodities) at HDFC Securities.

**PTI**

# Rupee rises 3 paise to close at 79.30 against US dollar

Mumbai, Jul 6 (PTI) The rupee recovered from its all-time low to close 3 paise higher at 79.30 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday after a sharp fall in crude oil and foreign fund inflows.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 79.29 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 79.24 and a low of 79.37. It finally settled at 79.30, a rise of 3 paise over its previous close. In the previous session, the rupee had closed at an all-time low of 79.33 against the US dollar.

“The Indian rupee recovered on Wednesday from lower levels on positive domestic equities and sharp decline in crude oil prices. FII inflows also supported Rupee,” Anuj Choudhary Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas said, adding that firm Dollar capped sharp gains.

A firm tone in the US Dollar and deteriorating global risk sentiments weighed on the investor sentiment.

“Any further foreign



inflows may support the Rupee. Crude oil prices slipped below USD 100/barrel yesterday. If crude sustains below USD 100 mark, it may support Rupee at lower levels,” Choudhary said.

Traders would be looking at Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) minutes too for clues to the Fed's possible rate hike paths, Choudhary said, adding that rupee may trade in the range of 78.50-80 in the next couple of sessions.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 616.62 points or 1.16 per cent higher at 53,750.97, while the broader NSE Nifty advanced 178.95 points or 1.13 per cent to 15,989.80.

**PTI**

# City Union Bank to raise up to ₹500cr via QIP

**New Delhi:** City Union Bank on Wednesday said it will raise ₹500 crore from qualified institutional players.

The board of directors at a meeting approved raising of further capital through the QIP route to the tune of ₹500 crore, City Union Bank said in a regulatory filing.

The private sector lender said that its annual general meeting (AGM) is scheduled to be held on August 18, 2022, and it will seek shareholders approval for the capital raise plan. The lender said that last year also it obtained shareholders' approval for raising capital through QIP but it didn't utilised the same.

Shares of CUB closed at ₹141.55 apiece on BSE, up by 1.11 per cent from previous close.

**PTI**

# SBI renews MoU with Air Force for defence salary package

**Mumbai:** State Bank of India (SBI) on Wednesday said it has renewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Air Force for the Defence Salary Package (DSP) scheme.

Under this scheme, it will offer various benefits and features to all serving and retired Air Force personnel and their families. The lender offers extensive benefits to the Air Force personnel such as complimentary personal accidental insurance, air accidental insurance, and additional cover in case of on-duty death (during action), a release said.

Insurance cover for permanent total disability / partial disability is also available.

“At SBI, we endeavor to support the undying efforts of the Air Force personnel in securing the safety of our nation and its citizens. We will continue to provide tailor-made solutions to defence personnel under our flagship defence salary scheme,” the bank's Chairman Dinesh Khara said in the release.

The bank said in case of death of the Air Force personnel, the family of the deceased is provided with add-on covers for child education and marriage of girl child.

Additionally, the retired personnel will be eligible for complimentary personal accidental insurance, irrespective of their age.

**PTI**

# PTC India records all-time high trade volume of 87,515 MU in 2021-22

**New Delhi:** Power trading solutions provider PTC India traded all-time high volume of 87,515 million units during 2021-22, registering a growth of 9 per cent as compared to the previous fiscal, according to a company statement.

In the March quarter, the trade volume increased by 6 per cent to 17,329 MUs from 16,279 MUs in the same period a year ago.

Earnings per share (EPS) stood at ₹14.35 per share for 2021-22 on a standalone basis.

Its consulting income for the March quarter has grown by 24 per cent to ₹11.25 crore vis-a-vis ₹9.05 crore in the corresponding quarter of FY21.

Rajib K Mishra, CMD in-charge and Director (M&BD) at PTC India, said, “The company has exceeded the bench-



mark of all-time high traded volumes set last year. PTC has traded over 87 billion units for the financial year 2021-22. While the seasonality in a particular quarter is a function of

post Covid-led disruptions. The growth has been primarily driven by short term trades and the exchange traded segments, he added.

“As always, PTC continues to trade in every segment of the market. The availability of coal, sustainable power from renewable sources and weather driven electricity demand patterns are new challenges of the sector which also present opportunities for bespoke solutions,” he said.

The company is developing its technology solutions and service offering for the evolving market, he added.

“Our consultancy business continues to make deeper inroads with a 24 per cent increase in consultancy income and winning orders in newer and complex segments.

# ICRA appoints Anand Iyer as Group Chief Technology Officer

**New Delhi:** Ratings agency ICRA on Wednesday announced the appointment of Anand Iyer as its Group Chief Technology Officer.

Iyer will be responsible for driving the digital strategy for ICRA Limited at group level and its subsidiaries to strengthen company's technological capabilities, thought leadership, and contribute to the growth of the group.

“Establishing a Group CTO role within ICRA is critical as we continue the journey of our digital initiatives to support its strategic growth plans,” Ramnath Krishnan, MD and Group CEO at ICRA Ltd, said.

Iyer comes with 24 years of experience in the financial services sector.

**PTI**

# Lamborghini launches new model Aventador Ultimae Coupé in India

**Mumbai:** Italian supercar maker Automobili Lamborghini on Wednesday launched the Aventador Ultimae Coupé in India, weeks after it showcased the limited edition Aventador LP 780-4 Ultimae Roadster in the domestic market.

The company said it will make only 350 units of the Ultimae Coupe and 250 of the Roadster globally.

Lamborghini, however, did not disclose the prices of the Aventador Ultimae Coupé.

“We are delighted to unveil the first Aventador LP 780-4 Ultimae Coupé in the country. Limited to 350 units of Coupé version worldwide, the Ultimae has the highest-performing naturally aspirated V12 engine in Lamborghini history as well as sophisticated technical solutions and unrivalled styling,” said Sharad Agarwal, head of Lamborghini India.

It is the most powerful Aventador ever built,



and “we are thrilled to introduce it to our Lamborghini clients and enthusiasts in India,” he said.

The Aventador LP 780-4 Ultimae Coupé comes in a single-tone, purple configuration, with lines and details such as the front splitter's outline and ‘teeth’ picked out in purple, among others, the company said.

**PTI**

# Govt taking steps to fix post-production challenges in agriculture sector: Tomar

**New Delhi:** Post-production in the agriculture sector is definitely a challenge and the government has taken many steps to build necessary infrastructure to address this issue by setting up of eNAM and other facilities, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said on Wednesday.

To address the post-production challenges, Tomar said the government has connected about 1,000 regulated wholesale mandis with electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) so far, sanctioned Rs 9,500 crore for 13,000 projects under the Agri-Infra Fund,



and encouraging setting up of farmer producer organisations (FPOs) besides promoting technologies like drones.

“Not production, but post production is definitely a problem today,” Tomar said addressing a conference on ‘Getting Agriculture Markets right’

organised jointly by National Stock Exchange and ICRIER.

Tomar also mentioned that efforts to address the post-production issues were made from time to time in the past but desired results could not be achieved.

However, in the last eight years, several steps have been taken to fix the post-production issues so that farmers get better prices and their income improves, he said.

He also said that there is a good market for organic products as their exports have risen.

**PTI**

# ‘Need MSP till mrkts get competitive, but should not be given through procurement’

**New Delhi:** The minimum support price on agri crops should continue as long as markets become competitive and efficient, but it should be given through means other than procurement, government think-tank Niti Aayog member Ramesh Chand said on Wednesday.

Chand -- while addressing a conference on ‘Getting agriculture markets right’ -- organised jointly by National Stock Exchange and ICRIER -- said: “Deficiency Pricing Payment (DPP)” is one such means of giving MSP (Minimum Support Price) to farmers, but cautioned that DPP cannot be

stopped once implemented.

Under DPP, the difference between the open market price and MSP is given to farmers, he said, adding that it has been implemented in some states like Madhya Pradesh.

MSP is a minimum price at which the government undertakes procurement. MSP is fixed for 22-23 crops. Rice and wheat are largely procured crops by the government.

“In some cases, MSP is justified in times of volatility in prices and glut. I feel what matters is how we give MSP to farmers. ...MSP has to be there as long as markets are not competitive and efficient.

**PTI**



# HALEP VS RYBAKINA IN WIMBLEDON SEMIS

AP ■ LONDON

Former champion Simona Halep said she is playing her "best tennis" as she set up a Wimbledon semi-final clash with Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina on Wednesday.

Halep, the 2019 winner, comfortably reached her third semi-final at the All England Club with a 6-2, 6-4 victory over Amanda Anisimova of the United States.

Russian-born Rybakina became the first player representing Kazakhstan to reach a Grand Slam semi-final when she defeated Ajla Tomljanovic of Australia, 4-6, 6-2, 6-3.

"Definitely this is my best tennis," said Halep, who missed last year's Wimbledon with a calf injury. "I am trying to build my confidence back, and it's good."

The Romanian 16th seed, who was also French Open champion in 2018, broke Anisimova's serve four times in the match, wrapping up victory in just over an hour.

"It's great to be back in the semi-finals," said the former world number one. "I'm very emotional right now. It means a lot."

The 30-year-old took charge early in the match on Centre Court, racing into a 5-1 lead and taking the set 6-2.

It was a similar story in the second set, with Halep again dominating and going 5-1 up with a double break.

Anisimova dug deep, earning her own break of serve when Halep served for the match but the Romanian stayed calm to serve out for the win.

"I had to stay strong on my legs -- they helped me today," said Halep, who has not dropped a set at Wimbledon this year.



Wimbledon this year.

"I also needed my serve -- everything was good, and it finished well."

## RYBAKINA FIGHT BACK

Rybakina came from behind to reach her first Grand Slam semi-final, firing 15 aces past Tomljanovic,

who had also made the last-eight in 2021.

"It is amazing. I am really happy to be into the semi-final. It was a really tough match," said the 23-year-old Moscow-born player.

"I started a bit slow, I didn't serve that well.

"Maybe I was nervous. She

played really well and was defending really good but I just tried to focus on my serve and try to find my way and in the end I found it."

Rybakina switched nationality in 2018. This year Russian and Belarusian players are banned from Wimbledon following the invasion of Ukraine.

Rybakina fired five aces in the first set but her 10 winners were cancelled out by her 10 unforced errors.

The steadier Tomljanovic did not concede a break point while a single break in the third game was enough to hand her the opener.

Back came Moscow-born

## Kyrgios in last 4



AP ■ LONDON

Nick Kyrgios advanced to the semifinals at a Grand Slam tournament for the first time by beating Cristian Garin 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (5) on Centre Court at Wimbledon.

Kyrgios reached the quarterfinals at the All England Club when he made his debut at the grass-court major in 2014 but this year was his first time getting back to that stage.

The Australian is the lowest ranked and first unseeded men's semifinalist since 2008. He is currently ranked 40th.

Kyrgios will face either two-time champion Rafael Nadal or Taylor Fritz in the semifinals on Friday.

Coco Gauff and Jack Sock have been eliminated from the mixed doubles tournament at Wimbledon.

The American pair lost to Australian duo Sam Stosur and Matthew Ebden in the semifinals 6-3, 5-7, 7-5 on No. 3 Court.

Both Gauff and Sock reached the third round in the singles tournaments. Stosur and Ebden will face either Sania Mirza and Mate Pavic or Desirae Krawczyk and Neal Skupski in the final.

Rybakina with a triple break in the second set to level the tie.

She swept through the decider and despite being broken when serving for the match in the seventh game, she made no mistake in the ninth with another ace sealing the win.

Halep and Rybakina have met

three times so far, with the Romanian holding a 2-1 edge.

Their most recent clash came at the 2021 US Open, when Halep came out on top in three sets in the third round.

"It is a big challenge for me. We have already played a few times and it was a tough battle," said Rybakina.

## DE JONG ISN'T FOR SALE, SAYS BARCA PRESIDENT

AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona president Joan Laporta said Wednesday that Dutch midfielder Frenkie de Jong is not for sale despite rumours of a departure to the Premier League.

De Jong "is a Barca player and unless we have a need or interest in selling him, we don't want to sell him," Laporta said as the club unveiled new signing Franck Kessie.

"We know he has offers. If at some moment we were interested, we would consider it, but right now, we're not selling the player," Laporta insisted.

De Jong, 25, has been heavily linked with a move to Manchester United and a reunion with former Ajax boss Erik ten Hag, who is preparing for his first season at Old Trafford.

Laporta revealed the club had made an offer to France international Ousmane Dembele, whose contract with Barca expired at the end of June.

"Ousmane is no longer a Barca player, but we made him an offer," said Laporta. "He hasn't accepted it yet, but he wants to continue talking. "We're going to carry on speaking, at least for now."

Laporta also acknowledged having lunch with Jorge Mendes, the agent of Portugal superstar Cristiano Ronaldo, who is reportedly looking to leave Manchester United. "We discussed the transfer market in general, but I'm not going to specify if he spoke to me about a player in particular," said Laporta.



## Sindhu, Prannoy in 2nd round; Saina knocked out

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu had to toil before emerging victorious in the opening round of the Malaysia Masters while compatriot Saina Nehwal made a second consecutive first-round exit here on Wednesday.

The seventh-seeded Sindhu took close to an hour to knock out China's He Bing Jiao 21-13, 17-21, 21-15 and move to the second round.

With this win, world number seven Sindhu exacted revenge for her first-round exit from the Indonesia Open Super 1000 last month, when Bing Jiao had defeated her in straight games. The Chinese though still leads the head to head 10-9.

London Olympics Bronze medallist Saina, on the other hand, squandered a one-game lead to go down 21-16, 17-21, 14-21 to Kim Ga Eun of South Korea.

The world number 24 Indian had also made a first-round exit from the Malaysia Open Super 750 tournament last week.

In the men's singles, HS Prannoy sailed into the second round after he claimed a comfortable 21-19, 21-14 victory over Frenchman Brice Leverdez.

In the other men's singles events, B Sai Praneeth and Parupalli Kashyap also moved to the second



**WITH THIS WIN, WORLD NUMBER SEVEN SINDHU EXACTED REVENGE FOR HER FIRST-ROUND EXIT FROM THE INDONESIA OPEN SUPER 1000 LAST MONTH, WHEN BING JIAO HAD DEFEATED HER IN STRAIGHT GAMES**

round, but with contrasting wins.

While Praneeth hardly broke a sweat against Kevin Cordon, registering an easy 21-8, 21-9 win over the Guatemalan in less than half an hour, Kashyap came back from a one-game deficit to beat local favourite Tommy Sugiarto 16-21, 21-16, 21-16.

Praneeth will take on Li Shi Feng in the pre-quarterfinals.

However, it was the end of the road for Sameer Verma, who went down fighting to fourth seed Chinese Taipei shuttler Chou Tien Chen 21-10, 12-21, 14-21.

The women's doubles pair of N Sikki Reddy and Ashwini Ponnappa lost 19-21, 21-18, 16-21 to the Indonesian duo of Fabriana Kusuma and Amalia Pratiwi.

## Diksha Dagar to lead Indian contingent

PTI ■ SITGES

Deaflympics gold medallist golfer Diksha Dagar will be leading a six-member Indian contingent in the Estrella Damn Ladies Open, to be held here from this week.

Diksha, who has been performing consistently for over a month, including in the Amundi German Masters, will set her sights at a top-10 finish while also hoping to win the Ladies European Tour for the second time in her career.

In 2019, Diksha became only the second Indian female golfer after Aditi Ashok to win the Ladies European Tour.

The 21-year-old golfer won the gold at the Deaflympics in Brazil this year.

Joining her in the contingent will be Tvesa Malik, who was India's best golfer on the LET Order of Merit last year.

The 26-year-old is currently struggling to find the kind of form that earned her a bunch of top-10s, including a runner-up finish last year.

The other Indians who are part of the six-woman contingent are Amandeep Drall, Vani Kapoor, Ridhima Dilawari and Neha Tripathi.

While Diksha has had only moderate success this season with five cuts in nine



starts and a best of tied 16th finish, Tvesa, on the other hand, has made six cuts in 12 events, while Drall has made five cuts in 11 starts.

The Indians will be facing a strong home challenge with Carlota Ciganda leading it.

Ciganda won the tournament in 2019 and was also part of the play-off for the title two years earlier in 2017.

Ciganda is also the reigning Ladies European Tour winner.

Besides Ciganda, the tournament will feature some of the best names, including the likes of Ana Peláez, Nuria Iñurrioz, María Hernández, and Carmen Alonso.

## Allyson Felix gets mixed relay nod, heading to 10th worlds

AP ■ INDIANAPOLIS

Allyson Felix was named to her 10th world championship team, where she will have a chance to run in the mixed relay event and add to her record medal collection.

Felix, whose 18 medals are the most in world-championship history, has announced that this will be her final season in track. At last month's US Championships, she finished sixth in the 400 meters and did not qualify for any individual events. But the 36-year-old was named to the mixed relay pool Tuesday when USA Track and Field released its 151-person roster for worlds.

The world championships run July 15-24 in Eugene, Oregon.

Missing from the roster was Sha'Carri Richardson, who failed to qualify for the finals of either the 100 or 200 meters at nationals. Richardson won the women's 100 at Olympic trials last year but was banned from the games after testing positive for a substance found in marijuana. Among those named to the women's 4x100 relay pool was Gabby Thomas, the 200-meter champion in 2021 who has been dealing with a hamstring injury this season.

## Ballon d'Or winner Putellas to miss Euro 2022 with knee injury



AP ■ LONDON

Spain's Alexia Putellas, the Sreigning Ballon d'Or winner, has been ruled out of Euro 2022 after tearing the anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee on the eve of the tournament.

"Tests carried out on the Spain international this afternoon ... have confirmed the national team captain suffered a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament," the Spanish football federation said.

Putellas, 28, was expected to be one of the stars of the tour-

## Inaki Williams to play for Ghana

AP ■ MADRID

Athletic Bilbao forward Inaki Williams on Tuesday announced that he will switch his allegiance from Spain to Ghana with the hope of representing the country at the 2022 World Cup.

Born in Bilbao to Ghanaian parents, the 28-year-old Williams, whose younger brother Nico also plays for Athletic, was capped once by Spain in a 2016 friendly.

"I feel the moment has come for me to find my origins within myself and with Africa and Ghana which means so much to me and

name that begins in England on Wednesday.

Spain had already lost their all-time top goalscorer Jennifer Hermoso to injury.

Hermoso, who recently signed for Mexican club Pachuca from Barcelona, sustained a knee injury last month shortly

my family," Williams said on social media.

"I want to return a small part of everything it has given to us because Ghana has played a significant part of becoming who I am as a person, as a son and as a brother.

"Today a new challenge begins. From now on, I will defend Ghana's T-shirt with all my will whilst I give my best. I'm one of the Black Stars," he added.

His availability for Ghana comes as a huge boost ahead of this year's World Cup in Qatar, where the 2010 quarter-finalists will face Portugal, Uruguay and South Korea in Group H.

after joining up with the Spain squad.

Spain were considered one of the favourites as they bid for a first major women's tournament success.

Spain open their campaign against Finland on July 8 in Milton Keynes.

## High jumper Tejaswin Shankar to be part of Indian contingent for Birmingham CWG 2022

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) on Wednesday told the Delhi High Court that it will include the name of Tejaswin Shankar, a high jumper, in the list of players who are part of the Indian contingent for the upcoming 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games.

Justice Yashwant Varma, who was hearing a petition by the sportsman against his exclusion from the team of selected players for the sporting event, directed the AFI to forthwith transmit his name to the Indian Olympics Association (IOA) for further action and said that the court expected both AFI and IOA to proceed further while keeping in mind the prescribed timelines.

The AFI lawyer informed the court that there was a vacancy as one of the athletes, who were part of the Indian contingent for the relay event, was disqualified and therefore the petitioner's name shall now be forwarded in his place.

The Commonwealth

Games (CWG) is scheduled to be held in Birmingham from July 28 to August 8.

"Mr (Hrishikesh) Baruah, learned counsel appearing for AFI, has, on instructions, apprised the court that Arokia Rajiv, an athlete who was part of the four by four hundred relay team, has come to be disqualified in trials which were held," the court recorded in the order.

"He accordingly submits that in view of the resultant vacancy which has occurred, the petitioner's name shall be included and forwarded forthwith amongst the list of athletes part of the Indian contingent for the upcoming CWG," it further noted.

"The statement so made is recorded and accepted. Let AFI consequently and forthwith transmit all particulars to IOA which may take further consequential steps," it said.

The court further said that it would keep the petition pending to examine the issues raised in it so that "this national embarrassment does not happen again".

## Indian shooters eye glory at ISSF WC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A 49-member strong Indian shooting contingent will be eyeing glory when it takes part in the ISSF World Cup in Changwon, Korea from July 9-21.

The tournament assumes significance as the World Championships are also scheduled to be held this year.

The World Cup will be the first major assignment for the five new foreign coaches who have been roped in by the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) recently.

The foreign coaches who have joined the Indian team and will be working closely with the chief coaches are Munkhbayer Dorjusuren (Pistol), Russel Mark (Shotgun), Lauryn Mark (High Performance Manager), Juan Giha (Skeet) and Thomas Farnik (Rifle).

Dorjsuren, Mark, Giha and Farnik are Olympic medallists and represented their countries at the Olympic Games multiple times.

Athletes representing in the 10m rifle and pistol events, along with the trap shooters in three batches, were the first to arrive in Korea on Wednesday, with the rest of the contingent



reaching a day later.

## RAHI PULLS OUT

While star shooters including the likes of Anish Bhanwala, Mairaj Ahmad Khan, Prithviraj Tondaiman, Sanjeev Rajput, Chain Singh, Anjum Moudgil, Manu Bhaker and Aishwary Tomar will be in action, reigning Asian Games champion Rahi Sarnobat has pulled out of the tournament due to medical reasons.

"The team is well prepared after rigorous training in the National camp conducted before the tournament. This is a very important tournament considering the World

Championships are next in line. We wish the team all the very best," said K. Sultan Singh, secretary-general of NRAI.

More than 432 athletes from 44 countries will take part in the tournament in Changwon.

In the previous combined World Cup stage in Baku, Azerbaijan, India had stood fifth with two gold and three silver medals, despite the pistol team choosing to opt out of the tournament.

India had initially planned to skip the Changwon World Cup but the postponement of the Asian Games in China led to an alteration of plans.



# INDIA BEGIN PREPS TO PICK BEST WT20 ELEVEN

PTI ■ SOUTHAMPTON

Experimentation will go out of the window as India will get down to finalising their best eleven for the World Cup during the three-match T20 series against an ultra-aggressive England, beginning here on Thursday.

Skipper Rohit Sharma, who missed the fifth Test in Birmingham after contracting COVID-19, will be travelling to the port city on Wednesday and is expected to feature in the series-opener.

Test players including Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, Ravindra Jadeja, Shreyas Iyer and Rishabh Pant will join the T20 squad from the second game onwards.

Their absence would give fringe players like Ruturaj Gaikwad and Sanju Samson one more game to make a statement though they seem to have fallen in the pecking order in India's list of probables for the World Cup in Australia.

A niggle meant Gaikwad could not open alongside Ishan Kishan in the two games in Ireland and if Rohit is back, he will have to warm the bench once again.

Kishan has done reasonably well in the chances that he has got and he will look to strengthen his position in the team as a reserve opener with a substantial knock against the mighty England.

With Kohli expected to be back at number three from game two, Deepak Hooda will be aiming for another match-winning effort to keep himself in the mix.

With a century and 47 not out against Ireland, Hooda has certainly made it tougher for the team management to keep him out of the eleven.

The uncapped duo of Rahul Tripathi and Arshdeep Singh have not been included for second and third T20 and it is unlikely they will get a look in on Thursday.



Suryakumar Yadav, who made a comeback from injury against Ireland, could not get going in the games in Malahide and will be backing himself to get back to his innovative best. He and Hooda were amongst the runs in the warm-up against Derbyshire last week.

In the bowling department, pacer Umran Malik will be brimming with confidence after defending 17 runs in the last over of a high-scoring second T20 against Ireland. However, he remains a work in progress and needs to improve on his accuracy.

The pacers including the seasoned Bhuvneshwar Kumar and wily Harshal

England vs India  
Live from 10:30pm IST  
SONY SIX, TEN 3

Patel were stunned by the Irish attack and against a tougher opposition, they will have to be at their best.

Yuzvendra Chahal will be expected to replace Ravi Bishnoi in the playing eleven.

India have about 15 T20 games to play before the T20 World Cup in Australia in October -- three against England in the current series, five against the West Indies (July 29-August 7), about 5 in Asia Cup (August-

September) and three against Australia (September).

The England series will mark the beginning of the process to identify its best XI for the marquee event.

For England, the series marks the beginning of the Jos Buttler era following the retirement of Eoin Morgan.

Ben Stokes and star of the fifth Test against India, Jonny Bairstow, have been rested from the series.

However, there is enough firepower in the England batting to rattle the opposition.

Both Buttler and Liam Livingstone showed devastating form in the IPL and would be looking to build on that.

## SQUAD

**England:** Jos Buttler (Captain), Moeen Ali, Harry Brook, Sam Curran, Richard Gleeson, Chris Jordan, Liam Livingstone, Dawid Malan, Tymal Mills, Matthew Parkinson, Jason Roy, Phil Salt, Reece Topley and David Willey.

**India:** Rohit Sharma (Captain), Ishan Kishan, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Sanju Samson, Suryakumar Yadav, Deepak Hooda, Rahul Tripathi, Dinesh Karthik (wk), Hardik Pandya, Venkatesh Iyer, Yuzvendra Chahal, Axar Patel, Ravi Bishnoi, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Harshal Patel, Avesh Khan, Arshdeep Singh, Umran Malik.



## Pant surges to career-best No. 5

PTI ■ DUBAI

India's star wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant blazed his way into a career-best fifth position in the latest ICC Test rankings announced on Wednesday, even as the out-of-form Virat Kohli dropped out of top-10 for the first time in six years.

Pant's meteoric rise in the rankings comes after his heroics in the recently-held COVID-delayed fifth Test between India and England in which he scored 146 and 57 across two innings.

It is worth mentioning that Pant scored two tons and three half centuries in his last six Test innings.

However, former India skipper Kohli dropped four places to 13th in the batting rankings, thanks to a prolonged lean run.

Interestingly, it is for the first time in six years that Kohli has found himself out of top 10 in the Test rankings.

Current Indian captain Rohit Sharma, who missed the Edgbaston Test after testing positive for COVID-19, also dropped one place in the rankings.

England batter Joe Root, who reigned supreme at Edbagston with a sublime 142 in England's second innings, consolidated his position at the top of the rankings with 923 points, with Australians Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith taking the second and third positions respectively.

Jonny Bairstow, who is in the form of his life and played a pivotal role in guiding England to a historic victory with his unbeaten 114, climbed 11 places to 10th in the rankings.

Bairstow has so far scored 1218 runs at an average of 55.36 with six centuries in the current ICC World Test Championship cycle.

# India aim to whitewash Sri Lanka Dhawan to lead India in WI ODIs

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

A confident India will look to complete the formalities and assert their supremacy by completing a whitewash of Sri Lanka in the third and final women's ODI here on Thursday.

Playing ODI cricket for the first time since the talismanic Mithali Raj retired from the game, the Indian team won the opening two games in contrasting fashion to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

The visitors had bagged the preceding T20I series 2-1.

Chasing similar targets, India looked much more confident in the second ODI as they galloped to 10-wicket win on Monday.

India controlled all aspects of the game. It was the kind of dominant display expected out of Harmanpreet Kaur and her troops through out the tour of the island nation.

After an underwhelming tour by their standards, star openers Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma finally joined the party with unbeaten half centuries.

The duo, that had struggled to build a decent partnership and provide electrifying starts in the first ODI and the T20 series, would be keen for an encore in the final game.

New full-time skipper Harmanpreet has been India's most consistent player this series. The all-rounder has shone with the bat, her innings often turning out to be the difference between the two sides.

While, Indian spinners were ruling the roost on the slow tracks in the T20s,



Sri Lanka vs India  
Live from 10:00 am IST  
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## Have made a conscious effort to improve strike rotation: Shafali

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

Young Indian opener Shafali Verma, who is known for her big-hitting prowess, says she is making a conscious effort to improve her strike rotation to become a better cricketer.

The 18-year-old slammed a run-a-ball 71 not out, her career-best score in ODIs, in an unbroken 174-run partnership with Smriti Mandhana (94 not out) as India decimated the hosts by 10 wick-

ets here on Monday to take a unassailable 2-0 lead in the three match series.

The 18-year-old has not been able to maintain consistency in her performances, especially in the 50-over format.

"Having seen my past matches, I thought I lacked in taking singles, so I've worked on it. I'm trying to be better as I feel taking singles is very important to build your innings in ODIs," Shafali said on the eve of the third and final ODI of the series.

the ODI series has belonged to pacer Renuka Singh, who has picked seven wickets in the two 50-over matches, including a career best 4/28.

In the absence of veteran Jhulan Goswami, who has often been the side's best pacer, Renuka's performance shows that that young and relatively inexperienced Indian pace unit has potential.

A 3-0 series win will also boost the visitors' confidence for their next assignment — the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

Sri Lanka will, once again, be keen to pick up a conciliatory win like they did in the T20 series.

Let down by its batters this series, the Chamari Athapaththu-led side would hope it can navigate the Indian bowling attack better in the dead rubber.

On the bowling front, the spin duo of Inoka Ranaweera and Oshadi Ranasinghe have been the stand-out players, doing most of the heavy lifting.



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shikhar Dhawan was on Wednesday named India captain for the three ODIs against the West Indies in the absence of regular skipper Rohit Sharma, while Virat Kohli and Rishabh Pant were among those who have been rested for the series beginning on July 22 in Port of Spain, Trinidad.

Two other senior players, Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammad Shami have also been rested. Hardik Pandya, who recently made his India

comeback following a successful IPL, is also not a part of the side.

Deepak Hooda, Sanju Samson, Ruturaj Gaikwad and Avesh Khan, who are not part of ODI squad for the series in England beginning July 12, have been included in the 16-member team for the West Indies tour.

Shubman Gill, who last played an ODI in December 2020, has also got the selectors' nod.

Ravindra Jadeja has been named Dhawan's deputy for the series.

Dhawan, who only plays ODI, had first captained the side during the tour of Sri Lanka last year when the Test specialists were in England.

There has been criticism from some quarters regarding the appointment of too many captains of the Indian team over the past one year with Bumrah, Pant, Rahul, Hardik, Dhawan leading the side due to scheduling and injury issues, and as part of workload management.

All the three games will be played in Port of Spain.

The games in the West Indies are the only ODIs India will play before the T20 World Cup in Australia and therefore, senior players being rested doesn't come entirely as a surprise.

After the ODIs, India will play five T20Is against the West Indies in the Caribbean and the United States, the squad for which is yet to be announced.

Considering every T20I game is important before the World Cup in Australia, the senior players are likely to return for the five-match series to be played from July 29 to August 7. The T20I matches will be played in Trinidad, St Kitts and Lauderhill in Florida.

**ODI Squad:** Shikhar Dhawan (captain), Ravindra Jadeja (vice-captain), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Shubman Gill, Deepak Hooda, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer, Ishan Kishan (wk), Sanju Samson (wk), Shardul Thakur, Yuzvendra Chahal, Axar Patel, Avesh Khan, Prasidh Krishna, Mohd Siraj, Arshdeep Singh.

## Smith unfazed by 'Bazball'

AP ■ GALLE

Australia's Steve Smith said Wednesday he found England's new attacking "Bazball" approach entertaining to watch, but questioned whether it was sustainable.

England have won all four Tests under new coach Brendon "Baz" McCullum and skipper Ben Stokes with a fearless new mentality, including thrashing India on Tuesday.

"I've watched a little bit of it, it's certainly been entertaining, they're coming out playing their shots," Smith said ahead of Australia's second Test against Sri Lanka starting on Friday.

"Even someone like Alex Lees started to come down the wicket when he was on nothing really to play the way he played (against India)," he told reporters.

Having tongue-in-cheek shouted 'Bazball' before whacking a shot in an earlier net session, Smith said he was "intrigued to see how long it lasts, if it's sustainable."

"If you come on a wicket that's got some grass and Josh Hazlewood, (Pat) Cummins and (Mitchell) Starc are rolling



in at you. Is it going to be the same? We'll see what happens."

England's Joe Root now has more centuries to his name than Smith, but the Australian was quick to point out that his rival has played 35 more Tests.

"He's a quality player and looks like he's pretty tough to get out at the moment," Smith said of the prolific run-getter.

The touring Australian team have themselves played attacking cricket on turning pitches to go one-up in the two-Test series with a hammering

of the hosts in the opener.

Spinner Nathan Lyon led the bowling charge with nine wickets in the match and the batsmen took control of the opposition spinners with Cameron Green scoring 77 as he used the sweep shot to good effect.

"We went at a good pace in the first Test. If you were sitting there not playing your shots or looking to score, you were probably going to get out eventually. So it was get them before they get us," Smith said.

## India eye win against NZ to stay in hunt

PTI ■ AMSTELVEEN

A lacklustre Indian women's hockey team need to tick all boxes against New Zealand in its final Pool B match to seal a direct quarterfinal place in the FIH World Cup, here on Thursday.

The Indians, who achieved a historic fourth place finish in last year's Olympics, drew 1-1 against Tokyo bronze medallist England and China in their first two pool matches.

The Savita-led side is currently placed third in Pool B with two points below China and leaders New Zealand, who defeated England 3-1 on Tuesday.

"New Zealand will be a tough team to play. They are very dangerous in their counter-attack and we will have to be ready for that, on the ball we have to play to our strengths," chief coach Janneke Schopman said.

According to the tournament format, the 16 teams are divided in four pools of four teams each. The top four sides from each pool will directly qualify for the quarterfinals, while the second and third



India vs New Zealand  
Live from 11:00pm IST  
STAR SPORTS 1

placed teams will feature in the crossovers.

The winner of the cross over matches will grab the remaining four quarterfinal spots. So, India would look for an outright win against New Zealand and hope for a Chinese draw or a loss against England to top Pool B.

But going by the way they played in the first two matches, it would be easier said than done.

While the Indian defence

has impressed in both the matches, denying England a single penalty corner in the first game, it is the performance of the forwardline and midfield which was found wanting.

Barring Vandana Katariya, who scored India's two goals, no other striker could live upto expectations so far with the likes of Lalremisiami, Sharmila Devi and Navneet Kaur cutting a sorry figure.

It is not that the Indians didn't create chances, but they

failed to grab those opportunities.

The midfield too needs to raise their game as it looked rusty against China.

Penalty corner conversion is also an area of concern for Schopman as India made use of just two out of the 12 earned in two games, and that too both the goals coming through indirectly from the sticks of Vandana.

While against England, Vandana scored from a rebound, against China she got a beauti-

ful deflection to Gurjit's flick to draw India level.

"I thought we started well against a tight Chinese defense. We were unlucky to not score early on and one moment of not paying attention defensively resulted in us conceding a goal," Schopman said.

"After that we struggled for a bit but when we found the space, we were able to play some good combinations."

"The PC goal was great but felt like we forgot to push through after that with China being more aggressive in the end phase."

"We are where we are but obviously, we would have liked to have more points. Our pool is incredibly tough and small things will make the difference," she added.

Gurjit Kaur too needs to polish her skills and raise her conversion rate if India have to progress far in the tournament.

The Black Sticks women, however, would be brimming with confidence after the win over England.

Both the sides would have a fair idea about the equations they need as China and England play earlier on Thursday.