

OPINION 6

AYUSH — THE WAY TO
A HEALTHY LIFE

WORLD 9

RISHI SUNAK WINS 1ST ROUND OF
CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADERSHIP VOTE

MONEY 10

STAFFING INDUSTRY ADDED 12.6 L
INFORMAL STAFF IN FY22: REPORT

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY JULY 14, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

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INDIA TO FACE
ENGLAND IN
2nd ODI TODAY
12 SPORT

Emergency in Lanka as Prez flees to Maldives

Rajapaksa, who had promised to resign, appointed PM Ranil as acting President hours later; thousands of protesters defy emergency

PTI ■ NCOLOMBO/MALE

Sri Lanka declared a state of emergency on Wednesday as angry protesters stormed the Prime Minister's office in Colombo, hours after President Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled to the Maldives on a military jet, amid the country's worst economic crisis in decades.

Rajapaksa, the 73-year-old leader who had promised to resign on Wednesday, appointed Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe as the acting President hours after he fled the country, escalating the political crisis and triggering a fresh wave of protests.

Announcing that Rajapaksa has appointed Wickremesinghe to act to perform his functions while he is abroad, Parliament Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena said he has informed him over the telephone that he will resign today as promised. The Speaker also said the vote for the new President will take place on July 20. In a special televised statement, Wickremesinghe declared a nationwide emergency and imposed a curfew in the city and surrounding areas. "We must end this fascist threat to democracy. We can't allow the destruction of state property. The President's Office, the President's Secretariat and the Prime Minister's official residence must be returned to proper custody," he said.

"Those who are in my office want to stop me from discharging my responsibilities as acting President. We can't let them tear up our Constitution. We can't allow fascists to take

over. Some mainstream politicians, too, seem to be supporting these extremists. That is why I declared a nationwide emergency and a curfew," Wickremesinghe said.

He said he has instructed the security forces to enforce the emergency and curfew to bring the situation to normalcy, adding that a committee comprising the heads of armed forces has been given the responsibility of doing so with zero political intervention.

However, the development enraged anti-Government protesters, who wanted both the President and Prime Minister to quit over mishandling the economy. Thousands of protesters waving Lankan flags defied the emergency and surrounded the building of the PM Office. The police fired tear gas on protesters who broke through a barricade and stormed the Prime Minister's office, calling for his resignation.

Wickremesinghe said he was alarmed by the inputs received by the Intelligence services.

"Despite the President leaving, and measures taken to elect a new President, some groups in the struggle have organised to take over the Prime Minister's Office, and surround the Air Force Commander's residence for providing an Air Force plane for the President to fly to the Maldives. They had also decided to surround the Navy Commander's residence and Army Commander's residence. These groups tried to obtain control of the country," he added. Sri Lanka's state-owned television channel *Rupavahini* briefly suspended



Police use tear gas as Sri Lankan protesters storm the compound of prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's office, demanding he resign after president Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled amid economic crisis in Colombo, Sri Lanka on Wednesday.

AP/PTI

its telecast on Wednesday as protesters stormed the building. Also, a second state television channel went off the air, less than an hour after *Rupavahini* suspended its operations.

Earlier, a statement from the Sri Lanka Air Force said that Rajapaksa left the country along with his wife and two security officers on a military jet and added that it was done with approval from the Ministry of Defence.

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Govt of Maldives faces flak for helping Gotabaya

MALE: Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's escape to the Maldives was negotiated by the Maldivian Majlis (Parliament) Speaker and former President Mohamed Nasheed, sources in the Maldives Capital Male said. The Maldivian Government's argument is that Rajapaksa is still the President of Sri Lanka, and that he hasn't resigned or

handed over his powers to a successor. Therefore, if he wanted to travel to the Maldives, it could not have been denied, sources said.

The Maldives Government has not yet officially commented on his presence in the island nation. However, the Maldives National Party (MNP) leader and former Maldives Foreign Minister

Dunya Maumoon said it was very disappointing that the Maldivian Government did not care about the sentiments of the Sri Lankan people.

"My party will move a motion in parliament seeking the Government's explanation in the matter," Maumoon, the daughter of former Maldives president Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, told *PTI*.

Chinese firm charged with ₹4,389 cr duty fraud

DRI has issued
show cause notice
to mobile major
Oppo India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has issued a show cause notice to Chinese mobile company, Oppo India, demanding Customs duty amounting to ₹4,389 crore.

The notice also proposes relevant penalties on Oppo India, its employees and Oppo China, under the provisions of the Customs Act, 1962. The DRI detected Customs duty evasion of around ₹4,389 crore during an investigation against Oppo



Mobiles India Private Limited, a subsidiary company of Guangdong Oppo Mobile Telecommunications Corporation Ltd., China.

Oppo India is engaged in the business of manufacturing, assembling, wholesale trading, distribution of mobile handsets and accessories across India. Oppo India deals in various brands of mobile phones, including Oppo, OnePlus and Realme.

"During the investigation, the DRI conducted searches at the

office premises of Oppo India and residences of its key management employees, which led to the recovery of incriminating evidence indicating willful misdeclaration in the description of certain items imported by Oppo India for use in the manufacture of mobile phones," said an official statement issued by the Union Finance Ministry.

This mis-declaration resulted in wrongful advantage of ineligible duty exemption benefits by Oppo India amounting to ₹2,981 crore.

"Among others, senior management employees and domestic suppliers of Oppo India were questioned, who in their voluntary statements accepted the submission of wrongful description before the Customs Authorities at the time of import," reads the official statement.

Continued on Page 2

'Udaipur killers were in touch with Pakis, 300 radicals in India'

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

A preliminary probe into the Udaipur beheading case has revealed that the two prime accused — Riyaz Akhtari and Ghouse Mohammad — were in communication with 18 Pakistani mobile numbers and as many as 300 suspected "radicals" across 25 States in India.

Out of these 300 people with whom the two prime suspects were in touch, nearly 250 are from Maharashtra alone and the remaining are from Gujarat, Kerala, West Bengal and Bihar, sources said.

The agencies are scanning the bank accounts of these 300 suspects for any dubious transactions. Also, initial findings suggest the 300 suspects could be

part of the sleeper cells of Pakistani terrorist group Dawat-e-Islami and awaiting instructions for inimical actions, they said.

Some of these 300 suspects were in touch with the Pakistani mobile phone numbers with which the two prime accused in the Udaipur beheading case were also communicating.

These initial findings have also been corroborated with the analysis of the call detail records of the seven arrested accused in the Udaipur case.

Sources said the two prime accused in the beheading case were curious to know about the quantum of punishment they would face and if death penalty was inevitable.

Continued on Page 2

Free Covid booster jabs for 18-59 age group from July 15

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Concerned that less than one per cent of the target population of 77 crore in the 18-59 age group has been given the precaution Covid jab, the Centre has decided to launch a 75-day drive from July 15 to provide the segment free booster doses at all its vaccination centres in India.

The drive, aimed at boosting the uptake of Covid booster doses, will be held as part of the Government's 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav to celebrate the 75th anniversary of India's Independence, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandivji tweeted.

"Less than one per cent of the target population of 77 crore in the 18-59 age group has been given the precaution dose.



However, around 26 per cent of the estimated 16 crore eligible population aged 60 and above as well as healthcare and frontline workers have got the jab.

"A majority of the Indian population got their second dose over nine months ago. Studies at ICMR and global research institutions have suggested that antibody levels wane around six months after the primary vaccination with both doses... Giving a booster increases the immune response," an official from the Union Health Ministry said.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

WEE: INDIA RANKS LOW IN
GENDER PARITY REPORT

New Delhi: India was on Wednesday ranked low at 135th place in terms of gender parity, despite an improvement of five places since last year on better performance in areas of economic participation and opportunity. **P5**

14 DEAD IN GUJARAT AS
HEAVY RAIN CONTINUES

Ahmedabad: Parts of south Gujarat and Kutch-Saurashtra regions received very heavy showers in the last 24 hours leaving 14 people dead, while over 31,000 were evacuated so far this rainy season, officials said on Wednesday

COURT ALLOWS ARYAN'S
PLEA ON PASSPORT

Mumbai: A special court in Mumbai on Wednesday allowed the plea of Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan, who has got a clean chit from the NCB in the 'drugs-on-cruise' case, seeking the return of his passport.

No blanket ban on demolitions: SC

Omnibus order
impossible as law
must be followed,
court tells
Ulama-i-Hind

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to pass a blanket order restraining authorities from carrying out demolition exercises if there is an illegal construction and the corporation or the council is authorised to take action.

The top court was hearing pleas filed by the Muslim body Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind seeking directions to the Uttar Pradesh (UP) Government and other States to ensure that no further demolition of properties of alleged accused in recent cases of



violence is carried out.

"What omnibus directions can we issue? Nobody can dispute that the rule of law has to be followed. But can we pass an omnibus order?"

"If we pass such an omnibus order, will we not prevent the authorities from taking action in accordance with law," a Bench of Justices BR Gavai and PS Narasimha said.

Claiming that the issue was "extraordinarily serious", senior advocate Dushyant Dave, who appeared for the Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, referred to a newspaper report which said that the house of a murder accused was demol-

ished in Assam.

"We don't want this culture. Lordships will have to decide for once and all. They have to act in accordance with the law. They cannot take advantage of municipal laws and demolish houses of someone who is merely accused of crimes.

"This country cannot permit this. We are a society governed by the rule of law which is the basic structure of the Constitution. It should be finally heard and disposed of," Dave said while seeking an interim stay direction on the demolitions.

Alleging that there was discrimination in carrying out such

exercises, Dave submitted there is no material to show that other unauthorised houses of other communities were acted against similarly. Senior advocate CU Singh, also appearing for one of the petitioners, said despite the status quo order in Delhi's Jahangirpuri, the same modus operandi was followed in city after city.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta said he has some objections with the locus of the petitioners. "Replies have been filed by authorities that the procedure was followed and notices were issued. The demolition process started much before alleged riots. Merely because you take part in riots does not give you immunity from illegal constructions being demolished.

"Affected persons have already taken their remedy before various high courts. Let us not create a sensationalising hype unnecessarily," Mehta said. He opposed Dave's submission, and said all communities are Indian. "We cannot have community-based PILs," he said.

Indian couple held with 45 guns at IGIA

Admits to
smuggling 25
guns from
Turkey earlier

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The customs department at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) has arrested an Indian couple returning from Vietnam in possession of 45 handguns of .22 caliber worth ₹22.5 lakh.

The accused were identified as Jagjeet Singh and his wife Jaswinder Kaur, who were returning to India with their infant daughter and the contraband.

In the preliminary report, the National Security Guard (NSG) has confirmed that the guns are fully functional and can be used.

The couple, who were arrested on July 10, reportedly con-



Customs officials display handguns seized from an Indian couple, who arrived from Vietnam, at Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi.

PTI

fessed to previously smuggling 25 guns from Turkey worth ₹12.5 lakh, the officials said.

The officials handed over their infant daughter, who was with them at the time, to her grandmother. According to a senior customs official, the couple was intercepted by customs officials after they had

crossed the green channel of the arrival hall and were approaching the east gate.

"Jagjit Singh was carrying two trolley bags which were handed over to him by his elder brother Manjit Singh, who had arrived from Paris almost at the same time Jagjit and Jawinder arrived from Vietnam," said the

senior customs official.

However, Manjit had slipped out of the airport by then. "Jaswinder Kaur was also an active participant in the smuggling plan and helped remove and destroy the tags of both the trolley bags containing 45 guns having an approximate value of ₹22.5 lakh," said the senior customs official.

"Both of them have confessed to their previous involvement in smuggling 25 pieces of assorted guns from Turkey with an approximate value of ₹12.5 lakh," said the customs official.

"The two trolley bags along with the recovered guns were seized and the couple was placed under arrest under Section 104 of the Customs Act," the official added.

Officials said the couple is suspected to be smuggling these guns to supply to criminals in India.

The agencies are probing how the couple cleared security check with so many guns while leaving Vietnam.

NCR PULSE

RAI REQUESTS CENTRE TO AUTHORISE MORE LABS TO TEST COMPOSTABLE PRODUCTS

New Delhi: Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai has written to the Centre, requesting it to authorise more laboratories to test compostable products, which are alternatives to single-use plastic, to facilitate startups. In a letter to Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav, Rai said that discussions with stakeholders at the Plastic Vikalp Mela at Thyagaraj Stadium revealed that manufacturers of compostable products need to get those tested by the Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering and Technology (CIPET) laboratory before obtaining a certificate from Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ON SALE OF NEW COMBAT DRESS

New Delhi: Delhi Police in coordination with Indian Army on Wednesday conducted an Awareness Campaign among shopkeepers in Delhi Cantontment to prevent sale of New Pattern Combat Dress. The uniform is unique in its creation as it has an exclusive digital camouflage pattern, contemporary and functional design and a lighter yet stronger and more breathable fabric. Because of this, the Army wants to adopt control measures to maintain its exclusivity.

SECOND RATH YATRA ORGANISED IN MAYUR VIHAR

New Delhi: The second rath yatra was organized by the Shree Jagannath Odia Association in Delhi's Mayur vihar Phase -3 with traditional fervor, great pomp and activities throughout the day. The Yatra of Lord Jaganath has been associated with a special ritual called "Pahandi Bijie" then "Chhnera anihara" Through the ritual, the four Deities were lovingly swing out of the temple one by one and they were installed on the designated platform on the rath.

SC lays down principles for courts in search, seizure matters under I-T law

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant verdict, the Supreme Court on Wednesday laid down principles for high courts in matters of search and seizure under Income Tax rules, and said formation of opinion and reasons to believe recorded by revenue department is not a judicial or quasi-judicial function, but administrative in character.

A bench of Justices Hemant Gupta and V Ramasubramanian set aside the Gujarat High Court order quashing the warrant of authorization of search and seizure dated August 7, 2018 issued by Principal Director of Income Tax (investigation).

"We find that the High Court was not justified in setting aside the authorization of search dated August 7, 2018. Consequently, the appeal is allowed and the order passed by the High Court is set aside. As a consequence thereof, the Revenue would be at liberty to proceed against the assessee in accordance with law," the apex court ruled.

The High Court had passed the order on a plea of an Ahmedabad-based business-

man who invested money in a recreation company in Goa and on whose premises search and seizure were conducted by the revenue department.

The bench said in light of earlier judgments, the sufficiency or inadequacy of reasons to believe recorded cannot be gone into while considering the validity of an act of authorization to conduct search and seizure.

"The belief recorded alone is justifiable, but only while keeping in view the Wednesbury Principle of Reasonableness. Such reasonableness is not a power to act as an appellate authority over the reasons to believe recorded," it said.

The bench said it would like to elaborate the principles in exercising the writ jurisdiction in the matter of search and seizure under Section 132 of the Income Tax Act.

"The formation of opinion and the reasons to believe recorded is not a judicial or quasi-judicial function, but administrative in character," it said, adding that the information must be in possession of the authorised official on the basis of the material and that

Cong asks Centre to withdraw new forest conservation rules

Urges NCST to take note of violation of Forest Rights Act 2006

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress has urged the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes to take note of the alleged "violation" of the Forest Rights Act 2006 and ask the Centre to withdraw the new forest conservation rules in public interest.

The party alleged that the new forest conservation rules will lead to disempowerment, dispossession, and displacement of STs and other traditional forest dwellers (OTFDs), and fuel conflict in tribal areas.

In a letter to the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) chairperson, Harsh Chouhan, AICC national coordinator SC, ST, OBC and minority departments K Raju said the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)

has notified the new Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022 on June 29, and alleged that these rules have been notified without holding any public consultation with stakeholders.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh, who has criticised the Centre's move of bringing in the new rules, shared Raju's letter to the NCST on Twitter and slammed the rules as "anti-Adivasi". The FC Rules 2022 replace the earlier 2003 Forest Conservation Rules and its amendments in 2004, 2014 and 2017, Raju noted in his letter. The FC Rules 2022 completely "undermine and violate" the Forest Rights Act 2006 by diluting the legal requirement of ensuring FRA compliance and of seeking the consent of Gram Sabha before diverting forest land, Raju said.

"The NCST is urged to take note of the violation of FRA and constitutional and statutory rights of STs due to the notification of FC Rules 2022 and issue directions to the Central Government and the MOEFCC to withdraw the Rules in public interest," he said in his letter.

Cholera claims 5 lives in Maha as State records 2nd Zika case

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Cholera claimed five lives in four villages of Amravati district in eastern Maharashtra, even as the state health authorities on Wednesday confirmed the second case of the Vector-borne Zika Virus in Maharashtra.

In its daily medical bulletin, the State Public Health department said that there was an outbreak of cholera in two taluks of Amravati district since July 7. "There is an outbreak in three villages -- Dongri, Koylari and Ghana --

in Chikhaldara block and Naya village in Amaravati block. Until now, 181 patients have been diagnosed and 5 of them have died".

Of those who succumbed to cholera, two were women, while three others were men. The three of the deceased were in the age group 24 to 40 years old.

Following the outbreak, medical teams are working round the clock in outbreak-affected villages and efforts for prevention and control in terms of water quality monitoring, patient surveillance,

management and treatment, and health awareness are underway.

"The state has lately been affected by heavy rainfall. Against this background, epidemiological surveillance is being carried out on war footing," the medical bulletin said.

Cholera is an acute diarrhoeal infection caused by ingestion of food or water contaminated with the bacterium Vibrio cholerae.

A state-level squad is currently in Amravati district to investigate the outbreak and provide appropriate guidance. Additional Health Secretary

(Public Health) reviewed the outbreak situation in detail and necessary instructions have been given regarding the outbreak control to the District Collector and Chief Executive Officer of Amravati district administration.

Meanwhile, the second Zika case has been reported in Maharashtra. As per the latest report from the Pune-based National Institute of Virology (NIV), a 7-year-old girl in the Ashramshala at Jhai in Talasari taluka of Palghar district was found to be infected with Zika virus.

Prior to this, the first ever

patient was found in Pune in July 2021.

Accordingly, preventive and control measures in terms of surveillance, Vector management, treatment and health education efforts are being taken.

In a related development, 2,575 fresh cases of Covid-19 were reported from different parts of Maharashtra on Wednesday, even as the pandemic claimed 10 lives in the state.

With 2,575 fresh cases, the daily Covid-19 cases rose from 2435 to 2,575, taking the total number of cases in the state

from 80,07,648 to 80,10,223

Similarly with ten fresh Covid-19 deaths reported during the day, the total number of deaths registered in the state since the outbreak of Covid-19 in the state in March 2020 rose from 1,47,991 to 1,48,001.

Of the total 4,255 fresh cases reported in the state, Mumbai accounted for 383 positive cases, taking the total number of cases reported in the metropolis since outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020 to 11, 19,833. The metropolis recorded one Covid-19 deaths taking the total number of deaths in the metropolis from

19,625. The authorities pegged the overall growth rate of Covid-19 cases during the period from July 6 to July 12 at 0.041 per cent.

As 3,219 Covid-19 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March 2020 increased from 78,42,090 to 78,45,300. The recovery rate in the state rose from 97.93 per cent to 97.94 per cent.

The number of "active cases" in the state dropped from 17,567 to 16,922. The

fatality rate in the state stood static at 1.84 per cent.

The active cases in Mumbai dropped from 3318 to 3006. The active cases in Thane went down from 1947 to 1,700, while the active cases in Pune dropped from 6411 to 6,222. The active cases in Raigad district dropped from 678 to 594, while the active cases in Palghar went down from 306 to 294.

Of the 8,24.81,808 samples sent to various laboratories across the state so far,80,10,223 have tested positive (9.71 per cent) for COVID-19 until Wednesday.

LS secretariat lists unparliamentary words ahead of Monsoon Session

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The usage of terms like 'jumlajeevi', 'baal buddhi', 'Covid spreader' and 'Snoopgate' and even commonly used words like 'ashamed', 'abused', 'betrayed', 'corrupt', 'drama', 'hypocrisy' and 'incompetent' will now on be considered unparliamentary in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha

A new booklet by the Lok Sabha Secretariat has listed out unparliamentary words and expressions ahead of the Monsoon session beginning

July 18, during which the use of words like 'anarchist', 'Shakuni', 'dictatorial', 'taanashah', 'taanashahi', 'Jaichand', 'vinash purush', 'Khalistani' and 'khoon se kheti' would also be expunged if used during debates or otherwise in both the houses.

Chinese firm charged with ₹4,389 cr duty..

From Page 1

The investigation also revealed that Oppo India had remitted / made provisions for payment of 'Royalty' and 'Licence Fee' to various multinational companies, including those based in China, in lieu of use of proprietary technology/brand/IPR license.

The 'Royalty' and 'Licence Fees' paid by Oppo India were not being added in the transaction value of the goods imported by them, in violation of Section 14 of the Customs Act, 1962, read with Rule 10 of the Customs Valuation (Determination of Value of Imported Goods) Rules 2007.

The alleged duty evasion by Oppo India on this account is Rs 1,408 crore.

A sum of Rs 450 crore has been voluntarily deposited by Oppo India as partial differential Customs duty.

"After completion of the investigation, a Show Cause Notice has been issued to Oppo India demanding Customs duty amounting to Rs. 4,389 crore," added the official statement. In December 2021, the Income Tax department had also conducted searches against Chinese handset manufacturing companies, including Oppo, and their linked persons and claimed to have detected alleged unaccounted income due to violation of the Indian tax law and regulations.

Free Covid booster...

From Page 1

"The Government is therefore planning to start a special drive for 75 days during which individuals aged between 18 and 59 years will be administered precaution doses for free at Government vaccination centres starting from July 15," he said.

The Union Health Ministry last week reduced the gap between the second and precaution dose of Covid-19 vaccine for all beneficiaries from nine to six months. This followed a recommendation from the National Technical Advisory Group on

Immunization (NTAGI).

To accelerate the pace of vaccination and encourage booster shots, the Government initiated the second round of the "Har Ghar Dastak campaign 2.0" across States and UTs on June 1. The two-month programme is currently underway.

According to Government data, 96 per cent of India's population has been administered the first dose of Covid vaccine while 87 per cent of the people have taken both doses. On April 10 this year, India began administering precaution doses of Covid-19 vaccines to all aged above 18 years.

'Udaipur killers were in touch with Pakis, 300 radicals in...

From Page 1

"The fanaticism of the two prime accused seems to have melted in the face of questioning by the sleuths and fear of looming death has gripped them amid the possibility of capital punishment post-trial in the case," an official said. The "premeditated" act of beheading in Udaipur

was part of a larger conspiracy with mentoring from Pakistan terror groups, the sources said.

The two prime accused Riaz and Ghouse had allegedly hacked Kanhaiya Lal Teli to death with a cleaver at his shop in Udaipur on June 28 and posted videos online claiming they are avenging an alleged

insult to Islam. The two accused had also inflicted multiple injuries to the victim with sharp weapons.

Besides the Udaipur killing case, the NIA is also probing a similar case relating to murder of pharmacist Umesh Kolhe in Amravati (Maharashtra) on June 21 allegedly on account of certain social media posts.

Emergency in Lanka as Prez...

From Page 1

Rajapaksa, who enjoys immunity from prosecution while he is president, fled the country before resigning to avoid the possibility of arrest by the new government.

On Saturday after thousands of protesters stormed his official residence, blaming him for the unprecedented economic crisis that has brought the country to its knees, Rajapaksa announced that he will step down on Wednesday.

Thirteen people accompanied Rajapaksa to the Maldives. They arrived in an AN32 aircraft, according to TV news channels.

Meanwhile, former president Maithripala Sirisena warned that a power-hungry group is gradually destroying the country, saying the President and the Acting President have no mandate at all, and one must think twice before executing their directives.

In a statement, Sirisena said

that it is the responsibility of the armed forces to protect the people who are engaged in the struggle.

"An MP with one seat is appointed as PM. Now the same person is appointed as acting President. This is the Rajapaksa style of democracy. What a farce. What a tragedy," Leader of the Opposition Sajith Premadasa tweeted.

Also on Wednesday, the Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka categorically denied "baseless and speculative" media reports that it facilitated the escape of Rajapaksa to the Maldives.

"It is reiterated that India will continue to support the people of Sri Lanka as they seek to realize their aspirations for prosperity and progress through democratic means and values, established democratic institutions and constitutional framework," the India mission tweeted. As the news of Rajapaksa's departure spread, an enthusiastic crowd gathered

in Galle Face Green chanting the popular phrase Aragalayata Jayawewa, or "Victory to the struggle" in Sinhalese and "Go home Gota".

Citing sources, BBC also reported that Rajapaksa's younger brother and former finance minister Basil Rajapaksa has also left the country.

On Monday night, both Rajapaksa and his brother Basil were turned back at the Colombo airport as they attempted to leave the country amid mounting anger against the powerful family for mishandling the island's worst economic crisis.

Sri Lanka, a country of 22 million people, is under the grip of an unprecedented economic turmoil, the worst in seven decades, leaving millions struggling to buy food, medicine, fuel and other essentials.

Last week, Prime Minister Wickremesinghe said Sri Lanka is now a bankrupt country.

कार्यालय, नगर पालिक निगम भिलाई, जिला-दुर्ग

जोन क्रमांक-05

E-mail:- zonefivebhilai@gmail.com

क्रं./लोक.वि/जोन क्रं 5/2022/813/181 भिलाई, दिनांक 11/07/2022

आयुक्त नगर पालिक निगम भिलाई द्वारा एकीकृत पंजीयन प्रणाली अंतर्गत सक्षम श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारो से निम्नलिखित निर्माण कार्य हेतु ई-निविदा आमत्रित की जाती है:-

क्र	कार्य का विवरण	सिस्टम टैडर क्र एवं जारी दिनांक	अनुमानित लागत (लाख में)	निविदा डाउनलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि
1.	जोन क्र0-5 अंतर्गत सविक सेंटर में चौपाटी निर्माण कार्य।	104587 07/07/2022	299.00	29.07.2022

निविदा हेतु शपथ पत्र एवं घोरोहर राशि की एक.डी.आर स्पीड पोस्ट अथवा रजिस्टर्ड डाक से स्वीकार किये जायेगे। निविदा हेतु आवश्यक दस्तावेज तथा कार्य हेतु दी जाने वाली दरें ऑनलाइन (Online) दी जाये। उपरोक्त निर्माण कार्य की निविदा की सामान्य शर्तें, घोरोहर राशि, विस्तृत निविदा विज्ञापित निविदा दस्तावेज व अन्य जानकारी नगर पालिक निगम भिलाई की वेबसाईट www.bhilainagarnigam.com संचालनालय की वेबसाईट www.nad.cg.gov.in एवं बीएस की वेबसाईट के वेबसाईट eproc.ecgate.gov.in से भी डाउनलोड की जा सकती है।

हस्ता/-

जोन आयुक्त

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Baljit Singh S/o. Mangat Ram, R/o. 83, JJ Colony, Satya Niketan, Moti Bagh-2, New Delhi-110021 have changed my name to Baljeet Singh for all purposes.

PD(90127)A

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mrs. Shailu Gupta W/o. Mr. Yogesh Gupta who is owner of Property No.T-249, area admeasuring 1 Kanal 13 Marla (1000 Sq. Yds.), comprised in Rectangle No. 47, Killa No. 3/6(1-3), 8/2(1(0-2), Rectangle No. 47, Killa No. 7(8-0), situated in the revenue estate of Village Chauma, Tahsil and District Gurugram (Haryana); by virtue of Sale Deed 10.10.2017, which is registered as Doc. No.7885 in the office of Sub Registrar-Gurgaon and intend to mortgage the same against the financial assistance from **Utkarsh Small Finance Bank Limited**. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any person(s) having any objection regarding ownership and/or creating mortgage of the said property is/are hereby requested to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 7 days at below address:

Lucern Legal LLP
269, Rama House, Ground Floor, Masjid Moh, Opp. Uday Park, South Ext.-II, New Delhi-110049
Date: 14-07-2022
Contact # 011-40046316

For ICICI Bank Limited
Date: 14-07-2022
Place: New Delhi

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that Kanchan Pahuja & Sunil Pahuja are the owner of Third Floor of Property No. 329, M.C. No. 239-A/24, area measuring 110 sq. yds., situated at waka adast 4 Marla, Gurgaon, Tahsil & Distt. Gurgaon within Hadud Nagar Nigam, Gurgaon by virtue of Sale Deed dated 17/11/17 (document no. 4420), whereas they has lost the following Documents pertain to the said property:-

Original Sale Deed dated 17.07.2017 executed by Anun Chhabra in favour of Kanchan Pahuja & Sunil Pahuja duly registered in the office of SR, Gurgaon as Doc No. 4420, Book No. 1, dated 17.07.2017 read with an FIR dated 11/6/22

All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, family arrangement, maintenance, bequest, partnership, possession, lease, sublease, tenancy, license, lien, charge, pledge, easement or otherwise howsoever, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 7 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned.

Kamal Kant Gupta (Advocate)
Shop No. 5 & 6, Pki-E, CSC, Mayur Vihar-II, Delhi-91, Mco. 9810053551

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e"-PROCUREMENT NOTICE WORKS DEPARTMENT

E-mail: ceroads.bbbsr@t@gmail.com

Bid Identification No. CE-DPI & R-09/2022-23

1. The Chief Engineer (DPI & Roads), Odisha on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids in double cover system in ONLINE MODE form eligible contractors for Road work as mentioned below:

2. Nature of work	Road work
3. No. of work	1 No.
4. Tender Paper cost	Rs. 10,000.00
5. Class of Contractor	Super Class
6. Available of bid document in the website	From 10.00 A.M. of 16.07.2022 to 5.30 PM of 05.08.2022
7. Date of opening of Bid	Dt.06.08.2022 at 11.30 AM

8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: <https://tenderodisha.gov.in> . Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

OIPR: 34111/11/0013/2223

Sd/- Chief Engineer (DPI & Roads), Odisha

PUBLIC NOTICE

I am Anjali Trivedi wife Shri Sharadindu Trivedi resident 94, Shivailik Apartment, Sector-35, Noida District Gautam Buddha Nagar (U.P.) in Shop No. K-55, Block 4 Sector- 29 Noida's allottee 'I am the owner of the book no. 1 A.D. Book No. 1, Volume No. On page 813-834 of 199, it was registered on 18/06/1997 in Sub-Registrar 1 Noida, the original documents of the registry of the said shop have been lost somewhere. And did not find even after searching a lot. If anyone finds it please kindly inform .

(Anjali Trivedi)
Mob- 9871104907

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Air quality panel revamps plan to check air pollution

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas has completely revamped the emergency-level Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) to reduce episodic smog events across the national Capital. The plan has now been linked to the Air Quality Index (AQI) or eight pollutants including PM 2.5, PM 10, and gases such as Ozone (O3), Sulphur Dioxide (SO2) and Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2). The review is part of a policy formulated by CAQM to abate the menace of air pollution in Delhi-NCR.

As per the policy of the commission for the GRAP, measures under the 'very poor', 'severe' and 'severe plus' categories will be enforced at least three days in advance. Agencies earlier waited until PM 2.5 or PM 10 concentration touched a particular threshold. Under the 'severe plus' category, agencies waited for PM 2.5 and PM 10 concentrations to stay above 300 and 500 micrograms per cubic metre for 48 hours or

more before enforcing the measures mandated under it.

"If AQI is in 'Severe' category (401-450), there will be ban on C&D activities in national capital, except emergent and essential projects (like railways, metros, airports, ISBTs, national security, defence related and projects of national importance) and non-polluting, non-dust generating activities such as plumbing works, interior decoration, electrical works and carpentry related works," stated the GRAP policy.

GRAP policy also stated that in severe category AQI, brick kilns, hot mix plants, stone crushers not operating on clean fuels like PNG and bio-mass-based fuels will be shut down.

"There will be ban on mining and associated activities in NCR and the state governments in NCR, GNCTD may impose restrictions on BS III petrol and BS IV diesel LMVs (4-wheeled vehicles)," the policy further added.

"In severe plus category (above 450), there will ban on the entry of trucks including



measures like closure of schools, colleges, educational institutions, plying of vehicles on odd-even basis etc," the policy added.

The GRAP for the National Capital Region (NCR) has now been classified under four different stages of adverse air quality in Delhi: Stage I - 'Poor' (AQI 201-300); Stage II - 'Very Poor' (AQI 301-400); Stage III - 'Severe' (AQI 401-450); and Stage IV - 'Severe+' (AQI

>450).

The measures to be followed in the "emergency" situation or Stage IV include a ban on the entry of trucks into Delhi, and on the plying of Delhi-registered diesel-run medium goods vehicles and heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) in the national capital except those engaged in essential commodities.

The use of four-wheeler diesel light motor vehicles, except for BS-VI vehicles and vehicles engaged in essential services, will also be banned in Delhi and the bordering districts of NCR. GRAP is a set of anti-air pollution measures followed in Delhi and its vicinity according to the severity of the situation.

Earlier, authorities would wait until PM 2.5 or PM 10 concentration touched a particular threshold. Under the 'severe plus' category, agencies waited for PM 2.5 and PM 10 concentrations to stay above 300 and 500 micrograms per cubic metre for 48 hours or more before implementing the measures mandated under GRAP.

CAQM formulates extensive action plan to check pollution from vehicles

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As vehicles are the second-highest contributors to particulate pollution in the country, the Commission for Air Quality Management has come up with an extensive action plan for abatement of air pollution from vehicles and the transport sector in the National Capital Region (NCR) and the adjoining states.

Ensuring 100 per cent compliance with valid pollution-under-control (PUC) certificates, formulating norms for monitoring on-road vehicles with remote-sensing devices for advanced emissions surveillance and phasing out over-aged vehicles are some of the key factors that have been included in the policy to curb air pollution.

For on-road emissions inspection and monitoring, the

policy mentions that effective fleet screening still remains a daunting challenge and that more advanced inspection and monitoring systems are needed to be introduced.

It further states that all commercial vehicles require annual roadworthiness and fitness tests under the Central Motor Vehicle Rules (CMVR). CMVR tests are carried out manually in the absence of adequate testing facilities in most parts of the NCR and there is a need to set up more fully-automated, high-capacity centralised testing centres for the region, it said.

The policy also includes plans to introduce remote-sensing facilities to measure exhaust emissions remotely.

Further, the action plan includes phasing out old vehicles and scrapping of end-of-life vehicles. "To maximise the emissions gains from this strategy and to reduce environmental impact from the unsafe disposal of junk vehicles, the state governments may additionally implement state-level scrapping policies for the end-of-life vehicles that cannot be used any more," the policy says.

emissions gains from this strategy and to reduce environmental impact from the unsafe disposal of junk vehicles, the state governments may additionally implement state-level scrapping policies for the end-of-life vehicles that cannot be used any more," the policy says.

Traders upset with MCD's licence, registration fees decision

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Traders across North and East Delhi on Wednesday expressed resentment over the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) decision to rationalise licence and registration fees by bringing the rates on par with markets in southern parts of the city.

Arguing that markets in south Delhi are more developed as compared to those in north and east Delhi that lack even basic facilities such as toilets and potable water, they demanded that the fees hike should be rolled back.

The MCD on Tuesday revised the rates for getting health trade licence for running various establishments, such as banquet halls and eating houses.

Nitin Gupta, President of Kamla Nagar Traders Association, said it is "unjust" to impose the health trade licence fee of south Delhi areas in north and east Delhi.

"As per the Master Plan, the conversion charge and parking development charge paid by traders to the MCD was to be used for the development of the market but the civic body did not do it and now they have raised taxes and licence fee and imposed it on traders.

"This is completely unjust," Gupta said.



"The MCD should first develop north Delhi areas on par with the south and then bring uniformity in taxes and licensing system. Fee hike should be rolled back," Gupta demanded.

The public health department of the MCD has revised the rates of one-time registration fee and annual license fee for 94 categories of health trades.

Under the new policy, a one-time registration fee for health trade licence for banquet halls with a capacity of up to 250 seats has been fixed at Rs 10,000 and an annual license fee of Rs 15,000.

The registration and license fees for health trade of banquet halls with capacity more than 250 seats have been fixed at Rs 20,000 and Rs

25,000, respectively. Prior to this arrangement, traders in north Delhi had to pay only Rs 1,000 for health trade license.

The traders said that after the revision in the license fee, if people want to open a 'dhaba (eatery)' in north Delhi areas, they will have to shell out Rs 6,000 for license while earlier it was only Rs 500.

Similarly, the per annum health trade license fee for a three- and five-star hotel in north Delhi will now be Rs 1 lakh and Rs 5 lakh, respectively. Earlier, it was Rs 500 for both the categories.

Meanwhile, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) hitting hard at BJP ruled MCD said that the BJP have brought out a new tactic to extort money from Delhiites.

Garage owner who mowed down man with customer's car arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a 23-year-old garage owner for mowing down a man in south Delhi's Greater Kailash area with a client's car he had taken for repair. The accused, Shubham Jain, who owns a garage and deals in spare parts of vintage luxury cars, had taken a red BMW from Chandigarh's Ajay Parihat for repair. Police said that the red BMW was registered in the name of Ravi Kumar, who is Parihat's elder brother.

According to Benita Jaiker, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), South district that during interrogation, Jain told police that on the intervening night of July 9 and 10,



he along with his elder brother Vaibhav Jain and a friend had gone to Nehru Place in the BMW car. While returning from Nehru Place at about 2.30 AM on July 10, he hit a person near the plastic pots Market on Lajpat Rai Road but

was unable to stop his car due to very high speed. Later, he stopped the car near Blue Bells School for a moment but due to fear, he fled from the spot, the DCP said. The deceased, Ranjan Kumar, 46, a resident of Savitri Nagar in Malviya Nagar, worked as a cashier at a pub in East of Kailash, police said.

The speeding car hit Kumar from the front while he was walking on the road, and threw him on the pavement, police said. They said they received information about the hit-and-run incident at 5.09 AM at Greater Kailash Police Station.

Kumar was lying unconscious on the pavement for a long time. A passerby, who spotted him, informed the police, officials said.

He seemed to have been hit by a car, as broken parts of a car bumper were found on the spot, the senior police officer had said Tuesday.

Kumar was rushed to the AIIMS where he was declared brought dead. A case under sections 279 (rash driving) and 304A (causing death due to negligence) of the Indian Penal Code was registered at Greater Kailash 1 Police Station and an investigation was initiated, Jaiker said. A special team was formed which examined over 200 CCTV cameras installed within five km from the restaurant where the victim worked in East of Kailash, to Safdarjung Hospital Ring road, to find out the route offending vehicle might have taken.

14 Chinese held for illegal stay in India

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Fourteen Chinese nationals, including a woman, were detained on Wednesday here for allegedly staying in the country illegally since 2020, police officials here said.

They all worked for a private company in Noida's Phase 2 and possessed valid passports but their business visas had expired, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Noida) Rajesh S said.

"The 14 Chinese nationals were detained by the Sector 49 police station team. The local intelligence unit had information that their visas had expired in 2020 but they had overstayed," the officer said.

Sisodia thanks UPSC for recruiting principals to Delhi Govt schools

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister, Manish Sisodia has written a letter to Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), Chairman, Manoj Soni to express his gratitude over recruiting principals for Delhi Government schools.

The direct recruitment of principals for Delhi Government schools is happening after a decade, the Minister noted. "Apart from checking just academic and administrative abilities of the

applicants, this time UPSC should also look out for their ability to motivate and mentor teachers, awareness about Delhi's cultural diversity, willingness to gain new skills, adaptability in every situation, deep understanding of child behaviour and their learning abilities and most importantly if he or she owns a research-oriented approach or not," the minister said in his letter to UPSC Chairman Manoj Soni.

In his letter Sisodia said that July 17, 2022 will be a historical day for the edu-

cation system of India because conducting the recruitment test for 363 posts by the UPSC is going to be the biggest exercise in strengthening the school system since the adoption of National Education Policy 2020.

"Many significant changes have taken place in the country's education system in the past seven years, between 2015 and 2022. Of which, the most important ones are that the Government of Delhi has been able to rebuild the public trust in the government school

system and the announcement of the first education policy of the 21st century adopted by the Government of India in 2020," said Sisodia.

The letter Sisodia also mentioned that Delhi government firmly believes in the vision of National Education Policy 2020 of making India a global knowledge superpower and its aims to have an education system with equitable access to the highest quality education for all learners regardless of social or economic background.

Shopkeeper thrashed with iron rods in Kotwali area

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 46-year-old shopkeeper was severely injured after a group of people allegedly attacked him in North Delhi's Kotwali area.

The shopkeeper identified as Deepak Jain, who sustained injuries on both of his hands and legs, is undergoing treatment at Sanjeevan Hospital in Daryaganj.

Jain's family suspected the involvement of the shop owner behind the incident, police said.

Anand Vihar RRTS station to be built 8 meters below ground

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Anand Vihar RRTS station will be an engineering marvel as it will be constructed eight meters below the ground. This will be the only station in the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS (Regional Rapid Transit System) corridor to be constructed one level underground.

"A typical underground station is constructed two level below the ground. Initially Anand Vihar Station was planned to be constructed 15 meters underground, however in doing so, it came in the way of the construction of the RRTS corridor," the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) said in a statement.

According to the statement, this station is being constructed by top-down method, first the ground level will be constructed and then the underground level. Four tunnels are also being constructed for the to and fro movement on both the sides of the station.

The construction of this station is a complex task from the point of view of civil engineering. However it is being made possible via new technologies, strategic planning, and innovative methods.

It would also ensure passenger convenience, for the elderly, handicapped and children as they wouldn't have to climb much to catch the RRTS trains, he added.

The station is close to var-



ious transport infrastructures such as Foot Over Bridge, Metro (blue and pink line), ISBT (Interstate Bus Stand), DTC (Delhi Transport

Corporation) bus terminals and Anand Vihar Railway Station. This would ensure seamless movement of commuters, providing them a safe,

hassle-free and time-saving experience, said a NCRTC official.

The Anand Vihar RRTS station will be 297 meters long and 35 meters wide. Three lifts, five escalators and two entry/exit gates will be provided for passenger convenience.

It has been the constant endeavor of NCRTC to ensure maximum convenience of the passengers in the implementation of RRTS project.

For smooth and uninterrupted travel of passengers, all RRTS stations are designed to be connected to the already existing modes of public transport wherever possible and to be made as close to them as possible, said the NCRTC official.

Plan to shift deer from Delhi Golf Club to Asola Bhatti put on hold

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi forest department's plan to shift a herd of Sambar deer from the elite Delhi Golf Club (DGC) to their new home in the Capital's Asola Bhatti Sanctuary has been put on hold till the construction of the sanctuary's boundary wall is completed. There are 30 to 40 Sambar deer in the DGC at present. The deer stomp on the grass of the golf course and damage it.

The forest department had shifted a couple of deer from the DGC to the wildlife sanctuary in a meticulously planned operation in April, but the intense heat impeded the trans-

fer of the rest of the deer.

According to Delhi government's officials, the DGC had last year approached the Delhi Forest and Wildlife Department, requesting them to shift the deer to the Asola Sanctuary, which is witnessing an increase in wildlife population. In winter months, when food is scarce, they start eating the grass, which increases the maintenance cost, according to DGC officials.

"The sanctuary's boundary wall is fragmented on the Haryana side. The concern is that the deer may get hurt or killed on the roads passing through or abutting the sanctuary," a senior forest official said.

CUET aspirants complain about lack of time to prepare

As exams dates approach

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The stress has increased manifold among students ever since the admit cards for the CUET-2022 were issued, with the aspirants complaining about a lack of time to prepare for the examination and no knowledge about their examination centres.

The debut edition of the CUET-UG will be conducted from July 15 to August 10. The "city intimation slips" were

issued to the students on Monday.

"On Monday, only our admit cards came. Many of us have been given three days to prepare for the most important examination of our life," said Himanshu (16), a Common University Entrance Test (CUET) aspirant.

Moreover, there is no clarity as regards the examination centre as the "city intimation slip" only mentions the city's name, not that of the centre.

"It is written on the website that the examination city can also be changed in case of a large number of students. There is a lot of uncertainty,"

Himanshu said.

Students say they are not satisfied with the date-sheet as the papers are either falling on the same day or in the first few days of the examination.

They feel it provides an "unfair" advantage to others as they will get ample time to prepare and also an idea about the pattern of the examination. A few aspirants have got all their examinations on the same day.

According to National Testing Agency (NTA) officials, students should not get worried as they have been issued the "city intimation slips" for the examination centre.

"Advance intimation slips

for the examination city to all candidates with the date of the examination and the city of the examination are being issued. The City Intimation Slip for each candidate has information relating to the subjects, language and medium offered in Slot 1 and Slot 2 as well as the date and the city allotted," a senior NTA official said.

"The admit card of the first phase, showing the details of the examination centre, have been available for download from 6 pm on July 12," he added.

The CUET is a centralised common entrance test for admission to undergraduate

programmers in over 90 universities across the country, including the Delhi University.

Due to a large number of subjects, a unique date-sheet for every individual candidate has been created.

The unique combination method is "quite confusing" and "convoluted" for the students. The lack of guidance is being equally felt by the students and their parents.

"It is quite confusing and convoluted. We are among the educated class and our children used to look up to us for guidance. Now, we have no idea about the examination. We are equally clueless," said Jyoti,

whose daughter is scheduled to appear in the CUET in August.

For Ramya Shukla (18), the lack of guidance is adding additional pressure on her. She said a major problem is that the syllabus is not just what they have studied in Classes 11 and 12 but contains "extra" elements too.

"I have not taken any coaching. I am employing the hit-and-run method. I have no idea what questions will come in the examination. The only relief is that my examination is in August. But I feel bad for my friends, many of whom have an examination in the first few days," she said.

UGC asks varsities to fix deadline for UG courses' admission

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has asked universities to fix their deadline for admission to undergraduate courses after the declaration of CBSE Class 12 results. The CBSE is likely to declare the result of the board exam results by the end of this month. The exam was delayed this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ex-VP Ansari leaked info to Pak scribe: BJP

Party seeks clarification from Hamid, Cong on Pak scribe's spying claims

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday virtually accused former Vice President of India Hamid Ansari of "leaking" official information to a Pakistani journalist and working against the "interest of the country".

In a no-holds-barred attack on Ansari, the BJP asked Ansari and the Congress to answer to the claims of a Pakistani scribe that he had visited India five times during the UPA rule and passed on sensitive information collected here to his country's spy agency ISI.

The BJP sought to ask Congress president Sonia Gandhi and senior leader Rahul Gandhi to provide information as to how the Pakistani journalist Nusrat Mirza was invited five times and he was also allowed to speak on terrorism, something his country sponsors against India..

"Was our intelligence agencies aware of his five visits? Also whether the Pakistani journalist was feeding Pakistani ISI India's information," BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia asked.

Addressing a Press conference, Bhatia cited the Pakistani journalist's purported comments that he had visited India on Ansari's invitations and also met him. If Congress leaders Sonia and Rahul Gandhi

besides the then vice president remain silent to the questions raised by the ruling party, it will amount to their admission to these "sins", Bhatia told newpersons.

"People of India are giving you so much respect and you are betraying the country. Isn't this treason? Sonia Gandhi, Rahul and Hamid Ansari should come out and reply to this," Bhatia said at a press conference.

Mirza has claimed in an interview in Pakistan that Ansari had invited him five times to India during 2005-11 and shared extremely sensitive and classified information, the BJP leader said.

"He took the information from Ansari and it was used against India," Bhatia alleged, adding that Mirza was also invited to speak at a seminar on the issue of terrorism.

"A person who is sharing information with the ISI is invited to come to India. Was this the Congress' policy to end terrorism?"

"This is the party's poisonous mindset. Our government has resolved to root out terrorism. On the other hand, this is the Congress mindset," he said.

Quoting Mirza's claims, the BJP leader said he was given the visa to visit seven Indian cities against the practice of three cities.

Bhatia also cited comments

Ansari terms BJP's charges as 'litany of falsehood'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Vice-president Hamid Ansari on Wednesday termed the BJP's charges as a "litany of falsehood" and said he "never invited the Pakistani journalist" to India. Ansari was India's Vice President from 2007-17. The Congress, however, did not respond to the BJP's allegations.

"Yesterday and today a litany of falsehood has been unleashed on me personally in sections of the media and by the official spokesperson of the Bharatiya Janata Party: that as Vice President of India I had invited the Pakistani journalist, Nusrat Mirza. That I had met him in a conference in New Delhi on 'terrorism', and that while as Ambassador to Iran, I had betrayed national interest in a matter for which allegations have been made by a former official of a government agency," Ansari said in the



statement.

"It is a known fact that invitation to foreign dignitaries by the Vice President of India are on the advice of the government generally through the Ministry of External Affairs. I had inaugurated the conference on terrorism on December 11, 2010, the 'International Conference of Jurists on International Terrorism and Human Rights'. As is the normal practice the list of invitees would have been drawn by the organisers. I never invited him or met him," the former Vice President said, referring to the Pakistani journalist.

of a former operative of RAW, India's external spy agency, to allege that Ansari had harmed the country's interests when he was its envoy to Iran.

Asked if the BJP was seeking legal action on the issue, he said the party's job is to raise

issues and it is for the investigation agencies to probe.

The BJP leader also made charges against Ansari during his tenure as Indian Ambassador in Iran and alleged he was "working against the national security".

Charges against Sonia, Ansari worst form of character assassination: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Coming out strongly against the "insinuations and innuendos" by the BJP against party chief Sonia Gandhi and former Vice President Hamid Ansari, the Congress on Wednesday said it amounts to character assassination of the worst form.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said in a statement that the level that the Prime Minister and his party colleagues will "stoop to debate public debate is staggering".

He said the "situations and innuendos by a spokesperson of the BJP against Sonia Gandhi and Hamid Ansari, are character assassination of the worst form" and are to be condemned "in the strongest possible language".

The Congress said that facts regarding the International Conference of Jurists on International Terrorism and Human Rights held on December 11, 2010 in New Delhi are already in the public domain and accused the ruling party of spreading lies.

Govt calls all-party meet ahead of Monsoon Parliament session

BJP expected to raise Uniform Civil Code with pilot Bill already on anvil

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Parliament session, beginning July 18, the Government has called an all-party meeting on Sunday to ensure the smooth conduct of the session, wherein the BJP is expected to raise the issue of Uniform Civil Code with a pilot Bill already on the anvil.

There has been some movement on the issue of UCC even in the States like Uttarakhand where the Government has formed an expert committee headed by a Supreme Court judge for implementing it.

Prior to the all-party meeting, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has convened a meeting of floor leaders on Saturday while Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu will meet the floor leaders of various parties on Sunday. The session will witness the election of a new President of India in place of the incumbent Ram Nath Kovind. The result will be declared on July 24.

NDA candidate Droupadi Murmu is expected to win by



a big margin as several non-NDA parties and even sections of the opposition have supported her. The ruling BJD in Odisha was the first to back Murmu, a tribal woman belonging to the Santhal tribe of the State. YSRCP and JDU are also supporting Murmu even as Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray said his MLAs will vote for her.

The next President is likely to take oath on July 25.

This will also be the last session for Vice President Naidu of his tenure ending on August 10. The notification for holding the election to the VP's post has been made and the last date for filing nominations is July 19. Both the ruling BJP and the opposition are yet to name their vice-presidential nominees.

The customary meeting of all parties has been called by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prahlad Joshi to discuss the agenda and seek their support and cooperation for the smooth and productive functioning of the Parliament session. Defence Minister Rajnath

Singh will be present during the meeting.

Birla has invited floor leaders of various parties for a meeting on Saturday evening at 4 pm. Naidu has convened the meeting on July 17 at 6 pm. The Monsoon session of Parliament begins on July 18 and will continue till August 12.

It is expected that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, like in past, may attend the meeting and interact with the opposition leaders, sources said.

Among the bills pending in Parliament are Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Amendment Bill, 2022; The Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Orders (Second Amendment) Bill, 2022; The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021; and The Anti-Doping Bill, 2021.

The Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021, and The Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021, have been sent to the respective standing committee.

SC orders conman to submit payment details, list of officials who extorted money from him

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed alleged 'conman' S u k e s h Chandrashekar, who has claimed that ₹12.5 crore was extorted from him by some officials at the Tihar Jail here, to submit the list of persons and details about the payments made on his behalf.

The apex court, which was hearing a plea of Chandrashekar and his wife seeking to shift them from the Tihar Jail on the ground of an alleged threat to their lives, questioned him as to who made the payment on his behalf and said it would go into the "root of the matter".

A bench headed by Justice U U Lalit observed that it would be necessary to understand the identity of those who made the payments on his behalf in order to come to a



conclusion as to whether Chandrashekar was subjected to alleged extortion or whether, as asserted by the authority, he was running a crime syndicate from inside the jail.

"We, therefore, call upon the petitioner to submit the list of persons giving all details as to the payments made by any or every one of them and to whom the payments were made.

Let all the details be filed before the next date of hearing," the bench, also comprising Justices S R Bhat and Sudhanshu Dhulia, said.

Issue of juvenility of accused be examined afresh, says apex court

Boy's death in G'gram school

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said a juvenile accused of killing a seven-year-old child at a private school in Haryana's Gurugram district in 2017 be examined afresh to ascertain if he should be tried as an adult for the alleged crime.

A bench of Justices Hemant Gupta and Vikram Nath dismissed the appeals filed by the father of the deceased child challenging the October 11, 2018 order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

The top court also asked the Centre and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights to issue guidelines regarding such matters.

The High Court had set aside a lower court order

which said the 16-year-old student, accused of killing the child over a year ago, will be treated as an adult during the trial.

The High Court observed that the procedure adopted by the lower court to declare that the accused be tried as an adult cannot be sustained in the eyes of law and therefore, the order is being set aside with the observation that it shall be remanded back to the JJ Board for taking a fresh view on the same, advocate Sushil Tekriwal, representing the victim's family, had said.

The CBI, in a charge sheet, had alleged that the teenager had murdered the student on September 8, 2017, in a bid to get the examinations postponed and a scheduled parent-teacher meeting cancelled.

The victim's body, with the throat slit, was found in the washroom of the school in the Bhondsi area in Gurgaon.

India, China to hold 16th round of talks on July 17 over LAC standoff

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and China are likely to hold the 16th round of Corps Commander level talks on July 17 in an effort to find a way out for early disengagement of troops at some friction points in Eastern Ladakh. The last round of military level talks was held on March 11. The upcoming parleys to be held at a border meeting point at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) comes days after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi reviewed the situation at the LAC in Bali, Indonesia.

The talks took place on the sidelines of a meeting of the foreign ministers of G-20 countries on July 7. It was learnt that the eastern Ladakh border row figured in the discussions.

The two ministers are likely to take stock of the situation at the LAC when they meet again on July 28 and 29 in Tashkent for the Shanghai C o o p e r a t i o n Organisation (SCO) Foreign



Ministers' conclave. The take-away from the Corps Commander talks is likely to figure prominently in the talks between Jaishankar and Wang Yi, sources said.

As regards the proposed military level talks on July 17, sources said here on Wednesday the two commanders will discuss further disengagement at frictions points along the LAC. The ongoing friction points are Hot Springs, Demchok and Depsang Valley.

India has all along insisted that complete withdrawal of the

Chinese troops from the sites is the prerequisite for restoring normal ties between the two countries. New Delhi has also made it clear that status quo has to be restored at the LAC as it existed prior to May 2020.

The sustained dialogue at the military and diplomatic levels in past two years have seen some forward movement with disengagement of soldiers from Galwan Valley, Pangong Tso and Gogra-Hot Springs area.

The last round of diplomatic level talks was held on June one under the aegis of the

Working Mechanism for Consultation and Co-ordination (WMCC) on India-China border affairs.

Giving details of the latest round of WMCC parleys, officials had said the two sides exchanged views on the current situation along the LAC in the Western Sector in Eastern Ladakh. They agreed that as instructed by the two Foreign Ministers, both sides should continue the discussions through diplomatic and military channels to resolve the remaining issues along the LAC at the earliest so as to create conditions for restoration of normalcy in bilateral relations.

This was the 24th Meeting of the WMCC.

IN SHORTS

BIRLA CALLS ASSEMBLY SPEAKERS' MEET

New Delhi: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has convened a meeting of all the Speakers or Presiding Officers of Legislative bodies across the country on Friday to deliberate on areas of interest concerning the functioning of legislative bodies in India, including anti-defection law, disruption in legislatures, people's participation in legislative bodies and uniformity of rules and procedures in legislatures.

PM TO LAUNCH FOUR-LANE EXPRESSWAY IN UP

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Uttar Pradesh on Saturday and inaugurate the Bundelkhand Expressway -- a 296-km four-lane expressway that has been constructed at a cost of around ₹14,850 crore, the PMO said. The work on the expressway has been completed within 28 months and it will now be inaugurated by the Prime Minister.

CBI TO PROBE BENGAL BJP ACTIVIST'S KILLING

New Delhi: The CBI has taken over the investigation into the alleged killing of a BJP activist in Kolkata in May last year. On the Calcutta High Court's orders to probe post-poll violence in Bengal, the CBI has re-registered a case of abetment to suicide against nine people, including two staffers of the Baguiati Police station, as complained by the victim's mother to a magistrate.

MODI TALKS WITH NETHERLANDS PM

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday had a telephonic conversation with his Netherlands counterpart Mark Rutte. They discussed India-Netherlands bilateral ties, including strategic partnership on water, cooperation in the key area of agriculture, potential for bilateral cooperation in high tech and emerging sectors.

Cabinet OK's Taranga Hill-Ambaji-Abu Road rail line

116.65 km rail line is to be constructed with estimate of ₹2,798.16 cr

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Wednesday approved the construction of the 116.65-km Taranga Hill-Ambaji-Abu Road rail line at an estimated cost of ₹2,798.16 crore.

Union I&B Minister Anurag Thakur said the Cabinet also granted central status to The Railway University in Gujarat's Vadodara and it has been

renamed as Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya.

To be built by the Ministry of Railways, the project will link two states and three religious places and will be completed by 2026-27. The proposed rail line will traverse through the Sirohi district of Rajasthan and Sabarkantha, Banaskantha and Mahesana districts of Gujarat. Ambaji is one of the 51 'Shakti Peeths' which attract millions of devotees from Gujarat as well as other parts of the country and abroad every year.

Mount Abu is the headquarters of the Brahma Kumari community and is frequented by its followers from around the world. The construction of this railway line will facilitate easy travel for millions of devotees. Those visiting the temple of Ajitnath Jain (one of the 24 Tirthankaras) at Taranga Hill



will generate direct employment for about 40 lakh mandays.

"The estimated cost of this project is ₹2,798.16 crore and will be completed by 2026-27. The new railway line will connect two states, and three religious places and will reduce the load on the main railway line," Thakur said at a press briefing.

Besides enhancing connectivity and mobility, the pro-

ject will lead to the overall socio-economic development of the region. This line will facilitate faster movement of agricultural and local products and improve mobility of the people between Gujarat and Rajasthan as well as to other parts of the country.

The project will also provide an alternative route to the existing Ahmedabad-Abu Road railway line. The new

line shall also benefit the dairy industry of Mehsana and the marble industry of Gujarat. PTI

Thakur said the Union Cabinet gave its approval to introduce a Bill in Parliament, namely, the Central Universities (Amendment) Bill, 2022 to amend the Central Universities Act, 2009 for setting up of Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV).

The amendment would help in converting the National Rail and Transportation Institute (NRTI), a deemed-to-be university into Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya, a Central University, he added.

Currently, the NRTI offers BSc in transportation technology, BBA in transportation management courses, and MSc in railway system engineering and integration.

FM more interested in Uranus, Pluto than reviving economy: Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Wednesday hit out at Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, saying she is more interested in Uranus and Pluto than in steering the country's economy towards recovery.

A day after the Government released its inflation data, Congress said the FM was busy tweeting pictures from NASA's webb telescope rather than explaining to the country how she planned to rein in inflationary trends.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, who is currently travelling abroad, hit out at the government over

price rise, rising unemployment and debt and the fall in the value of the rupee. "When 'Economics' trumps 'Economics...', he said in a tweet citing figures of government debt, unemployment and the value of the rupee.

At the AICC Press conference, Congress spokesman Gaurav Vallabh accused the Modi Government of polarising society and creating disharmony instead of tackling rising inflation, unemployment and depreciating Rupee. The economics professor said with rising inflation, it was expected that the Finance Minister would come out with a plan on how to tackle inflation, but she has different priorities.

"Unfortunately, our Finance Minister is showing sky-road to planets, and is unable to show the way forward to our economy," Vallabh said.

Vallabh also alleged that the BJP has brought about a "doom with 7s", with retail inflation at 7.01 percent, unemployment at 7.8 percent and Rupee depreciated 7 percent in the last six months vs the US Dollar. "While these are worrying data points, the BJP government is in deep slumber," he said.

"Any government can bring relief to the common mass only when sympathy leads over apathy. The ED and CBI are not tools that bring relief. Unless the BJP Government moves beyond ED

politics, common Indians will continue suffering," he alleged.

Attacking the government, Rahul shared a chart sharing details mentioning government's debt in 2014 was ₹56 lakh crore and it is ₹139 lakh crore in 2022. Similarly, he said unemployment is at 7.8 per cent in 2022 against 4.7 per cent in 2014 and the LPG price is ₹1,053 against ₹410 in 2014.

Rahul also claimed that the per capita debt in 2022 is ₹1,01,048 against ₹44,348 in 2014 and the trade deficit now is USD 190 billion against USD 135 billion in 2014. The chart also stated that the value of the rupee in 2014 was ₹ 59 per US dollar and it is ₹80 per dollar.

K'taka rain fury: 32 dead, 34 injured, 300 evacuated

₹500 crore to be disbursed for restoration work, says CM

PTI ■ BENGALURU/UDUPI

As rains continue to wreak havoc in different parts of Karnataka, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Wednesday said 32 people have lost their lives so far, and Rs 500 crore will be released immediately to restore the basic infrastructure that got damaged. The CM is on a visit to rain and landslide-affected Kodagu, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts since Tuesday, and will be travelling to Uttara Kannada, Belagavi and other northern districts next week. "Across the state, so far 32 people have lost their lives, five people are missing, 34 are injured, more than 300 people have been evacuated and saved, 14 relief camps have been set up, four NDRF and SDRF



teams each are working to rescue people," Bommai said. Speaking to reporters after holding a review meeting with senior ministers and deputy commissioners of coastal districts in Udupi, he said a sum of Rs 500 crore would be immediately released to take up repair and restoration of roads, bridges, power lines and other infrastructure works in the flood-hit areas based on the report received from all the districts on the extent of losses suffered.

The Chief Minister said he is getting reports on estimates for damage from all districts, following which the state will request the Centre for relief. Rains have increased this year in July, resulting in flood-like situation in coastal region, he said, adding, "Earlier there were some rains in May and June, in June it was average rainfall, but all of a sudden there was large-scale rainfall in the last 10 days, which has been above normal in coastal and some northern districts."

Rains have continued in several parts of Malnad and coastal Karnataka causing flood-like situation, also there have been several incidents of landslide and sea erosion. Rivers in the region have swelled, several dams have reached the brim and there is severe waterlogging in agricultural fields and low-lying areas causing damage to crops and properties. Similar is the situation in adjoining districts of Shivamogga, Chikkamagaluru and Hassan. Rains and increase in water level in rivers and dams is a cause of worry in a few northern districts of Belagavi, Vijayanagara and Yadgir. Water is being let out through 15 crest gates at Yadgir's Basava Sagara dam into Krishna river. The reservoir is receiving an inflow of about one lakh cusecs. People living along the riverside have been asked to vacate to safer areas. With Vijayanagara's

Tungbhadra dam almost reaching its capacity and increasing water flow in the river, there are threats of some of the monuments at the heritage site of Hampi like Purandara Mantapa getting inundated, sources said. The state government is providing immediate relief of Rs 10,000 to those whose houses have been damaged, Bommai said, adding that damage to houses has been categorised as A, B and C according to the extent of damage, and Rs 5 lakh is being provided as compensation for completely destroyed houses, Rs 3 lakh for partially damaged houses and Rs 50,000 for houses with less damage. As for crop losses, the NDRF has fixed input subsidy of Rs 6,800 per hectare for dry land crops, however the state government is paying Rs 13,600. Similarly, this year too Rs 13,600 would be paid, he said, and added that for wet-land crops Rs 25,000 would be

paid per hectare as against the input subsidy of Rs 13,500 fixed by the Union government. For horticulture crops, the Union government is providing input subsidy of Rs 18,000, while the state government is giving Rs 28,000 to help the farmers, Bommai said. A solatium of Rs 4 lakh is being paid by the Centre to the families of those killed in natural calamities like floods, but the state government has raised it to Rs 5 lakh, the Chief Minister said. Speaking about damages caused in Udupi, Dakshina Kannada and Uttara Kannada, he said among the dead, eight people are from the three districts, where crop loss is to the tune of 355 hectare, and 1,062 houses have been damaged. Also, a total of 2,187 km of PWD and RDP roads have been damaged there. The CM said this time those affected and not coming to relief camp will be given dry

ration kits. Referring to frequent tremors in Kodagu and coastal regions, he said the Geological Survey of India, Universities of Bengaluru and Mysuru have

been asked to study the phenomenon and submit a report. Appropriate measures would be taken based on the study report for the safety of the people.

Maha: Four swept away in nullahs amid rain in Gondia

PTI ■ GONDIA

Four persons were swept away in flooded nullahs in separate incidents in Maharashtra's Gondia district on Wednesday, an official said. Efforts are on to trace them, he said. The incidents occurred in Pujaritola (Lodhitola) village and Gondia city in the afternoon. Ashish Dharmaraj Bagde (25) and Sanju Pramod Bagde (23), both residents of Pujaritola village, were walking towards their field when they tried to cross a swollen nullah,

said district disaster management officer Rajan Choubey. The duo was pulled in by strong currents and swept away, he said. Personnel from the district search and rescue team (DSRT) have been pressed into service to trace them, Choubey added. In Gautam Nagar area in Gondia city, Javed Ali Hazrat Ali Sayyad (24) and Baba alias Rehan Ali Kalim Sheikh (15) were swept away while they were trying to swim in the flooded Chautha nullah. A search operation has been launched to traced them, the official added.

ICMR releases new standard treatment guidelines for 54 common conditions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In view of growing new scientific evidence and surging healthcare costs, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has released a set of new standard treatment guidelines for 54 common conditions across 11 specialities to help physicians at all levels with focus on affordable quality health care. The volume III of the 'Standard Treatment Workflows' seeks to address problems associated with irrational use of medicines, over and under diagnosis and poor referral practices, among others. Dr Vinod K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, released the book ICMR Standard Treatment Workflows - Volume III pertaining to 54 conditions under 11 specialities and also a mobile app on

Tuesday, an ICMR statement said on Wednesday. Specialties such as dermatology, endocrinology, gastroenterology, general surgery, sickle cell disease, neonatology, oncology, ophthalmology, orthopaedics, female infertility, paediatric surgery had been covered in the book. Prof (Dr) Balram Bhargava, Secretary, DHR, and Director General, ICMR, said, "The burden of delivering healthcare at the periphery predominantly rests on primary care physicians who have been doing a phenomenal job. The Standard Treatment Workflows will help these physicians to remain updated and will provide broad guidance on how to manage common conditions" Paul said the use of Standard Treatment Workflows (STWs) needs to be examined in an operational research mode and at various levels of



the public healthcare system. A robust dissemination strategy, including international dissemination, involving various stakeholders needs to be planned, he added. The ICMR released volume I with 53 conditions in 2019 and volume II with 18 conditions exclusively focused on tuberculosis in March this year. Dr Lokesh Sharma, senior scientist at ICMR, said, "Developing STW is a mission mode project of ICMR for

common and serious diseases encountered by the treating physicians at all levels of healthcare systems with an aim to guide them for management and encourage rational use of drugs, diagnostics and other healthcare services." "It is expected that these resource stratified treatment workflows would be useful to doctors working at primary, secondary as well as tertiary levels and help in optimal utilisation of resources," he said.

7 cops suspended after 2 criminals escape from their custody in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Seven policemen, including a sub-inspector of Rae Bareilly police, have been placed under suspension after two hardened criminals of Irani gang, arrested in a police encounter, escaped from the Trauma Centre of King George's Medical University here on Wednesday.

The police team allegedly remained mute spectators as the criminals escaped from their custody. Taking stern action in the matter, Rae Bareilly's Superintendent of Police Alok Priyadarshi suspended all the seven policemen deployed at the hospital. Last Saturday, the cops of Rae Bareilly and the local Special Operation Group (SOG) had an encounter with criminals near Kanha village of Dalmau Kotwali, in which four hardened criminals including Irfan



and Inzamam of Bada village, Shahganj district Jaunpur were caught. Inzamam and Irfan were shot in the leg. Their treatment was going on in the district hospital. Both were referred to the Trauma Center in Lucknow on Tuesday evening. To keep an eye on them, The Rae Bareilly district police chief had deployed Sub-Inspector Mohit Kumar, head constable, Lalsa Chauhan, constables Mukesh Sahu, Mahesh Singh, Shakti Singh, Sachin Gautam and Anand Kumar, all posted at Dalmau police station.

National flag dumped with garbage: Police begin probe so do Navy, Coast Guard

PTI ■ KOCHI

The Navy and the Coast Guard on Wednesday launched a probe into an incident wherein the national flag and the flags of the Coast Guard were found dumped along with garbage on the outskirts of Ernakulam in Kerala. The police have already registered a case and launched an investigation into the matter by constituting a special squad. Defence sources told PTI that even the Navy and Coast Guard have initiated parallel investigations into the incident and at the same time they are also cooperating with the police probe. A top officer of Kochi city police said an ex-military personnel passing through that area had reported the incident and immediately they had

rushed to the spot, gave a salute to the Indian flag and removed it as well as the flags of the Coast Guard from an open piece of land close to Iruppanam crematorium in Ernakulam on Tuesday. The special squad has begun to investigate what has happened and as part of that, information has been sought from the Cochin Naval Base and the Coast Guard, the officer said. He said it is hoped that the flags were dumped there in such an insulting manner by someone from outside the naval base or the Coast Guard. The defence sources said it is suspected that the agencies which were awarded contracts to collect scrap from outside the "material organisations" (or store depots) of the Navy and Coast Guard were probably responsible for what had happened.

India ranked low in gender parity: WEF report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India has been ranked low at 135th place in terms of gender parity, despite an improvement of five places since last year on better performance in areas of economic participation and opportunity. On the health and survival subindex too, India ranked the lowest at 146th place and figured among the five countries with gender gaps larger than 5% - the other four being Qatar, Pakistan, Azerbaijan and China, as per the annual Gender Gap Report 2022 of the World Economic Forum (WEF) released on Wednesday in Geneva. However, good news is that India was ranked the top globally in terms of gender parity for primary education enrolment and tertiary education enrolment and at the eighth place for the position of head of state. Iceland retained its place as the world's most gender-equal

country, followed by Finland, Norway, New Zealand and Sweden. Only 11 countries are ranked below India on the index of 146 nations, with Afghanistan, Pakistan, Congo, Iran and Chad being the worst-five. The WEF warned that the cost of living crisis is expected to hit women hardest globally with a widening gender gap in the labour force and it will take another 132 years (compared to 136 in 2021) to close the gender gap. The report further said that COVID-19 has set gender parity back by a generation and a weak recovery was making it worse globally. On India, the WEF said its gender gap score recorded its seventh-highest level in the last 16 years, but it continues to rank among the worst performers on various parameters. "With a female population of approximately 662 million, India's level of attainment weighs heavily on regional

rankings," it said. Recovering ground since 2021, India registered the most significant and positive change to its performance on Economic Participation and Opportunity. But, labour-force participation has shrunk for both men and women since 2021. The share of women legislators, senior officials and managers increased from 14.6% to 17.6%, and the share of women as professional and technical workers grew from 29.2% to 32.9%. The gender parity score for estimated earned income improved; while values for both men and women diminished, they declined more for men. However, in the area of political empowerment, the sub-index where India ranks relatively higher at 48th place, showed a declining score due to the diminishing share of years women have served as head of state for the past 50 years. Within South Asia, India



was ranked the sixth best on overall score after Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan. Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan scored worse than India. At its current pace, it will take 197 years to close the gender gap in the region. The economic gender gap has closed by 1.8% with increases in the share of women in professional and technical roles in countries including Bangladesh and India as well as Nepal. The WEF said that of the 146 economies surveyed, just one in five has managed to

close the gender gap by at least 1% in the past year. "The cost of living crisis is impacting women disproportionately after the shock of labour market losses during the pandemic and the continued inadequacy of care infrastructure," WEF Managing Director Saadia Zahidi said. At the current rates of progress, it will take 155 years to close the political empowerment gender gap - 11 more than predicted in 2021 - and 151 years for the economic participation and opportunity gender gap.

Didi, Dhankhar, Hemanta meet for 2.5 hrs in Darjeeling

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In a curious development Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday held discussions for more than two-and-half hours in the presence of Assam Chief Minister Hemanta Biswa Sarma almost 700 km away from Kolkata at the former's summer palace in Darjeeling. While the Chief Minister assured that the trio discussed no politics among them Congress Lok Sabha Leader Adhir Chowdhury interpreted Wednesday's meeting as a prelude to a secret parley between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Chief Minister. "I was in Darjeeling and the Governor too arrived here on an official visit ... he invited me to the Raj Bhavan here and I responded," the Chief Minister said adding she and Biswa Sarma knew each other from a long time and that



"Hemant ji too had some works here and we had a chance meeting ... I had only a cup of tea and biscuits... No politics was discussed," Banerjee said when asked whether the leaders discussed presidential elections. Hours earlier the Governor attacked the State Government and asked the State civil society to "break silence and high-light worrisome governance scenario of extreme appeasement, communalised patronage, Mafia Syndicate Extortion in the state as this would help to enhance of democratic values and human rights protection."

He also said that "many statements were made" regarding development, investment and job creation but not one was reflected on the ground. Elsewhere the TMC leaders like Idris Ali hit the Governor back saying he was a "communal person." Bengal Speaker Biman Banerjee said Raj Bhavan was being reduced to a place of drama. Meanwhile, speaking on the two-and-a-half hour parley far away in Darjeeling Adhir Chowdhury said that the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister were working on a "hidden agenda," adding "It is normal for Didi to sit and have tea with the Governor and the Assam Chief Minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma, in Darjeeling. PM Modi and Didi both want Congress-mukt Bharat and these hidden meetings will happen between Didi and the BJP ahead of the 2024 elections to decide how the Citizenship Amendment Act will be used."

'Transgenders showing increasing interest in gender-change surgeries'

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Having law on their side in the wake of a legislation passed in 2019 besides a constitutional right to register themselves under the third gender category, the number of transgenders in the country showing interest in gender-change surgeries—female to male and vice versa — is increasing, plastic surgeons pointed out on Wednesday. However, while the number of those having actually reached the logical conclusion remains unknown as most of the surgeries are being conducted in the private hospitals where the transgender is assured of secrecy. In the Government hospitals in contrast, the OPD is crowded and health records are mostly open to all.

Transgenders aspiring surgeries thus prefer private hospitals even though treatment cost is quite high in such settings, said Dr Vijay Kumar, Department of Plastic Surgery, King George Medical University, Lucknow. Dr Kumar is also the Secretary of Indian Plastic Surgeon Association. "In the last 10 years, in Lucknow alone, around 18 transgender surgeries—16 in private centres -- have been conducted," he informed. In Government hospitals mostly, surgeries are free except for the cost on the devices if any. Such surgeries are time consuming as the doctors have to take help of psychiatrists who analyse the interested transgender at least six months. The mindset and psychology of the transgender is studied

intensively and he/she is made to understand that once the sex is changed there is no going back. Dr (Prof) Maneesh Singhal, Head-Department of Plastic, Reconstructive and Burns Surgery, AIIMS, Delhi, shared that they will be holding a workshop on issues related with surgeries involving transgenders. According to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, the government is mandated to provide health facilities to transgender persons, including separate HIV surveillance centers and gender affirmation surgery. "It is time that they are treated as equals and hospital settings are sensitive towards their rights. We will soon hold a sensitization workshop just to sensitise our own staff towards

the needs of the community so that they avail health facilities without any hesitation," said Dr Singhal. The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is planning to set up 'Garima Greh' or shelter homes for transgenders across the country. This is aimed at rehabilitating the members of the community whose parents or immediate family shun them because of their gender orientation. "Many trans-persons undergo gender distress caused by not having your body match your gender identity. But such surgeries are expensive and only few state governments like Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu have been helpful," Reena Rai, who organizes transgender beauty pageants in India, was quoted by a news agency.

Azad to steer Cong committee ahead of Assembly polls

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad is all set to occupy the driver's seat to steer the faction-ridden Pradesh Congress committee ahead of the forthcoming Assembly polls in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Though no formal announcement has been made in what capacity he would be handling the affairs of the Pradesh Congress committee but leaders privy to inhouse deliberations told The Pioneer, "a broader understanding has been achieved and the party high command has directed the warring factions to bury the hatchet and work 'unitedly' to strengthen the party ahead of the crucial polls.

Sitting JKPC Chief GA Mir had earlier tendered his resignation to make way for the new JKPC Chief. However, several senior party leaders adopted a tough posturing when the party high command started lobbying in support of a junior leader from the Ghulam Nabi Azad camp. The move also brought out fissures among the Azad loyalists prompting them to visit New Delhi to resolve the leadership crisis. Inside reports suggested the party high command has almost made up its mind to hand over the power baton to the tallest party leader Ghulam Nabi Azad in order to galvanise the party workers and motivate them to give a tough fight to their political opponents.

Maurya to take out 'Gram Vikas Yatra' to see progress of Amrit Sarovar project in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya on Wednesday gave clear instructions to the officers of the Rural Development department to take all necessary steps to expedite the construction of Amrit Sarovars. Maurya said he would visit villages to inspect the progress of the Amrit Sarovar work. "Amrit Sarovar should be built in such a way that it becomes a part of village development and rural tourism centre. It should prove to be a boon for water harvesting and conservation and should also prove helpful in environmental protection and promotion," Maurya said, adding that it should also send a positive message to society that they all should show concern towards

the environment. Maurya was reviewing the progress of works of the Rural Development department in his room at Vidhan Bhawan here on Wednesday. He directed the top officers of the department, chief development officer and block development officer to make surprise inspections of the Amrit Sarovar works. He said stern action should be taken against the officers and employees adopting a casual approach towards the timely completion of work. He directed that a booklet should be published and distributed to the MLAs about the works to be done from the MLA Local Area Development Fund. He said the funds should be allocated work wise and time limit should be fixed for completing the works.

FIRST COLUMN

THE FALLACY OF SUCCESS

In this essay, the writer highlights the silly glorification of success and wealth



GK CHESTERTON

There has appeared in our time a particular class of books and articles which I sincerely and solemnly think may be called the silliest ever known among men. They are much more wild than the wildest romances of chivalry and much more dull than the dullest religious tract. Moreover, the romances of chivalry were at least about chivalry, the religious tracts are about religion. But these things are about nothing, they are about what is called Success. On every bookstall, in every magazine, you may find works telling people how to succeed. They are books showing men how to succeed in everything, they are written by men who cannot even succeed in writing books. To begin with, of course, there is no such thing as Success. Or, if you like to put it so, there is nothing that is not successful.

That a thing is successful merely means that it is; a millionaire is successful in being a millionaire and a donkey in being a donkey. Any live man has succeeded in living, any dead man may have succeeded in committing suicide. But, passing over the bad logic and bad philosophy in the phrase, we may take it, as these writers do, in the ordinary sense of success in obtaining money or worldly position. These writers profess to tell the ordinary man how he may succeed in his trade or speculation—how, if he is a builder, he may succeed as a builder; how, if he is a stockbroker, he may succeed as a stockbroker. They profess to show him how, if he is a grocer, he may become a spotting yachtsman; how, if he is a tenth-rate journalist, he may become a peer; and how, if he is a German Jew, he may become an Anglo-Saxon. This is a definite



and business-like proposal, and I really think that the people who buy these books (if any people do buy them) have a moral, if not a legal, right to ask for their money back. Nobody would dare to publish a book about electricity which literally told one nothing about electricity, no one would dare to publish an article on botany which showed that the writer did not know which end of a plant grew in the earth. Yet our modern world is full of books about Success and successful people which literally contain no kind of idea, and scarcely any kind of verbal sense.

It is perfectly obvious that in any decent occupation (such as bricklaying or writing books) there are only two ways (in any special sense) of succeeding. One is by doing very good work, the other is by cheating. Both are much too simple to require any literary explanation. If you are in for the high jump, either jump higher than anyone else, or manage somehow to pretend that you have done so. If you want to succeed at whist, either be a good whist-player, or play with marked cards. You may want a book about jumping, you may want a book about whist, you may want a book about cheating at whist. But you cannot want a book about Success. Especially you cannot want a book about Success such as those which you can now find scattered by the hundred about the book market. You may want to jump or to play cards, but you do not want to read wandering statements to the effect that jumping is jumping, or that games are won by winners...

(Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936) was an English critic and author.)

Going organic Indian, not Sri Lankan, way

The abrupt ban on imports of fertilisers ahead of summer crop sowing plunged Sri Lanka into deep agrarian crisis



SUMEE BHASIN

A few days ahead of the beginning of the Yala planting season, Sri Lanka announced a complete ban on imports of chemical fertilizers in April 2021. The farmers were ready with the sowing season as the Monsoon set its course in the island nation for the Yala crops, same as Kharif sowing season in India. This planting season is the mainstay of the Sri Lankan economy, as paddy is the staple food of the island nation. The Sri Lankan government was convinced that the organic farm produce would fetch premium prices in the international market and make Sri Lanka richer in quick time.

The Sri Lankan government took the country into the arms of chaos by embarking on policy adventures with least regards to the scientific inputs. Agriculture is not a domain for casino players to set bets with borrowed foreign money. But the Sri Lankan government was fully policy-blinded, as the Chinese hot money flowed in the pockets of the ruling elites in Colombo, and Beijing pursued its debt-trap policy in India's neighbourhood. The ban on imports of chemical fertilizers was sudden. It came as a jolt to the farming community. That was despite the agricultural scientists publicly expressing their reservations.

Sri Lanka is essentially a plantation economy. The island nation was self-sufficient in rice production. Agriculture accounted for 8.26 per cent in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Sri Lanka in 2020. Sri Lanka takes pride in the Kandyan Home garden System, banking on the traditional agricultural practices, which is said to have helped in protecting biodiversity and also the environment. The Chenna cultivation system works with the rotation of the crops and the agro-forestry has also been a key feature of Sri Lankan agriculture. Such practices which enjoyed popular support for the traditional agricultural practices must have made the Sri Lankan government to take the organic bet in April 2021.

By November, Sri Lanka began realizing that the worst case scenarios projected by the agricultural scientists started proving right. Tea productions, the mainstay of Sri Lanka and the key earner of foreign currency reserves, crashed by over 40 per cent. The productions of the Yala crops took a big hit, crashing by almost 40 per cent. The prices of the foodgrains began soaring. Panic set in, and the government realized that mistakes have been committed. But it was too late in the day when the Sri Lankan government partially lifted the ban on imports of chemical fertilizers.

The foreign currency reserves were already dwindling following the 2019 Easter terror attacks and the subsequent outbreak of the Covid-19, which dried up the remittances sent by the expatriates. The cunning traders began hoarding the food-



SRI LANKA'S FINANCIAL AND POLITICAL COLLAPSE IS A CASE STUDY FOR MANY COUNTRIES, AND ITS AGRARIAN MESS WARRANTS DEEPER STUDIES FOR THE POLICY MAKERS ACROSS THE WORLD WHO CAN ALSO EXAMINE THE INDIAN WAYS OF ORGANIC FARMING

The author is Director, Public Policy Research Centre



grains, and the food inflation just flew into the sky, setting off a chain reaction to stage the collapse of the financial system of Sri Lanka, which eventually defaulted on its over USD 55 billion.

The Galle Face protest began gathering strength about three months back, almost the same time when Russia invaded Ukraine, which plunged the world into a full scale inflation trap. While Russia and Ukraine are granaries of the world, being big wheat producers, the ongoing war triggered the food crisis in many countries. The crude oil prices dried the foreign currency reserves of the importing countries, including Sri Lanka. Time had run out for the Sri Lankan government to do any repair, as the people stood miles in queues to fetch cooking gas, petrol and diesel, rations, and so on. In the end, the April, 2021 decision of the Sri Lankan government to ban import of the chemical fertilizers proved to be the last straw on the camel's back.

Organic farming is an abiding objective of the progressive farmers. But the fact is also true that a shift to organic farming after decades of chemical fertilizers-based agriculture cannot be abrupt. Incidentally, Sri Lanka and India worked almost at similar times for the Green Revolution in the 1960s. Doubling of the foodgrains production and their subsequent scaling up later were entirely based on the use of chemical fertilizers and better quality seeds. Like India, Sri Lanka too became self-sufficient in most of the foodgrains requirements. There emerged significant comfort levels about food security in Sri Lanka, which may have set

up the government there to go for the organic gamble.

It, however, remains a fact among the agricultural scientific community that a shift to organic farming cannot be swift and sudden, for soil needs to be restored to its health first before productions of the grains could match the levels seen during the use of the chemical fertilizers. This tests patience, and requires government support to the farming community, as has been done by the Central government in India. Sikkim is the only organic state in India, but the state government with the support of the Centre put in place a robust support system for the farmers to compensate for the losses of the productions and incentivize them to persist with the use of the organic manures, while at the same time providing a pan-India marketing support system to help the cultivators fetch the premium prices for their produces.

The Indian experiment to promote organic farming has been scientific and gradual. Organic Research and Training Institute hand-holds the farming community in the adoption of organic farming. The Central government through a slew of schemes support the promotion of the use of bio-fertilizers and organic fertilizers through laboratories, while at the same time the Soil Health Cards, taken up by the government on a big scale, have empowered the farmers to make the right choices. As part of the National Programme for Promotion of Organic Products, India exported 59908 MT of produces in the Cereal & Millets category worth USD 76 million in 2020-21. On the

other hand India's export of organic food products rose by 51 per cent USD 1040 million in 2020-21. India is exporting organic food products to 58 countries, while there continues to be robust demand in the global market. The Covid-19 pandemic made no impact on the exports of the Indian organic food producers. That was made possible on account of the end-to-end support system, from cultivation to processing to marketing, with incentives assured by the government for each stakeholder.

Besides, India embarked on scientific ways to reduce the consumption of the chemical fertilizers, with the Soil Health Cards helping the farmers to make informed decisions on right use of urea. Also, the introduction of the neem-coated urea has been a game changer. Additionally, the innovation with the nano-fertilizer has empowered the farmers to make the best and optimum use of the chemical inputs. Incidentally, the ceiling on the production of the neem-coated urea has been enhanced from the earlier 20 per cent to 35 per cent.

The Indian way of promoting organic farming is well-tested and assured by the government, which should act as an exemplar for any country if it decides to make a shift in the farming practices. Restoring the health of the soil is at the core of the efforts of the government to promote organic farming. There cannot be any short-cut. The farmers, the government agencies, and the scientific community have to toil hard for sustainable agriculture, and there cannot be any short-cut to reach the goal.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

AS HEAD OF THE GOVT, THE PM SHOULDN'T HAVE UNVEILED THE NATIONAL EMBLEM ATOP THE NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING. —AIMIM LEADER AND OPPOSITION LEADER ASADUDDIN OWASI



HE (OWASI) IS ALWAYS DRIVEN BY A NEGATIVE MINDSET AND CONSTANTLY ATTACKS THE NATION'S VALUES. HE DOES IT HABITUALLY. —BJP SPOKESPERSON SUDHANSHU TRIVEDI

BJP sets eyes on record Prez poll win; 2024 agenda on card

The BJP wants Opposition presidential candidate Yashwant Sinha to bite the dust to set narrative for 2024 and beyond

After 1969, the Presidential election is being much talked about even though the outcome is no secret. The BJP's election management for a big victory margin, higher than 2017, has made politics unusually out of the ordinary.

The fad for a super number of votes is unparalleled in an election that has little relevance than going past the halfway mark. There may be much more to it than meets the eyes. There may be a new order in the pipeline. Nobody spells that out but it can be for a variety of reasons. The 1969 was different –VV Giri against Sanjeeva Reddy. That was an intra-Congress affair that finally led to decimation of the syndicate and installed Indira Gandhi as the new leader in



SHIVAJI SARKAR

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

the party.

The opposition is also losing its credibility for not raising the issue of inflation and a lot more. Congress is busy with its first family and a pseudo presidential battle. Together or individually, none of them even bring out a protest rally.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is himself leading the party in creating a sort of record by having the maximum number of votes for the ruling alliance's presidential nominee Droupadi Murmu. It is troubling the opposition parties the most and many leaders, including West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, are feeling cornered by an astute BJP leadership. Modi's love-hate relationship with the opposition nominee Yashwant Sinha is known.

Having fallen out of his favour, it's no wonder that the strategies in the BJP are being made to make Sinha bite the dust. In the process, the entire Opposition is finding itself in an uncanny situation and uncertain future.

The sudden turn in Maharashtra politics with 55 Shiv Sena MLAs joining a government with the BJP is planned to make the state politics interesting. The way the Eknath Shinde group forced Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thakre to vote for Murmu speaks volumes. Shiv Sena has a total vote value of 25893 in the Presidential election.

Wherever the opposition parties are not cohesive, it is getting a shock and finds their ranks tilting towards Murmu. In UP, Samajwadi Party ranks

appear mysteriously favouring Murmu.

Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia) chief Shivpal Singh Yadav has announced that he would vote for Murmu. Om Prakash Rajbhar attended the dinner of Murmu and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, but the next morning he said he would vote for the candidate being supported by Akhilesh Yadav. Mayawati's BSP is supporting Murmu.

UP may spring some surprises. Jansatta Dal Loktantrik founder Raghuraj Pratap Singh alias 'Raja Bhaiya' extended his support to Murmu, saying his two MLAs will vote for the NDA candidate.

Murmu met 31 YSR Congress Party MPs and 151 MLAs and later joined a tea party hosted by Andhra

Pradesh Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, who assured support for the NDA candidate in the Presidential election. The opposition Telugu Desam Party with 4 MPs and 23 MLAs has announced to support the NDA nominee. The lone MLA of Jana Sena who is virtually now in YSRCP has also announced to back Murmu. In effect, all votes from Andhra Pradesh will go to Murmu.

Almost similar is the situation in Odisha. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's BJD and BJP are voting for her. There is little doubt about Bihar either despite some reservations of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren who had initially thrown his phalanx with Sinha almost overnight not only was won

over by BJP but even told Sinha not to visit his home state for campaigning.

Rajasthan has seen cross voting during the Rajya Sabha polls. Now BJP is trying to dent the Congress votes with appeal to the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe MLAs to vote for tribal Murmu. The BJP backed Subhash Chandra lost the RS poll recently from Rajasthan.

Surprises remain in West Bengal. While Mamata Banerjee, worried about Santhal votes, blames the BJP for not telling about Murmu's candidature, her missive to Yashwant Sinha not to visit the state for campaigning speaks volume. She has not yet said how she would vote.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal still holds the

AAP card close to his chest. Though it is certain that Murmu is getting the majority votes, the BJP poll managers are targeting for more than 75 percent votes.

The total value of votes is 10,86,431, with a total of 776 MPs and 4033 MLAs constituting the electoral college. The BJP commands 48 percent votes and the NDA has over seven lakh votes.

The BJP is aiming to surpass votes polled by the incumbent President Ram Nath Kovind over Meira Kumar in 2017. Kovind had won with more than 65 percent votes. The BJP has taken the Presidential election as a test case for the 2024 polls. It will show its might for the one-nation-one-party to carry on a number of unfulfilled tasks.

Ukraine: Heavy Russian shelling kills 5 civilians, wounds 18

AP ■ KYIV

Renewed Russian artillery barrages across Ukraine killed at least five civilians and wounded another 18 in the past day, the office of Ukraine's president reported on Wednesday as Moscow attempted to expand and consolidate its gains in the country's east.

Most of the deaths occurred in Donetsk province, which is part of a region where pro-Russia separatists have fought for eight years and the Kremlin is intent on capturing. The city of Bakhmut faced particularly heavy shelling as the current focus of Russia's offensive, Donetsk administrative chief Pavlo Kyrylenko said.

In adjacent Luhansk province, which Russian and separatist forces have all but conquered, Ukrainian soldiers battled to retain control of two outlying villages amid the shelling, Gov. Serhiy Haidai said.

Luhansk and Donetsk together make up Ukraine's Donbas region, a mostly Russian-speaking region of steel factories, mines and other



industries vital to the economy.

The Russians are "deliberately turning Donbas into ashes, and there will be just no people left on the territories captured," Haidai said.

Russian artillery also rained down in northeast Ukraine, where a regional governor, Oleg Syniehubov, accused Russian forces of trying to "terrorize civilians" in Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city.

With Russia's sights set on

the east, the Ukrainian military has tried to reclaim captured city's in the south. The Ukrainian military claimed Tuesday to have used missiles to destroy a Russian ammunition depot in occupied Nova Kakhovka, a city east of the Black Sea port of Kherson.

The precision of the depot strike suggested Ukrainian forces had employed US-supplied multiple-launch High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS, a type of

weapon for which the government in Kyiv repeatedly appealed.

Russia's Tass news agency said the reported blast occurred when a mineral fertilizer storage facility exploded. Some of the ingredients in fertilizer can be used for ammunition.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian and Russian officials are expected to meet face-to-face Wednesday for the first time in months.

Military delegations from the two countries and Turkey

plan to hold talks in Istanbul on a potential deal to get grain out of Ukraine's blockaded and mined ports.

United Nations representatives also were involved in the talks. Ukraine is one of the world's largest exporters of wheat, corn and sunflower oil, but Russia's invasion halted shipments, endangering food supplies in many developing countries and contributing to higher global prices.

In other developments:

— The leader of a Moscow-backed separatist government in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk province said foreign fighters convicted of terrorism and trying to overturn constitutional order for working with Ukrainian troops have appealed their death sentences.

If the appellate court in the separatists' self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic rejects the appeals, two British men and a Moroccan could face a firing squad.

Rebel leader Denis Pushilin said about 100 members of Ukrainian National Guard battalion captured after the fall of the city of Mariupol were scheduled to appear before a court soon.

‘Ukraine needs assurances to resume grain exports’

AP ■ KYIV

The Ukrainian foreign minister says grain exports from his country's ports won't resume without security guarantees for ship owners, cargo owners and Ukraine as an independent nation.

Military officials from Russia and Ukraine were set to hold their governments' first face-to-face talks in months Wednesday. They planned to meet in Istanbul to discuss a United Nations plan for getting blocked Ukrainian grain to world markets through the Black Sea.

Speaking to The Associated Press ahead of the talks, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said any agreement needs to ensure Russia "will respect these corridors, they will not sneak into the harbor and attack ports or that they will not attack ports from the air with their missiles."

Kuleba also told the AP on Tuesday that Ukraine's military is "planning and preparing for full liberation" of Russian-occupied cities and towns near the country's Black Sea coast. Ukrainian forces already have stepped up their activity to retake territory in the south as Russia concentrates on eastern Ukraine.



Asked about the likelihood of negotiations to end the war that started when Russia invaded neighbouring Ukraine on Feb. 24, the foreign minister said peace talks were unlikely to happen soon.

"Russia continues to be in the war mood, and they are not seeking negotiations in good faith. They are seeking a way to make us implement their ultimatums, which is not going to happen," Kuleba said.

Moscow is attempting a de facto annexation of Kherson, Mariupol and other seized cities by introducing a Russian school curriculum, doing business in Russia's currency and offering Ukrainians Russian passports, he said.

"I'm pretty confident that once these territories are lib-

erated, the vast majority of people will burn their Russian passports quietly in their fireplaces," Kuleba said.

In the meantime, Ukraine is insisting upon a full withdrawal of Russian forces as a condition for ending the conflict, he said.

"We are fighting for our freedom, for our territorial integrity, and we want peace. This war was imposed on us. This was not our choice," Kuleba told the AP.

He stressed that while Ukraine appreciates the support it has received from the United States and European nations during the war, the country needs Western weapons deliveries to speed up as the fighting drags on into a fifth month.

Iranian envoy is vague about possible drone sales to Russia

AP ■ ROME

Iran's Foreign Minister insists that his country opposes Russia's war against Ukraine but stayed vague Wednesday about whether Tehran's military cooperation with Moscow would include sales of drones that could carry missiles.

Earlier in the war, Iran was criticised in the West for not condemning Russia's

February 24 invasion of neighbouring Ukraine. But Wednesday in the Rome daily La Repubblica, FM Hossein Amir Abdollahian was quoted as saying that "we are against Russia's military attack in Ukraine." Abdollahian arrived in Rome on Monday for a visit including meetings with Italian business officials and industrialists, as well as with the Italian foreign minister and Vatican

officials. The Minister was vague when asked about US contentions that Russia is about to acquire Iranian drones that could transport missiles.

"We have various types of collaboration with Russia, including in the defense sector," Abdollahian replied. "But we will help either of the sides involved in this war because we believe that it (the war) needs to be stopped."

Dozens dead in Haiti's Capital in gang clashes

AP ■ PORT-AU-PRINCE

Dozens of people have died in four days of gang battles in a violent neighbourhood of Haiti's capital, the latest eruption of bloodshed in a wave of increasing violence sweeping the country, local officials said Tuesday.

Jean Hislain Frederick, deputy mayor in Cite Soleil district of Port-au-Prince, said that the fighting erupted Friday in

a clash between members of two rival gangs and that at least 50 people had died and more than 50 were wounded.

The violence began just a day after the first anniversary of the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse. Since Moïse was killed, violence has soared in Haiti as gangs battle over territory, and the government has struggled to crack down.

The aid group Doctors Without Borders said that



thousands of people were trapped in Cite Soleil without

drinking water, food and medical care.

The organisation called on other humanitarian groups for help and it urged the gangs "to spare civilians." In a press release, it said three of its members were treating wounded people in an area of Cite Soleil called Brooklyn.

"Along the only road into Brooklyn, we have encountered corpses that are decomposing or being burned,"

Mumuza Muhindo, Doctors Without Borders head of mission in Haiti, said in the statement.

"They could be people killed during the clashes or people trying to leave who were shot — it is a real battlefield. It is not possible to estimate how many people have been killed."

Local officials said the fighting involved the rival gangs known as G9 and G-Pep.

**Punjab State Power Corporation Limited**
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Tender Enquiry No.: 311/SE/C&I/FSSS/AMC/13 **Dated 30-06-2022**
Superintending Engineer/ C&I Circle, O&M, GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat invites E-tenders for the work of Routine, Breakdown, Periodical / Preventive Maintenance and shutdown overhauling of C&I Equipments/ Instruments installed in FSSS, ASLD, Local PLC systems, Local Gauges, H2 Plant, Ash Water Recovery System etc. at Stage-I (2x210 MW) & Stage-2 (2x250 MW) Guari Hargobind Thermal Plant, Lehra Mohabbat, Distt. Bathinda, Punjab as per details given in the tender specifications for a period of one year.
For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from **12-07-2022 from 0300 PM** onwards.
Note: Corrigendum(s) and or addendum(s), if any, will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>
76155/12/989/2021/15645 **GHPT-36/22**

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING
VRB HYDRO POWER PVT LTD
RB North Square, Park Road, Baramulla (J&K)
8.00 MWs Boniyar Small Hydro Electric Power Project
Bids are invited from eligible bidders for Design, Engineering, Manufacture, Supply, Erection & Commissioning of electrical & mechanical works for Boniyar Small Hydro Electric Power Project 8.00 MWs + COL at Boniyar, District Baramulla, Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir as per details below:

1. Tender ID	VRB/J&K/E&M/001/2022
2. Last Date / Time of Bid Submission	10 August 2022, upto 1:00 PM
3. Date/Time of Opening of Bids	10 August 2022, at 4:00 PM

For details please contact:
Mr. Mohd Rafiq Malik

Project Office: VRB Hydro Power Pvt. Ltd. Srinagar-190005 (J&K)
Telefax: +91-194-2437293, Mobile: +91-9797794441
Email: vrhydro@rashbulders.in

FORM G - INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (Under Regulation 36A (1) of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) Regulations, 2016	
RELEVANT PARTICULARS	
1 Name of the corporate debtor	Sadhna Media Private Limited
2 Date of incorporation of corporate debtor	24/12/2002
3 Authority under which corporate debtor is incorporated / registered	Registrar of Companies, NCT of Delhi and Haryana
4 Corporate identity number / limited liability identification number of corporate debtor	U82111DL2002PTC118164
5 Address of the registered office and principal office (if any) of corporate debtor	38 Rani Jhansi Road, Jhandewalan, New Delhi-110055
6 Insolvency commencement date of the corporate debtor	(Copy of order received on 12.04.2022) Earlier Date: 26th June 2022 Revised Date: 14th July, 2022
7 Date of invitation of expression of interest	Revised Date: 14th July, 2022
8 Eligibility for resolution applicants under section 25(2)(h) of the Code is available at:	Detailed Expression of interest contains details of eligibility for resolution applicants under section 25(2)(h) of the code can be sought by email at: insm22@gmail.com
9 Norms of ineligibility applicable under section 29A are available at:	Same as stated in (8) above
10 Last date for receipt of expression of interest	Earlier Date: 11th July 2022 Revised Date: 29th July, 2022
11 Date of issue of provisional list of prospective resolution applicants	Earlier Date: 20th July 2022 Revised Date: 07th August, 2022
12 Last date for submission of objections to provisional list applicants	Earlier Date: 25th July 2022 Revised Date: 12th August, 2022
13 Date of issue of information memorandum, evaluation matrix and request for resolution plans to prospective resolution applicants	Earlier Date: 03rd August, 2022 Revised Date: 21st August, 2022
14 Date of issue of final list of prospective resolution applicants	Earlier Date: 25th July 2022 Revised Date: 12th August 2022
15 Manner of obtaining request for resolution plan, evaluation matrix, information memorandum and further information	The Prospective Resolution Applicants are requested to send email to irsmpl22@gmail.com with a copy to pkrayp@gmail.com after submitting confidentiality agreement.
16 Last date for submission of resolution plans	Earlier Date: 24th August 2022 Revised Date: 11th September 2022
17 Manner of submitting resolution plans to resolution professional	The Resolution Plan shall be submitted in a sealed cover at the following address: Pradeep Kumar Ray Resolution Professional of Sadhna Media Private Limited Address: 38, Rani Jhansi Road, Jhandewalan, New Delhi-110055 Softcopy of the resolution plan in password protected PDF file shall be sent to irsmpl22@gmail.com
18 Estimated date for submission of resolution plan to the Adjudicating Authority for approval	Earlier Date: 24th September 2022 Revised Date: 24th September 2022
19 Name and registration number of the resolution professional	Name: Pradeep Kumar Ray Reg. No.: BB/UPA-002/UP-N-01100/2021-2022/13648
20 Name, Address and e-mail of the resolution professional, as registered with the Board	Address: VIZ-108, First Floor, Shadipur Main Bazar, Chhoti Choupal (Pakodiwali Gali), Delhi-110008 Email: pkrayp@gmail.com
21 Address and email to be used for correspondence with the resolution professional	Address: 38, Rani Jhansi Road, Jhandewalan, New Delhi-110055 Email: irsmpl22@gmail.com
22 Further Details are available at or with	Further information can be obtained through the email id: irsmpl22@gmail.com Earlier Date 26th June 2022 Revised Date 14th July 2022
23 Date of publication of Form G	

Date : 14.07.2022
Place : New Delhi

Sd/-
Pradeep Kumar Ray
Reg. No. (BB/UPA-002/UP-N-01100/2021-2022/13648,
VIZ-108, First Floor, Shadipur Main Bazar, Chhoti Choupal
(Pakodiwali Gali), Delhi-110008
For Sadhna Media Private Limited

Vatican names 3 women to office that vets bishop nominations



AP ■ ROME

Pope Francis on Wednesday named three women to serve as members of the Vatican office that vets bishop nominations, in another first for women to have a say in Catholic Church governance.

The Dicastery for Bishops oversees the work of most of the church's 5,300 bishops, who run dioceses around the world. The dicastery's members, who include cardinals, bishops and now women, meet periodically to evaluate proposed new bishops whose names are forwarded by Vatican ambassadors. The ambassadors usually come up with three candidates for each opening after consulting with local church members.

The pope still makes the final call and can bypass candidates proposed by his ambassadors and then vetted by the dicastery. But the addition of women into the consultation process is nevertheless significant and a response to calls to break up the all-male clerical hierarchy of the Holy See and demands that women have a greater say in church decision-making.

The new members are Sister Raffaella Petrini, who already holds a high-ranking Vatican position as the secretary general of the Vatican City State, which runs the Vatican Museums and other administrative parts of the territory.

Also named was Sister Yvonne Reungoat, former superior general of the Daughters of Mary the Helper, a religious order also known as the Salesian Sisters; as well as a laywoman, Maria Lia Zervino, president of a Catholic women's umbrella group, the World Union of Female Catholic Organizations.

SKorea spy agency searched amid squabbling over NKorea cases

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korean prosecutors raided the country's main spy agency Wednesday as part of investigations into two past North Korea-related incidents that drew criticism that the previous liberal government ignored basic principles of human rights to improve ties with Pyongyang.

New conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol, who took office in May, has accused his liberal predecessor Moon Jae-in of being "submissive" to North Korea and has moved to resolve persistent suspicions about the handling of the two cases. His push has triggered a backlash



from the liberals who accuse him of political revenge against his rivals.

Wednesday's raid came days after the National Intelligence Service, now part of Yoon's government, filed charges against two of its former directors who had served under Moon. It accused them of abusing power, damaging

public records and falsifying documents.

Prosecutors and other investigators searched the NIS main headquarters near Seoul, including documents, computer files and other materials related to the two cases, the Seoul Central District Prosecutors' Office said without elaborating.

The cases include North Korea's fatal shooting of a South Korean fisheries official near the Korea's western sea boundary in 2020, and South Korea's deportation of two North Korean fishermen despite their wishes to resettle in South Korea in 2019.

Spain's running of the bulls: 6 hurt, no gorings in Pamplona

AP ■ PAMPLONA

Six people were treated for injuries but initial Sreports said there were no gorings in the seventh running of the bulls at Spain's San Fermin festival on Wednesday.

There were many hairy moments in the 2-minute dash through the cobblestone streets of Pamplona. Shortly into the race, one bull twice head-butted a runner before tossing him to the ground where he was trampled by other beasts and frantic runners.

In the bull ring, at the end of the run, another runner who had fallen and tried to get to his feet was surprised by a charging bull who butted him into the air.

Four people in all have been gored, none seriously, during the festival's seven runs bull-runs so far this year. The festival ends Thursday.

In the 8 am runs, hundreds of runners, mostly men, test their mettle to run like mad ahead and alongside six fighting bulls and their guiding steer as they charge along an 875-meter (956-yard) route through Pamplona to the city's bullring, where later in the day the bulls are killed by professional bullfighters.

Tens of thousands of visitors attend the Pamplona festival, which was immortalised in Ernest Hemingway's 1926 novel "The Sun Also Rises." The festival is also popular for its 24-hour partying, street events, and the city's food.

Japan court holds ex-TEPCO execs liable for Fukushima crisis

AP ■ TOKYO

A Tokyo court on Wednesday ordered four former executives at the utility behind the tsunami wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant to pay 13 trillion yen (USD 94 billion) to the company, holding them liable for the 2011 meltdown crisis.

In a high profile ruling, the Tokyo District Court said the former chairman of Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, Tsunehisa Katsumata, and three other

former executives failed to fulfil their duty of taking the utmost safety precautions despite knowing the risks of a serious accident in case of a major tsunami. It said they could have prevented the disaster if they had taken available scientific data more seriously and acted sooner.

A magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami destroyed key cooling systems at the Fukushima Daiichi plant, causing its three reactors to melt down, spreading massive radiation in the area and keeping

tens of thousands of residents from returning home due to radioactive contamination and safety concerns.

A group of 48 TEPCO shareholders filed the suit in 2012 demanding that Katsumata and four others — former TEPCO president Masataka Shimizu, former vice presidents Sakae Muto and Ichiro Takekuro, and another executive, Akio Komori, pay 22 trillion yen (USD 160 billion) in damages to the company. It maintained that they had neglected to heed experts'

tsunami predictions and failed to take adequate tsunami precaution measures soon enough.

Presiding Judge Yoshihide Asakura said the former TEPCO executives "fundamentally lacked safety awareness and a sense of responsibility."

The ruling noted that TEPCO could have prevented the disaster if it had carried out necessary construction work to prevent the plant's key areas from being flooded, including making its reactor buildings water-tight.

Heavy rains cause unseasonal floods, kill 39 in Afghanistan

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Unseasonal rains and flooding have killed at least 39 people -- including nine children - in Afghanistan, the United Nations said Wednesday.

Fourteen other people were wounded, according to the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

The rains have caused land to slide, exposing unexploded ordnance from four decades of war and conflict. The mines are being moved and exploded under controlled circumstances

to prevent further casualties, said OCHA.

This is the third time that the eastern region has experienced flash flooding in less than a month, with 19 people killed and 131 people injured in heavy rains over two days in June.

In eastern Nangarhar and Nuristan, some 500 families were affected. About 800 hectares (close to 2,000 acres) of agricultural land were destroyed, along with four mosques, two canals, five local flour mills, a bridge, 19 km (12 miles) of road and three schools.

Sunak wins first round of Conservative Party leadership vote in UK



PTI ■ LONDON

Former Chancellor Rishi Sunak extended his lead in the UK prime ministerial race on Wednesday with the highest number of votes at 88 in the first round of voting by Conservative Party MPs, which narrowed down the race from eight to six candidates on the shortlist.

Fellow Indian-origin candidate,

Attorney General Suella Braverman, features last on the latest tally with 32 votes, behind Trade Minister Penny Mordaunt (67 votes), Foreign Secretary Liz Truss (50 votes), former minister Kemi Badenoch (40 votes) and backbencher Tom Tugendhat (37 votes).

Newly appointed Chancellor Nadhim Zahawi and former Cabinet minister Jeremy Hunt are out of the race after not

being able to attract the requisite votes of at least 30 MPs, at 25 and 18 backers respectively.

While Sunak has maintained a steady lead among his Tory parliamentary colleagues since he declared his intention to run for party leadership last week, the Conservative Party membership base which will have the final say seems to be building momentum behind Penny Mordaunt.

At this early stage of the contest, the race seems to be narrowing down into a three-way Sunak, Mordaunt and Liz Truss clash, but the field is still seen as wide open.

The next round of voting by the 358 Conservative members of Parliament to pick their favourites left on the ballot paper is scheduled for Thursday, when the field of candidates will be narrowed down even further to a shorter list of finalists.

Under the timetable set by the 1922 Committee of Tory backbenchers, the deadline to whittle down the shortlist to just two remaining candidates is July 21.

The process will then be taken over by the Conservative Party headquarters to organise a series of hustings in different parts of the UK for the final two to pitch their campaign pledges to the estimated 200,000 Conservative Party membership.

The candidate who receives the most votes will be elected the new Conservative Party and British Prime Minister leader on September 5.

Jan 6 rioter apologises to officers after House testimony



AP ■ WASHINGTON

A man who joined the pro-Trump mob that attacked the U.S. Capitol apologized Tuesday to officers who protected the building after telling lawmakers that he regrets being duped by the former president's lies of election fraud.

During a hearing before the U.S. House committee that's investigating the insurrection, Stephen Ayres testified that he felt called by former President Donald Trump to come to Washington.

He described being swept up by Trump's bogus claims, and believing as he marched to

the Capitol on Jan 6, 2021 that Trump would join them there and that there was still a chance the election could be overturned.

"I felt like I had like horse blinders on. I was locked in the whole time," said Ayres, who is scheduled to be sentenced in September after pleading guilty to a misdemeanor in the riot.

His message to others: "Take the blinders off, make sure you step back and see what's going on before it's too late." "It changed my life," he said. "And not for the good."

Ayres, who was not accused of any violence or destruction on Jan. 6, said he worked for a

cabinet company in northeast Ohio for 20 years, but lost his job and sold his home after the riot. He was joined by his wife at the hearing.

After the hearing, Ayres approached officers in the committee room who have testified about being verbally and physically attacked by the angry mob. Ayres apologized for his actions to Capitol Police Officers Aquilino Gonell and Harry Dunn, Metropolitan Police Officer Daniel Hodges and former officer Michael Fanone.

The officers appeared to have different responses to Ayres' attempt to make amends.

Fanone told The Associated Press that his apology was not necessary because "it doesn't do s--- for me." Hodges said on CNN that he accepted his apology, adding that "you have to believe that there are people out there who can change."

Gonell, who recently found out that the injuries he succumbed on Jan. 6 won't allow him to be a part of the force any longer, said he accepted the sentiment from Ayres, but that it doesn't amount to much.

"He still has to answer for what he did legally. And to his God. So it's up to him," the former sergeant said.

Mexico agrees to invest \$1.5B in 'smart' border technology



AP ■ WASHINGTON

Mexican President Andres Manuel López Obrador agreed to spend \$1.5 billion to improve "smart" border technology during meetings Tuesday with President Joe Biden — a move the White House says shows neighborly cooperation succeeding where Trump administration vows to wall off the border and have Mexico pay for it could not.

A person familiar with a series of agreements the two countries hammered out as their leaders met in Washington said they also called for other things like expanding the number of work visas the U.S. Issues and welcoming more refugees. They also would create joint patrols for Mexico and Guatemala to hunt human smugglers along their shared border.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the agreement hadn't been formally announced. But the Biden administration was most excited about securing border funding from Mexico after years of failed attempts by former President Donald Trump.

The agreements came hours after the meetings began with López Obrador offering more than half an hour worth of comments. He touched on everything from Americans heading south for cheaper prices at the pump at Mexican gas stations to the New Deal politics of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, while chiding conservatives and saying the U.S. And Mexico should reject the "status quo" on the border.

López Obrador said both countries "should close ranks to help each other" amid spiking inflation and border challenges.

Biden kicks off Mideast visit in Israel



AP ■ JERUSALEM

The United States and Israel are launching a new strategic high-level dialogue between the countries that will focus on technology.

The new talks were announced in a joint statement from U.S. President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid on Wednesday, just

hours before Biden was scheduled to arrive in Israel for his first Mideast visit as president.

The partnership is to focus on the use of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and other tech-based solutions, against global challenges such as pandemic preparedness and climate change, the statement said.

The leaders pledged to

work together to "advance and protect critical and emerging technologies in accordance with our national interests, democratic principles and human rights, and to address geostrategic challenges."

On Wednesday, Biden begins his trip to the region in Israel and the occupied West Bank. He is scheduled to fly to Saudi Arabia on Friday.

Austria's far-right Freedom Party names presidency candidate

AP ■ BERLIN

Austria's far-right Freedom Party has chosen former lawmaker Walter Rosenkranz as its candidate to challenge liberal incumbent Alexander Van der Bellen in the country's presidential election in October.

The party said its leadership nominated Rosenkranz, 59, unanimously on Tuesday evening. In 2016, Freedom Party candidate Norbert Hofer lost to Van der Bellen in a runoff vote — which had to be rerun on the orders of Austria's Constitutional Court after the party claimed widespread voting irregularities in Hofer's initial narrow defeat.

Van der Bellen, 78, announced in May that he will



seek reelection. He's expected to have broad mainstream support in the October 9 vote, with a runoff to be held on November 6 if no candidate secures an outright majority.

Three other candidates, none of them representing a party in parliament, have already come forward.

Rosenkranz was an unexpected choice to challenge for the presidency. He was a law-

der Bellen's six-year term have given him high visibility.

After conservative Chancellor Sebastian Kurz's governing coalition with the Freedom Party collapsed in scandal in 2019, the president appointed an interim Cabinet of nonpartisan experts under Brigitte Bierlein, then the head of the Constitutional Court.

Kurz, who had returned in a new government with the Greens, resigned last fall.

The country had three chancellors in two months, with Kurz's successor, Alexander Schallenberg, giving way within weeks to current Chancellor Karl Nehammer.

Harris vows US will strengthen its Pacific islands relations



AP ■ SUVA (FIJI)

US Vice President Kamala Harris assured Pacific island leaders of more U.S. Engagement after acknowledging Wednesday the United States may not have previously provided the diplomatic attention the region deserved.

Harris' virtual address to the Pacific Islands Forum, meeting in the Fijian capital Suva, comes as China vies for more influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

She proposed new embassies in Tonga and in Kiribati, a Micronesian state that split this week from the 18-nation forum in a major blow to regional harmony.

Harris also proposed requesting that the U.S. Congress triple funding for fisheries assistance to \$60 million a year and appoint the first U.S. Envoy to the forum.

"The United States is a proud Pacific nation and has an enduring commitment to the Pacific islands which is why President Joe Biden and I seek to strengthen our partnership with you," Harris said. "We recognize that in recent years the Pacific islands may not have received the diplomatic attention and support that you deserve. So today I am here to tell you directly, we are going to change that," she added.

Harris' commitment was welcomed by Fijian Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama, the forum chair who invited her to speak.

Her invitation was remarkable given that the forum's dialogue partners — including the United States, China, Britain and France — have not been invited to this year's summit.

US destroyer patrol inflames South China Sea dispute

AP ■ BEIJING

The U.S. Navy on Wednesday sailed a destroyer close to China-controlled islands in the South China Sea in what Washington said was a patrol aimed at asserting freedom of navigation through the strategic seaway.

The guided-missile destroyer USS Benfold sailed past the Parcel Islands and continued thereafter with operations in the South China Sea.

The operation "upheld the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses of the sea," the 7th Fleet

said in a news release.

Such operations are considered key to the U.S. Navy maintaining its presence in the Indo-Pacific, where China has grown its presence through a massive ship building campaign.

Beijing has also alarmed the U.S., Australia and New Zealand with the signing of a mutual defense agreement with the Solomon Islands, under which it could receive Chinese troops in emergencies and possibly establish a permanent Chinese military presence.

FEEDBACKINFRAPRIVATE LIMITED				
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STANDALONE UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR HALF YEARLY PERIOD ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER, 2021				
(Rupees in Lakhs)				
Sl No.	Particulars	For the Period Ended September 30, 2021	Corresponding Period For the Previous Year September 2020	Previous Year Ended March 31, 2021
		Unaudited	Unaudited	Audited
1	Total Income from Operations	9,033	11,136	20,759
2	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(5,914)	(1,635)	(7,197)
3	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before Tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(7,793)	(20,319)	(26,611)
4	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after Tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(5,870)	(15,243)	(19,914)
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	(5,870)	(15,243)	(19,939)
6	Paid up Equity Share Capital (Face Value of Rs. 10 per share)	1,636	1,636	1,636
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	(1,960)	8,607	2,171
8	Securities Premium Account	1,739	1,739	1,739
9	Net Worth	(324)	10,243	5,546
10	Paid up Debt Capital / Outstanding Debt	52,295	40,253	52,406
11	Outstanding Redeemable Preference Share	-	-	-
12	Debt Equity Ratio*	57.21	3.50	5.35
13	Earnings Per Share (of Rs. 10/- each) (for continuing and discontinued operations)			
	Basic	(35.87)	(93.17)	(121.71)
	Diluted	(35.87)	(93.17)	(121.71)
14	Capital Redemption Reserve	-	-	-
15	Debt Redemption Reserve	1,210	1,210	1,210
16	Debt Service Coverage Ratio (DSCR)*	(0.22)	(8.61)	0.19
17	Interest Service Coverage Ratio (ISCR)*	(0.22)	0.70	0.19
* Note 1: Adopted definitions for Ratios				
Ratios have been computed as follows:				
a) Debt Equity Ratio = Total Debt / Total Equity				
b) Total Debt = Non-Current Borrowings + Current Maturities of Non-Current Borrowings				
c) Total Equity = Equity Share Capital + Other Equity + Compulsory Convertible Instruments to Equity				
d) Interest Service Coverage Ratio (ISCR) = (EBIT - Current Tax - Exceptional Items) / Gross Interest				
e) Debt Service Coverage Ratio (DSCR) = (EBIT - Current Tax - Exceptional Items) / (Gross Interest + Principal Repayment of Long Term Debts excluding repayment from refinancing of Debt)				
Note - 2				
a) The above is an extract of the detailed format of annual financial results required to be filed with the Stock Exchange under Regulation 52 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 (as amended). The full format of the annual financial results is available on the Bombay Stock Exchange website www.bseindia.com and on the Company website www.feedbackinfra.com				
b) For the items referred in Regulation 52(4) of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, the pertinent disclosures have been made available to the Bombay Stock Exchange website www.bseindia.com and on the Company website www.feedbackinfra.com				
c) The above financial results as at and for the period ended September 30, 2021 have been reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors at their meeting held on 12th July 2022.				
d) The Statement has been prepared in accordance with the Indian Accounting Standards (Ind AS) as prescribed under Section 133 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with relevant rules issued thereunder and in terms of Regulation 52(2) of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 (as amended) and SEBI's circular no. SEBI/HO/DDHS/CIR/2021/0000000637 dated October 5, 2021.				
e) The Company is primarily in the business of consultancy. The Board of Directors of the Company, which has been identified as being the Chief Operating Decision Maker (CODM), evaluates the Company's performance and allocates resources based on the analysis of the various performance indicators of the Company as a single unit. Therefore, the Company's business activity falls within a single business segment in terms of Ind AS 108.				
For and on behalf of Board of Directors				
Sd/-				
Jayashri Swaminathan				
Director				
DIN: 09229930				
Place : Gurugram				
Date : 12th July 2022				

MAHINDRA RURAL HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED				
Corporate Office:- Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Ltd. Sadhana House, 2nd Floor, 570, P.B. Marg Worli, Mumbai 400 018 India,Tel: +91 22 66523500 Fax: +91 22 24972741				
Branch Office : 3rd Floor 139-141 Mangal Pandey Nagar Opposite CCS University Meerut, Uttar Pradesh 250002,				
Branch Office: F/F, Plot No-17, Sanjay Nagar, District Center, Near Vishal Megha Mart And Pnb Bank, Sanjay Nagar Ghaziabad UP 201001.				
Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 read with Rule 3(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The Undesignated is the Authorised Officer of Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Limited under the above said Act. In exercise of power conferred under Section 13(2) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Demand Notice under section 13(2) of the said Act, Calling upon the following Borrower(s) (the "said Borrower(s)"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s) issued to them, the content of which is re-produced below.				
S.N.	Name of the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Address of Borrower(s)/ Guarantor	Demand Notice Date and Amount	Description of Secured asset (Immovable Property)
1.	SAHARANPUR Branch LAN:-1134633/ XSEMGAR0073128 GUILZAR (Borrower) RIVANA URF KHUSNUMA (Co-Borrower) MOHAMMAD ISLAM (Guarantor)	S/O EKBAL MOHALLA ILHAHI BAKSH GANGOH, NAKUR, SAHARANPUR, UTTAR PRADESH - 247341	30.05.2022 Rs. 6,00,000/-	KHASRA NO.3088 WAKE GRAM GANGOH, MAJBATA ANDAR HADDOOD ZA, PARGANA AND TEHSIL NAKUR, Pin code: 247462, North: 14 FEET WIDE ROAD, South: HOUSE OF YASIN, East: HOUSE OF IRFAN, West: HOUSE OF IRFAN
2.	MEERUT Branch LAN:-1170440/ XSEMMER00960354 IKBAL (Borrower) RIHANA, MOHD SALMAN (Co-Borrower)	207 RAMLILA TILLA, MUZAFFAR NAGAR,UTTAR PRADESH -251002	30.05.2022 Rs. 7,00,000/-	A RESIDENTIAL PLOT^ KHASRA NO-473^ 474^ 475^ VILLAGE N A Y A Z U P U R A M A Z R A SHAHABUDDINPUR MEERUT, South: PLOT OF GUFRAN, East: PLOT OF SHREENAZ, West: PLOT OTHERS
3.	GHAZIABAD Branch LAN:-573229/ XSEMGAR00482359 VIPIN TYAGI (Borrower) MITHLESH, KALPANA TYAGI, SANTOSH, VINEET TYAGI (Co-Borrower)	S/O SUBHAS CHAND TYAGI, H.NO L-190 SECTOR 23 SANJAY NAGAR, GHAZIABAD, UTTAR PRADESH -201002	30.05.2022 Rs. 8,00,000/-	PLOT NO 15 GARDEN ENCLAVE K H A S R A N A N O C 2 4 5 MAINPURE, GHAZIABAD ,UTTAR PRADESH -201002, North: PLOT NO.13 AND 14, South PLOT NO-16, East: OTHER PROPERTY, West: ROAD 18 FEET
4.	MEERUT Branch LAN:-761697/ XSEMMER00656767 SANGITA (Borrower) SURENDRA (Co-Borrower)	942/13 SHAHABUDDINPUR ROAD RAMPURI, MUZAFFARNAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH -251002	30.05.2022 Rs.13,40,240/-	PART OF PLOT NO A-46 KHASRA NO 304, OM SAI VATIKA MOHIUDDINPUR,MEERUT ,UTTAR PRADESH -250103, NORTH: RASTA 20 FT WIDE, SOUTH: PLOT NO. A-35, EAST: PLOT NO. A-45, WEST: PART OF PLOT NO. A-46
5.	AGRA Branch LAN:-801802/ XSEMGAR00711664 ASHIK KHAN (Borrower) HABIB HEMAD (Co-Borrower) SALEEMAN BEGUM (Co-Borrower) KASIM ALI (Guarantor)	S/O-HABIB KHAN -SHAH NAGAR BAMBHA MASJID TEDHIBAGIYA KUBERPUR AGRA, UTTAR PRADESH -282006	30.05.2022 Rs. 5,20,000/-	PLOT SITUATED AT KHASRA NO-863, SAHAB KHAN NEAR SARAI HAJJAM,MAUJA, NARAICH,TEHSIL ETMADPUR,DISTT-AGRA,UTTAR PRADESH -283202, NORTH: OTHER-S PLOT, SOUTH: PLOT OF ALISHA, EAST: PLOT OF SULEMAN, WEST: 15'-0" WIDE ROAD
6.	AGRA Branch LAN:-1033751/ XSEMGAR0038589 VISHNOO SINGH (Borrower) KRISHNA (Co-Borrower) VINOD KUMAR PARMAR (Guarantor)	S/O BHOLANAR,H.NO.26, NEERAJ VIHAR DEHTORA MOD BODLA, AGRA,UTTAR PRADESH -282007	13-08-2021 Rs. 9,25,864/-	PART OF PROPERTY NO-26 KHASRA NO-519 & 520,, SHARDA VIHAR COLONY, MAUJA BODLA, AGRA,UTTAR PRADESH -282007, NORTH: PLOT 27, SOUTH: PLOT NO.25, EAST: PART OF PLOT NO.26, PLOT OF NINNU RAM, WEST: 4-0 WIDE RASTA
7.	MEERUT Branch LAN:-689380/ XSEMMER00589765 NAZMA BEGUM (Borrower) NASEER AHMAD (Co-Borrower) SHAHBAB (Guarantor)	w/o Naseer ahmad H NO. 37 SAMAR COLONY GHANTA GHAR MEERUT,UTTAR PRADESH -250002	30.05.2022 Rs. 8,00,000/-	PART OF PLOT NO. C-112 KHASRA NO. 2794 SAMAR COLONY REVENUE VILL-LISARI PARGANA & TEHSIL - DISTT-MEERUT PIN-250002, NORTH: PLOT, SOUTH: PLOT, EAST: SAMAR COLONY, WEST: 20 ft ROAD
8.	MEERUT Branch LAN:-760749/ XSEMMER0053064 SHAYARA (Borrower) AFZAL (Co-Borrower) MOHD IRFAN SAIFI (Co-Borrower)	W/O MOHD AFJAL 285 GALI NO. 1 ASHIYANA COLONY MEERUT, UTTAR PRADESH -250002	30.05.2022 Rs. 8,00,000/-	PLOT NO. G/B 17/1 KHASRA NO 3487 & 3488, SAMAR GARDEN COLONY,MEERUT,UTTAR PRADESH -250002, NORTH: RASTA 20FT WIDE, SOUTH: PLOT OF OTHERS,, EAST: PLOT OF SHAKEEL, WEST:PLOT OF NAVEEHAZAN
Pursuant to the above notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s) to pay to MAHINDRA RURAL HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED, within 60 days from the date of publication of this notice, the amount indicated herein above, together further interest at 2% p.m. from the date(s) mentioned above till the date of payment and/or realization of the dues.				
The above said Borrowers are hereby advised to make the payment to the company as aforesaid, failing which the company shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers as to the cost and consequences.				
Place :-DELHI, NCR, MEERUT, SAHARNPUR, Date:-14.07.2022 Sd/- Authorised Officer Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Limited				

SENSEX, NIFTY FALL FOR 3RD DAY

On selling in oil, banking & IT shares



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty reversed their early gains to close lower on Wednesday due to selling in oil & gas, banking and IT stocks amid weak trends in European markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 372.46 points or 0.69 per cent to close at 53,514.15, extending its falling streak to a third day.

The index opened higher and touched the day's high of 54,211.22 amid gains in Asian markets. However, it failed to hold onto its gains and dropped over 750 points to touch a low of 53,455.26 as European markets opened lower.

The broader NSE Nifty declined 91.65 points or 0.57 per cent to settle below the 16,000 level at 15,966.65.

In the three sessions to Wednesday, Sensex dropped by 967 points or 1.7 per cent while Nifty fell by 254 points.

"Strong domestic macro numbers and a fall in crude prices lifted Indian indices to open in positive territory while the gains were restrained by Europe's negative market trend.

"Global markets were in a bear grip ahead of the release of the US inflation

data...," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Among the Sensex constituents, IndusInd Bank fell the most by 3.42 per cent. Bharti Airtel fell 2.87 per cent, HDFC by 2.65 per cent, HDFC Bank by 2.44 per cent and Reliance Industries 1.77 per cent.

TCS declined by 1.49 per cent while HCL Technologies fell 1.11 per cent. Titan, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Tech Mahindra and Wipro also dropped.

Analysts said gains in FMCG and pharma shares helped cut losses in the indices.

Hindustan Unilever rose by 1.97 per cent, Asian Paints by 1.7 per cent, and Sun Pharma by 1.09 per cent. Kotak Mahindra Bank, NTPC and Nestle also advanced.

Meanwhile, the broader markets outperformed the benchmark and ended on a flat note. The BSE midcap gauge advanced 0.32 per cent and smallcap index ended up by 0.04 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, utilities fell 1.71 per cent, power by 1.71 per cent, oil & gas by 1.43 per cent, energy by 1.26 per cent, finance by 0.91 per cent and tech by 0.65 per cent.

FMCG, basic materials, healthcare, metal and realty were the gainers.

Markets traded under pressure and lost

over half a percent, in continuation of the prevailing corrective move, Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

"The Bank Nifty index breached the immediate support of 35,000 and witnessed continuous selling pressure throughout the day. It remains in a sell mode and is likely to test the next support of 34,400 on the downside," Kunal Shah, Senior Technical Analyst at LKP Securities said.

Official data released on Tuesday showed that retail inflation eased slightly to 7.01 per cent in June but was above the central bank's tolerance band for the sixth month in a row, signalling more interest rate hikes in future. In May, retail inflation was 7.04 per cent.

In Asia, markets in Shanghai, Seoul and Tokyo ended higher, while Hong Kong settled marginally lower.

Stock markets in Europe were trading lower in mid-session deals.

The US markets had ended lower on Tuesday. Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 1 per cent to USD 100.5 per barrel.

Foreign institutional investors remained net sellers on Tuesday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 1,565.68 crore, according to exchange data.



Indian staffing industry adds 12.6 L informal employees in FY22: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The staffing industry added 12.6 lakh informal workers in 2021-22, driven by demand in industries like fast-moving consumer goods, e-commerce and manufacturing, according to a report.

In 2020-21, the informal workforce or flexi staff demand grew at a modest 3.6 per cent, according to the Indian Staffing Federation (ISF) annual report.

It said FMCG, e-commerce, manufacturing, healthcare, retail, logistics, banking and energy drove demand for general flexi staffing or informal workers.

ISF is the apex body representing the manpower outsourcing industry in India.

Digital adoption across sectors drove the demand for new employees. This indicates that in FY23, fintech, IT- Infra, IT/ITeS are promising impact sectors that are expected to continue with the staffing demand, it added.

The report said that in FY22, ISF member-companies collectively added 2.27 lakh for-

mal workforce and provided employment to 12.6 lakh flexi workforce.

Women's participation in the flexi workforce continued at 27 per cent in FY22, the same as in the previous financial year, said the report.

The majority of job opportunities for flexi staff moved from outdoor sales to essential delivery services, it showed. Most of the flexi workers were in 25-30 years age-bracket, comprising 40 per cent of the workforce.

Interestingly, the report found that there is a growth in the participation of the 31-45 years age bracket in the flexi working population, which saw over 10 per cent growth compared with other formats of employment.

"FY2022 has been exceptional for the flexi staffing industry. The sharp comeback of workforce demand, growing to 21.9 per cent (12.6 lakh), is a clear indication that both employers and employees are working to put the impact of the pandemic in the past and are looking forward to building

the future," ISF president Lohit Bhatia said.

Even as the inflationary fears and geopolitical tensions loom large, the early indicators for FY23 and the industry's preparations for the festive season show that hiring is expected to remain elevated over the next three quarters, he added.

According to ISF Executive Director Suchita Dutta, compared with other forms of employment, there has been 10 per cent growth in demand for flexi work.

"The participation of 27 per cent women in the workforce remained stable over the last two financial years, continuing to contribute to the workforce in spite of the three Covid waves.

"Year after year, flexi working continues to positively impact the lives of Indian citizens and their families, and provides livelihood and stability in the post pandemic era. It is also great to witness that around 15 per cent flexi workforce gets absorbed as permanent workforce," she added.

India's palm oil imports rise to 5.90 L tonnes in June: SEA



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's palm oil imports rose marginally to 5,90,921 tonnes in June this year, but the shipment of RBD palmolein oil showed a sharp increase, industry body Solvent Extractors Association (SEA) said on Wednesday.

India, the world's leading vegetable oil buyer, imported 5,87,467 tonnes of palm oils in June 2021.

The association also demanded the government to increase the quota fixed for duty-free import of crude soyabean oil and sunflower under the Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) system to boost domestic availability.

Total import of vegetable oils (both edible and non-edible oils) remained lower at 9.91 lakh tonnes in June this year from 9.96 lakh tonnes in the year-ago period.

The share of palm oil is about 50 per cent of the country's total vegetable oil imports.

On May 24, the government had allowed import of 20 lakh tonnes of crude soyabean oil and sunflower oil each at zero duty for 2022-23 and 2023-24 under the TRQ system.

Sharp rise in commodity prices to have adverse impact on construction industry's profitability: Icra

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sharp rise in commodity prices along with increased competition will have an adverse impact on the profitability of construction industry, domestic rating agency Icra said on Wednesday.

The industry is battling with input cost pressure due to considerable rise in major commodity costs, particularly steel, bitumen and cement.

"Sharp increase in commodity prices, along with increased competition, will have an adverse impact on industry profitability, with anticipated decline in operating profitability by 100-200 basis points in the current fiscal," Icra said in a statement.

A sharp rise in commodity prices seen in FY22, if sustained, can reduce players' prof-



itability by 100-200 basis points in the current financial year.

Notwithstanding some moderation in steel prices in the past 6-8 weeks, the prices of steel were still higher by 40 per cent compared to the rates of March 2021, which will continue to remain a drag on profitability.

Similarly, fuel prices and bitumen prices have also seen a sharp increase in the last one year. The commodity price increase has been much sharper than the overall inflation rate and hence inflation-linked price escalation clauses (in some contracts) will not be able to absorb the commodity price hikes.

It further said that it expects the construction industry in India to witness a healthy revenue growth in the medium term.

Cigarette sales set to rise 5-6% to surpass pre-Covid level this fiscal: Report



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Domestic cigarette manufacturers are on course to record higher volume growth than the pre-pandemic levels at 5-6 per cent this fiscal, despite smuggled in cigarettes chipping away a good volume, a report said on Wednesday.

Rating agency Crisil said it expects the volume to go past 93 billion sticks this year on the back of increased outdoor mobility after ebbing of the pandemic restrictions and a stable tax regime.

Cigarette volume has been on the upward spiral since FY18 when it was 85 billion sticks, which rose to 91 billion sticks in FY19. The sales volume declined marginally to 90 billion sticks in FY20 before plunging to 77 billion sticks next year due to the pandemic. In FY22, the volume went up again to hit 88 billion sticks.

The volume is projected to touch 93 billion sticks this year, according to the report.

It said though gross margins will moderate on rising input cost, credit profiles of manufacturers will stay robust owing to higher volumes, healthy operating margins and strong balance sheets.

Rising demand on the back of the near end of pandemic curbs and the stable prices will light up cigarette sales by 5-6 per cent on year during this fiscal year, helping the industry surpass pre-pandemic levels.

Volume is expected to touch 93 billion sticks, the agency said, adding, for the organised cigarette industry, volume will be 3 per cent higher than in FY20.

The report sees the rising

input cost shaving off gross margins by 100-150 basis points for manufacturers. Prices of tobacco and packaging paper, which together account for 50-60 per cent of total cost, have been rising and will rise further this fiscal.

According to Anand Kulkarni, a director with the agency, cigarette sales volume run rate has exceeded pre-pandemic levels in the fourth quarter of last fiscal as the impact of the third wave turned out to be modest. Increasing occupancy at workplaces, near-normal retail and recreation mobility and a stable tax regime over the past two years augur well for demand.

Cigarette sales volume saw a 14 per cent decline in fiscal 2021 due to the mobility curb. But in FY22, the volume bounced back with a surge of 14 per cent as mobility returned to near-normal levels.

Between FY13 and FY17, excise duty on cigarettes rose annually at 15.7 per cent.

In fiscal 2018, the industry saw a further 20 per cent hike in taxes as a result of the increase in excise duty and transition to the GST regime.

Another growth enabler is the continuing stable taxation, which also has sizeable bearing on demand. Since fiscal 2013, such levies, including excise duty and Goods and Services Tax (GST), have increased significantly, leading to progressive migration from duty-paid cigarettes to other lightly taxed/tax-evaded tobacco products such as illegal cigarettes and bids.

However, profitability is likely to decline marginally as prices of tobacco and packaging are rising.

India on track to add 27k circuit km power transmission lines by 2024: Official



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is poised to add 27,000 circuit kilometres of inter-state power transmission networks by 2024 as it has already added 6,500 circuit kilometres or almost one-fourth of the target. The power transmission network expansion has been planned keeping in mind the ultimate goal of having 500 GW of non-fossil fuel based electricity generation capacity in the country.

"We have planned to add 27,000 circuit km of inter-state transmission network in the country, mainly focussing on evacuation of renewable energy in the country by December 2024. We have already completed 6,500 circuit km lines so far," a senior power ministry official said. The official exuded confidence that India is on track to meet the target of adding 27,000 circuit kilometres as one-fourth of that is completed well within schedule.

The official also informed that 10,000 circuit kilometres lines are already under construction while 10,500 circuit kilometres are at various stages

of bidding or tendering.

The inter-state transmission link plays an important role in power generation capacity addition. Solar projects are set up within a time frame of 15 to 18 month, whereas more time is required to set up the inter-state transmission link.

Experts are of the view that transmission link to evacuate power from projects especially renewables should be set up much before the generation capacity is added. The official said, "We need to build transmission line well in advance so that the generation capacities are not stranded."

In order to facilitate faster development of power infrastructure in the country, 1,500 inter-state transmission lines are mapped on PM GatiShakti portal, covering 2 lakh circuit kilometres across the country.

Earlier this month, power ministry had said that all Inter-State Transmission System (ISTS) lines have been mapped on the portal of the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan (NMP), which was launched in October, 2021 to push infrastructure development in the country.

GMR Aviation Academy signs MoU with NFSU

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

GMR Aviation Academy has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with National Forensic Science University (NFSU) to develop and extend educational programmes in the field of aviation forensics and cyber security, a statement said on Wednesday. As per the MoU, the GMR Group will sponsor domestic and international students in the field of aviation cyber security with one-year of onsite training at GMR Airports, its statement said.

GMR Airports, part of the GMR Group, manage and operate airports in Hyderabad and Delhi in India. A research centre, certified by NFSU, will be set up in the campus of GMR Aviation Academy in Hyderabad, as per the MoU, the statement noted.

"NFSU scholars can pursue a full-time PhD in aviation forensics and cyber security domain at this unique centre with research and development opportunities in the live airport environment," it mentioned. Technology and digitization have brought many advantages to the aviation sector, but at the same time, these have created challenges in managing cyber vulnerabilities in such a complex environment, said Ashwani Lohani, CEO of GMR Services Business. The aviation industry has been an attractive target for cyber attackers.

More women in India seeking entrepreneurial opportunities compared to men: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India has low representation of women in leadership positions in the workforce but more women are seeking entrepreneurial opportunities compared to men, according to a report.

The conclusion is part of a report based on an analysis of anonymised and aggregated profile information of users on professional networking site LinkedIn, which has around 88 million users in India and 830 million users worldwide. According to LinkedIn data, the share of women founders grew 2.68 times between 2016 and 2021.

In comparison, the share of men founders grew by only 1.79 times during the same period. The figures are in terms of founders of startups.

The report, prepared by LinkedIn, said the growth rate of women entrepreneurship was at



its highest in 2020 and 2021.

The representation of women in leadership roles in the workforce is around 18 per cent, as per the report.

LinkedIn's Senior Director of India Talent and Learning Solutions Ruchee Anand said the new data is indicative of one thing that working women in India are being held back by more barriers in the workplace when compared to men.

SAT directs Shivinder to deposit 50% of Sebi's penalty in Fortis case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Securities Appellate Tribunal has directed businessman Shivinder Mohan Singh to deposit 50 per cent of the penalty imposed by Sebi within six weeks in connection with a case related to Fortis Healthcare.

If the amount is deposited, then the markets regulator will not make further recovery, the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) said in its order passed on July 8. August 1 is the next date of hearing.

The order came after a plea filed by him against the regulator's order passed in

April, whereby it had slapped a fine of Rs 5 crore each on Shivinder Mohan Singh and his brother Malvinder Mohan Singh, who were promoters of Fortis Healthcare.

Apart from Singh brothers, the regulator had penalised seven entities.

In addition, Sebi had barred Singh brothers from the securities market for a period of three years.

They have also been restrained from being associated as directors or key managerial personnel in a listed company or Sebi-registered intermediary of any market infrastructure institution.

Banks revise foreign currency deposit rates in response to RBI relaxation last week

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

SBI, ICICI Bank and IDFC First Bank have raised interest rates on foreign currency non-resident deposits in response to the Reserve Bank's relaxation last week to shore up forex inflows.

The country's largest private sector lender HDFC Bank has also revised the rates on foreign currency (non-resident) deposits.

However, it clarified that the revision is not in response to the latest RBI move and it will take a call on revising the rates further going forward.

The largest public sector lender State Bank of India (SBI) has revised the foreign currency non-resident deposits (FCNR) rates on US dollar.

INDIANS SHINE IN SINGAPORE OPEN

Mithun, Ashmita register stunning victories; Sindhu, Prannoy also progress

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Indian shuttlers Mithun Manjunath and Ashmita Chaliha notched up stunning wins over their illustrious rivals to hog the limelight on the second day of the Singapore Open Super 500 tournament here on Wednesday.

While Mithun recorded a stunning 21-17, 15-21, 21-18 win over compatriot and World championships Silver medallist Kidambi Srikanth in men's singles, Ashmita shocked Thailand's world number 12 Busanan Ongbamrungphan 21-16, 21-11 in women's singles.

The world No. 77 Mithun, a product of the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy, will next take on Ireland's Nhat Nguyen, while Ashmita faces China's Han Yue.

For two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu and man-in-form HS Prannoy, it was also a good day in office as the two also progressed to the second round with facile wins.

Sindhu looked in complete control as she prevailed 21-15, 21-11 over Belgium world No. 36 Lianne Tan to set up a clash with Vietnam's Thuy Linh Nguyen.

Prannoy, who had reached the semifinals at Malaysia Masters last week, saw off Thailand's Siththikom Thammasin 21-13, 21-16 and will next meet third seeded Chou Tien Chen, whom he had beaten at Malaysia Open recently.



London Olympics Bronze medalist Saina Nehwal also avenged her India Open loss to compatriot Malvika Bansod with a 21-18, 21-14 win to make it to the second round.

Manjunath, who had reached the finals of Orleans Masters Super 100 in April this year, came out all guns blazing as he dominated the opening game after taking an early 6-2 lead. He kept Srikanth at bay to comfortably seal the opening game.

Srikanth, however, turned the tables after the change of ends as he enjoyed a 11-8 cushion at the break and

kept extending his lead to come back into the contest.

The decider turned into a roller-coaster ride with the two slugging it out but it was Manjunath, who showed better control as he ensured a slender one-point advantage at the breaker.

Srikanth managed to take a 16-15 lead at one stage but Manjunath didn't let the opportunity slip and reeled off the last three points from 18-18 to notch up one of the biggest win of his nascent international career.

Manjunath, 24, has been in fine fettle as he reached his maiden Super-100

final at Orleans Masters in France last April. He had claimed four All-India ranking titles, including the Senior Ranking Badminton tournament in December last year.

Earlier in the year, he had contracted COVID-19 and had to withdraw from India Open Super 500 in January. He, however, made it to the Indian team for the Badminton Asia Team Championships in Malaysia after a semifinal finish at Syed Modi International and quarterfinals at Odisha Super 100.

Ashmita, world number 66, also

dished out a superlative performance as he fought back from 5-10 down with an eight-point burst to zoom ahead and earn the bragging rights.

The 22-year-old from Assam kept up the tempo in the second game as well with an early 7-2 lead. Busanan cut it down to 6-7 but the Indian once again reeled off nine points on the trot to slam the door on her rival.

Earlier, Sindhu took time to get off the block, lagging 1-4 but she pulled away from 7-7 to never look back. After 11-8 lead at the mid-game interval, she kept moving ahead to pocket the opening game.

She continued the momentum in the second game with a 5-1 advantage. A three-point burst helped Tan to narrow the lead but a relentless Sindhu stepped up her game to seal the issue without much ado.

Among others, Pooja Dandu and Arathi Sara Sunil moved into women's doubles second round after Chinese Taipei duo of Hu Ling Fang and Lin Xiao Min withdrew from the tournament.

However, it was curtains for former Commonwealth Games gold medallist Parupalli Kashyap and world No. 29 Sameer Verma.

While Kashyap was no match for fifth seed Indonesian Jonatan Christie, losing 14-21, 15-21, Li Shi Feng of China ended Sameer Verma's campaign with a 21-10, 21-13 win in another lopsided men's singles match.



Mehuli-Tushar clinch second Gold for India

Palak, Shiva sign off with Bronze

PTI ■ CHANGWON

The duo of Mehuli Ghosh and Shahu Tushar Mane bagged India's second gold medal in the 10m Air Rifle Mixed Team final at the ongoing ISSF Shooting World Cup here on Wednesday.

In the 10m Air Pistol mixed event, the Indian pair of Palak and Shiva Narwal bagged bronze after clinching the third place play-off.

The in-form duo of Mehuli and Tushar outsmarted the Hungarian pair of Eszter Meszaros and Istvan Pen 17-13 in an evenly poised match-up.

The third and fourth place went to shooters from Israel and Czech Republic respectively.

This is Tushar's maiden gold for India at the senior level while Mehuli bagged her second yellow metal, having won her first at the 2019 South Asian Games in Kathmandu.

In the mixed Air Pistol event, Palak and Shiva thrashed Kazakhstan's Irina Loktionova and Valeriy Rakhimzhan 16-0, in what turned out to be a one-sided clash.

With the impressive results on Wednesday, India have now climbed up to the second position behind leaders Serbia, with two gold and 1 bronze medal.



Soumya, Jyoti to go for trial at Dinamo Zagreb

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India international woman footballer Soumya Guguloth and national level player Jyoti Chauhan will undergo a two-week trial at Croatia's top-tier club ZNK Dinamo Zagreb next month.

The duo was invited by the Croatian club for a pre-season and extended trials in the first week of August for 12-15 days.

ZNK Dinamo Zagreb, founded in 2016, plays in the Croatian First Division and finished third in the last three seasons.

Soumya and Jyoti were picked for the trial by ZNK Dinamo Zagreb assistant coach Mia Medvedoski, who attended a trial organised by 'Women in Sports' from June 6-11 in Kolkata.

"Soumya and Jyoti have been invited by Croatia's most famous club ZNK Dinamo Zagreb to join them for their pre-season and extended trial for assessment for a possible longer term contract with the club," a statement from 'Women in Sports' said.

Both the players were part of the Gokulam Kerala team that won the 2022 Indian Women's League.

Hailing from Telangana, Soumya, who will turn 21 on July 18, was a part of the Indian team that toured Sweden recently. She played against Sweden and USA.

The 23-year-old Jyoti, from Dhar in Madhya Pradesh, is yet to break into the India team though she has been called for national camps in the past. She has represented her state in the Senior Nationals and also part of the country's top women's club Gokulam Kerala.

"Soumya is a fast winger while Jyoti is strong striker and attacking midfielder," said Anuj Kichlu, who is player representative of both. Recently, India international players Dangmei Grace and Manisha Kalyan joined top clubs abroad. Dangmei joined Uzbekistan side FC Nasaf for a six-month stint while Manisha signed a two-year contract with Apollon Ladies FC of Cyprus. Both last played for Gokulam Kerala in IWL.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra is relying on his red-hot form and consistency this season to grab a historic medal at the World Athletics Championships, beginning on Friday in Eugene, USA.

The 24-year-old Chopra will be one of the medal favourites in the showpiece after pulling off the third-best throw of the season with an effort of 89.94m during the Stockholm Diamond League on June 30.

A medal in the World Championships will be another piece of history for Chopra as he will become only the second Indian track and field athlete and first male player from the country to win a medal in the World Championships.

Long jumper Anju Bobby George had become the first Indian to win a Bronze in 2003 in Paris.

"The preparation has been good and my confidence level

is high. In the three events I took part, I had done two personal best and won one. I have been consistent in my three performances," Chopra said at a virtual media interaction from his training base in Chula Vista in USA.

"I can do better (and get past 90m), it was just 6cm short of 90m mark at the Stockholm Diamond League. So, hopefully I can do my best in the World Championships."

In his three outings this season, Chopra has improved his personal best twice -- he recorded a 89.30m throw on June 14 at the Paavo Nurmi Games in Finland before sending his spear to 89.94m, just 6cm shy of 90m in Stockholm.

He had won the javelin throw event at Kuortane Games in Finland with a throw of 86.69m under wet and slippery conditions.

Chopra's main rival for the Gold medal will be Anderson Peters of Grenada, the 2019 World Championships Gold medallist. Peters heads to the



World Athletics Championships as the stand-out contender for Gold as he owns four of the top five throws this season. His best effort of 93.07 is also the best result this season.

The 2017 world champion

Johannes Vetter of Germany, who has maximum number of 90m-plus throws among active athletes, has pulled out with a shoulder injury.

A Gold is not beyond Chopra's reach as he has beat-

en Peters twice this season -- at Paavo Nurmi Games and Kuortane Games.

If Chopra wins the yellow metal, he will become the first male javelin thrower to follow Olympic success with World

Championship Gold since Norway's Andreas Thorkildsen feat in 2008-09.

Before that, world record holder Jan Zelezny of Czech Republic had achieved the milestone in 2000-01 and 1992-93.

Asked about his mindset with which he will go into the World Championships, Chopra said, "I will go with the same mindset I had in Tokyo, with a relaxed mind. I will give my best, that is the only thing, I am not putting pressure on myself."

But, Chopra has learnt one thing from the 2017 World Championships in London where he could not qualify for the final round. He said he cannot go into the qualification round thinking that he would get into the finals without much effort.

Chopra had competed in the 2017 London World Championships with the hope of at least making it to the finals. But he could not do that at his best throw of 82.26m fell short of the automatic qualification mark of 83m.

Delhi Premier League to kick off on July 15

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The inaugural Delhi Premier League will commence at the Ambedkar Stadium on Friday.

The league will be played in a double round-robin format with all 11 teams playing 20 matches each.

A total of 110 matches will be played over the duration of more than two months. The tournament will carry a prize money of ₹ 7 lakh.

All the matches will be held at two venues -- Ambedkar Stadium and

Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

The participating clubs are Delhi FC, Hindustan FC, Royal Rangers FC, Friends United FC, Garhwal FC, Tarun Sangha FC, Rangers SC, Sudeva Delhi FC, Uttarakhand FC, Indian Air Force, and Vatika FC.

Football Delhi President Shaji Prabhakaran said, "Clubs participating in the Delhi Premier League will be playing a vital role in taking Delhi's football forward and more of our clubs from Delhi will be seen competing in the top leagues of India in the coming seasons."



The Government will go out of the way to provide all the required support in its bid to make the upcoming FIFA Women's U-17 World Cup a success, according to All India Football Federation (AIFF). The assurance was given by Sports Minister Anurag Thakur to visiting FIFA Director of Tournaments Jaime Yarzua who met him here on Wednesday. AIFF's acting General Secretary Sunando Dhar was also present in the meeting.

French enquiry blames organisers for CL fiasco



AP ■ PARIS

An enquiry by the French Senate into crowd chaos at this year's Champions League final in Paris concluded that organisers were to blame, not supporters, undermining claims by the police and Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin.

A fact-finding mission led by two senators was set up after the Liverpool-Real Madrid game on May 28 which was marred by a delayed kick-off, crushes, teargas and street crime.

The investigation concluded that the problems were caused by a "string of dysfunctions" including a lack of preparation by French authorities and poorly executed security arrangements.

"These dysfunctions were at every level, not only during the implementation but also during preparations in advance," the co-chair of the enquiry Laurent Lafon told reporters at a press conference.

The final report contradicted repeated statements from Darmanin that Liverpool fans

were mostly responsible, with the minister claiming that up to 40,000 of them travelled to the stadium either with no tickets or with fake ones.

"The first statements (by the minister) do not match up with reality," Francois-Noel Buffet, a fellow co-chair of the investigation, told reporters.

"The conclusions of the minister on the evening and the day after were not the right ones," Lafon added. "It was a biased conclusion, imprecise."

Many Liverpool supporters struggled to travel to the stadium because of a transport strike, then found themselves in bottlenecks and crushes at the stadium entry gates.

Faced with the build up of frustrated fans around the Stade de France, police fired tear gas to move the crowd back, affecting many children as well as disabled fans in wheelchairs.

After the game, visitors were preyed on by local gangs as they made their way to local transport connections, with many reporting pickpocketing, muggings and threats as the police looked on.



AP ■ MANCHESTER

Raheem Sterling has said he will leave Manchester City "a man" on Wednesday as his transfer to Chelsea edged ever closer.

The 27-year-old posted a goodbye message on social media ahead of an expected £50 million (\$59 million) move.

Sterling announced his exit from the Etihad with a social media post thanking those he worked with at the club over the past seven years.

"Seven seasons, eleven major trophies, a lifetime of memories," he posted on Twitter. "What a ride it's been."

"I am thankful for the ups and the downs as it's the downs that have, at times, tested my strength and resolve and enabled me to stand here in front of you as the best possible version of myself."

Chelsea-bound Sterling thanks City for 'lifetime of memories'

Raphinha set to join Barca

AP ■ BARCELONA

Brazil winger Raphinha, who played a pivotal role in Leeds United retaining their place in the Premier League last season, is poised to sign for Barcelona after the clubs agreed to the deal in principle on Wednesday.

The 25-year-old will cost the Catalans a reported 55 million euros (\$55.3million) -- with a potential 15 million euros in add-ons -- and sign a five year contract.

"Barcelona and Leeds United Football Club have reached an agreement in principle for the transfer of Raphael Dias Belloli, Raphinha, pending the player passing his medical," read a statement on the Barcelona website.

Barcelona said they were buying: "a winger who is excellent in one on ones, taking on defenders being a key



part of his game."

Raphinha spent two seasons at Eland Road, scoring 17 goals and providing 12 assists after they signed him from Ligue 1 outfit Rennes for £17 million - the French side are due a cut of the transfer fee.

THE 27-YEAR-OLD POSTED A GOODBYE MESSAGE ON SOCIAL MEDIA AHEAD OF AN EXPECTED £50 MILLION (\$59 MILLION) MOVE

"I arrived in Manchester as a 20-year-old. Today, I leave a man. Thank you for your endless support. It's been an honour to wear the shirt of Manchester City."

Sterling is set to become Chelsea's first signing since Todd Boehly's consortium bought the club. The England international won four Premier League titles among nine major trophies since joining City from Liverpool in 2015.

A key player in the early years of Pep Guardiola's reign at City, Sterling scored 131 goals in 337 appearances for the English champions.

However, his regular place in the starting line-up at City came increasingly under threat from the signing of Jack Grealish for a Premier League record £100 million last year, plus the emergence of Phil Foden from the club's academy.

INDIA EYE ANOTHER SERIES WIN

PTI ■ LONDON

A confident Indian team looks set to overpower England with yet another dominant show in the second ODI at the Lord's on Thursday despite Virat Kohli's dodgy groin and dismal form.

The former India captain, who is enduring a prolonged bad patch, missed the first game due to groin strain and it is still not clear if he is fit for the second game.

Kohli's poor show, however, hasn't affected the team much as it is playing extremely well in the white-ball games. After clinching the T20 series 2-1, it cantered to a convincing 10-wicket victory in the opening ODI.

While the negative aspect of Kohli's absence is not getting a solid show from country's premier batter in pressure games, on the flip side, his poor form is an opportunity for others to show that they can win games on their own or at least own the big stage like Suryakumar Yadav did in final T20 International at Nottingham.

"I wasn't playing in the last T20 game and he (Kohli) didn't play today (Tuesday). I don't have an update on his injury," was all that first match's hero Jasprit Bumrah said when asked about former skipper's availability for the second game.

Groin strain can easily aggravate into a proper tear if the player rushes himself into the thick of things.

A quick single or a swift turn-around during a double can unknowingly worsen a player's condition if he takes field without being hundred percent fit.

At times, some injuries are blessing in disguise for the team manage-



Eng vs India (2nd ODI)
Live from 5:30pm IST
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ment in order to avoid a tough call and Kohli's groin strain could just be that.

REPEATING OVAL STORY

Rohit Sharma and his men will hope that the pitch at the Lord's plays

like Oval, where conditions helped them get lateral movement both in the air and off the track.

With Bumrah in the form of his life and the ever dependable Mohammed Shami ready to torment

the opposition with his bagful of tricks, skipper Rohit will focus more on Shreyas Iyer and his ever compounding problems facing the short ball.

The bowlers around the globe

have sorted Iyer out with short-pitched stuff and his predictable trigger movement towards the leg-stump in an attempt to make room is no longer paying dividends.

A player of Deepak Hooda's calibre is being made to sit out in formats because of reputation of some players and hence Iyer will feel the heat.

The conditions in Oval would have been a great learning experience for the flamboyant Mumbaier but the skipper himself with a wide array of horizontal bat shots ensured that Iyer could just kick his heels in the confines of the Indian dressing room during the series-opener.

For Rohit, the 58-ball-76 is some kind of reassurance that his process has been spot-on and that he can play the high-risk pull-shot with successful percentage.

A confident captain can make bold yet prudent decisions and runs under his belt will allow Rohit to be more adventurous with his decision at the Lord's.

A batting line-up comprising Jos Buttler, Joe Root, Ben Stokes, Jonny Bairstow, Jason Roy and Liam Livingstone can scare the daylights out of any bowling attack but at the Oval, the tables turned 180 degree on a seamer-friendly conducive surface.

The Lord's has traditionally been a batting belter but when it comes to rookie bowlers like Prasidh Krishna, it will also be about adjusting to the famous slope of the Lord's ground.

There are bowlers, who prefer bowling up the slope and some the other way round. Managing the slope is key to success at Lord's but the current Indian team is on a roll and might just complete another series win with minimum fuss.

Wasn't thinking about break from ODI, says Shami



PTI ■ LONDON

Seasoned India pacer Mohammad Shami said he wasn't thinking about his long lay off from ODI cricket and approached his comeback game with a clear mind as he is well-versed with the white-ball behaviour.

The first ODI against England on Monday was Shami's first appearance in the format after almost a gap of two years. He last played in India's 51-run loss to Australia in November 2020.

"It wasn't a small break but of three years," Shami, who claimed 3 for 31 at the Oval on Tuesday, said during a chat with bowling coach Paras Mhambrey on BCCI.Tv.

"Nothing was going on in my head regarding the gap. I've become very comfortable with the team. We travel together and have been playing together for like a decade now.

"Everyone knows their job and after playing so much of cricket, if you come with a question mark in your mind, then I believe it's not good."

It was also a milestone match for Shami who became the fastest Indian and third fastest bowler overall to take 150 scalps in ODI cricket.

"It's extremely important to come with a clear mind as you already know what you need to do, where you need to pitch the ball, the variations in white-ball and everyone knows these basics.

"But you need to be courageous from heart and if you are that, then you can get set in any format at any given moment."

While Shami claimed three wickets, fellow pacer Jasprit Bumrah finished with a career-best 6 for 19 to blow away hosts England in the first ODI.

"As soon as we started, the ball was stopping and seaming, it became important for us to pick our areas and keep line and length in control.

"We played our best performance (in first ODI); like, the way a series has to be started, it set an example."

Shami said the key was to keep things simple and put pressure on the batters from both ends.

"The only thing to be kept in mind was if the area will be great on a pitch where it swings and seams, you bowl with great pace from both ends and makes life difficult for (batting teams) on a wicket like this.

"We kept things simple, got to fetch wickets quickly and result is there for all to see."

Shami feels not much needs to be changed if the conditions remain the same in the next two games.

"Personally speaking, reverting back to keep it simple theory will be the best. If the wicket behaves a little differently, then you need to think a bit more," he said.

"If you take the confidence from here to rest of matches, then the chances are there for being more successful."

"But if the wicket is dry or slow, then the plans can be changed. But to carry confidence from here is very important."

Bumrah back to No.1 in ICC ODI Player Rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

Fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah has regained the top spot in the ICC men's ODI Player Rankings after fashioning India's 10-wicket win over England with a career-best haul of six for 19 in the first game at the Oval.

Bumrah had lost the top spot to New Zealand's Trent Boult in February 2020 after being No. 1 for most of the preceding two years. He has been at the top for a total of 730 days, more than any other Indian and the ninth-most in history.

Bumrah, who has been No. 1 in T20Is in the past and is currently at a career-best third position in Tests, is only the second Indian fast bowler after Kapil Dev to be No. 1 in the ODI rankings.

Maninder Singh, Anil Kumble and Ravindra Jadeja are the other Indian bowlers to have attained top ranking.

Bumrah's new-ball partner Mohammad Shami too has gained

India trump Pakistan in ODI Team Rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

India have moved to the third spot, surpassing Pakistan in the ICC ODI Team Rankings after their emphatic win in the first game of the three-match series against England at the Oval.

India were placed fourth with 105 points but the 10-wicket win on Tuesday propelled them to 108 rating points, leaving Pakistan behind at 106 in the latest chart.

New Zealand continue to reign supreme at the top of the table with 126 rating points, while England are second with 122.

after grabbing three for 31 and playing his role in skittling England out for 110 in 25.2 overs.

Shami has progressed three slots

Pakistan had pushed India down to the No. 4 spot in the rankings last month after a clean sweep over the West Indies. It also helped that Australia slipped after their series loss in Sri Lanka. However, their stay at No. 3 has been a short one, with India claiming the spot.

India could stretch their lead even further with the two remaining ODIs against England and the three-match series against West Indies later this month. Conversely, India could drop back behind Pakistan and down to fourth if they lose the final two matches of the series against England.

to reach joint-23rd position along with team-mate Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

In batting chart, captain Rohit Sharma has bridged the gap with

third-placed Virat Kohli to just one rating point after his brisk 76 not out helped India chase down the target in just 18.4 overs, while left-hander Shikhar Dhawan inched up one slot to 12th position after his unbeaten 31.

In the ICC men's T20I Player Rankings, India batter Suryakumar Yadav has gained 44 slots to reach a career-best fifth position after his valiant 117 in the final match of a three-T20I series against England.

India seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar has surged seven places to a career-best seventh position after a haul of three for 15 in the second T20I in Birmingham, while leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal (up two places to 19th), Harshal Patel (up 10 places to 23rd) and Bumrah (up six places to 27th) also progressed.



Eoin Morgan to play in Legends League Cricket

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

World Cup winning former India captain Eoin Morgan, who recently retired from international cricket, will be back on the field when he competes in the second season of the Legends League Cricket.

Morgan will thus join former India opener Virender Sehwag, Pathan brothers -- Irfan and Yusuf, Australia's Brett Lee, Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan in the league, which will return in September with four teams and 110 International players on board. "It feels great and I am super excited to be part of Legends. I am looking forward to play in season 2," Morgan, who had captained England to the 2019 World Cup win, said in a release.

The first season of tournament had former cricketers from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Australia, England divided into three teams representing India, Asia and Rest of the World.



ODI cricket needs to find its relevance: Ashwin

PTI ■ MUMBAI

As India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin believes that ODI cricket needs to find its relevance as the 50-over format is turning out to be an extended form of T20 cricket without "ebbs and flows".

Bilateral ODIs across the globe is fast losing relevance and some like former India head coach Ravi Shastri want more franchise-based T20 leagues than these kind of series.

"It's a question of relevance and I think ODI cricket needs to find its relevance. It needs to find its spot," Ashwin, who has 151 wickets in 113 ODIs, said on the upcoming show of the Vaughany and Tuffers Cricket club podcast.

The podcast is hosted by former England captain Maichael Vaughan and left-arm spinner Phil Tuffnell.

"The greatest beauty of one day cricket is - sorry was - the ebbs and flows of the game. People used



to bide their time and take the game deep. The one-day format used to be a format where bowlers had a say," added the 35-year-old.

Ashwin, himself a "cricket nut" admitted that he switched his TV off after a point while watching an ODI

game.

"Even me as a cricket badger and a cricket nut, I switch off the TV after a point and that's frankly very scary for the format of the game. When those ebbs and flows go missing, it's not cricket anymore. It is just

an extended form of T20," he maintained.

Currently, two new balls are used in an ODI innings but Ashwin pushed for returning to the old format where one was ball used, saying it would then be an even contest.

"I think one ball is something that would work and spinners would come into the game to bowl more at the back end. Reverse swing might come back in, which is crucial for the game," the twalker, who has 442 Test wickets, added.

Ashwin's comments have come at a time when South Africa decided to withdraw from the ODI series in Australia, which was scheduled to be played in January because of crammed schedule and launch of its domestic T20 competition.

"I would also say we need to go back to the ball we used around 2010. I don't think we use the same ones anymore," the off-spinner signed off.

Ashwin wants LBW to come into play if batters go for switch hit

PTI ■ MUMBAI

As India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin feels that the batters should be adjudged leg before wicket even if the ball is pitched outside leg stump if they miss out on an attempted switch hit.

As per current rules, a player can't be ruled leg before even if it goes onto hit the stumps in case it is pitched outside leg-stump, which is considered to be a 'blind spot' for the batters.

"My question is not whether he can play reverse sweep or not, whether it's negative bowling strategy or not (bowling outside leg stump), my point is about lbw. It's unfair that it's not ruled lbw," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel.

"Let batters play the switch hit, but give us LBW when they miss. How can you say it is not LBW when the batter turns? If they start giving that out in all formats of the game, some parity could be retained between bowling and batting," maintained Ashwin, who has 442 Test wickets.

SA pull out of scheduled ODI series in Australia



AP ■ BRISBANE

Australia is likely to get the competition points from a cancelled three-game limited-overs international series after South Africa withdrew because of a crammed schedule and the launch of its domestic T20 competition.

Cricket Australia on Wednesday said the scheduled ODIs in January in Hobart, Sydney and Perth against South Africa had been scrapped and dates and venues for other international matches were revised.

The ODI series was to be part of the International Cricket Council's Super League which determines direct quali-

cation for the 50-over World Cup in 2023. "Given these games will not be played before the qualification cut-off date in May, (South Africa) has agreed that Australia will be awarded the competition points pending ICC approval," Cricket Australia said in a statement.

Cricket South Africa is set to launch at new domestic T20 league in January and wanted its leading players available for the tournament.

Australia will host South Africa in a three-test series starting in Brisbane on December 17 and scheduled to end in Sydney on January 8.

Before then, Australia will host Zimbabwe, New Zealand, West Indies and England in white-ball series from late August ahead of the T20 World Cup from October 16-November 13. The Australians will then play England in a three-game ODI series and West Indies in a two-Test series in Perth and Adelaide.

Australia's men's team returned this week from a tour to Sri Lanka that included T20 and ODI series and two Test matches.

Umesh takes maiden wicket in County cricket

PTI ■ LONDON

Senior India pacer Umesh Yadav has notched up his maiden wicket in the County Championship representing Middlesex against Worcestershire on the second day here.

The 34-year-old pacer, who was roped in by Middlesex for the remainder of the English County season replacing Pakistan speedster Shaheen Shah Afridi, took the wicket of Taylor Cornell.

Umesh went through the defence of Cornell (11) to return with figures of 14-1-45-1.

On day 2, Middlesex dismissed Worcestershire for 191 and then reached 180 for six to take a lead of 177 runs. Middlesex had scored 188 in their first innings.

Umesh is also the latest Indian to join veteran batter Cheteshwar Pujara, and all-rounders Washington Sundar and Krunal Pandya in County cricket.

While Pujara plays for Sussex, Sundar and Krunal have signed up for Lancashire and Warwickshire respectively.

New Zealand beat Ireland by 3 wickets to clinch ODI series

AP ■ MALAHIDE

Mark Adair's early heroics could not prevent Ireland falling to a three-wicket defeat to New Zealand in the second ODI.

Adair took the wickets of Martin Guptill and Will Young with the first two balls of the Kiwi innings as they set about chasing down the hosts' modest 216.

But a fine 60 from Finn Allen soon steadied the visitors and they cruised to a victory which also sealed the series with one game remaining.

Michael Bracewell, Mitchell Santner and Matt Henry each helped themselves to two wickets as New



Zealand immediately set about the Irish attack.

Under pressure, it was only a fine 74 from George Dockrell and a gutsy unbeaten 27 from Adair that enabled Ireland to amass a reasonable total.

But rising Irish hopes after the dramatic start to the New Zealand innings soon fell away as the Black Caps composed themselves and Tom Latham joined Allen in earning a half-century.

A middle-order wobble made the result far from certain until Bracewell translated his fine form with the ball to the bat, with his unbeaten 42 carrying the tourists over the line with 71 balls to spare.

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