

OPINION 6
ARE WE HEADING
FOR ARMAGEDDON?**WORLD 8**
FIRES SCORCH FRANCE, SPAIN;
TEMPERATURE-RELATED DEATHS SOAR**MONEY 10**
GULF REMITTANCES FELL
IN FY21 DUE TO COVID

NEW DELHI, MONDAY JULY 18, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

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It's kisan putra vs woman power in V-P poll contest

Former Guv
Margaret Alva to
take on Bengal
Guv Dhankhar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

It's kisan vs woman in the Vice-presidential contest. After the BJP put up West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, hailed as a "kisan putra" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Opposition on Sunday pitted former Union Minister Margaret Alva against him.

Incidentally, as an occupant of the Raj Bhavan in Kolkata, Dhankhar has a running feud with the Opposition's best-known woman face and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Alva (80) a, former Union Minister and former Governor of Rajasthan and Uttarakhnad, was on Sunday unanimously chosen by leaders of 17 Opposition parties to be the joint Opposition candidate for the Vice-President's post which will fall vacant after incumbent Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu ends his tenure.

"It is a privilege and an honour to be nominated as the



Congress leader Margaret Alva was nominated as the candidate by the combined Opposition parties for the vice-presidential polls, on Sunday. PTI



NCP chief Sharad Pawar, CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut, CPI leader D. Raja, JKNK Chief Farooq Abdullah and others after electing the combined Opposition parties' candidate for the vice-presidential elections, in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

candidate of the joint Opposition for the post of the Vice-President of India. I accept this nomination with great humility and thank the leaders of the Opposition for the faith they've put in me. *Jai Hind*," Alva tweeted soon after the Opposition parties announced her name.

Alva has been a four-term Rajya Sabha MP. She was also a Minister in the Governments

headed by Rajiv Gandhi and PV Narasimha Rao.

The leaders of various Opposition parties had met at the residence of NCP supremo Sharad Pawar to decide on the common candidate for the Vice-President's election. The last date for filing nominations is July 19 for the August 6 polls.

Announcing the decision, Pawar said that 17 Opposition parties have unanimously

decided on Margaret Alva's name.

The meeting was attended by all major Opposition parties including the Congress, Shiv Sena, Left Front constituents, the RJD, the SP, and others. Among the attendees were Congress' Mallikarjun Kharge and Jairam Ramesh, CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury, CPI's D Raja and Binoy Viswam, Shiv Sena's Sanjay Raut, DMK's TR

Baalu and Tiruchi Siva, SP's Ram Gopal Yadav, MDMK's Vaiko and TRS' K Keshava Rao.

The IMUL's ET Mohammed Basheer and Kerala Congress (M)'s Jose K. Mani were also present.

The TMC and AAP were not present in the meeting but sources said they offered support to Alva.

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Govt to bring 32 Bills in Monsoon Session

Stormy House session likely as Opp set to raise inflation, Agnipath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government and Opposition are set for bitter sparring in the Monsoon Session of Parliament beginning Monday. The Government is set to bring around 32 important Bills in both the Houses, whereas the Opposition is ready with its own wish list to corner the ruling dispensation.

In an all-party meeting on Sunday, the Government sought the Opposition's help in "smooth conduct" of the Session, while the Opposition said it would raise issues of "price rise, inflation, the military recruitment scheme 'Agnipath', rising intolerance, the attack on federalism and Chinese incursion in Ladakh", in the upcoming session.

NDA floor leaders of the two Houses also met during the day and discussed the strategy for the conduct of the session where the Government will bring in 32 Bills.

The first day of the



Monsoon Session will see voting for the presidential election. Some of the Bills that are on the pending list include The Indian Antarctica Bill, 2022. The Bill is pending in the Lok Sabha.

The Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Amendment Bill, 2022 was passed by the Lok Sabha and is yet to be passed by the Rajya Sabha.

The Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021 is pending in the Lok Sabha, The Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill, 2019, and the National Anti-Doping Bill, 2021 are also pending in the Lok Sabha.

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Orders (Second Amendment) Bill, 2022 (in respect of State of UP - amendment regarding change of district name to be approved

by Cabinet) was introduced in the Lok Sabha in March 2022.

New Bills to be introduced in the Parliament during the Monsoon session include The Central Universities Amendment Bill, 2022.

In the all-party meeting, the Opposition questioned the absence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi which raised their hackles.

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh tweeted: "All Party Meeting to discuss forthcoming session of Parliament has just begun and the Prime Minister, as usual, is absent. Isn't this 'unparliamentary'?"

The last time the Prime Minister skipped the meeting ahead of the Budget Session.

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi defended the Government by saying "former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had given a miss to many such meets."

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CAPSULE

'NOT GOT DEO'S LETTER OF RESIGNATION YET'

Raipur: Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday said he was yet to receive Minister TS Singh Deo's resignation from the panchayat department. The All India Congress Committee's Chhattisgarh in-charge PL Punia, who is on a visit to the State capital Raipur said he has spoken to AICC general secretary KC Venugopal, Baghel and Deo on the issue and a decision will be taken soon.

ICSE CLASS 10TH RESULTS TODAY, CLASS 12TH SOON

New Delhi: The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination on Saturday announced the ICSE class 10 results 2022 on Sunday. Four students share top rank with 99.8 per cent marks, 34 are at second spot with 99.6 per cent.

RAUT SEEKS PREZ RULE IN MAHA TILL SC DECISION

Mumbai: Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut has sought imposition of President's Rule in Maharashtra till the Supreme Court gives its verdict on its plea seeking disqualification of the rebels.

India achieves Covid jab milestone of 200 crore

PM congratulates nation on historic feat; country sees 20,528 new cases in single day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid a rise in Covid-19 cases — over 20,528 in a single day on Sunday, the highest in five months — India has achieved a major milestone in its Covid-19 vaccination programme with cumulative jabs administered surpassing the 200-crore mark.

Lauding the feat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said it has strengthened the fight against the coronavirus.

India has been reporting above 20,000 new Covid cases for the past five days in a row. However, the increased vaccination pace has come as a relief in the fight against Covid-19. "India creates history again!



Congrats to all Indians on crossing the special figure of 200 crore vaccine doses. Proud of those who contributed to making India's vaccination drive unparalleled in scale and speed. This has strengthened the global fight against Covid-19," Modi said in a tweet.

Also, congratulating citizens on the achievement, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said that India has set a new record by

completing the target of 200 crore vaccinations in just 18 months.

"Powered by the spirit of Jan-Bhagidari, India's vaccination journey under PM @NarendraModiJi's inspiring leadership has emerged as a mighty epitome of Sabka Prayas.

"This extraordinary achievement will be etched in history!" he said in a tweet.

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All party meeting on Lanka on July 19

DMK, AIADMK have urged Govt to protect interests of Tamils in troubled nation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Government will hold an all-party meeting on the current Sri Lanka situation after Tamil Nadu-based DMK and AIADMK asked it to intervene in the neighbouring country and safeguard the interest of the country's Tamil population.

The meeting will be chaired by Union Ministers Nirmala Sitharaman and S Jaishankar, said Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi.

During an all-party meeting convened on Sunday ahead of the Monsoon Session of Parliament, the DMK and AIADMK demanded that India intervene in Sri Lanka which is



The all-party meeting being held ahead of the Monsoon Session of the Parliament, at Parliament House, in New Delhi, on Sunday. PTI

facing a debilitating economic crisis. Talking to reporters after the meeting, NDA constituent DMK leader M Thambidurai said India should intervene to resolve the crisis in Sri Lanka. Party leader TR Baalu also demanded India's intervention in addressing the situation

confronting the island nation. Sri Lanka is facing its worst economic crisis in seven decades, with a severe foreign exchange shortage hampering the import of essentials including food, fuel, and medicines. The economic crisis also sparked a political crisis in the

country after a popular uprising against the Government.

In response to the concerns on the alarming situation in the island nation, Joshi said the Government will hold an all-party meeting on the current Sri Lanka economic crisis on Tuesday.

Mid-air scare again! 4 flights make emergency landings



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air passengers continued to face mid-air scare due to technical snags in aircraft. After SpiceJet flights were hit with repeated snags in the last three weeks, passengers of several flights faced the same trauma over the weekend.

A Sharjah-Hyderabad IndiGo flight had to make an emergency landing at the Karachi International Airport

dispatched to Karachi to ferry the stranded passengers to Hyderabad.

Last week, SpiceJet's Delhi-Dubai flight had to be diverted to Karachi after the pilots noticed an unusual fuel reduction in one of the fuel tanks of the plane.

In the second incident, Air India Express (Calicut-Dubai) was diverted to Muscat on Saturday after a burning smell was observed in the cabin mid-air and the pilots observed a defect in one of the engines.

The burning smell was coming from one of the vents in the forward galley and the pilots, therefore, diverted the plane to Muscat and landed safely, the officials said.

The third incident is related to the Air India Express Bahrain-Kochi flight in which an live bird was found in the cockpit on July 15.

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L-G nod to CBI to prosecute AAP MLA for graft

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has given the CBI sanction for the prosecution of AAP MLA and Delhi Waqf Board (DWB) chairman Amanatullah Khan and retired IPS officer Mehboob Alam under Section 19 of the Prevention of Corruption Act 1988 and Section 197 of the Code of Criminal Procedure 1973 in connection with "illegal" appointments. The case was registered in 2016.

The prosecution sanction has also been granted for offenses including "deliberate and criminal violation" of rules, regulations, and law and "misuse of position" and causing financial losses to the exchequer. According to the official sources, the SDM (HQ),



Revenue Department of the Delhi Government in November 2016, filed a complaint alleging arbitrary and illegal appointments to various existing and non-existing posts by Amanatullah in the DWB. The CBI had undertaken thorough investigations that revealed sufficient prosecutable evidence of the commission of criminal offenses and had sought prosecution sanction of the L-G in May 2022.

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Kejriwal writes to Modi seeking clearance for Singapore summit

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After getting no response from the Lieutenant-Governor's office, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking permission to attend the World Cities Summit (WCS) in Singapore in the first week of August.

The High Commissioner of Singapore, Simon Wong, had in June invited Kejriwal to attend the summit.

"With great sadness, I have to say that I have not yet received permission to go to Singapore. It was nearly five weeks ago, on June 7, that I had written a letter seeking permission to go to Singapore but I haven't received a reply. It is not right to stop a Chief Minister of any State from visiting such an important event



and it is against the interest of the country," Kejriwal wrote to the PM.

The Kejriwal Government sees the invitation from Singapore as an opportunity to take its "Delhi model" of governance to the global platform.

The Chief Minister highlighted in the letter that former US president Donald Trump's

wife Melania Trump had expressed her admiration for Delhi's education model and, "Every Indian had felt proud that day".

Previously, former Secretary General of United Nations Ban Ki-moon and former Norway Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, too, had visited the Mohalla Clinics here. Continued on Page 2

Haven't received Singh Deo's resignation from Panchayat dept: Baghel

PTI ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday said he was yet to receive Minister T S Singh Deo's resignation from the panchayat department and that he learnt about the latter's move through the media.

All India Congress Committee's Chhattisgarh in-charge P L Punia, who is on a visit to the state capital Raipur since July 15, said he has spoken to AICC general secretary K C Venugopal, state CM Baghel and Singh Deo on the issue and a necessary decision

will be taken on it.

Singh Deo, locked in a turf war with Baghel in the ruling Congress in Chhattisgarh, on Saturday resigned from the panchayat and rural development department.

He will still remain the minister for health and family welfare, medical education, twenty point implementation and commercial tax (GST) departments.

Asked about the development, Baghel told reporters that he learnt about the minister's move through media and after he receives the res-



ignation letter, he will think over it.

"I have not spoken to him (Singh Deo). I tried to call him last night, but he could not be contacted," the CM said.

On the BJP's allegations of

lack of coordination in his cabinet, Baghel refuted it and said, "Whatever the matter is we will sort it out by sitting together".

Meanwhile, Punia said Singh Deo has requested the CM to relieve him of the panchayat department's charge and once Baghel receives the request letter, the issue will be addressed.

"Nothing has happened as of now," the Congress leader told a TV channel.

Singh Deo had in his resignation letter to the CM claimed not a single house was built for homeless people

under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana as funds were not allotted despite "repeated request".

In a four-page resignation letter addressed to the chief minister, Singh Deo cited various reasons, saying he was unable to fulfil the department's targets as per the vision of the Jan Ghoshna Patra (poll manifesto), given the "current scenario".

On Singh Deo's claims made in the letter, Punia said it is the minister's experience and the CM can answer how much of it is right or wrong.

"Whatever decision will be

taken, it will be informed to you (media), I have discussed the issue with Singh Deo, CM and K C Venugopal ji and a necessary decision will be taken," he said.

The Congress has called the state legislature party meeting at 7 pm on Sunday which will be held at the chief minister's official residence.

Discussions would be held on the July 18 presidential poll and the state Assembly's monsoon session scheduled to begin on July 20. The political situation after Singh Deo quit one department would also be discussed, a party

leader here said.

The political development in Chhattisgarh comes a year ahead of the Assembly elections in the Congress-ruled state.

It is being seen as the bitter fallout of an old political rivalry between Baghel and Singh Deo, who was seeking the chief minister's post under a purported power-sharing agreement.

In June last year, differences had flared up between Baghel and Singh Deo shortly after the CM completed his two-and-a-half years in the office.

The latest flash point between Baghel and Singh Deo seems to be coal mine projects in the Hasdeo Arand forest area of the Surguja district.

In August last year, the Congress high command had summoned Baghel and Singh Deo to Delhi in a bid to resolve the power tussle.

In the 90-member Chhattisgarh Assembly, the Congress currently has 71 MLAs, BJP 14, while the Janata Congress Chhattisgarh (J) and the Bahujan Samaj Party have three and two members, respectively.

Raut seeks Prez rule in Maha till SC decides plea on disqualification of rebel Sena MLAs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut has demanded the imposition of President's rule in Maharashtra till the constitution bench of the Supreme Court gives its verdict on the plea seeking disqualification of rebel Shiv Sena MLAs.

Raut also took a dig at the newly-formed Eknath Shinde government over the delay in the formation of the new cabinet.

"Barbados has a population of 2.5 lakh and yet has a cabinet of 27. Maharashtra's 12-crore population has a cabinet of 2 members that are taking arbitrary decisions. Where is the regard for the constitution?" he tweeted.

Raut demanded that till the constitution bench of the Supreme Court gives its verdict on the disqualification of rebel Shiv Sena MLAs, President's rule should be imposed in the state.

"Article 164 (1-A) of the Constitution says that the number of ministers including CM of the state shall not be less than 12. For the last 2 weeks, the cabinet consisting of just 2 ministers is taking decisions that are not Constitutionally valid. Honourable governor sir, what's going on?" he questioned.

After his rebellion led to the collapse of the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, Shinde took oath as the chief

minister on June 30 along with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Devendra Fadnis as the Deputy CM.

As per the latest speculation, the formation of the new council of ministers might take place days after the Presidential polls, scheduled on July 18.

A senior BJP leader has said the cabinet may be expanded on July 20 or 21.

Raut, who is in Delhi, on Sunday slammed the Shinde-led government for not expanding the Cabinet.

"It (expansion of cabinet) has not happened because there is a Constitutional problem. The 40 rebel MLAs of Shiv Sena (in the Shinde camp) face the threat of disqualifica-

tion and the matter is being heard in the Supreme Court. If they take oath as ministers, they will be disqualified," he said.

The Supreme Court last Monday asked the Maharashtra Assembly Speaker to not take any decision on disqualifying Shiv Sena MLAs.

Maharashtra Legislature Secretary Rajendra Bhagwat had issued show cause notices to 53 Shiv Sena MLAs. Forty of the notices have been sent to the faction led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and the other 13 belong to the Uddhav Thackeray group.

Both the groups have sought the disqualification of legislators from the rival faction.

BSE's Chauhan likely to be next MD & CEO of NSE

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ashishkumar Chauhan is likely to take charge as the managing director and CEO of leading exchange NSE, with capital markets regulator Sebi clearing his appointment, sources said on Sunday.

Chauhan, who is currently the MD and CEO of BSE, will be appointed for a period of five years, they added. He will be taking over the helm of NSE from Vikram Limaye, whose five-year term ended on Saturday.

Limaye did not seek another term at the National Stock Exchange (NSE) despite being eligible. Chauhan, who is one of the founders of NSE, faces the uphill battle of guiding the exchange at a time when it is



facing regulatory probes pertaining to governance lapses as well as a scam related to its co-location facility. The co-location case resulted in the ouster and later arrest of its former MD and CEO Chitra Ramkrishna.

Chauhan, a technocrat from IIT and IIM, is considered the father of modern financial derivatives in India due to his work in the area during 1993-2000. He is also the creator of the Nifty index and was in charge of creating the first screen-based trading.

It's kisan putra vs...

From Page 1

"We are trying to contact TMC supremo and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee and AAP convenor and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal. Last time they supported our joint presidential candidate," Pawar said, adding that even JMM is together with opposition parties in this election.

Shiv Sena's Sanjay Raut said, "We are all together in this election".

Meanwhile, the absence of TMC from the meeting to decide on the Opposition's candidate for the VP poll, has set the tongues wagging. West Bengal Congress president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said, "I am assuming that the TMC has a hidden coalition with the BJP. They do not want to displease the BJP leadership. Mamata Banerjee's meeting with Jagdeep Dhankhar and Himanta Biswa Sarma and the

announcement of Dhankhar's candidature following that, and the overall silence of the party indicates that."

CPI(M) leader Sujan Chakraborty said, "When the Opposition's presidential election candidate was to be chosen, Mamata Banerjee was proactive. In the case of the vice-presidential election, she has been silent since meeting Dhankhar and Sarma. Everybody knows why she is silent now."

Dhankhar and Alva have several things in common: both have been governors, and union ministers and have a Congress background to list a few.

Both also have a law degree, have been one-time Lok Sabha members, and share a Rajasthan connection. While Dhankhar is a native of the state, Alva 80 has been its governor.

Kejriwal writes to Modi seeking clearance for Singapore...

From Page 1

"After visiting the Mohalla Clinics, they had said such a health model should be adopted by the entire world. It is a matter of pride for the country that the world is impressed with Delhi's education and health-care model.

"In Singapore, I will present the Delhi Model and tell them about the education, hospitals, Mohalla Clinics and free electricity scheme and the world's biggest lead-

ers will applaud me. Then, every Indian's heart will swell with pride. My Singapore trip will increase the country's pride and honour," Kejriwal said in the letter.

"When you were the Gujarat Chief Minister and denied a visa by America, the whole nation stood by you and condemned America's step. Today, when you are stopping a Chief Minister from going on such an important stage, it is against the interest of the nation," the let-

ter said. Addressing a press conference, AAP Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh said that PM Modi is not allowing Delhi CM to go to Singapore as he is afraid of his "Delhi model".

"PM has probably forgotten about the time when he did not get a US visa and he used to make a fuss about it day and night. At that time, whole country stood by his side and criticised the US; now he is doing the same with Kejriwal," he said.

According to the Delhi

Government official, the Chief Minister's office (CMO) submitted a file to the Lieutenant Governor's (LG) office on June 7 seeking approval for the official foreign tour, but the approval has not been given yet. According to rules of the Central Government, all Ministers and bureaucrats need clearance for foreign visits from the Union Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). The public servants need administrative approval, and in case

of the Chief Minister of Delhi the administrative approval is required from the LG. After the administrative approval, a political clearance is required from the MEA. Without the two clearances foreign trips cannot be undertaken.

In 2019, the MEA had denied him permission to attend the Copenhagen C40 World Mayors' Summit in Denmark. Former Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit had attended the same summit in 2007 in New York.

Mid-air scare again! 4 flights make emergency landings...

From Page 1

The bird was found in the glove compartment on the co-pilot's side when the plane was at 37,000 feet altitude, the officials noted. The plane landed safely in Kochi. Prima facie, it looks like there was a ground handling lapse at a foreign station, the officials said while talking about the incident.

In the fourth incident, an aircraft of Ethiopian Airlines from Addis Ababa to Bangkok made an emergency landing at Kolkata airport due to a pressurisation issue on Saturday.

Civil Aviation Minister

Jyotiraditya Scindia held a high-level meeting on Sunday with senior officials of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and DGCA, asserting that passenger safety is paramount. He directed officials that, "there should be no compromise with the passengers' safety, safety is the paramount priority".

Meanwhile, a petition has been filed before the Delhi High Court to stop all flying services of SpiceJet airline in view of the recent safety issues that the airline has encountered. The petition which is public interest litigation (PIL)

has been filed by lawyer Rahul Bhardwaj and his son Yugan Bhardwaj. In his plea, Bhardwaj has argued that SpiceJet's flights need to be stopped to prevent a big accident that can damage the life and property of many passengers.

He said the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has not taken any action against the airline despite several incidents and narrow escapes. This amount to a violation of the right to life under Article 21 of the passengers.

India achieves Covid jab milestone...

From Page 1

According to Health Ministry data, 98 per cent of the adult population has received at least one dose while 90 per cent of people have been fully vaccinated.

The data showed that 82 percent of adolescents aged 15 to 18 years have also been vaccinated with the first dose since the vaccination for this age group began on January 3 while 68 percent have got both the first and second dose.

Eighty-one percent of those aged 12-14 years have taken the first dose while 56 percent are fully vaccinated.

Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director WHO South-East Asia congratulated India for administering over two billion COVID-19 vaccine doses.

"This is yet another evi-

dence of the country's commitment and efforts to minimize the impact of the ongoing pandemic. COVID-19 vaccines provide protection against severe disease and death for all variants. We must continue our efforts to ensure everyone everywhere benefits from these life-saving vaccines. Let us not forget that the pandemic is still around even after taking the vaccine. We must remember to take all precautionary measures to curtail the virus spread," she said in a statement.

According to the Union Health Ministry, 71 percent of the vaccination has taken place in Covid vaccination centers located in rural areas and 29 percent in urban areas. Also, 48.9 percent of the total doses were administered to men while 51.5 percent were given to women.

In Andhra Pradesh, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Lakshadweep, Chandigarh, Telangana, and Goa, 100 percent of the 12 years plus eligible population is fully vaccinated.

The top five states where highest number of doses have been administered are Uttar Pradesh (34,41,93,641), Maharashtra (17,05,59,447), West Bengal (14,40,33,794), Bihar (13,98,52,042) and Madhya Pradesh (12,13,15,911).

A total of 5,63,67,888 precaution doses have been administered to all eligible populations. The cumulative Covid vaccine doses administered in the country crossed the 100-crore mark on October 21 last year and 150 crore on January 7 this year.

Meanwhile, with 20,528 new coronavirus infections being reported in a day, the country's tally of Covid-19 cases rose to 4,37,50,599, while the active cases increased to 1,43,449. The death toll climbed to 5,25,709 with 49 new fatalities. The active cases comprise 0.33 percent of the total infections while the national COVID-19 recovery rate was recorded at 98.47 percent, the ministry said. The 49 new fatalities include 17 from Kerala, eight from Maharashtra, six from West Bengal, three each from Karnataka and Punjab, and two each from Assam, Delhi, Jharkhand, and one each from Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Pondicherry, Tripura, and Uttarakhand.

A total of 5,25,709 deaths have been reported so far in the country.

L-G nod to CBI to prosecute AAP MLA for...

From Page 1

"As per investigation of the CBI, Amanatullah in connivance with Mehboob abused his official position and deliberately ignored rules and laid down procedures to cause huge losses to the Government exchequer by arbitrarily appointing individuals by manipulating recruitment procedures to favour chosen individuals over thousands of deserving people who could have got employed, had the process of appointment been transparent and impartial. The basic principle of the right to equality and opportunity was bypassed by Amanatullah by providing undeserving and unauthorised benefits to specific pre-identified persons," sources said.

"The CBI investigations have found that there is sufficient evidence to prosecute Amanatullah and Mehboob under sections 13 (1)(d) and

Section 13(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 read with Section 120-B of the Indian Penal Code 1860, before a Court of Law," sources informed.

"After carefully going through the records placed on file that prima facie provide sufficient evidence of culpability of Amanatullah and Mehboob and warrant grant of prosecution sanction for launching criminal proceedings against them, the LG has accorded such sanction," sources said.

"With this, the proverbial 'tip of the ice-berg' involving the rampantly prevalent practice of appointing favoured individuals without following the due process and depriving the common eligible citizen of the national Capital of their basic right to equality and employment, is expected to be addressed. It may be recalled, that Saxena right since taking

over has been insisting upon ending adhocism and favouritism in Government appointments and pressing for the filling up of all pending vacancies in various departments of the state government on a regular basis through the due process of recruitment," sources added.

"He has been emphasising upon an unbiased and impartial consideration of all citizens against existing vacancies on the basis of their eligibility rather than their proximity to people in positions of power," the sources further added.

While criticising the move of the LG, the AAP spokesperson said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is so scared of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's rise in Indian political arenas that he gets horrified by the thought of AAP even in his dreams.

"The PM and the BJP have started hating the AAP

Government's world-renowned work so much that they have started to put totally crass and baseless allegations upon the party and its leaders. We completely anticipate and expect many more such allegations to come up in the coming days. But the Delhi Government stands unfazed and will not deter on its mission to serve the people of Delhi," AAP said in a statement.

Amanatullah had previously landed in trouble when the Delhi Police arrested him for obstructing the demolition drive that was carried out in Madanpur Khadar after a complaint was lodged against the leader at Shaheen Bagh Police Station.

He was arrested for obstructing official duties. The Delhi Police had registered an FIR against him and his supporters for allegedly obstructing an anti-encroachment drive in Shaheen Bagh.

Govt to bring 32...

From Page 1

In the backdrop of the alarm raised by Opposition leaders objecting to a circular on banning of 'Dharnas' in the Parliament precincts, Joshi said, "These circulars are brought-out in every session... Opposition has no issue ... people have accepted Modi as the leader of the country..."

Joshi also said that the Government was open for discussion on all issues under rules and procedures of Parliament.

Condemning the opposition for creating a row over

unparliamentary words and circulars issued in routine for the past several years, he further said such a practice is being carried on since 1954 when the first such list was brought out, and said the opposition was doing so as it was devoid of any issues against the government.

Joshi at the meeting urged the parties to ensure the smooth functioning of parliament.

Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge said after the meeting that his party will raise "issues of price-rise, rising inflation, the controversial four-year short-term army recruitment scheme 'Agnipath' and Chinese incursion in Ladakh along Line of Actual Control.

Besides, the Congress

leader said "misuse of ED and CBI and 30 thousand crore DHFL scam" were also put on the table.

The opposition in the meeting also raised issue of delay in clearance of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's visit to Singapore and the alleged "attack" and misuse of federal structure by the Centre. The opposition will bring all these issues during the session which is to conclude on August 12, said Kharge.

Kharge put forth 13 topical issues which had been shortlisted by Congress for discussion during the monsoon session. Among them are: Hate speech, rising crimes in Jammu and Kashmir and attacks on Kashmiri Pandits, the collapse of autonomous

bodies & constitutional institutions, illegal demolition of homes of minorities, undemocratic attack on Congress Leaders, and amendment to Forest Conservation Rules.

The meeting was attended by the BJP's Rajnath Singh, Piyush Goyal, Prahlad Joshi, Arjun Meghwal and Muraleedharan. The Congress was represented by Mallikarjun Kharge, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and Jairam Ramesh.

Sharad Pawar and Supriya Sule from the Nationalist Congress Party, Ramnath Thakur from Janata Dal United, Aam Aadmi Party's Sanjay Singh and Harsimrat Kaur from Akali Dal were also present in the meeting held in Parliament annex.

The coming session holds

importance as the election of the top constitutional posts President and Vice-President office is slated to take place in this session. The Presidential polls will be held on July 18, while the Vice-Presidential polls will take place on August 6. The term of President Ram Nath Kovind is coming to an end on July 24, while the term of Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu is ending on August 10.

The session which would again be conducted under Covid-19 protocols, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha will be taking up important bills, some of which could not be taken up in the last session for one or other reason.

Family Courts (Amendment) and Indian Antarctic bill are listed to be taken up in Lok Sabha on

Monday, while the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Amendment Bill is listed for consideration and passing on the same day in Rajya Sabha.

Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will move the Weapons of Mass Destruction Bill in Rajya Sabha, as per the house's list of business. The bill seeks to ban funding of weapons of mass destruction and also empower the Centre to freeze, seize or attach financial assets and economic resources of people engaged in such activities.

Union Law Minister Kiren Rijji's name is listed to introduce the Family Courts (Amendment) Bill in Lok Sabha, as per the house's list of business for Monday.

27-year-old American tourist stages drama of abuse to blackmail parents

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 27-year-old woman from the US, who arrived in India as a tourist, staged a drama of being physically and emotionally abused by some unknown people to emotionally blackmail her parents back home, a Delhi Police official said on Sunday.

The victim-turned-accused was identified as Chloe Renee McLaughlin, who arrived in Delhi on May 3. The daughter of a former Army officer, she is a graduate and resides in Washington DC.

Deputy Commissioner of Police, New Delhi, Amrutha

Guguloth said the US Embassy had approached them, stating that the woman was assaulted and beaten by an unidentified individual known to her and is missing after reporting the incident to her family in the US. The woman, in an email, claimed that she is in an unsafe environment where she has encountered physical and emotional abuse.

"On July 10, the victim spoke to her mother Sandra McLaughlin via a video call on WhatsApp. The mother tried to gather some more information about her but an unknown individual entered the room and she could not disclose much," the DCP said.

Take Covid booster dose: CM to Delhiites

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday appealed Delhiites to get the Covid-19 precaution doses, saying only around 10 per cent people have done so far in the national capital. He also urged the parents of children in the age group 12-17 years to get them administered second dose of the vaccine. Only 8 per cent of the country's total population across India, the Central Government had said earlier this week, has got the third shot against coronavirus, also called as precautionary dose.

"The coronavirus situation in Delhi is under control. I appeal to all eligible citizens to take 'precaution dose' of Covid vaccine, provided for free in Delhi. It will also be administered at Mohalla Clinics," the Chief Minister urged in a video address, adding that 3.5 crore vaccine doses have been given so far in the national capital.

"This dose needs to be administered after the first and second dose. Those who are yet to take the precaution should do it immediately," he said. Noting that a very small share of the total population has taken the precaution dose, he



stressed that it is also available free of cost just like the other two doses. "People are not required to pay any money, they just have to spare some time to get vaccinated. All the adults i.e., people aged more than 18 years who took the second vaccine more than six months ago can get this precaution dose," he said.

"A lot of people are not getting booster shots. Only 10 per cent of people have got it so far, it seems. Since July began, Delhi has been recording less than 1,000 cases in a day."

This week, the daily tally went past 600 cases on just one day. The city has been witnessing low hospitalisations and deaths due to the virus, Kejriwal said. "All those above 18 who got their second shot six months ago can get booster shots," he urged. Sharing vaccination figures, he said so

far, a total of 3.5 crore vaccines have been administered in Delhi. Out of this, 1.81 crore are first doses, 1.53 crore are second doses.

"And only 18.5 lakh people have taken the precautionary dose. This means that a lot of people are yet to get the precautionary dose. This number is only 10 per cent of the people who got the first dose. We have a huge capacity of administering 1 lakh doses per day in Delhi, both private and government facilities included," he said.

The Chief Minister said the Government will also set up camps in schools for vaccination of children, if the school authorities request the local district administration officials for the purpose. "Children aged between 12-17 are eligible for a second dose but a lot of them are yet to take that dose. I request them as well as their parents to ensure that they get vaccinated," he said.

The Chief Minister also appealed people who have not received their second dose to do so at the earliest. The senior citizen, health workers and frontline workers also need to get precaution doses, he stressed.

DUTA prez joins AAP in presence of Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Several members of the Academics for Action and Development (AAD), led by chairperson Dr Aditya Narayan Misra who is a three-time Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) president and considered close to the Congress, joined the Aam Aadmi Party in presence of Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Sunday. Misra has been a member of Congress's 'vichar vibhag'.

According to the AAP, among the AAD members who joined the AAP are four DUTA office bearers, a member of DU's finance committee, two elected Executive Council (EC) members, three elected Academic Council members and two former EC members. "We all made a conscious decision... We felt that under Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's leadership, a positive direction is being created... we also appreciate that they have done wonderful things in school education.

"Now in university education, we want to have a positive relationship so we can work together on crises and issues such as those of grants to colleges. We will positively work together, I'm quite sure we can

resolve issues with colleges in Delhi," said Misra, in a Press conference.

Speaking on the occasion, Sisodia said it is a moment of great happiness for the AAP that a renowned face of Delhi University and voice of higher education and teacher politics, Chairperson of Academics for Action and Development, Mishra has joined the party. "With the presence of Mishra in the party, the Government will benefit from his experience in taking higher education to new heights," he added.

He further added that the AAP is committed to taking higher education to a greater heights.

He said ever since the Arvind Kejriwal Government has come into power, it is working diligently in the field of education. "Today the Delhi Education Model is being talked about everywhere," Sisodia added.

Along with other teachers' groups, the AAD has also been critical of the Delhi Government in its move to de-affiliate the College of Art from DU and make it a part of Ambedkar University, and of recurring issue of non-release of grants to the 12 Delhi University colleges fully funded by the Delhi Government.

Will look into problems that can arise out of ban on BS-IV vehicles: Rai

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Sunday said the city Government will look into the "practical problems" that can arise out of the proposed ban on BS-IV diesel vehicles if air pollution rises to the "severe plus" level, and take a call after holding discussions with people.

As part of its new policy to curb air pollution in Delhi-NCR, the Commission of Air Quality Management (CAQM) has for the first time recommended Delhi and NCR States to impose the ban on diesel four-wheelers when the air quality index (AQI) breaches the 450 mark.

According to reports, the ban is projected to impact around 9.5 lakh diesel vehicles, including private cars, and could lead to a crisis for commuters if enough arrangements are not made. "The commission has recommended banning BS-IV diesel vehicles in emer-



gency situations. We will further examine it. Look into the practical problems and take a call after holding discussions with people," said Rai.

Asked about the CAQM's new policy, Rai said the states need political will power to implement it properly.

The policy lists sector-wise action plans to curb air pollution in Delhi-NCR in the next five years.

"The problem is that the CAQM cannot implement policies. The states have to do it. Haryana, for example, still allows diesel generator sets in certain areas that lack power supply. It has been going on for

years. "We have banned firecrackers bursting in Delhi, but still people do. Where do you think these firecrackers come from?" he asked.

The problem of air pollution in Delhi-NCR persists despite several directions by the Supreme Court, Central Pollution Control Board, and CAQM because neighbouring states are not serious about implementation, he said.

The minister said the air pollution issue in the region can only be resolved through a panel of state environment ministers which should meet once every month.

Asked if the hike in LPG prices force people from low-income strata to fall back upon coal and firewood, Rai said, "LPG is the basic requirement of people. No one will use coal if the government makes LPG cylinders affordable."

In the fourth such hike this year, prices of non-subsidised LPG went up by Rs 50 from July 6.

MCD constitutes fresh panel to address sexual harassment complaints at workplace

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has constituted a fresh panel to address complaints related to sexual harassment at workplace. The move comes nearly two months after the new unified civic entity came into being on May 22.

After the unification of three erstwhile corporations, MCD has constituted a fresh sexual harassment complaint committee for redressal of complaints related to sexual harassment, the MCD said in a statement. The corporation has a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual harassment at workplace, it said.

Chief Architect Neelam Arora has been appointed as the chairperson of this committee, and deputy director hospital, administration, Alka Gupta, law officer Surendra Kumar, deputy director (education) Seema Sharma and one woman member from an NGO, are members of the

committee, the statement said.

The woman member of an NGO will be drawn from the panel available with the chairperson as and when cases are referred to the committee, it said.

The objective of this committee is to redress sexual harassment complaints of women employees at their work place on a priority basis, and to take necessary action to provide justice to the complainants, it added.

"Deputy commissioner of all zones are also directed to constitute zonal or sub-committee under their jurisdiction. In the zonal/sub-committee, there shall be not less than four members including the presiding officer.

"The presiding officer of the Committee shall be a woman employee of a senior level in the zone. At least one-half of the total members so nominated, shall be women," the civic body said. Appropriate procedure will be adopted for disposal of com-

plaints regarding sexual harassment cases.

The complainant should register her complaint before the committee at the earliest point of time, and in any case within 15 days from the date of occurrence of the alleged incident, it added.

The committee shall take immediate action to get the matter investigated discreetly or hold an inquiry, if any, and will submit its recommendations to the head of the organisation for appropriate action, including penalty if any, to be imposed, it added.

Redressal of sexual harassment-related complaints of women employees at work place will be ensured on a priority basis, it said.

The unified Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) had formally come into existence on May 22 with IAS officers Ashwani Kumar and Gyanesh Bharti assuming charge as the new civic body's special officer and commissioner, respectively.

Girls outshine boys in ICSE Class X results

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Girls have done slightly better than boys in Delhi in the Class 10 ICSE exam, the results of which were announced on Sunday. While girls have achieved a pass percentage of 100 per cent, the pass percentage of boys stood at 99.28 per cent.

The top rank in the Delhi region was bagged by Yashvi Jain with 97.6 per cent followed by Aryan Garg at the second spot with 97.4 per cent. The third spot was shared by Mahima Gupta and Jaisveen Kaur with 97 per cent marks.

All four students are from the Frank Anthony Public School. A total of 240 candidates from Delhi had appeared for the class 10 exam out of

which 57.92 per cent were boys while 42.08 per cent girls.

For the first time in the history of the board, the Council For The Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) conducted two examinations in a single examination year. While semester one exams were held in November-December 2021, the second semester exams were conducted in April-May 2022, for class 10 and 12.

The Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) examination was conducted in 61 written subjects of which 20 are Indian languages, nine foreign languages and one Classical language. The CISCE had on Saturday announced that marks of both first and second semesters will be given



Students celebrate their success after announcement of ICSE Board Class 10th results, at Lt Atul Katarya Memorial School in Gurugram on Sunday

Gupta challenges Kejriwal for debate over health, education

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal slammed the Prime Minister's "revadi culture" remark, Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta on Sunday challenged him for a debate over health and education.

The AAP national convenor should tell the people how many of his Ministers, MLAs, and leaders' children study in Delhi's Government schools, Gupta said in a Press conference. "If Delhi's health system is better, why do Kejriwal and his Ministers get their treatment in private hospitals on Government expens-



es," he asked.

On Saturday, Modi cautioned the people against what he called was a "revadi culture" of offering freebies for winning votes. The prime minister had used 'revadi', a popular north Indian sweet often distributed during festivals, as a metaphor for freebies. Countering this, Kejriwal had said free education, healthcare and bus travel for women were not freebies

but waiving loans of friends and fetching them tenders worth thousands of crores was "free ki revadi". Delhi's GDP growth has gone down to -3.9 due to Kejriwal's 'Revadi' politics" while the country's GDP growth is 8.2 percent," Gupta claimed on Sunday.

It is the result of distributing 'revadis' that now Delhi's revenue is Rs 61,891 crore while expenditure stands at Rs 71,085 crore, he said. "The CAG in its report has expressed concern that in the form of subsidies the state government expenses went up from Rs 1,867.61 crore in 2015-16 to Rs 3,592.94 crore in 2019-20," the Delhi BJP president said.

Jindal alleges glass of PCR van outside his house broken in attack, cops deny claim

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Expelled Delhi BJP spokesperson Naveen Kumar Jindal on Sunday alleged that the glass of a Delhi Police's PCR van stationed outside his residence here was broken in an attack. However, police denied his claims and said the back glass of the PCR van outside Jindal's house broke due to a "spinning stone from the wheel of a passing vehicle". "My family faces a threat from Islamic Jihadis. I have given evidence to the Delhi Police in writing several times in a month. A PCR van is stationed at my residence along with a personnel. In the

night the jihadis sent a message by breaking the glass of PCR. @CPDelhi, make arrangements for my and my family's safety," tweeted Jindal, who was expelled from the BJP for his derogatory comment on Prophet Mohammad.

The Delhi Police advised everyone to not propagate false information. "Some media channels are wrongly stating that thr hs been stone pelting at residence of Sh. @naveen-jindalbjp. Back glass of PCR Van outside his house broke due to a spinning stone from the wheel of a passing vehicle. All are advised not to propagate false information," it tweeted tagging PIB India. In another

tweet, it said, "The news of stone pelting at Mr. @naveen-jindalbjp's house is misleading. Some media channels are showing wrong news.

In the incident, a rubble stone jumped from the tyre pressure of a truck and hit the glass of his house. Our appeal is present the correct facts in this regard."

Delhi Police had earlier provided additional security to Jindal after he complained about receiving death threats online on June 30, a day after two men in Rajasthan's Udaipur brutally killed a tailor. Since then, Jindal has claimed that he has received online threats.

Delhi Police to sign MoU with FM radio channels to give live jam updates



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police is in the process of signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with FM radio channels to give live updates about traffic congestions and diversions to commuters in the national capital.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic Dwarka Range and Public Interface Unit) Ankit Singh said that the information regarding the traffic will be taken from the ranges and forwarded to the public relations officer (PRO) to further pass it to the FM channels.

"There are over 1.22 crore registered vehicles in the national capital. People listen to

FM channels while driving their vehicles. Through this system, we would like to enhance our reach to more people.

The commuters would get the information of VVIP moments, special arrangements, dharna, protest, etc. So that they can plan accordingly.

We have opted for this medium as we feel it is very convenient for us and the commuters. "The Public Interface Unit (PIU) of the traffic police gets details from all the ranges in the city about the traffic congestions or jams in the respective areas. It further passes this information to the PRO who will later share the information with the FM channels

for the broadcast. The commuters will also be suggested about the diversions on the particular routes," Singh said.

The DCP said that the Delhi Police has also started taking information from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) about the weather conditions. "The waterlogging after the rain also becomes a very crucial factor for the traffic jams.

We have been using all the platforms, including social media and the application of the Delhi Police called 'Tatpar', through which we update people about the traffic situation across the national capital," Singh said.

Special Commissioner of Police (Traffic Zone II) Surender Singh Yadav said, "We are signing the MoU as the FM radios have a wide and live reach especially with the commuters as well as auto and cab drivers.

We want that they should have updates about the traffic congestion or the traffic movement. If there are some emergencies where we make diversion or wherein there is a prediction that the weather is not

good and in our analysis, there is traffic congestion in later hours, so it is better to keep the public updated so that they can plan their journey accordingly."

Police officials said that the traffic police regularly update the traffic situation in the city through its Twitter handle, but not everyone is on Twitter. "But people do listen to FM channels and they can get the live updates about their routes if there is any change in it," a senior police officer said.

The officer further said, "Many times, heavy vehicles, including buses and trucks, break down during peak hours which leads to a traffic jam on that particular stretch.

This kind of information can also be shared with commuters and they will be suggested alternate routes for their convenience. The MoU is yet to be signed but we have started passing the information to FM channels."

Delhi Police spokesperson Suman Nalwa said that this is another step of reaching out to the citizens of the city. "We are in the process of signing an MoU with the FM channels.

This is another step of reaching out to the citizens of the national capital. We are planning to increase our reach

with the public through FM radios and to keep them updated about traffic in the city," Nalwa said.

Ad used to raise awareness about traffic rules

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police, which often finds innovative ways to raise awareness and spread informative messages through social media in a creative ad, has used the same to raise awareness and urged people to follow traffic rules.

The clip showed a speeding car running past a traffic light while it was red. After the car runs past, Kareena Kapoor Khan's character, Poo, appears on top of the red light and mouths her dialogue 'Yeh kon hai jisme Poo ko dobara mud kar nai dekha'. Along with the clip, the Delhi Police tweeted, "Who's that traffic violator? Poo likes attention, so do the traffic lights! #RoadSafety

#SaturdayVibes." Earlier, on July 12, the Delhi Traffic Police had shared NASA's deepest and sharpest infrared picture of the universe, next to an image of a person putting on a seat-belt. They captioned it, "Drive with a seatbelt on to avoid seeing the stars and the challan."

In May, the Delhi Police on the occasion of Harry Potter Day, shared a meme featuring characters from J K Rowling's fantasy series in order to urge people to follow Covid-19 protocols.

Using fun and viral ways, they have been educating people on different issues such as cybercrimes, the safety of women and children, among several other important similar topics of public interest.

‘187 highrise societies, 178 commercial establishments without fire NOC in G’gram’

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Around 187 high-rise buildings, group housing societies, 178 commercial establishments, and 28 paying guests (PG) under Gurugram Municipal Corporation limits do not have a valid fire safety NOC from the local authorities, officials said on Sunday.

According to the data provided by the department, 1,472 buildings are located in the Gurugram Municipal Corporation (MCG) limits.

After a survey, the Gurugram fire department found that out of 1,472 buildings, 987 have valid fire NOC, 144 are under process, 154 are under objection and 187 are still pending.

In Manesar Corporation limits out of 122 buildings, 90 have valid fire NOC, 13 are under process, and 19 are under objection.

According to the fire officials reason behind 187 high-rise societies do not have fire

NOC is disputed between the flat owners and builders but they urge the residents to settle their disputes and ensure their safety first.

"We have sent notices to different organisations which include high-rise, group housing societies, commercial establishments and paying guests. In the notice, it has been told that if the occupiers do not have a fire NOC, should take NOC from the fire department as soon as possible.

Also, the societies or commercial establishment whose fire NOC has expired, should renew their NOC and if it is not done, the fire department will take action against them," Gulshan Kalra, Deputy Director, Fire Department said.

A notice has been issued to them and their reply has been sought, Kalra said, adding that a total of 3 notices will be given to the property occupiers and despite this NOC is not obtained even after giving notice, then FIR will be recommended against them".

India-China hold talks over LAC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and China on Sunday reaffirmed their resolve to sustain the momentum of dialogue for early resolution of continuing stand-offs between the two armies in Eastern Ladakh. The two sides also agreed to have another round of military-level talks at the earliest.

It was the main takeaway from the 16th round of Corps Commander-level talks between the two armies at the Chushul-Moldo border meeting point at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh on the Indian side.

Leh-based 14 Corps chief Lt General Anindya Sengupta led the Indian delegation while Major General Yang Lin led the Chinese team. The meeting started at about 9.30 am. The last round of military dialogue took place on March 11 and it lasted for around 13 hours.

As regards the latest parleys, the two sides reviewed the present situation prevailing on the ground at the friction points in Eastern Ladakh and



agreed to maintain peace and tranquility and avoid escalating tension, sources said here. The Indian delegation also brought up the issue of Chinese fighter jets transgressing the no fly zone close to the LAC in Ladakh which may lead to more tension, they said. The most recent case was reported in June when a Chinese jet came close to the LAC on its side.

The two countries have a pact that no jets can fly within ten kms of the border on either side. Besides this issue, the talks focused on firming up a process for disengagement

from friction points at Depsang Valley, Demchok, and Hot Springs, they said.

India has all along stressed that the complete withdrawal of Chinese troops from the stand-off sites and status quo ante as prevailing prior to May 2020 are the prerequisites for restoring normal ties between the two countries.

At present, more than 50,000 troops each from both the sides are facing each other at the LAC thereby leading to tension in the border areas.

The latest round of talks was held 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 learned that the eastern Ladakh border row figured in the discussions.

Jaishankar called for an early resolution of all the outstanding issues along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh, the ministry of external affairs had said. Recalling the disengagement achieved in some friction areas, Jaishankar reiterated the need to sustain the momentum to complete disengagement from all the remaining areas to restore peace and tranquillity in the border areas, the ministry said.

The two Ministers agreed that they should continue regular contact at military and diplomatic meetings, and looked ahead to the next (16th) round of Senior Commanders meeting at the Chushul-Moldo border point at an early date, the statement said.

Incidentally, Wang Yi was the first Chinese minister to visit India in March this year

since trouble erupted on the LAC in eastern Ladakh more than two years back. At present, more than 50,000 troops each from both sides are in a stand-off at some friction points.

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 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Foreign Ministers' conclave.

The takeaway from the Corps Commander talks is likely to figure prominently in the talks between Jaishankar and Wang Yi, sources said.

The eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong lake areas. Both sides gradually enhanced their deployment by rushing in tens of thousands of soldiers as well as heavy weaponry.

As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks, the two sides completed the disengagement process last year in the north and south banks of the Pangong lake and in the Gogra area.

India, Bangladesh to review entire spectrum of military, bilateral ties

Army Chief will commence his visit by paying tributes to martyrs of 1971 battle

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Bangladesh will review the entire spectrum of bilateral military ties and security situations in the neighborhood during Army Chief General Manoj Pande's interaction with his Bangla counterparts. He is on a two-day visit starting Monday. This is his first foreign visit after assuming charge in May.

Giving details of Pande's visit, army officials said here on Sunday continuing with the excellent bilateral defence ties between India and Bangladesh, the Army Chief will commence his visit by paying tributes to the bravehearts who made the supreme sacrifice during the Liberation War of 1971 by laying a wreath at the Shikha Anirban on Monday.

During the day, Pande will take part in multiple meetings with senior officials of the security establishment and exchange views on various defence-related issues. He will also pay tributes to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Museum in Dhanmondi.

On the second day of his visit, the Army Chief will address the students and faculty of



Defence Services Command and Staff College, Mirpur. He will thereafter visit and interact with the members of the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support and Operation Training (BIPSOT), a premier institute of Bangladesh that trains peacekeepers for employment in various UN Peace Operations.

This will be followed by a visit to the Bangabandhu Military Museum at Mirpur. The visit of the Army Chief will further deepen the bilateral relationships between the two Armies and act as a catalyst for closer coordination and cooperation between the two countries on a host of strategic issues.

Naidu meets with all political parties ahead of Monsoon Session

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah sought a 'farewell gift' in the form of a meaningful and productive session in the Upper House during the Monsoon Session of Parliament beginning Monday.

Naidu said this during the meeting of leaders of all the parties attended by the highest ever of 41 leaders and ministers. While nostalgically recalling the functioning of the House during the last 13 full sessions that he presided over, Naidu said that he was making one last request for upholding the dignity and decorum of the House of Elders.

Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge and others placed on record their appreciation of the efforts of Naidu for the effective functioning of the House during the last five years. Some leaders particularly referred to Naidu's concern for orderly conduct and discipline in the House.

Noting that 'the disciplinary actions taken including suspension of some members were all part and parcel of the functioning of the House but the leaders and members would remember for long the personal affection shown to them by Naidu'.

The leaders also recalled the efforts made by Naidu to give more and more opportunities to members by streamlining the conduct of Question Hour, Zero Hour and Special Mentions and debates and his commitment to promoting the use of 'mother tongue'.

As the all-party meeting was turning into a farewell to Naidu, Leader of the House Piyush Goyal said that it was a bit premature to do so as Naidu is to preside over one full session and a formal farewell would be held in the House with all the leaders and



members sharing their experiences in detail in the House. He further said as mentioned by some other leaders, 'all sections of the House would work together to present a befitting farewell to the Chairman Naidu in the form of a productive monsoon session'.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said, "After this session your absence will be noticed. At times you were angry with us and irritated us but at the end of you are a good person."

It is difficult to prove to be a good person and you proved to be one such a good person and will be missed. Hope your spirit of personal affection and humour will continue to animate the House". He further said that as a token of acknowledgement of your contributions, it is appropriate for the government to create a post of 'Chairman Emeritus'.

On behalf of the opposition, Kharge listed 16 issues for discussion during the monsoon session. These include: Federalism coming under strain; Agnipath scheme; Rising prices and uncontrolled inflation; Declining labour force participation rate; EPFO interest rates; Declining credibility of organizations like the Election Commission, CBI, CVC; External threats to national security; hate speeches; undemocratic actions against opposition leaders; Increasing crime in Jammu & Kashmir and attacks on Kashmiri pundits and Reservations in the promotion and in private sector.

Prachanda, Nadda discuss ways to deepen ties

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Maist Center Chairman and top Nepalese leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Sunday met BJP president JP Nadda and discussed ways of "deepening relations" between the two countries and their parties.

The Nepalese leader is on a three-day visit to India at the invitation of the BJP chief under the saffron party's 'Know BJP' programme. India's Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar and BJP Foreign Affairs Department in-Charge Vijay Chathaiwale were also present

during the Nadda-Prachanda interaction at the BJP headquarters.

After the meeting, Nadda said, "We had fruitful discussions over strengthening and deepening ties between India & Nepal, especially our age-old cultural and people-to-people bond."

We also discussed ways to further party-to-party cooperation. "Nadda has been meeting diplomats and party heads of different countries in the last few months. In the series recently he interacted with the communist party leader of Vietnam, too."



NIA to quiz Khadim of Ajmer Dargah for links with PFI, Udaipur killers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is likely to question Khadim of Ajmer Dargah Gauhar Chisti who was arrested by Rajasthan police for hateful speech. The agency will quiz him about his likely linkages with PFI and Udaipur killers.

Chisti was recently nabbed by the Rajasthan police from Hyderabad where he was hiding at his friend Amanullah's residence. Amanullah has also been arrested by the Rajasthan police.

The Rajasthan police probe has revealed that there had been a transaction of over Rs 20 lakh in his bank account in the run up to the beheading incident in Udaipur on June 28. The probe has revealed that Chisti was in touch with the two prime accused, Riyaz Akhtari and Ghouse Mohammad, in the beheading of tailor Kanhaiya Lal Teli in Udaipur. He even met them before the ghastly incident.

The Rajasthan police is also said to be probing the linkages between the Khadim and

radical outfit Popular Front of India. Sources said the NIA is likely to soon take custody of Chisti as part of the probe into the beheading of Kanhaiya Lal Teli. Last week, the NIA searched certain areas around the Ajmer Dargah in connection with the probe into the Udaipur killing case.

Earlier, Chisti had given a call for the beheading of those indulging in blasphemy and had subsequently fled to Hyderabad. His father Sarwar Chisti is also accused of hateful speech. A video of his nephew Adil Chisti denigrating Hindu Gods had also gone viral.

The NIA has so far arrested seven persons in connection with the Udaipur killing case and the investigation has revealed that the two prime accused in the case were in touch with at least 18 Pakistanis and around 300 radicals across the country.

A preliminary NIA probe into the Udaipur killing case has revealed that the beheading incident could be part of a larger plot being aided by Pakistani handlers.

CPI (M): Baseless charges levelled by BJP against V-P Ansari

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The CPI(M) Polit Bureau on Sunday condemned the "unsubstantiated and baseless" allegations levelled by BJP on former Vice President Hamid Ansari.

"The Polit Bureau strongly condemned the unsubstantiated and baseless allegations levelled by the ruling BJP on Hamid Ansari, former Vice President of India."

Ansari is a globally respected diplomat, and scholar and served with distinction in every responsibility given to him by the Union government with an unimpeachable track record of patriotism.

"Targeting Ansari because of his identity and steadfast commitment to the Indian Constitution and to the secular democratic Republic is unacceptable," said CPI(M) in a statement.

The polit bureau in its communiqué also blamed the Centre for collapsing economy and an increase in unemploy-

ment.

World Bank data shows that the annual growth of the Indian economy over 2020-22 was a mere 0.8 percent and unemployment is at a staggering rate of 42 percent, said the party.

"According to the CMIE Report for the January-April 2022, the number of unemployed in the age group of 20-24 years was over 2 crore - a staggering unemployment rate of 42 percent. In the 25-29 age group, this was over sixty lac - an unemployment rate of 12.72 percent."

Together unemployment in 20-29 age group is nearly 80 percent of the over 3 crore unemployed Indians above 15 years who are actively looking for jobs.

"India's working age population is 36 percent of the total. Of these 61.2 percent have simply stopped looking for employment as there are no jobs. The Labour Participation Rate has dropped to an all-time low of 38.8 percent," said CPI(M).

Pay 5% GST on pre-packed, labelled food items, hospital rooms above ₹5K from today

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Customers will have to pay 5 per cent GST on pre-packed, labelled food items like atta, paneer and curd, besides hospital rooms with rent above Rs 5,000 from Monday with the GST Council's decision coming into force.

In addition, hotel rooms with tariff of up to Rs 1,000/day, maps and charts, including atlases, will attract a 12 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST), while 18 per cent GST will be levied on tetra packs and fees charged by banks for the issue of cheques (loose or in book form).

Last month, the GST Council, chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising her state counterparts, had imposed the exemption list and unified tax on a host of goods and services.

interim report of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on rate rationalisation, had also removed duty inversion for goods where the taxes on inputs were higher than those on the output.

Tax rates on products such as printing, writing or drawing ink; knives with cutting blades, paper knives and pencil sharpeners; LED lamps; drawing and marking out instruments will be hiked to 18 per cent on Monday, from 12 per cent currently, to correct the inverted duty anomaly. Also, solar water heater will now attract 12 per cent GST as compared to 5 per cent earlier. Some services such as work contracts for roads, bridges, railways, metro, effluent treatment plants and crematoriums too will see tax going up to 18 per cent from the current 12 per cent.

Besides, taxes will be cut on on ostomy appliances and on transport of goods and passengers by ropeways to 5 per cent from July 18, from 12 per

cent. Renting of truck, goods carriage where the cost of fuel is included will now attract a lower 12 per cent rate as against 18 per cent.

GST exemption on the transport of passengers by air to and from northeastern states and Bagdogra will be restricted to economy class only.

Services rendered by regulators such as RBI, IRDA and SEBI will be taxed at 18 per cent and so will be renting of a residential dwelling to business entities.

Bio-medical waste treatment facilities shall attract 12 per cent GST, while non-ICU hospital rooms exceeding Rs 5,000/day will be levied 5 per cent GST, without input tax credit, to the extent of the amount charged for the room.

Besides, individuals will only be able to claim GST exemption for training or coaching in recreational activities relating to arts or culture or sports.

Exchequer incurs losses due to restricted trade in rosewood

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian exchequer is incurring huge losses due to restricted global trade in the rosewood (Dalbergia sissoo) from 2016 onward after it was listed under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

According to the Government data, exports of furniture and handicrafts made of the species have fallen by almost 50 percent from an estimated Rs 1000 crore (USD 129 million) since the restriction imposed in 2016.

India has once again submitted its proposal before the CITES, a multilateral treaty to protect endangered plants and animals, seeking its exclusion from Appendix II. Under Appendix II the species are not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival. India has been opposing the move to include rose-

wood under a controlled trade ambit. The proposal has been sent to the CITES ahead of the nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to be held in Panama City (Republic of Panama) in November. "The decrease in exports of rosewood products has affected the livelihoods of around 50,000 artisans who work with the species."

It has also had a knock-on effect on the livelihoods of other stakeholders who are directly or indirectly connected with the trade of the species, in particular farmers who have been growing the species as part of agroforestry activities to generate additional income," said India which has got the support from Nepal in the matter.

"The species has a very fast growth rate and capacity to become naturalized outside of its native range and is even invasive in some parts of the world. The regulation of trade in the species is not necessary to avoid it becoming eligible for

inclusion in Appendix I in the near future and the harvest of specimens from the wild is not reducing the wild population to a level at which its survival might be threatened by continued harvesting or other influences."

The species is sustainably utilized for its timber, fuelwood, fodder, medicines, etc. The species is native to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, and South Africa; and has also been widely introduced, especially in Africa and Asia.

"It is even treated as invasive in Florida, USA and the Northern Territories. The wild population of D. sissoo does not fall under any Threatened categories." To substantiate its claim, India has also quoted various studies like the NDF which "revealed that the harvest of D. sissoo is conducted mostly from planted/cultivated trees outside the locations of its wild occurrence." According to



'State Forest Report 2021' (FSI, 2021), the total estimated number of trees of D. sissoo outside the forests in India is 7,57,62,000. India has said in its proposal document.

According to an official from the Union Environment Ministry, it was in the 17th COP, in Johannesburg in 2016, several African and Latin American countries had expressed concerns that there was a "rise in interest in wood of Dalbergia in international markets, primarily in China" which was fuelling an illegal trade at the cost of Dalbergia populations. "Although CITES focuses on protection of indi-

vidual species, COP 17 put the entire genus under Appendix II, which regulates trade in species. Though most of the 182 member countries agreed to the proposal, India, for the first time, strongly expressed its reservation concerning the inclusion of all rosewood in Appendix II.

"The entire genus of Dalbergia was put in the appendix based on the "look-alike" criterion. This criterion is not based on the level of threat the species face, but on the difficulty of distinguishing the species from other threatened species of the genus", as per the official.

Assam flood situation better but 90K still hit

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The flood situation in Assam improved further as no major river was flowing above the danger mark on Sunday, though a little over 90,000 people continued to be affected due to the deluge, an official bulletin said.

There was no report of any fresh fatality, as the number of people losing lives in this year's flood and landslides in the state remained at 195.

Altogether 90,875 people in Biswanath, Cachar, Dima Hasao, Morigaon and Tamulpur districts were still reeling under



the impact of the deluge, the bulletin issued by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said.

The affected population has come down from 1,48,645 the previous day.

Seven revenue circles and

99 villages were still impacted by the flood, the ASDMA said.

Morigaon was the worst hit with over 57,000 people under distress, followed by Cachar (28,000). More than 6,000 people have been sheltered in 26 relief camps, the report added.

Govt acts tough on Kannauj violence, removes DM, SP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A day after "body parts of an animal" were found at the entrance of a temple in Rasoolabad village of Kannauj, leading to communal tension, the Superintendent of Police and District Magistrate were removed and the station house officer of Talgram police station was suspended.

The police said that they were making efforts to arrest the accused. "Our teams are working and very soon we will be making the arrests," Kanpur Range Inspector General of Police, Prashant Kumar (II), said. "The situation is under control now and the area is under police surveillance," said

a senior officer. Taking a serious note of the mishandling of the situation leading to communal tension in Kannauj, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath removed the district magistrate and the superintendent of police.

Kannauj DM Rakesh Mishra was shunted out and put on wait list a few hours after Superintendent of Police Rajesh Srivastava was removed.

Chitrakoot's District Magistrate Shubhransh Shukla has been posted as the new district magistrate of Kannauj and Kunwar Anupam Singh as the new district police chief, confirmed an official communiqué released on Sunday.

The station house officer of Talgram has been suspended and Jitendra Pratap Singh posted in his place.

It may be recalled that communal clashes took place in Kannauj district after some unidentified miscreants allegedly threw pieces of meat in the compound of a village temple and desecrated idols at two places, which led to protests during which several shops were set on fire, police said.

The police added that the gate of a graveyard was also damaged in the violence that ensued. According to police, the incident took place in Rasoolabad village in Talgram police station limits.

Yogi for water conservation with people's aid

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stressed on conservation of water, maintenance of its quality and better usage, saying that it was essential for survival as well as progress of the state.

Yogi Adityanath said that preserving water was the most focused area of his government. He said that in its effort to realise this objective, the government not only ensured the completion and operation of several projects pending for decades but also worked towards saving every drop of water through construction of farm ponds, multi-purpose ponds on the banks of rivers, check-dams and more.

The chief minister said that due to the sustained efforts of the government in the span of the last five years, as many as 25 development blocks of the state had been pulled out of the 'dark zone' slot signifying depleting groundwater levels they had witnessed and a remarkable improvement in terms of availability of groundwater.

He said to improve the quality and presence of groundwater, the government not only worked to ensure the effective implementation of Atal Bhujal and Catch the Rain schemes but also simul-

taneously made elaborate arrangements for rain water harvesting at various institutions, including state government buildings.

The chief minister was expressing his views while flagging off the 'Digital Groundwater Rath' developed for publicity of various public awareness programmes under the Atal Bhujal Yojana on the occasion of Groundwater Week at his official residence here on Sunday.

Earlier, the chief minister started the programme by lighting the lamp and flagged off the Digital Groundwater Rath.

The Groundwater Week is being organised from July 16 to 22.

The chief minister said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had started the 'Catch the Rain' programme two years ago and under this scheme, the Groundwater Week was being organised in the state for creating public awareness regarding groundwater conservation.

"This is a very important week for the country and the state. Under this, digital groundwater raths will go to 10 districts of the state and make their contribution in making every citizen aware about the safety of drinking water and groundwater," he said.

104 rain-related deaths in Maha since onset of monsoon

PTI ■ MUMBAI

At least 104 people have died in rain-related incidents in Maharashtra since the onset of monsoon on June 1, the State disaster management authority said in a report on Sunday.

The fatalities occurred between June 1 and July 16, and two of the deaths were recorded in the last 24 hours - one each in Jalgaon and Amravati districts, it said.

The deaths were caused by floods, lightning strikes, landslides, falling of trees and collapse of structures, among other reasons, the report said.

As per the latest data, two villages in the state were affected by heavy rains and three peo-

ple have been reported missing. However, no one was evacuated anywhere in the state due to flooding in the last 24 hours, the report said.

Several parts of the state, including Mumbai and its adjoining areas, have been witnessing moderate rainfall, it said.

After heavy showers for more than a week, rains have abated in the state, including in Mumbai.

It was a sunny day in the state capital on Sunday.

The Colaba observatory in south Mumbai recorded 12.8 mm rainfall while the Santacruz observatory in the western suburbs registered 23.3 mm showers in the last 24 hours, the report said.

Ratnagiri district received an average 20.1 mm rainfall in the last 24 hours, it said, adding that the Parshuram Ghat on the Mumbai-Goa highway was shut for traffic.

Traffic on the Mumbai-Goa highway was earlier this month diverted following a landslide in the Parshuram Ghat section near Chiplun. Besides, Gadchiroli district witnessed 20 mm average rainfall in the last 24 hours.

The Godavari and Indravati rivers in the state were flowing above the danger mark, while three other rivers were flowing close to the danger level, the report said. According to the report, as many as 10,600 people have been shifted to safer



locations in Gadchiroli district so far. Teams from the National

Disaster Response Force and the State Disaster Response Force

have been deployed in the district, the report added.

2 authors highlight history of tribal warriors

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Tilka Manjhi, Thalakkal Chanthu, Budhu Bhagat have remained unheard of to the old and new generations of Indians alike but for the efforts of two young authors by name Tuhin A Sinha and Ambalika.

An effort has been made by this duo to bring the lives and times of these tribal warriors and commanders to the public domain, hopefully for the first time in the history of modern India. A 166 page book "The Great Tribal Warriors of Bharat" encompassing the life sketches of 17

proud sons and daughters of India is the tribute by Sinha and Ambalika to these hitherto unsung souls on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Indian Independence.

Though history books in schools and universities in the country are full of paeans to white-skinned George Washington, Napoleon Bonaparte, Winston Churchill, the curriculum is silent about the gallant and brave fighters in the sub-continent who staged the country's first wars of independence. The tribals who were the inhabitants of the country's dense jungles and worshipped nature were

the first ones who sae through the evil designs of the occupiers to subjugate this great nation. While the natives were struggling to get into the administrative and military services of the Moghuls and the Britishers, the tribal warriors were the ones who challenged the mighty Moghuls and the Europeans who succeeded them.

The tribals who were the residents of dense jungles spread across the length and breadth of the sub-continent were the first ones who staged armed struggles against the British East India Company. Their feats in these battles

fought with bows and arrows powered by indigenous intelligence would put the 1857 armed uprising labeled as Sepoy Mutiny into pale. It seems there were people in post-independent India who wanted to black out the great sacrifices made by these tribal warriors in their efforts to drive out the white masters. There is no justification in not telling the new generation about the unparalleled achievements made by these tribal warriors," says Prof P G Haridas, eminent historian, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala.

Tilka Manjhi (1750-1785),

the chief of the Santhal tribe was known as the Robinhood of Jungle Terry (modern day Bhagalpur). Story of Tilka's fight against the white oppressors who were exploiting the tribals to the hilt should be an eye-opener to the Indian public. All he stood for was freedom, dignity, and equality. It was the denial of these rights that made him took the traditional hunting weapons to teach the uninvited and exploiting guests a lesson. Thalakkal Chanthu, the tiger from Wayanad's Kurichiya tribals, is a name that electrify the local residents even today. Though he lived up to

only 25, Chanthu left behind a series of victories against the British East India Company in jungle warfare. He was the commander of Edachena Kunkan,, the commander in chief of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja and made the supreme sacrifice to save his boss as well as the King from the marauding army and preying eyes of their spies.

In days of yore, jungle warfare was not the prerogative of the male. If the number of women warriors featured in the book is any indication, our tribal ladies were no way inferior to men in fighting qualities. Helen Lepcha (1902-



1980), Rani Gaidinliu (1915-1993), Dashriben Chaudhury (1918-2013) Putalimaya Devi (1920-1984) are the names which would reverberate across campuses in India in days to come. As the saying

goes, better late than never.

According to Kiren Rijiju, the union minister for law and justice who penned the foreword, the volume marks the evolution of the Adivasi contribution to the country.

CRPF ASI martyred in Pulwama encounter

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In another targeted attack on the security forces, an Assistant Sub Inspector of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was martyred in the South Kashmir district of Pulwama on Sunday.

The martyred CRPF officer has been identified as Vinod Kumar, a resident of Farukkabad area of Uttar Pradesh.

According to a tweet of Kashmir Zone police, "terrorists fired upon Naka party at Gangoo Crossing, Pulwama from nearby Apple orchard. In this terror incident 01 CRPF personnel ASI Vinod Kumar

got seriously injured. He was shifted to hospital for treatment where he attained martyrdom". Soon after the attack took place the entire area was cordoned off and searches were launched in the nearby orchards to track down the foot prints of the terrorists.

This is the second major strike on a senior cop in the last six days in the Kashmir valley.

Earlier, an ASI of Jammu and Kashmir police attained martyrdom on July 12 in the Lal Bazaar area of Srinagar while two other jawans received injuries.

The attack took place a day after the Eid festivities were still going on in the Kashmir



valley.

Since January 1, 2022 around two dozen security personnel which included 12 JKP personnel have been killed in various operations, incidents of terrorist violence in the Kashmir valley. Out of these two dozen security personnel 11 belonged to other central para military forces ,jawans of the Indian army.

Movement launched across Jammu for 'separate State'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

The Ilk Jutt Jammu Party (IJP) on Sunday launched a movement across Jammu province for 'Separate Jammu State'. A large number of party supporters led by its president Ankur Sharma held a massive demonstration in Jammu while similar marches were taken out at other places in the province in support of their demand seeking separation of Jammu province from Kashmir.

Addressing the party workers outside Press Club Jammu, IJP President Advocate Ankur Sharma said the only rational, national and constitutional solution to the 75-year-old Jammu's political problem is Full State

status for the province.

He said the historic reforms of August 5, 2019 have miserably failed to produce the desired results and the people of Jammu continue to suffer.

Leading the protest march, Ankur Sharma repeatedly said, "IJP only wants Statehood for Jammu. "Statehood for Jammu is our motto, our battle-cry, our watchword, the gospel of Jammu's political redemption".

"Separate Jammu state is the only panacea available to meet the national requirement, empower the people of the province to manage their own affairs themselves, defeat the enemies working day and night to change Jammu's demography and create



Kashmir-like situation in this strategic region," asserted the IJP president. "The people of Jammu province will rise in revolt sooner than later if the powers-that-be in New

7-year-old boy kidnapped, killed by five minors

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a bizarre incident in Bulandshahr, five minor boys watched a popular TV crime serial and went on to kidnap a seven-year-old boy for ransom and then murdered him.

The accused boys are aged between 15 and 16 years and study in Class 10.

Bulandshahr's Senior Superintendent of Police Shlok Kumar said. "The boy was picked up by the teenagers from his school on July 9 and then taken to Aligarh where they choked him to death using a handkerchief. They then dumped his body in a river. The body was recovered later."

Prez poll today; 5 UP MLAs to vote from outside Lucknow

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Five MLAs of Uttar Pradesh Assembly will cast their vote outside Lucknow on Monday in the presidential election.

Out of these five MLAs of UP who will vote outside the state, four will cast their votes in Delhi and one in Kerala state capital Thiruvananthapuram.

The five MLAs are Mukesh Choudhary of Bharatiya Janata Party from Nakur in Saharanpur district, Ziaur Rahman of Samajwadi Party from Kundarki in Moradabad district, Pradeep Kumar Singh of Rashtriya Lok Dal from Sadabad in Hathras, Brijbhushan Rajput of BJP from Charkhari in Mahoba and Neel Ratan Patel of BJP

from Sevapuri in Varanasi.

With the highest vote value of 208 for each of the total 403 MLAs, Uttar Pradesh will be an important state to watch out for in Monday's presidential election in which National Democratic Alliance candidate Droupadi Murmu will take on joint opposition candidate Yashwant Sinha.

Brij Bhushan Dubey, the returning officer for the presidential election in Uttar Pradesh, said five MLAs of the state would cast their votes outside the state due to personal reasons.

Elaborating on the instructions issued for the poll, he said, "All MLAs have been informed about the precautions they have to take. The MLAs will have to use a special pen to be

provided by the Election Commission of India to vote for the candidate of their choice."

"Voting will take place through ballot paper at Tilak Hall of Vidhan Bhawan from 10 am to 5 pm," Dubey said, and added that three polling booths had been set up for two ballot boxes which had come from Delhi and would be sent back to the national capital after voting was completed on July 18 itself. Counting of votes will be taken up in Delhi on July 21.

According to the Election Commission of India, the value of vote of an MP this time is 700. The value of vote of each MLA varies in different states. In Uttar Pradesh, the value of vote of each MLA stands at 208.

Akhilesh dinner diplomacy to pacify SP MLAs upset with Sinha's Mulayam remark

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With Samajwadi Party facing anger from party MLAs over the statement of Yashwant Sinha calling Mulayam Singh Yadav an "ISI agent, party chief Akhilesh Yadav resorted to dinner diplomacy on the eve of the polling for the Presidential election.

Mohammed Tahir, SP MLA from Isauli-Sultanpur, hosted the dinner and all 111 MLAs of the party were directed to attend the dinner.

Yashwant Sinha is the opposition candidate in the presidential election. The dinner is an attempt to win over the SP MLAs not happy with the party's decision to support the joint opposition candidate



Yashwant Sinha.

SP MLAs, particularly Muslim MLAs are unhappy with Yashwant Sinha for his statement calling SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav "an ISI agent". SP ally Suheldev Bhartiya Samajwadi Party (SBSP) has already broken ranks with the opposition and its chief Om Prakash Rajbhar

has announced to vote for National Democratic Alliance candidate Droupadi Murmu.

Shivpal Yadav, SP MLA and uncle of Akhilesh Yadav, has also announced to support Droupadi Murmu. On Saturday, he had shot off a letter to Akhilesh Yadav, asking him to reconsider SP's support to Yashwant Sinha as the opposition presidential candidate had called Mulayam Singh Yadav an ISI agent.

The statement of Yashwant Sinha about Mulayam Singh Yadav threatened to snowball into a major controversy on the eve of the polling for the presidential elections, thus forcing the SP chief to resort to dinner diplomacy to pacify his party MLAs.

Ex-BSP MLC Mahmood arrested from Mumbai

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Former member of Legislative Council, Mahmood Ali, was arrested from Mumbai by Saharanpur police, officials said on Sunday.

According to the police, Mahmood Ali was arrested in Mumbai late on Saturday night. He is the brother of former MLC Haji Iqbal, allegedly a member of a mining mafia.

A senior police official said that Mahmood was presented in a court in Mumbai, and efforts were on to bring him to Saharanpur on remand.

Senior Superintendent of Police Vipin Tada said that two days ago the police had announced a reward of Rs 25,000 each on Haji Iqbal and his brother Mahmood Ali, who were wanted in different cases.

He added that efforts were on to search out Haji Iqbal.

Three sons of Haji Iqbal have already been arrested in different cases. The SSP also said that cases were registered against Haji Iqbal, his brother and family members in different FIRs and efforts were on to arrest them.

Both the brothers have been BSP MLCs. Haji Iqbal was an MLC from 2010 to 2016, while Mahmood Ali was an MLC from 2016 to 2022.

It may be mentioned that mining mafia Haji Iqbal had become close to the then Chief Minister and BSP supreme Mayawati due to his immense wealth. Haji Iqbal became MLC in 2010 on a BSP ticket on money power to make a stronghold in the ministry and secretariat.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

End *revdi* culture now!

PM has rightly warned against the freebies which benefit politicians but hurt development and future

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's admonition against freebies is very timely. He has correctly compared them with the free distribution of *revdis* (a kind of sweetmeat). Referring to this practice, he rightly said, "There is also a huge challenge... If attention is not paid now, it can cause a lot of damage to the youth of India and today's generation. Your present will go astray and your future will be confined to darkness... That's why it's important to wake up now. Nowadays, every effort is being made in our country to introduce the culture of collecting votes by distributing freebies." He went on to point out that the leaders indulging in such culture "will never build new expressways, airports or defense corridors for you.

They feel that they will buy the people by distributing freebies to them." Though he didn't take any names, the message was conveyed.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, whose Aam Aadmi Party is guilty of quite a few irresponsible populist measures, was quick to respond to the Prime Minister, "Allegations are being leveled against me but I want to ask what my mistake is. 18 lakh students are studying in Delhi govt schools. We are providing them with free, quality education. Am I committing a crime by giving them free, good education?" Sadly, this is a spiteful, not reasoned, response. Free education is not a freebie, but free

bus commute to women, free electricity and water, etc., are.

Even more unfortunate is the fact that it is not just the AAP but all parties, including the Bharatiya Janata Party, that are trying to collect votes by distributing freebies. The situation is especially bad at the state level. A recent study by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) study has underlined this fact. "We can identify a core subset of highly stressed states from among the 10 states identified by the necessary condition i.e., the debt/GSDP ratio. The highly stressed states are Bihar, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, and West Bengal," it said. Punjab's debt-GSDP ratio is the worst, and it is estimated to not only remain so but exceed 45 percent in 2026-27. And yet, the AAP government in the state has announced that around 51 lakh households will receive zero electricity bills from September as the government has promised 600 units of free power per billing cycle starting from July 1.

Populism has gone berserk in Punjab. Free power, however, is not the only opiate that is toxifying the body-politic and the body-economic; other populist measures are also harming public finance at the state level. Farm loan waivers are the best, or worst, examples of mindless populism. They are morally reprehensible (why shouldn't one repay loans they have taken?) and fiscally ruinous. In the long run, they even hurt the intended beneficiaries, for the lenders become skeptical about giving money to farmers. In the long run, we become Sri Lanka.

PICTALK



Varanasi: Kanwariyas (Lord Shiva devotees) at the Ganga ghat during the holy month of 'Shrawan', in Varanasi.

AP

Government must act

If the rupee keeps falling against the dollar the country's economy would be hit badly

The rupee has breached the psychological 80-level mark against the US dollar and is now hovering around it for a couple of days. This is indeed bad news for numerous importers and of course, the country whose trade deficit swells to a new high. Though it would be wrong to assume that it is the end of the road for the Indian economy and we are headed for a Sri Lanka-like situation. Nevertheless, it is ominous as it means that something needs to be done to stop the further slide of the rupee against the dollar as it is the US from where we import a lot of goods that are essential for Indian businesses.

The reason for the depreciation of the rupee against the dollar is varied, some manageable others not. A big factor is indeed the Ukraine war which has obstructed the supply lines. It has been a steady decline in the Indian currency since February when the Ukraine war began.

The rising dollar is bad news for the Indian economy as the current account deficit increases. The slide in the rupee would put an extra burden on the current account deficit (CAD). India is already struggling with its CAD. It is likely to touch \$105 billion or 3 percent of the GDP this fiscal.

Even worse is its impact on inflation which is already racing fast. As the rupee loses its sheen the imports become dearer. This leads to a rise in the prices of raw materials and that reflects in the selling prices. So, we have to pay more for the same goods as the sellers struggle to sustain.

India has to act and act fast to avoid any misgivings about the economic fundamentals of the country. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is taking several measures like selling US dollars in the open markets, out of its forex reserves. This increases the supply of USD in the markets, bringing down their value. But this is a risky proposition as it leads to depreciation of forex reserves. Since February 2022, India's forex reserves have been depleted by Rs 1 trillion.

Besides, the rupee settlement mechanism is also being talked about. Under this arrangement, foreign companies can make payments in rupees. How far this will work is difficult to say as we have a net trade deficit with the USA. Let's hope the Ukraine war ends easing the flow of goods and easing the payment situation.

Are we heading for Armageddon?

Efforts to divide the society for electoral gains may well lead to a highly polarized society sitting on the brink of a civil war



DEEPAK SINHA



In the short term, it hardly bodes well for the society at large. Unfortunately, this intolerance is not just reflected in the conflict between those of differing faiths, but also between extremists and liberals within their religions as well, with extremists invariably winning out.

The prevailing social milieu is such that even the average citizen, even if he belongs to the majority community, prefers to keep his or her head down, mouth shut and nose clean to avoid any confrontation with those espousing differing ideological leanings as they are unsure of the repercussions. They are fully aware that the wheels of justice grind at a snail's pace here and that the judiciary cannot be fully trusted as many within it, even at the highest levels, are perceived as having been compromised. The Police too are no better, seemingly in terminal decline having degenerated into local militias and handmaidens owing fidelity to politicians in power.

The issue has been further complicated by the accusations, true or not, that Governments both at the Centre and in some of the States are complicit in this violence. A problem that will get accentuated in the coming years as youth, with basic

weapons and a modicum of tactical training, find themselves jobless thanks to that nonsensical initiative formulated by the Modi Government, the Agnipath Scheme, and are drawn towards radical groups. The United States is a living example of this as can be seen from the fact that white supremacist paramilitaries, like the Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers, are filled with military veterans.

Moreover, in the face of majoritarian bulldozing, in the literal sense, that we have witnessed in the past few years, and the psycho-social stresses that it has created within minority communities, there will be those among them who will suffer an amygdala hijack, wherein emotions involving either a flight or fight response will take over.

Undoubtedly, in most cases, the response will be to run, but there will be those, who may be just a fraction of the community, who will fight. Given our demographics, even that fraction will be an extremely large number. We would do well to remember that despite a population of around two million, the Union Government has not been able to resolve the Naga problem through force in the past seventy-five years.

The results are already there for all to see. Sectarian violence can hardly be the way forward and will adversely impact internal cohesion and development. Once we enter the downward spiral, it will assume a life of its own and cannot be controlled. Pakistan is an example of this as, despite their best efforts, neither politicians nor religious leaders nor the military has complete control over radical groups that terrorize citizens. This is not the path we wish to tread, though things continue the way they are, we may well be gifting ourselves a civil war.

Why then are our politicians, across the board, so engrossed with religion? The Pandemic and the Ukrainian War have left many of us in dire straits, unable to make ends meet. Isn't that where our focus should be? Does our middle-class have the spine to step forward, as only their intervention will bring about change, or are we destined to follow in the footsteps of our neighbors?

(The writer is a military veteran and Visiting Fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and a Senior Visiting Fellow with the Peninsula Foundation, Chennai. Views expressed are personal)



IT IS UNDENIABLE THAT INCREASING RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AND POLARISATION ARE SETTING THE STREETS ON FIRE LEADING TO VIOLENT COMMUNAL CLASHES

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY RADIO

Sir — As the medium of mass communication, radio is always fascinating and has its hold on people even in the face of stiff competition from other mass communication channels, such as television. Though radio is largely a commercial broadcasting service across the country, community radios still hold their forte in rural India.

The importance of community radio has been predominantly felt during the Covid-19 pandemic. Radio networks played a crucial role in disseminating credible information about the deadly virus. ("Roping in radio to enhance immunity", July 15).

In fact, for millions of rural India radio is the only window to the outside world, and naturally, community radio stations have emerged as a vital channel, especially during the last two years when the country went into frequent lockdowns. Reportedly, until the end of 2021, India had little over 300 community radio stations, which is a significant increase compared to previous years, and reflected a rising trend that had developed over the past decade. These community radios are well managed, controlled, and owned by the communities they serve. For those who may not know, when Kerala got India's first Covid-19 case, community radios were first pressed into action across rural areas in the State to broadcast information about the pandemic for more than seven hours a day.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

A PLAYER OF A "VIRAT" RACE

Sir — Virat Kohli's form is being debated heavily. Virat, who missed the first ODI due to muscle soreness, was unable to perform. Everything about Virat is under the scanner. After all, he is Virat.

It has been decided to withdraw him from the West Indies tour to give him rest. The question has been raised as to why former Indian captain Kapil Dev does not remove Virat from the team. Captain Rohit Sharma is seen strongly supporting Virat Kohli. England's T20 captain Jos Butler also said that Virat Kohli needs big innings. How

NDA's VP PICK A RELIEF FOR MAMATA



West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankar, NDA pick for the post of Vice President, may come as a sigh of relief to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Dhankar and Banerjee were on collision course ever since the former was appointed Governor of West Bengal in 2019. It may be recalled that Banerjee has donned the role of Chancellor of West Bengal Universities, a step that took away the position of Governor as Chancellor of the Universities. Since Dhankar happens to be an NDA pick, it can never be her choice to vote for him but it

would be no wonder if the thought of voting for him once crosses her mind to facilitate the exit of Dhankar more easily. Even though it is visible and well known that Dhankar is the bête noire of Mamata, the CPM has termed the candidature of Dhankar as a reflection of under-the-table relations between the TMC and BJP.

Dhankar, a native of Rajasthan and a former Supreme Court Advocate, hails from the Jat community and farmer's family. He was instrumental in getting OBC status to the Jats. A person's political journey comes to an end soon after he or she is appointed as President or Vice President though the Constitution does not envisage any such condition.

As an experiment, why not make an ex-Prime Minister a President. Prime Minister is well-versed in Constitutional matters and he or she can be a good guide as President to a sitting Prime Minister.

KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

fair is it to question the career of a player like Virat because of his low runs in a few matches? Sportsmen are always suffering from physical problems. Sportsmen are also individual and can have mental problems too. Even the best player like Virat faces critics. Virat Kohli has a long way to go.

Dattaprasad Shiroadkar | Mumbai

A GLIMPSE OF COSMIC BEAUTY

Sir — Sir, The 'deep field' virgin images from NASA's James Webb space telescope, described as 'a window on the unknown' were stunningly and indescribably beautiful. The pictures of SMACS 0723 galaxy cluster, WASP-96 b planet, the Southern Ring Nebula, Stephan's Quintet and the Carina Nebula were tremendously exciting to behold; these 'cosmic beauty shots' gave us a sense of the incomprehensible vastness of space and time.

Seeing the infrared images of hitherto invisible places in the cosmic backyard is a unique and wonderful experience. The Webb telescope is state-of-the-art; it is so

sophisticated that it can peer through cosmic dust and clouds and detect the feeble glimmer of some of the oldest and most distant stars. Space exploration, as is being done by the Webb space observatory, is evidence that scientists continue to push the boundaries of human knowledge.

Science has now put us in a position to look back to the dawn of time, probe the deep structure of the universe and peek inside the atmospheres of exoplanets to detect signs of life or conditions ripe for life. We eagerly await more pictures and findings; we are excited at the prospect of more new discoveries. Reaching out for an infinite universe is good for life on earth; it reshapes our understanding of the universe, its origins, evolution and composition. It is wondrous that the human brain is unravelling the mysteries of the universe.

G. David Milton | Tamil Nadu

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Gujarat has emerged as one of the better-performing states in India, especially the government schools and grant-in-aid schools.



Union Minister for I&B —Anurag Thakur



US President —Biden

Today we officially take our first step on the Music Journey of Brahmstra, a film and experience of a lifetime...



Music Composer —Pritam



Athlete —Neeraj Chopra

Why not just remove Gandhiji's statue from the premises? And erase Article 19 (1) a of the constitution.




TMC MP —Mahua Moitra

FIRST COLUMN

METaverse IS BAD; IT BOOSTS RAPE CULTURE

Metaverse builds on rape culture, and mute bystanders




UTTAM CHAKRABORTY

When metaverse creates a series of historic experiences, it sets a precedent of rape culture. The rape culture propagated by metaverse builds on the medieval concepts that the victims of sexual crimes are to be blamed for their plights, while trivialising sexual crimes.

Interacting with others in the metaverse, however, is made possible by the use of virtual reality (VR) headsets. At the same time, Avatars, surprisingly and interestingly, can be created by altering clothing, gender, hairstyle, facial and body traits, as well as the appearance of the user's face.

They can use cryptocurrency to buy goods and attend activities like concerts and sporting events. Rape culture is just being reinforced by metaverse. Millions of people are unfortunately witnessing this ghastly affair, as rape culture is apparently more widespread than most people realise. Offensive jokes about rape victims, inaction of onlookers are commonplace in the metaverse, while false beliefs are propagated and disseminated to the participants and the audience.

Social media, even in the metaverse, is fueling the rape culture among college students. Strangely, such culture continues to be normalised, despite the fact that it has been well-documented for years that social media is harmful for mental well-being and many other parts of lives. Sad to say that no one wants to accept that sexual crimes are trivialised and normalised in the society, but the truth is that this is indeed the situation. Bystanders who do nothing to aid are another major factor in perpetuating this mentality in the society. We cannot even begin to demolish the rape culture on college campuses around the world without the aid of people who witness or have information of a sexual assault event taking place or having taken place.



The sad and undignified episode is not ending here. Metaverse platform owned by a popular social media had a researcher's avatar sexually attacked, making her the latest victim of virtual sexual abuse. Metaverse, which translates as beyond universe or parallel universe, is a virtual reality environment in which one can interact with others via a computer-generated persona.

Privacy and safety should be integrated into the metaverse and this is the hard-press job to execute to curb the menace of rape culture. Firms are developing devices that provide a physical component to social virtual reality encounters as the internet's 3D space evolves. However, these areas could become safest havens for sexual offenders.

The governments must swiftly amend their laws to address this concern. In India, the Indian Penal Code (IPC) Sections 354A, 354D, 499, 507, 508 and the Information Technology Act Sections 66C, 66E, 67 and 67A are some of the legislative provisions for the victims of online abuse. However, in the world of metaverse, these laws are just futile. In the metaverse world, it would be difficult to track down someone to chastise for meta-avatar abuse. It is possible to create an avatar that resembles anyone. A child or a superman can be created from anyone who has the access to the power of technologies.

The IPC provisions against sexual offences or injuries pertain to a man or woman, their body and bodily injury. As a result, it's hard to see how an avatar can be blamed for it. At this point, it is impossible to argue that the penalties of harassing a digital avatar are comparable to those of harassing a real person.

Immense amount of moral pressure is mounting on the platforms to implement safety measures that are activated when a user's avatar feels threatened or vulnerable or compromised. Along with the moral compass, tough laws are the need of the hour. Let's wait and watch.

(The author teaches at Jaipuria Institute of Management, Lucknow)

Saving life on Earth in times of climate change

Modern technologies prove effective for biodiversity management, but sustainable consumption and production practices have no substitutes



Life forms on Earth have much diversity, ranging from bacteria to plants and animals. No life form can survive on Earth without the direct or indirect support of other organisms. Each of these species and organisms works together in an ecosystem to maintain balance and sustain life. Biodiversity thus includes not only the variety of different species but also the variations within and among them and between ecosystems such as different habitats and ecological processes.

Biodiversity provides humans with a variety of essential resources and ecosystem services, including food production, pollination of plants, air and water purification and climate stabilization. It can also be instrumental in achieving sustainable development goals (zero hunger, improvement of land and soil quality), halting land degradation, building food security, preventing future pandemics and providing jobs in agriculture, fisheries, forestry, etc.

However, the world is currently experiencing an unprecedented biodiversity loss. Over one million species are at a risk of extinction and we are in the midst of a sixth mass die-off?—the largest since the extinction of dinosaurs. The most notable drivers behind this crisis are habitat loss, overexploitation, invasive species, fragmentation, pollution and climate change. Recent climate changes such as rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns and more extreme weather events have disrupted species' tolerance limits and nutrient cycling processes.

It is possible that these changes may create opportunities for invasive species which could further add to the stress on species already struggling to adapt to changing environmental conditions. Fragmented ecosystem is often less resilient than a contiguous one, because areas cleared for farms and roads provide pathways for invasion of non-native species, which further contribute to the decline of native species. The genetic loss also threatens species' survival over time, mainly because the number of mates becomes scarce and the chances of inbreeding risk rises. So, the best way to conserve biodiversity is to save habitats and ecosystems, because no organism can exist in isolation. Hence, a diverse pool of data from all possible domains that are directly or indirectly related to biodiversity is required for monitoring and assessing these multiple pressures on species and formulating conservation strategies.

Although, it requires a more coordinated, coherent and strategic approach by all stakeholders such as scientists, biologists, ecologists, government, private sector, forest sector, civil society and individuals. Historically, bio-geographical surveys for conservation usually involved many hours of field work performed by professional researchers, rangers, which certainly could not scale up to meet today's con-



CLIMATE CHANGE IS A REALITY THAT'S EVIDENT IN THE CHANGING WEATHER PATTERNS, WHICH ADDS TO THE CHALLENGES IN MAINTAINING BIODIVERSITY, WHILE SUSTAINABLE GOALS IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE, INCLUDING AGRICULTURE, CANNOT BE IGNORED

The author is former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Uttar Pradesh



servation goals.

Surveillance, especially in tropical and inaccessible terrains, is also challenging and complex. It was implausible to predict the global consequences of human activities from these locally collected data. However, recent technological advances have facilitated biodiversity conservation on many fronts, notably for collecting field data and analyzing large datasets, which is expanding human understanding of ecosystems. The increased availability of satellite imagery for instance has revolutionized data collection for ecological survey and monitoring. Similarly, application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) can also change the dynamics of the field in favour of threatened species. Varieties of algorithms can be developed to harness AI for surveillance, capturing picture, security, animal counting, poaching management, research, etc.

Today, satellites are being used worldwide to collect data of temperature, location, moisture, etc. These environmental information along with geo-location data are essential for understanding the scope of threat to a given species.

Habitat maps or land cover data are usually the most commonly derived product from satellite imagery which can be used to determine species' presence and absence with vegetation types and habitat components.

Even regions that are experiencing rapid change, such as tropical environments, can be closely surveyed through these means. Remote sensing enables faster and more frequent analysis of terrestrial and aquatic landscapes, including chemical and geological parameters and biological processes,

which are crucial for taking timely action. It can also help conservation biologists in assessing biodiversity hotspots, maintaining healthy habitats and protecting the life they harbor by detecting failing food webs and excessive human interference.

By conventional means, this kind of surveillance was unfeasible, exhaustive and the territories needed to be monitored by the rangers were humongous when compared with the number of rangers. Fortunately, there are a variety of wildlife tracking systems now that allow us to identify protection priority areas and track animals' movements, assess critically endangered species and protect them from natural calamities and illicit activities. Data gathered from these tracking systems generates massive high-resolution datasets that reflect the ecological context in which animals perceive, interact with and respond to their surroundings.

The AI-enabled robots or drones image datasets are becoming increasingly useful for identifying species, determining animals' social groups, population, location, migration patterns, their daily activities, habitat, repeated behaviors – reproduction patterns, foraging routes, hunting habits, etc. Researchers are using floating robots equipped with image classification algorithms to locate and eradicate invasive species of marine algae before they become well-established. Also, drones can also be used to select ideal seeding sites by assessing site conditions like soil types, gradients and competing vegetation.

AI-powered acoustic sensors are helping conservationists in understanding the underwater

ecosystem health by observing species behavior and their presence in a specific region or island through their sounds. Acoustic sensors can also be used to detect chainsaws, vehicles and gunshots sounds and alert authorities in real time about illegal poaching, mining or logging. Similarly, camera traps are facilitating conservationists to non-invasively monitor and track both vulnerable species and human presence in largely inaccessible areas and quickly spot anomalies or warning signs. Using environmental DNA, conservationists are quickly and easily collecting traces of animal DNA by scanning water and soil samples which can reveal the presence of unobserved species and make the case for greater protection of an area.

These conservation technologies are rapidly expanding scientific frontiers, improving conservation opportunities and assisting scientists, ecologists, foresters, policymakers and others in better understanding the complex natural environment at national, regional and species level. However, human technology cannot fully replace nature's technology, which has evolved over millions of years to provide essential services to sustain life on Earth. It is challenging to conserve the biosphere with standard economic practices that ignore sustainability issues in relation to resources or excessive stress on the environment. The success of our civilization has been largely dependent on a diverse, productive natural world and a stable climate. Thus, more sustainable production and consumption practices along with national and sector policies are required to address climate and biodiversity change together.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

JAGDEEP DHANKHAR IS A 'KISAN PUTRA' (SON OF FARMER) WHO ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS 'PEOPLE'S GOVERNOR'. —BJP PRESIDENT JP NADDA



THE INTENTION OF THE BJP WAS TO DO SOMETHING TOTAL CHAOS THROUGH DHANKHAR IN BENGAL. —TMC MLA MADAN MITRA

Great multicultural experiment succeeds in West

Only 14% people in England and Wales are non-white, and yet half the candidates vying to replace Johnson are non-white

Here's an interesting fact. Only 14 per cent of people in England and Wales are 'Black, Asian, Mixed or Other' (i.e. non-white). Yet half the candidates vying to take the place of disgraced British prime minister Boris Johnson as leader of the Conservative Party—and therefore the new prime minister—are non-white. Four out of eight.

In case you're worried, this article is not about the internal struggle in Britain's Conservative Party. Not only do I not know who will win the race; I can't bring myself to care much about it either. The Conservatives are probably political toast in 2024 no matter whom they choose.

Only eight candidates were left by Tuesday evening, as three of the other hopefuls



GWYNNE DYER

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

failed to win the support of enough Conservative members of parliament (MPs) to make the first cut. But all three who fell by the wayside were also technically 'visible minorities': Sajid Javid, Rehman Chishti, and Priti Patel.

The eight who remained were: Kemi Badenoch (Nigerian descent, born in England), Suella Braverman (Indian descent, born in England), Jeremy Hunt (English descent, born in England); Penny Mordaunt (ditto); Rishi Sunak (Indian descent, born in England); Liz Truss (English descent, born in England); Tom Tugendhat (ditto); and Nadhim Zahawi (Kurdish descent, born in Iraq).

Most of the candidates are probably non-believers, but even in Britain there's still a

minor political price to be paid for saying so publicly. So three are at least nominally Protestant, two are Catholic, two are Hindu and one is Muslim. And half of them are female. Hurrah for diversity, but what does this tell us about a) the United Kingdom, b) the West, and c) the world?

It says less about diversity in British politics than it seems to, for in fact the 65 Members of Parliament who are 'non-white' are exactly 10 per cent of MPs, whereas 14 per cent of the general population are. But the proportion has been rising since at every general election since 1988, and will probably soon accurately reflect the ethnic makeup of the population.

But fully HALF the contenders for next British prime minister are 'non-white'? Really?

How does one explain that, especially when the Conservative Party, despite having more than half the seats in parliament, has only one-third of the 'non-white' MPs?

It's probably down to the old story of recent immigrants working extra hard not just to fit in but to rise, since the hostility of some of the native-born makes them feel insecure. And those who do manage to rise, like most people who are financially and professionally successful in any society, tend to believe that their success is mainly due to their own efforts.

That's a belief that will naturally draw them towards conservative political parties, and to strive harder to rise within them, so no mystery here, and no miracle either.

What is remarkable is that

the white British majority, which was still clearly racist just a generation ago, is now quite content with a slate of prime ministerial candidates of whom half are non-white. None of them are token candidates, either, and the likeliest winner is Rishi Sunak. And nobody even notices that half of them are women.

Is this transformation occurring in the rest of the 'West' too? Yes, but at different speeds.

Australia, Canada and New Zealand all run around one-quarter 'visible minorities' (24 per cent, 25 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively), but only New Zealand has a similar proportion of MPs. Canada stalls out at 15 per cent visible minorities in Parliament, and Australia crashes with only 7

per cent. They do better with women MPs: 30 per cent in Canada, 39 per cent in Australia, 49 per cent in New Zealand.

Germany is about the same as Britain: 14 per cent visible minorities in the country, but only 11 per cent of the seats in the Bundestag. France is much worse: only nine members out of 577 deputies in the National Assembly are 'non-whites', although 15 per cent of the population are. They're not doing well with women in parliament either: only 25 per cent in Germany and 27 per cent in France.

So far the United States is the only 'Western' country to have had a non-white head of government (Barack Obama), although Britain may soon have one too. In other respects,

however, the US lags: only 23 per cent non-whites in Congress, although they are almost 40 per cent of the population—and only 27 per cent of the members of Congress are women.

And the show stops there. Apart from Western Europe and its daughter countries overseas, hardly anybody is running this kind of experiment with creating genuinely multi-cultural democracies driven by large-scale voluntary migration.

We can already conclude that these emerging societies are a great deal less turbulent and unequal than the pessimists feared (with the possible exception of the United States). It remains to be seen what advantages they might confer in the long run, but so far, so good.

Russia strikes south Ukraine city, presses attacks in east

AP ■ VINNYTSIA (UKRAINE)

Russian missiles hit industrial facilities at a strategic city in southern Ukraine on Sunday as a funeral was held for a four-year-old girl killed in an earlier deadly strike elsewhere in the country.

Liza, who had Down syndrome, was en route to see a speech therapist with her mother when a Russian missile struck the city of Vinnytsia in central Ukraine on Thursday.

At least 24 people were killed, including Liza and two boys aged 7 and 8. More than 200 others were wounded, including Liza's mother, who remains in an intensive care unit in grave condition.

"I didn't know Liza, but no person can go through this with calm," priest Vitalii Holoskevych said, bursting into tears as Liza's body lay in a coffin with flowers and teddy bears in the 18th century Transfiguration Cathedral in Vinnytsia.

"We know that evil cannot win," he said, his voice trembling.

On Sunday, more Russian missiles struck industrial facilities in the strategic southern city of Mykolaiv, a key shipbuilding center in the estuary of the Southern Bug river. There was no immediate information about casualties.

Mykolaiv has faced regular Russian missile strikes in recent weeks as the Russians have sought to soften Ukrainian defences.

The Russian military has declared a goal to cut off Ukraine's entire Black Sea coast all the way to the Romanian border.

If successful, such an effort would



deal a crushing blow to the Ukrainian economy and trade and allow Moscow to secure a land bridge to Moldova's separatist region of Transnistria, which hosts a Russian military base.

Early in the campaign, the Ukrainian forces fended off Russian attempts to capture Mykolaiv, which sits near the Black Sea Coast between Russia-occupied Crimea and the main Ukrainian port of Odesa.

Since then, the Russian troops have halted their attempts to advance in the city but have continued to pummel both Mykolaiv and Odesa with

regular missile strikes.

Russian Defence Ministry spokesman Lt. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said on Sunday that Russian missiles destroyed a depot for anti-ship Harpoon missiles delivered to Ukraine by NATO allies, a claim that couldn't be independently confirmed.

The Russians also sought to reinforce their positions in the Kherson region near Crimea and part of the northern Zaporizhzhia region that they seized in the opening stage of the conflict, fearing a Ukrainian coun-

teroffensive. The British Defence Ministry said on Sunday that Russia is moving manpower and equipment between Kherson, Mariupol and Zaporizhzhia. It said the Russians also are increasing their security measures around Melitopol.

It added: "Given the pressures on Russian manpower, the reinforcement of the south whilst the fight for the Donbas continues indicates the seriousness with which Russian commanders view the threat."

For now, the Russian military has focused its efforts on trying to take

control of Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland of Donbas, where the most capable and well-equipped Ukrainian forces are located.

Ukraine says its forces still retain control of two small villages in the Luhansk region, one of the two provinces that make up the Donbas, and are successfully fending off Russian attempts to advance deeper into the second one, the Donetsk region.

The Ukrainian military's General Staff said on Sunday that Ukrainian troops thwarted Russian attempts to advance toward Sloviansk, the key Ukrainian stronghold in Donetsk, and other attacks elsewhere in the region.

During a visit to the front lines on Saturday, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu issued an order "to further intensify the actions of units in all operational areas".

The Russian military said it has struck Ukrainian troops and artillery positions in Donbas in the latest series of strikes, including a US-supplied HIMARS multiple rocket launcher. The Russian claims couldn't be independently verified.

Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia's Security Council chaired by President Vladimir Putin, responded to Ukrainian officials' statements that Kyiv may strike the bridge linking Crimea and Russia, warning that that would trigger devastating consequences for the Ukrainian leadership.

"If that happens, the consequences will be obvious: They will momentarily face the Doomsday," Medvedev said on Sunday. "It would be very hard for them to hide."



Cargo plane operated by Ukraine carrier crashes in Greece

AP ■ PALAIOCHORI (GREECE)

An Antonov cargo plane operated by a Ukrainian airline crashed Saturday near the city of Kavala in northern Greece, authorities said. Local residents reported seeing a fireball and hearing explosions for two hours after the crash.

Greek Civil Aviation authorities said the flight was heading from Serbia to Jordan. The An-12, a Soviet-built turboprop aircraft, was operated by cargo carrier Meridian.

Greek media reported there were eight people on the plane and that it was carrying 12 tons of "dangerous materials," mostly explosives. But local officials said they had no specific information on the cargo and provided varying numbers of people on board.

As a precaution because of a strong smell emanating from the crash site, a coordinating committee made up of municipal, police and fire service officials told inhabitants of the two localities closest to the crash site to keep their windows shut all night, to not leave their homes and to wear masks. Authorities say they do not know if there were dangerous chemicals on the plane, including those contained in batteries.

Greece's Civil Aviation authority said the pilot managed to alert authorities about a problem in one of the plane's

engines and he was given the choice of landing in either the Thessaloniki or Kavala airports, and he opted for Kavala, which was closer, saying that he had to make an emergency landing.

Communication with the plane ceased almost immediately afterwards. The plane crashed about 40 kilometers west of the airport.

"We were hearing explosions until a few minutes ago," Filippos Anastassiadis, mayor of the municipality of Paggaio, told the Associated Press a little over an hour after the accident. "I am about 300 metres from the site of the crash."

One of Anastassiadis' deputies told state broadcaster ERT that explosions were heard for two hours following the crash.

Locals reported seeing a fireball and a plume of smoke before the crash.

ERT reported that army and explosive experts were en route to the site, located on farmland close to two villages that are part of the Paggaio municipality. But they are not expected to start working before dawn. Experts from Greece's Atomic Energy Commission will join them.

The fire service has cordoned off the area at a radius of about 400 metres. The cordoned-off area will be expanded at dawn, fire service officials said.

Diplomatic spat erupts between Balkan rivals



AP ■ BELGRADE (SERBIA)

Diplomatic tensions soared on Sunday between Balkan rivals Serbia and Croatia after Croatia refused to allow a private visit by Serbia's populist president to the site of a World War II concentration camp where tens of thousands of Serbs were killed by pro-Nazi authorities in Croatia.

Croatia's authorities said they learned about the planned visit to the Jasenovac camp by Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic through "unofficial channels".

Foreign Minister Gordan Grlic Radman told reporters that the fact that the Croatian government had not been formally notified of the visit was "unacceptable".

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would like to stress that in the planning of any visit by foreign officials the time, nature and programme of the visit should be subject of official communication and agreement by both sides," said Grlic Radman.

"This was not a trip to the seaside. The president of a country is a protected individual."

Croatia's decision sparked outrage in neighbouring Serbia, where officials described it as "scandalous".

Serbia's hardline Interior Minister Aleksandar Vulin said all Croatian officials from now on would have to announce any transit or visit to Serbia, and would be placed under "special

regime of control".

He did not elaborate.

"This was an anti-European and anti-civilisation decision and brutal violation of the freedom of movement," Serbian Prime Minister Ana Branabic told the pro-government Pink television. "I don't know what our relations will look like in the future ... This is sending a frightening message."

Relations between Serbia and Croatia have remained tense since the breakup of the former Yugoslavia and the 1991-95 war in Croatia that erupted when its Serb minority, backed by Serbia, rebelled against Croatia's independence. More than 10,000 people were killed in the war.

Although the two nations have pledged to work to resolve remaining problems from the conflict - such as finding those still missing - occasional diplomatic spats have marred the postwar efforts.

Serbia's populist authorities have insisted that Croatia's government has not done enough to acknowledge its World War II past, while Zagreb accuses Serbia of using the issue for internal politics and refusing to deal with own role in the 1990s' war.

"We see this as a provocation," Grlic Radman said. He added "such a visit is not sincere, it is not about honouring the victims" of the Jasenovac camp, where tens of thousands of Croatia's Serbs, Jews and Roma perished in brutal executions during the WWII rule of the pro-Nazi authorities.

Man shot by off-duty police in DC's Wharf area

AP ■ WASHINGTON

An off-duty police officer shot and killed a man armed with a semi-automatic handgun in the area of a Southwest Washington entertainment district Saturday night, the Metropolitan Police Department said.

The encounter took place shortly after 9 pm EDT in the area of The Wharf, a district of restaurants, shops and entertainment venues along the Potomac River.

At least one shot was fired by the



officer, who was with a second off-duty officer at the time, Police Chief Robert J. Contee III said.

A person who may have been with the gunman was being treated at a hospital for a graze wound, Contee said.

The officers had observed the man pointing a handgun while on a pier just outside of a restaurant and "engaged" the man, Contee said in a statement to reporters. He said the suspect was "a very brazen individual" and that the investigation was continuing.

Holocaust survivors mark 80 years since mass Paris roundup

AP ■ PARIS

Family by family, house by house, French police rounded up 13,000 people on two terrifying days in July 1942, dispatching them to Nazi death camps simply because they were Jewish. Eighty years later, France is honouring the victims, and trying to keep their memory alive.

For the dwindling number of survivors of France's wartime crimes, commemoration ceremonies Sunday are especially important. At a time of rising antisemitism and far-right discourse sugarcoating France's role in the Holocaust, they worry that history's lessons are being forgotten.

A week of ceremonies marking 80 years since the Vel d'Hiv police roundup on July 16-17, 1942, culminates Sunday with an event led by President Emmanuel Macron.

The raids were among the most shameful acts undertaken by France during World War II, and among the darkest moments in its history.

Over those two days, police herded 13,152 people - including 4,115 children - into the Winter Velodrome of Paris, known as the Vel d'Hiv, before they were sent on to Nazi camps. It was the biggest



such roundup in western Europe. The children were separated from their families; very few survived.

In public testimonies over the past week, survivor Rachel Jedinak described a middle-of-the-night knock on the door, and being marched through the streets of Paris and herded into the velodrome, in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower.

She recalled her desperate mother shouting at police. Some neighbours informed on Jews, others wept as they watched them corralled like livestock.

Chantal Blaszkas' aunts and uncle were among the children rounded up: 6-year-old Simon, 9-year-old Berthe, 15-year-old Suzanne. Their names are now

engraved on a monument at a garden where the velodrome once stood, along with some 4,000 other children targeted in the raids. Photos of the children hang from tree trunks, the result of years of painstaking research to identify and honor the long-anonymous victims. Of the children deported from the Vel d'Hiv 80 years ago, only six survived.

"Can you imagine?" Blaszkas asked, pointing at the names and shaking her head. "Can you imagine?" Serge Klarsfeld, a renowned Nazi hunter whose father was deported to Auschwitz, spoke Saturday in the garden, calling it an "earth-shaking testimony to the horrors lived by Jewish families."

Envoys from Bulgaria, North Macedonia meet on EU bloc talks

AP ■ SOFIA

The foreign ministers of Bulgaria and North Macedonia met in Sofia on Sunday to discuss the next steps of North Macedonia's path to EU membership talks, a day after the parliament in Skopje voted in support of a French proposal that should lift Bulgari's veto of North Macedonia joining the bloc.

EU member Bulgaria had until recently held up any progress for those accession talks, accusing North Macedonia's government of disrespecting shared cultural, linguistic and historic ties.

Both countries agreed on "extremely ambitious short-term and long-term measures, which in practice aim to solve many of the open issues", Bulgarian Foreign Minister Teodora Genchovska told reporters.

"Bulgaria is the country that most strongly supports the European integration of the Republic of North Macedonia and Albania; hence we wish them success on the path they have long wanted to take. With joint efforts and with our support, they will

reach what the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia most want to reach — membership in the EU", Genchovska said.

Her counterpart, Bujar Osmani, said his country is counting on Bulgaria's support and expressed hope that bilateral ties are entering a new phase.

"It is a historic opportunity for us that after 17 years with the status of a candidate country for membership, the Republic of North Macedonia gets the opportunity to start negotiations with the EU," said Osmani.

North Macedonia will start accession talks with EU on July 19, its prime minister announced on Saturday.

Bulgaria's National Assembly already has approved the French proposal, but legislators set additional conditions for agreeing to North Macedonia's EU membership.

They included protection for Bulgarians living in North Macedonia by including them in its constitution on an equal basis and no assumption that Bulgaria would recognise Macedonian as a separate language from Bulgarian.

Fires scorch France, Spain, temperature-related deaths soar

AP ■ PARIS

Firefighters struggled on Sunday to contain wildfires raging out of control in France and Spain as Europe wilts under an unusually extreme heat wave that authorities in Madrid link to a rise in excess mortality.

Two huge blazes that have been consuming pine forests for six days just south of the city of Bordeaux in southwest France have forced the evacuation of some 14,000 people, including many who were set to spend their vacation at campsites.

In Spain, firefighters supported by the armed forces' emergency brigades are trying to stamp out over 30 fires consuming forests spread across the country.

Spain's National Defence Department said that "the majority" of its fire-fighting aircraft have been deployed. Many areas are rugged, hilly terrain that makes it difficult for ground crews to access.

Drought conditions in the Iberian Peninsula have made it particularly susceptible to wildfires, some caused by lightning, others by accident, and even some intentionally set, after a mass of hot air was blown up from Africa last week.

So far, there have been no fire-related deaths in France or Spain. In Portugal, a pilot of a firefighting plane died when his aircraft crashed on Friday.

But as temperatures remain unusually high, heat-related deaths have soared amid a heat wave that the EU considers the work of climate change.

In Spain the second heat wave of the summer has kept highs above 40 degrees Celsius in many areas, hitting peaks of 43 degrees Celsius regularly.

According to Spain's Carlos III Institute, which records temperature-related fatalities daily, 360 deaths were attributed to high temperatures from July 10-15. That was compared with 27 tem-



perature-related deaths the previous six days.

The death of a street cleaner after he suffered heat stroke while work-

ing has led to the town hall of Spain's capital giving the option for its street cleaners to work in the evenings to avoid the worst spells of the day.

In France, the fire in La Teste-de-Buch near the Atlantic coast has forced 10,000 people to flee the area popular for the Arcachon seaside resort.

The Gironde regional government said on Sunday that "the situation remains unfavourable" due to gusting winds that, combined with hot and dry conditions, have fanned more flare-ups overnight. That led to a protracted struggle to protect campgrounds.

A second fire near the town of Landiras, south of a valley of Bordeaux vineyards, has forced authorities to evacuate 4,100 people this week, including some 1,900 on Saturday.

Authorities said that one flank has been brought under control by the dumping of white sand along a two-kilometer (1.2-mile) stretch. Another flank, however, remains unchecked.

Overall more than 10,300 (25,400) hectares of land have burned in the two fires.

Emergency officials warned

that high temperatures and winds on Sunday and Monday would complicate efforts to stop the fires from spreading further.

"We have to stay very prudent and very humble, because the day will be very hot. We have no favourable weather window. The site is very, very hot and very active," regional fire official Eric Florensan said on Sunday on local radio France-Bleu.

Temperatures are forecast up to 40 degrees Celsius in the area, with Monday expected to be the hottest day in a stretch of extreme July weather.

Some of the most worrisome blazes in Spain are concentrated in the western regions of Extremadura and Castilla y León.

Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska announced a joint command that will take over coordinating the efforts to battle the fires that are active in the adjoining regions.

Firefighters have been unable to stop the advance of a fire that

broke out near the city of Cáceres that is threatening the Monfragüe National Park and has kept 200 people from returning to their homes.

Another fire in southern Spain near the city of Malaga has forced the evacuation of a further 2,500 people. There are more fires near the central city of Avila, in north-west Galicia, among other areas.

Hungary, Croatia and the Greek island of Crete have also fought wildfires this week, as have Morocco and California.

The scorching temperatures have reached as far north as Britain, where its weather agency has issued its first-ever "red warning" of extreme heat for Monday and Tuesday, when temperatures in southern England may reach 40 degrees Celsius for the first time.

That will still be relatively bearable compared with the 47 degrees Celsius recorded in Portugal's northern town of Pinhao on Wednesday, establishing a new national record.

Lanka's own 'Arab Spring' uproots Rajapaksa clan, but eco recovery still uncertain

PTI ■ COLOMBO

What started as a small protest by a handful of individuals demanding basic necessities turned into a tsunami that uprooted the once-powerful Rajapaksa family in what was Sri Lanka's 'Arab Spring' moment, but the road to recovery from the country's worst economic crisis in decades looks distant and painful.

Sri Lanka is facing its worst economic crisis since independence from British rule in 1948, with a severe foreign exchange shortage hampering the import of essentials including food, fuel and medicines. Its foreign debt is over USD 50 billion with repayments this year falling to the tune of USD 7 billion.

As the crisis emerged in March, a handful of individuals gathered in a small group holding placards to demand basic necessities like milk powder and a regular power supply.

Within days, Sri Lankans were forced to wait in miles-long queues to get fuel and cooking gas and suffered from multiple hours of power outages. Some 20 people even died

while waiting for their turn in the serpentine queues in scorching heat.

Enough was enough for the people having waited each passing day for the government to respond, respond positively. But the Rajapaksa government did not offer any solutions and there was no end to the people's suffering.

The government declared bankruptcy in mid-April by refusing to honour its international debt. The situation created a thriving black market where people paid to secure a place in the queue and fuel was sold 4 times higher than the legal retail price.

With no end to their sufferings, people across Sri Lanka took to the streets calling for resignations of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his elder brother Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. The Rajapaksas, a powerful dynasty that ruled Sri Lanka for nearly two decades, has been blamed for the country's economic ruin.

It was the dawn of the 'Arab Spring' moment, a series of anti-government protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across



much of the Arab world in the early 2010s.

Unfazed by the power that the Rajapaksa family wielded, the people gathered at the Galle Face Green in the heart of Colombo, raising the slogan "GoGotaGama" in a peaceful protest.

These protesters have been at the forefront of the popular 'Aragalaya' movement - named after the Sinhalese word for 'struggle' - calling for the resignation of President Gotabaya and his elder brother Mahinda.

The slogan attracted students,

activists, youths and the people from all walks of life, who joined the protest overcoming the deep ethnic and religious divide in the country.

Under mounting pressure, President Gotabaya first dropped his older brother Chamal and the eldest nephew Namal from the Cabinet in

mid-April.

In May, Prime Minister Mahinda also resigned after his supporters attacked anti-government protesters, triggering violence against the Rajapaksa family loyalists in many parts of the country.

Gotabaya tried to tackle the crisis for a few weeks along with the newly-appointed Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe before the President was forced to flee his official residence in the face of massive public protests in July.

"We are tired of the situation in the country. They have no solution," says Ananda Arunajith, a tuk-tuk operator. While he languished in the petrol queue, his wife Sumali waited in the cooking gas line.

Some mothers had to take their toddlers to the queues as they waited overnight to hear the news of stocks arriving.

Shehan Perera, an IT industry middle-level executive, says the jobs have come under threat due to the fuel crisis.

"The employees now seem to look for running businesses with minimum manpower resources. This has made us work a lot hard-

er to perform and show results," he says while keeping his car in a long queue in the city.

"Our generation has been almost rendered useless by this fuel crisis. I take a rest break at night in the fuel queue to get the limited fuel supply for my scooter," says Yohan Perera, a young hospitality industry trainee.

He has waited in the queue for over hours many times, only to be told that the pumps had run dry when he was within striking distance of the pumping station.

"Who takes responsibility for the deaths of nearly 20 people who have died in the waiting queues?" asked Walter Peiris, a retired official.

He said his wife was sending food and water to the fuel queue as he waited. The government has said the situation would get worse before it gets better.

"This is sheer incompetence. They just don't know how to manage the economy," says Shamal Jayaratne, a self-employed man.

He says he closes his motorcycle battery and tyre selling business to join the queue at least three days of the week.

Candidates for UK leader woo Right wing before vote



AP ■ LONDON

The candidates to become the next British prime minister burnished their right-wing credentials on Sunday, as they looked to remain in the race to succeed Boris Johnson.

Many of the five remaining hopefuls highlighted issues linked to Brexit and immigration as they attempted to woo fellow Conservative lawmakers ahead of a third round of voting on Monday, when another contender will drop out.

Even though the eventual winner will automatically become prime minister, the contenders must appeal to a narrow constituency of party members, who tend to be whiter, older and more right-wing than the general public. The candidates face a series of votes from lawmakers next week, who will narrow down the field to two, before facing a runoff among an estimated 180,000 Conservative Party members.

Writing in Britain's Sunday Telegraph newspaper, the former Treasury chief Rishi Sunak, who is the frontrunner among Conservative lawmakers, pledged to tear up European Union laws as Britain beds down its position outside the bloc.

Appealing to the pro-Brexit party vote, Sunak wrote that he will have "scrapped or reformed all of the EU law, red tape and bureaucracy that is still on our statute book and slowing economic growth" by the time of the next election if he becomes the next prime minister.

Meanwhile, Trade Minister Penny Mordaunt, who became a surprise frontrunner and bookmaker favorite last week, was forced to challenge accusations that she had pushed through a policy to end the requirement for trans people to obtain a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria before they could legally change gender when she was equalities minister in Theresa May's government.

She told the BBC's Sunday Morning programme that she had managed a consultation with health care professionals but no policy had been developed while she was in the job.

Despite the demographics of the members, the race to succeed Johnson has been called the most diverse for a British prime minister. Sunak and Kemi Badenoch, a former equalities minister, are both non-white, while three of the remaining five contenders are women. Badenoch, whose parents are from Nigeria, remains little known. But she has seen her star rise after her public showing in a television debate Friday, and led a poll of party members by the ConservativeHome website on Sunday.

She would be the first Black prime minister and, at 42, the youngest in more than 250 years.

Despite her background, she has made immigration control a key pillar of her political pitch, pledging Sunday to "do whatever it takes to deal with the small boats issue."

Voters believe Rishi Sunak will make good PM: UK opinion poll

PTI ■ LONDON

Almost half of the voters for the UK's governing Conservative Party believe Rishi Sunak will make a good Prime Minister, according to the results of a new opinion poll on Sunday.

"The Sunday Telegraph" reports that the JL Partners poll of more than 4,400 people found that 48 per cent of those who backed the Tories in the 2019 general election felt the British Indian former Chancellor would be a good Prime Minister.

This is also the first poll that puts Foreign Secretary Liz Truss in second place, with 39 per cent backing her for Prime Minister and 33 per cent in favour of Trade Minister Penny Mordaunt.

The survey comes as the race to elect Boris Johnson's successor as the next Conservative Party leader is narrowing down to these three main contenders, with former equalities minister Kemi Badenoch and Parliament's Foreign Affairs

Committee Chair Tom Tugendhat in fourth and fifth place, respectively.

"Among those who have heard of Mordaunt, the overwhelming view is one of neutrality," James Johnson, co-founder of JL Partners and a former Downing Street pollster, told the newspaper.

"Sunak invites strong opinions. One-third of voters think he would be good in the top job, one third do not. But in an unpopular field where every other candidate is in net-negative territory, this score draw makes him the public's favourite. He is particularly popular with the all-important 2019 Conservative voter, as the only candidate to have half approve of him," he said.

Among all voters, the most popular policy priority was to "turn the economy around", with addressing the National Health Service (NHS) backlog and restoring trust and integrity in public life coming second and third respectively.

Cutting taxes, which has emerged as a central focus of all the debates so



far, was the fourth priority, selected by 38 per cent of voters overall and 40 per cent of Conservative voters.

The JL Partners poll, which also delved into the characteristics voters are seeking from a new leader, found that 19 per cent of Conservative supporters and 24 per cent of voters overall most wanted a leader who is "truthful".

The survey, carried out last week, puts the Opposition Labour Party 11 points ahead of the Conservatives, on 42 points to the Tories' 31.

"While the public chew over the economy, the NHS and public trust, Conservative MPs may have a much simpler question: who is the best candidate to hold their seat? On this evidence, the answer is Mr Sunak," added James Johnson.

An MRP model, which maps survey results onto every seat in the country, found that, among all voters, Sunak had the highest net approval score in 76 per cent of the seats won by the Tories in the last general election over two years ago, compared to

19 per cent in which Tugendhat came out on top and five per cent in which Mordaunt had the best score.

Sunak, 42, has topped the first two rounds of voting among Tory MPs last week and the next few rounds of voting in the coming week are set to narrow down the field further, with only two left in the race by Thursday.

While Sunak is a clear favourite among the Tory MPs, some polling among the Conservative Party members who will have the final say has had Mordaunt in the lead.

However, a survey overnight for the Conservative Home website of 850 Tory members put Badenoch in the lead on 31 per cent, with Truss second on 20 per cent, Mordaunt third on 18 per cent, Sunak fourth on 17 per cent and Tugendhat fifth on 10 per cent.

Postal votes will be sent out to around 160,000 Tory party members who are eligible to vote and they will decide the eventual winner and new Prime Minister to be announced on September 5.

Biden's realism approach runs head-on into liberal pressure

AP ■ WASHINGTON

On restoring access to abortion, President Joe Biden says his hands are tied without more Democratic senators. Declaring a public health emergency on the matter has downsides, his aides say. And as for gun violence, Biden has been clear about the limits of what he can do on his own.

"There's a Constitution," Biden said from the South Lawn in late May. "I can't dictate this stuff." Throughout this century, presidents have often pushed aggressively to extend the boundaries of executive power. Biden talks more about its limits.

When it comes to the thorniest issues confronting his administration, the instinct from Biden and his White House is often to speak about what he cannot do, citing constraints imposed by the courts or insufficient support in a Congress controlled by his own party - though barely.

He injects a heavy dose of



reality in speaking to an increasingly restive Democratic base, which has demanded action on issues such as abortion and voting rights before the November elections. White House officials and the president's allies say that approach typifies a leader who has always promised to be honest with Americans, including about how expansive

his powers really are.

But Biden's realpolitik tendencies are colliding with an activist base agitating for a more aggressive party leader - both in tone and substance. Although candidate Biden sold himself as the person who best knew the ways of Washington, he nonetheless is hamstrung by the same obstacles that have bedeviled his

predecessors.

"I think that if you hesitate from important actions like this just because of a legal challenge, then you would do nothing," said Rep. Judy Chu, D-Calif., who has been pressing for more administrative actions on abortion. "People all across the country are expecting us - the leaders - to do something."

Biden's cautionary approach could be to protect himself if the White House falls short - like Democrats did in negotiating a party-line spending package centered on the social safety net and climate provisions. That sweeping effort had been steadily thwarted due to resistance from two moderate Democrats, one of them West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, who on Thursday scuttled for the time being a scaled-back effort that focused on climate and taxes.

That development prompted calls from Democratic senators for Biden to unilaterally declare a climate emergency. In a state-

ment Friday while in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Biden pledged to take "strong executive action to meet this moment" on climate. But in recent weeks, that gap between "yes, we can" and "no, we can't" has been most glaring on abortion.

Since the Supreme Court last month overturned the landmark Roe v. Wade ruling from 1973 with its constitutional protections for abortion, the White House has come under considerable pressure to try to maintain access to abortion in conservative states that are set to outlaw the procedure.

For instance, advocates have implored Biden to look into establishing abortion clinics on federal lands. They have asked the administration to help transport women seeking abortions to a state that offers the procedure. And Democratic lawmakers are pressing the White House to declare a public health emergency.

Without rejecting the ideas

completely, White House aides have expressed skepticism about such requests. And even as he signed an executive order last week to begin addressing the issue, Biden had one clear, consistent message: that he could not do this on his own, shifting attention to the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

"The only way we can secure a woman's right to choose and the balance that existed is for Congress to restore the protections of Roe v. Wade as federal law," Biden said shortly after the court struck down Roe. "No executive action from the president can do that."

Shortly after declaring that the filibuster - a Senate rule that requires 60 votes for most legislation to advance - should not apply for abortion and privacy measures, Biden acknowledged during a meeting with Democratic governors that his newfound position would not make a difference, at least not right away.

90-year-old Indian woman revisits Pak after 75 yrs to see her ancestral home

AP ■ LAHORE

An Indian woman's long-cherished dream of visiting her ancestral home in Rawalpindi materialised when Pakistan granted 90-year-old Reena Chhibber

Varma a visa and she arrived here on Saturday via the Wagah-Attari border, 75 years after leaving the country at the time of Partition.

Moist-eyed Varma, immediately after her arrival in Pakistan, left for her hometown Rawalpindi, where she will visit her ancestral dwelling Prem Niwas, her school, and childhood friends.

In a video she uploaded on social media, Varma, who is from Pune, said her family was living on the Devi College Road in Rawalpindi when the Partition

took place.

"I studied at the Modern School. My four siblings had also gone to the same school. My brother and a sister also studied at the Gorden College located near the Modern School," she recalled.

"My elder siblings had Muslim friends who would come to our home as my father was a man of progressive ideas and had no

issue in meetings with boys and girls. Before the Partition, there was no such issue of Hindus and Muslims. This happened after the Partition," she said.

"Although the Partition of India was wrong, now that it has happened, both the countries should work together to ease visa restrictions for all of us," she said.

Zimbabwe students scoop international awards for moot court

AP ■ HARARE

A history-making team of Zimbabwean high school students that became world and European moot court competition champions has been widely praised in a country where the education system is beset by poor funding, lack of materials and teachers' strikes.

The 11-member Zimbabwean team of nine girls and two boys aged between 14 and 18 and drawn from different schools was crowned world champions last month after winning the International High School Moot Court competition held online at the end of May.

A team from New York City came second in the competition where par-



ticipants used fictional cases to simulate proceedings in the International Criminal Court pre-trial chambers.

Zimbabwe now has also been crowned champions of Europe after beating The Netherlands in the finals of the European Moot Competition for

high school students on July 3. It was Zimbabwe's first time competing in both prestigious events.

Organizers of the European competition were so impressed with Zimbabwe's performance at the International High School Moot Court competition that they invited the team to be the first-ever African country to enter their competition, said team captain Ruvimbo Simbi.

"It is surreal and extraordinary," said Simbi after returning from Romania, where the European competition was held. "When we were at the European Moot Court, many people didn't even know Zimbabwe. We put Zimbabwe on the map, letting the world know of the amazing talent found in this country," said Simbi.

African National Congress stalwart Jessie Duarte passes away after battling cancer

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

South Africa's veteran freedom fighter and Deputy Secretary General of the African National Congress (ANC), Yasmin "Jessie" Duarte passed away on Sunday after a long battle with cancer. She was 68.

The ANC confirmed that Duarte passed away in the early hours of Sunday morning.

She was the longest serving member of the ruling party's national executive council (NEC), after first being elected to the body in 1999 under the leadership of then president Thabo Mbeki.

Sharing its condolences, the ANC said Duarte had been "a tower of strength to the organisation as well as a matriarch and pillar of her family." "The passing of Comrade Jessie is a great loss, not only to the family but to the democratic movement and the country as a whole," ANC national spokesperson Pule Mabe said in a statement.

"She dedicated her entire life to the struggle for a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic, prosperous, and just South Africa. A committed gender activist, she relentlessly championed the emancipation and empowerment of women. Her life and work reflected a consistent commitment to advancing the rights of the poor and marginalised," Mabe added.

A management accountant by profession, Duarte joined the freedom struggle at an early age and was involved in setting up women's structures throughout South Africa while the ANC remained banned in the country under the white minority government. Duarte served as the personal assistant to Nelson Mandela, who was released after 27 years of imprisonment as a political prisoner to become South Africa's first democratically elected president. Duarte's funeral by Muslim rites was scheduled for Sunday afternoon.

Hindu temple, homes vandalised in B'desh over Facebook post: Reports

PTI ■ DHAKA

A temple, shops and several houses of the Hindu community have been vandalised in southwestern Bangladesh by some unidentified persons over a Facebook post allegedly belittling Islam, in the latest spate of violence targeting the religious minority in the country, according to media reports on Sunday.

Police fired warning shots to disperse a mob that vandalised several homes and torched one of them in Sahapara village in Narail district on Friday evening, bdnews24.Com, an online newspaper quoted Haran

Chandra Paul, an inspector at the local police station, as saying.

The attackers also threw bricks at a temple in the village during the attack around 7:30pm, he said.

They also broke the furniture inside the temple.

Several shops were also vandalised, The Daily Star newspaper reported.

Haran said a young man posted something offensive on Facebook, triggering anger among Muslims. Police took his father to the police station after a search for the young man failed to trace him.

Rupee’s fall fuels inflation, but it makes exports competitive: Experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rupee depreciation has impacted the current account deficit and fuelled inflationary pressures but at the same time it has made Indian exports more competitive, according to experts.

The Indian rupee has been depreciating against the USD dollar and is nearing the psychologically key mark of 80, making imports expensive.

"The depreciation of the rupee has multiple impacts on the economy. Given we have a negative trade balance, though a depreciation of the rupee makes our exports more competitive, our import bills go up significantly.

"It has an impact on the current account deficit thus further putting pressure on the rupee as well as imports inflation too as the price of imports in rupee terms is higher," said Ranen Banerjee, Leader, Economic Advisory Services, PwC India.

A recent report by the finance ministry cautioned that India's current account deficit (CAD) is expected to deteriorate in the current fiscal on account of costlier imports and tepid merchandise exports.

Primarily driven by an increase in the trade deficit, the CAD stood at 1.2 per cent of GDP in 2021-22.

Rumki Majumdar, Economist, Deloitte India, said the US dollar has strengthened amid economic uncertainties marked by rising global inflation and commodity prices, rapidly tightening monetary policy in advanced nations, rising geopolitical tensions, fears of a global economic slowdown, and even a possible recession in the US and a few major European nations.

However, not always does curren-



cy depreciation hurt an economy, she added.

"The opportunity to boost services exports revenue on the back of the global digitisation wave is promising. A weaker domestic currency also is an opportunity for FPIs to enter the equity market to earn handsome returns in the medium to long term," she opined.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) were net sellers in the Indian equity market for the ninth consecutive month in June, with an outflow of Rs 49,469 crore -- the highest since March 2020. The sell-off has continued this month, with net outflows to the tune of Rs 7,432 crore during July 1-15.

Overall, FPIs have withdrawn Rs 1.2

lakh crore from the Indian equity market in 2022-23 so far, but the sell-off has been absorbed by domestic institutional investors (DIIs).

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA Limited, was of the opinion that a weaker rupee will partly counteract the slide in commodity prices, lessening the fall in the wholesale (WPI) and retail (CPI) inflation expected over the next few months.

"Similarly, the beneficial impact of the fall in input costs on corporate margins will be tempered. The weaker INR will help to protect some export competitiveness, given the sharper fall recorded by many emerging market (EM) currencies than the INR in the

recent period," she added.

Khalid Khan, vice-chairman of exporters' body FIEO, said while a depreciating rupee will help exporters, exporting goods which have import content in terms of raw materials will not be benefited that much.

An article published in its recent bulletin said that amid a hostile international environment, close and continuous monitoring of the widening trade deficit and portfolio outflows is warranted, strong reserve buffers notwithstanding.

As per the latest data, the country's imports expanded by 57.55 per cent to USD 66.31 billion in June compared to the year-ago month.

The merchandise trade deficit in June 2022 was estimated at USD 26.18 billion as against USD 9.60 billion in June 2021, which is an increase of 172.72 per cent.

Crude oil imports in June almost doubled to USD 21.3 billion.

Coal and coke imports more than doubled to USD 6.76 billion in the month as against USD 1.88 billion in June 2021.

It is widely expected that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may go for the third consecutive hike in the key interest rate next month as retail inflation continues to rule above 7 per cent — higher than its upper tolerance limit of 6 per cent.

Banerjee further said the matching rate hikes by the RBI in response to the US Federal Reserve actions will also provide support to the rupee.

These counterbalancing forces have helped the rupee in the past few months wherein it has not depreciated to the extent of other emerging market currencies, he added.

Six of top-10 firms lose ₹1.68 lakh cr in M-cap; TCS biggest laggard



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Six of the 10 most valued firms suffered a combined erosion of Rs 1,68,260.37 crore from their market valuation last week, mainly dragged down by IT major TCS amid an overall weak trend in the equity market.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex fell 721.06 points or 1.32 per cent last week.

From the laggards, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) took the biggest hit as its market valuation tumbled Rs 99,270.07 crore to reach Rs 10,95,355.32 crore. Shares of TCS dropped last week after the company's June quarter earnings failed to meet market expectations.

Another IT behemoth Infosys also suffered an erosion of Rs 35,133.64 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 6,01,900.14 crore.

HDFC Bank's market valuation fell by Rs 18,172.43 crore to Rs 7,57,659.72 crore

and that of State Bank of India (SBI) declined by Rs 8,433.76 crore to Rs 4,27,488.90 crore.

The market capitalisation (m-cap) of HDFC dipped by Rs 4,091.62 crore to reach Rs 4,02,121.99 crore and that of ICICI Bank went lower by Rs 3,158.85 crore to Rs 5,22,498.11 crore.

In contrast, the valuation of Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) jumped Rs 17,128.52 crore to Rs 6,03,551.26 crore.

Reliance Industries added Rs 6,801.72 crore, taking its market valuation to Rs 16,24,681.08 crore.

ITC's m-cap climbed Rs 1,318.81 crore to Rs 3,62,327.81 crore and that of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) went higher by Rs 316.25 crore to Rs 4,48,157.71 crore.

In the ranking of top-10 firms, Reliance Industries continued to remain the most valued domestic company, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, HUL, Infosys, ICICI Bank, LIC, SBI, HDFC and ITC.

Remittances from Gulf countries fell sharply in FY20-21 due to Covid-19

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The share of inward remittances from Gulf nations dipped sharply during 2020-21 on account of the economic stress created by the COVID-19 pandemic, said an RBI article.

On the other hand, advanced economies like the US, the UK and Singapore emerged as important sources for the country for remittances, accounting for 36 per cent of the total payments in 2020-21, the article said citing an RBI survey.

To analyse the factors contributing to the resilience of remittances and to understand to what extent the pandemic has changed the underlying dynamics of remittances flow, the Reserve Bank of India conducted the fifth round of the Survey on Remittances for the year 2020-21.

"...The share of remittances from the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) region in India's inward remittances is estimated to have declined from more than 50 per cent in 2016-17 (last surveyed period) to about 30 per cent in 2020-21," said the article prepared by the officials in the Department of Economic and Policy Research, RBI.

The central bank, however, said the views expressed in the article are those of the authors and do not represent the views of the Reserve Bank of India.

Overall, notwithstanding headwinds of COVID-19, India's inward remittances have proven to be a resilient source of current account receipts, the article published in the RBI's July bulletin said.

The decline in remittances from the Gulf countries during 2020-21 reflects a slower pace of migration and a larger presence of Indian diaspora in informal sectors which was hit the most during the pandemic period. As a result, the proportion of small size transactions in total remittances increased in 2020-21.

The US surpassed the UAE as the top source country, accounting for 23 per cent of total remittances in 2020-21.

This corroborates with the World Bank report (2021) citing an economic recovery in the US as one of the important drivers of India's remittances growth as it accounts for almost 20 per cent of total remittances, the article said.



The share of the traditional remittance recipient states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, which had strong dominance in the GCC region, has almost halved in 2020-21, accounting for only 25 per cent of total remittances since 2016-17, while Maharashtra has emerged as the top recipient state surpassing Kerala.

"Apart from the host country dynamics, reducing wage differentials, changing occupational patterns in these states with increasing white collar migrant workers to GCC region and entry of low-wage semi-skilled workers from other states and Asian countries may have led to this compositional shift," it said.

By contrast, migration from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal to the Gulf countries has increased in recent years. According to the Ministry of External Affairs data, more than 50 per cent of the approved emigration clearances for the GCC region in 2020 were for these states.

With the dominance of low-wage unskilled labourers, however, their share in remittances has remained significantly

low while the share of Maharashtra and Delhi has increased significantly in 2020-21, it said.

The article also concludes that the majority of the remittances continue to be routed through private sector banks, followed by public sector banks although foreign banks have witnessed a marginal increase in remittances transactions, particularly from Singapore.

It also noted that stressed income conditions are discernible from small size transactions gaining a share in total remittances during the pandemic period.

"Notwithstanding, India is the second cheapest remittance receiving market in the G20 group after Mexico, the cost for certain remittance corridors has been consistently higher than others," it said.

Policy measures need to be undertaken that expand the scope of the Money Transfer Service Scheme (MTSS) in high-cost corridors, it said, and added that remittance service providers need to adapt to the changing times by investing heavily in digital technologies.

General Aeronautics begins production of agri-drones

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Drone startup General Aeronautics on Sunday said it has begun commercial production of agricultural drones and aims monthly production of 100 units. General Aeronautics is into delivering advanced aerial technologies for agriculture, healthcare and unmanned aerial vehicle design.

"We have started commercial production this month after conducting trials for the last three years," Srikanth Srinivasan, Head of Sales and Marketing at General Aeronautics, told PTI.

The trials were conducted in 10,000 acres in 45 crops in 14 states in experimental plots of agrichemical companies. The trial results have been validated by 15 agricultural institutes, he said. With brand name 'Krishak', the drone manufactured by General Aeronautics has 16 kg payload with 25 minutes flight time and has a coverage of up to six acres per battery charge with artificial intelligence assisted navigation, he said.

Srinivasan said nozzles used in Krishak are different as spraying happens in mist form without posing any hazard and increasing coverage.

"The battery used now has a capacity of 600 cycles. The company is working on a new battery of 6,000 cycles," he said. Currently, the Bengaluru-based startup has priced its drones at Rs 25 lakh each with three batteries. Its main clients at present are agro-chemical companies like Syngenta, Bayer Cropscience and others. It is mainly focusing on B2B sales.

Last year, the government issued standard operating procedures for use of drones in the farm sector. The Union Budget too gave a push. Come up with a scheme to fund drones to cooperatives, entrepreneurs and farmer produce organisations.

Front-loading monetary policy action can anchor inflation expectations: RBI paper

PTI ■ MUMBAI

By front-loading rate hikes, the RBI can cement the credibility of its monetary policy intent and action when it fights supply-side driven inflation on one hand and also contains the negative impact on growth, as per an article. The paper has been authored by three RBI analysts, including Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra who is a member of the rating setting panel Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) and also heads the key monetary policy department at the central bank.

The article has been published in the monthly RBI bulletin for July but does not officially represent the views of the monetary authority. Underlining that the current inflation pain is global and supply-side driven and can better tackled by fiscal measures and not monetary policy actions like rate hikes, the article notes that the ongoing supply shocks are larger and unrelenting, carrying the risk of "unanchoring inflation expectations".

They are also accompanied by a rebound in pandemic related revenue spending, leading to a gradual closing of the output gap underway.

Therefore, coordinated monetary and fiscal policy responses are needed to tackle this because "given the limited policy space, front-loading of monetary policy actions can keep inflation expectations firmly anchored thus maintaining the credibility of the central bank, re-align inflation with the target and reduce the medium-term growth sacrifice," says the article penned by Patra, Joice John and Deepak Kumar. The article squarely pins the blame for the ravaging global inflation pressures on crude oil prices and the resultant ripple effect on rates of other commodities following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Using crude prices as an exemplar of supply shocks, simulations from the RBI's quarterly projection model show that when the shock is transitory, inflation returns to equilibrium without the need for any monetary policy action.

On the other hand, repeated supply shocks trigger second round effects through cost-push, inflationary expectations, exchange rate volatilities and demand channels, warranting pre-emptive monetary policy action. "Lack of credibility can reduce the monetary policy response even and therefore by frontloading monetary policy actions, credibility is demonstrated by showing commitment to the inflation target.

"The required monetary policy response is lower when there is a fiscal policy response to supply-side shocks, but the latter entails macro-economic costs, including potentially a slowing down of medium-term growth," says the arti-



cle. If the central bank is seen credible with its intent, words, and actions, then timely monetary action can prune the long-term impact on growth, it added. The article also quoted the World Bank which has pegged global median inflation at its highest level since 2008. For advanced economies, it is at its highest level since 1982 and in the US it is at a 41-year high.

This inflation surge draws its origins from a series of supply shocks---pandemic lockdowns, supply chain disruptions, elevated commodity prices and the war in Ukraine.

The energy component of global consumer price inflation is at its highest level since early 1980s. For over 40 per cent of emerging markets and most low-income countries, consumer price index and food inflation is expected to remain in double-digits through 2022.

Consequently, the global inflation crisis is just the face of one of the most severe food and energy crises in recent history that now threatens the most vulnerable across the globe, it added. In a world wherein elevated inflation is globalised, "it is the direction of the change that matters, not the height" and central to that exercise is the "role of credibility of the monetary policy and anchoring of inflation expectations."

Higher crude price increases other international commodity prices, feed into global inflation and weaken global demand and growth.

The direct impact of higher crude price on inflation occurs due to the pass-through to domestic petroleum product prices. Second round effects occur through cost-push — petroleum rates increase prices of intermediate goods and services which, in turn, push up prices of final goods and services.

There is also a demand channel of transmission to domestic inflation at work — higher fuel prices reduce consumption of other items and profit margins of firms, leading to lower cash flows and investment.

India’s first shopping mall-cum-coworking facility to come up in Pune: Anarock Retail

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's first shopping mall-cum-coworking facility adjacent to an airport is expected to be launched in Pune in mid-October, according to Anarock Retail.

Situated adjacent to the Pune Airport, the AeroMall, being developed by Pebbles Infra-Tech under the PPP model with AAI, is spread over 4,45,000 sq ft, including 1,30,000 sq ft of leasable space for retail.

As sole advisors to the



facility, Anarock Retail has designed the complex, managed its development, and crafted its tenant mix, Anarock Retail, the retail services division of the home-grown real estate consultant Anarock, said.

Pune airport is the only air-

port in India within the city and the only instance of a co-working and shopping facility directly adjoining an airport with a multi-level car park, Anarock Retail said.

The post-pandemic revival in air travel has brought airport retail back centre-stage. However, there continues to be a deficit of quality retail spaces at Indian airports for the best-suited retailers dealing in apparel and fashion, wellness, electronics and travel accessories, F&B, and beauty products, the company said.

Airport retail is attractive for retailers due to the relatively higher ROI compared to other locations. However, a well-researched tenant mix is critical in airports, it said.

Stating that AeroMall is set to be launched on October 15, Anarock Retail said it expects to complete leasing out Pune Airport's standalone mixed-use centre encompassing shopping, office and coworking, a food court and multi-level car park (MLCP), spread in 2,50,000 sq ft, by the end of the third quarter of 2022.

Average farm income soared 1.3-1.7 times in FY22 from FY18: SBI Research

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The income of farmers has grown in the range of 1.3-1.7 times in FY22 from the FY18 levels on average while grain exports soared to over USD 50 billion, says an SBI Research report.

For certain crops in some states (like soyabean in Maharashtra and cotton in Karnataka) farmers' income more than doubled in FY22 from FY18 levels, while in all other cases it rose in the range of 1.3-1.7 times.

The increase in the income of farmers engaged in cash crops has been more prominent

compared to farmers growing non-cash crops, SBI chief economist Soumyakanti Ghosh said in an elaborate report on Sunday.

This also has led to an increase in the share of agriculture in the GDP to 18.8 per cent from 14.2 per cent, the report said. This rise was also due to the shrinkage of the industrial and services contribution to the economy due to the deadly second wave of the pandemic.

But the report is silent on the massive fall in the prices of spices like black pepper, cardamom, clove, and cinnamon among others as also natural rubber.

Also, the report, based on key farming states like Maharashtra, Rajasthan, MP, UP, Karnataka, and Gujarat among others, notes that allied/non-farm income showed a significant increase of 1.4-1.8 times in the majority of states in tandem with farm income during this period, substantiating the trend in the 77th National Sample Survey that said source of farmers income has become increasingly diverse apart from crops.

Significantly, this also ensured that there have been no yawning gaps in income inequalities in the hinterland during this period.

India's fuel demand falls in July as monsoon sets in: Data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's demand for petrol and diesel fell in the first half of July over the previous month as the onset of monsoon chipped away consumption in some sectors and restricted mobility, preliminary industry data showed on Sunday.

Diesel, the most widely used fuel in the country, saw consumption drop 13.7 per cent during July 1-15 to 3.16 million tonnes from 3.67 million tonnes demand in the same period of the previous month.

The arrival and intensity of monsoon weighs heavily on diesel demand in the country and consumption traditionally is lower in July-September than in April-June. Floods restrict mobility and demand from the farm sector, which uses diesel in irrigation pumps and trucking, also drops with the onset of rains.

Diesel demand was however almost 27 per cent higher year-on-year, supported by strong economic growth and a relatively low baseline for the same period in 2021 when a second wave of COVID-19 had impacted the economy.

Consumption of diesel was 43.6 per cent higher than the 2.2 million tonnes demand during July 1 to 15 of 2020. It was 13.7 per cent more than pre-COVID July 2019, the data showed.

Luxury car market remains suppressed in India due to high taxes, says Audi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian luxury car market has huge growth potential but remains suppressed due to high taxation on luxury cars and unfavourable regulatory environment, as per a senior executive of German luxury carmaker Audi.

Luxury car volumes account for less than 2 per cent of the overall passenger vehicle sales annually and the sector has been more or less at the same level for the past decade.

SINDHU CLINCHES SINGAPORE TITLE

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Double Olympic medallist P V Sindhu lifted the Singapore Open Super 500 trophy after outwitting China's Wang Zhi Yi in an intense women's singles final here on Sunday.

In a mistake-filled title clash, Sindhu managed to stay strong in the key moments to come up trumps against the 22-year-old Wang, the reigning Asian Championships Gold medallist. The final scoreline read 21-9, 11-21, 21-15 in the Indian's favour.

The 27-year-old from Hyderabad came into the match with a 1-0 lead over Wang, having beaten the Chinese player in their only meeting at the All England Championships this year.

Sindhu produced another fine display to grab her third world tour title of the season.

Toss played a major role in the match with drift in the hall making life difficult for the shuttlers. Wang's decision to choose the side put her in an advantageous position as she played against the drift after the final change of ends.

However, Sindhu managed to limit the errors and keep her nerves

to emerge victorious in the end.

After losing the first two points, Sindhu used her reach to get the shuttle early, played some superb angled returns, and produced one winner after another to stay ahead all the way in the opening game.

The second game, however, turned into a forgettable affair for Sindhu as Wang, now on the better side of the court, displayed her prowess.

Sindhu tried to use the spinning net shot and use the gaps on the court to make a comeback but points were too few to come by as Wang continued to move ahead.

The match came alive in the decider as the duo played some long rallies.

While Wang seemed charged up initially, Sindhu was patient and after an initial duel of 5-5, played a superb smash and then finished a long rally with a delectable drop shot to leave her opponent on the floor.

The Indian grabbed a five-point advantage at the interval after producing another superb cross-court smash from a deep forehand corner.

Back to the better side after the final change in ends, Wang reduced

the deficit to 11-12 with Sindhu committing errors.

The Indian, however, managed to establish a four-point advantage with a good follow-up shot.

Just two points away, Sindhu hit long before unleashing a smash to finish an intense rally and grab five match points.

Wang hit wide as Sindhu threw her arms to the air in celebration.

The title run will be a big boost for Sindhu, who will be leading the India's charge at the Commonwealth Games, starting July 28 in Birmingham.

This was her third title of the season -- having won two Super 300 crowns in Syed Modi International and Swiss Open -- and an addition to her brimming cabinet which has a Gold, two Silver, and as many Bronze medals from the World Championships besides two Olympic medals.

GINTING WINS

Indonesia's Anthony Ginting ended his two-year title drought by beating Japan's Kodai

SINDHU MANAGED TO STAY STRONG IN THE KEY MOMENTS TO COME UP TRUMPS AGAINST THE 22-YEAR-OLD WANG, THE REIGNING ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS GOLD MEDALLIST

Naraoka 23-21, 21-17 in the men's singles final.

After taking down world champion Loh Kean Yew in the semi-final, Ginting, the world number six, continued to display the same attacking style to end the giant-slaying run of Naraoka.

The world number 43's passage to the final saw him stun world number eight Jonathan Christie, India's HS Prannoy and China's Zhao Jun Peng, who were all ranked higher than him.

Thailand's Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai retained their mixed doubles title after they beat China's Wang Yi Lyu and Huang Dong Ping in straight games 21-12, 21-17.

Indonesia, meanwhile, won both the doubles competition with Apriyani Rahayu and Siti Fadia Silva Ramadhanti clinching the women's doubles.

While Daniel Martin and Leo Rolly Carnando claimed the men's doubles title.

Champ hopes winning spree will continue



PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Relieved P V Sindhu hopes to continue her rich vein of form in the upcoming events, including the Birmingham Commonwealth Games, after winning the Singapore Open title here on Sunday.

"In the last couple of tournaments, there were hard-fought matches, and losing in the quarter-finals and semifinals was a bit upsetting but each match mattered and finally I could get this," Sindhu told reporters after the win.

"I am very happy because after a long time coming here to Singapore and winning this, means a lot to me.

"I have finally crossed that level, I have got the win now and I hope the same tempo continues for the rest of the tournaments and I do well in the upcoming event."

Living out of a suitcase is the norm for international athletes and Sindhu admitted there is no time to celebrate as she shifts focus on the Commonwealth Games starting July 28.

"I just have a week after that again we leave for Commonwealth Games. Maybe I can take a day off, and spend time with my family," she said.

"It has been a long tour for me, there was Indonesia, Malaysia for two weeks, and now Singapore. So it is time to go back home and just relax for a bit and then get back to training but definitely, I am going to enjoy this win, it means a lot.

Asked if the Singapore open title augurs well for the Commonwealth Games and World Championships, Sindhu said: "Ya it is. I wanted to be more successful (laughs). Right now it is time to just go and relax and then focus on the Commonwealth Games and hope I get a medal in that.

"Followed by that we have the world championships and Japan Open, of course, hope for a medal in that too. I have to be physically and mentally fit. My strength and conditioning coach Srikanth is there with me, so it should be okay."

Sindhu, who already has a Silver and a Bronze apart from the team Gold from the Commonwealth Games, will be favourite to win the Gold this time.

Talking about the Birmingham event, Sindhu said: "It is going to be a team event. We have to give 100 percent and be in 100 percent form. As a team, we need to work (towards it) and after that, there is an individual event.

"I hope I give my best, it is not going to be easy, there are some good players. So hoping for as many medals as we can."

PM Modi lauds Sindhu, says proud moment for country



She has yet again demonstrated her exceptional sporting talent and achieved success. It is a proud moment for the country and will also give inspiration to upcoming players."

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday congratulated ace shuttler P V Sindhu on winning her first ever Singapore Open Super 500 title, saying it is a proud moment for the country and her victory will inspire upcoming players.

Modi tweeted, "I congratulate P V Sindhu on winning her first ever Singapore Open title.

Anjum Moudgil wins Bronze in Changwon Shooting WC

PTI ■ CHANGWON

India's Anjum Moudgil won a Bronze medal in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions event at the ISSF Shooting World Cup here on Sunday.

Anjum shot 402.9 in the final round to finish third behind Germany's Anna Janssen (407.7) and Italy's Barbara Gambaro (403.4), who won the Gold and Silver medals respectively.

Sanjeev Rajput, Chain Singh, and Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar clinched the Silver medal in the men's 3P team event.

The Indian trio, which had finished second in the qualification stage, faced a strong Czech Republic team in the Gold medal match.

But despite putting up a good fight, the Indians went down 12-16 to the trio of Petr Nymbursky, Filip Nepejchal, and Jiri Privratsky.

Anjum, a world championship Silver medallist, had qualified for the finals after finishing sixth in the ranking round on Saturday.

This is the 28-year-old shooter's



second individual medal in consecutive World Cup stages. She had won Silver in the same event at the Baku World Cup held last month.

While Anjum was off the radar and slipped to sixth position after the second prone series, she recovered steadily in the final standing position.

By the time the fifth and sixth place shooters were eliminated after the 15th standing position shot, Anjum was 0.2 points ahead of 4th placed Rebecca Koeck of Austria.

However, a slip up in the initial stages meant, she was 1.5 points behind Gambaro, and despite gaining a full point in the fourth and final five-shot standing position series, Anjum had to remain contented with a bronze.

With one Bronze and Silver apiece, India consolidated its position at the top of medal tally with a total of 11 medals (four Gold, five Silver and two Bronze).

PTI ■ EUGENE

Long jumper Murali Sreeshankar failed to live up to the expectations as he finished seventh in the finals with his best effort of 7.96m on day two of the World Athletics Championships here on Sunday.

Having become the first Indian male athlete to qualify for the long jump finals in the World Championships, Sreeshankar had raised hopes of a historic medal in the showpiece. But his performance in the final was way below his season's and personal best of 8.36m.

He had three legal jumps -- the opening jump of 7.96m, fourth round effort of 7.89m and last attempt of 7.83m. The other three tries were fouls.

The 23-year-old must be disappointed as he could not cross the 8m mark in six attempts. He has been a consistent performer this season having jumped 8.17m, 8.36m, 8.31m and 8.23m since March and going into the World Championships.

He had qualified for the finals with a best jump of exactly 8m in the qualification round on Saturday, finishing second in Group B and seventh overall.

Sreeshankar had gone into the championships in the joint second spot in the season's top list on the basis of his national record 8.36m jump.

Sreeshankar finishes 7th in long jump finals at World C'ships



China's Jianan Wang won the Gold with a sensational final round jump of 8.36m while Olympic champion Miltiadis Tentoglou of Greece, who was leading till the penul-

time round, won the Silver with a best effort of 8.30m. Season leader Simon Ehammer (8.16m) of Switzerland took the Bronze.

His father and coach S Murali said it was sheer bad luck that Sreeshankar could not at least jump more than 8.16m, which would have given him a Bronze.

"Sreeshankar was confident to do well today but it was sheer bad luck. Jumping more than 8.16m was within his reach and he has done many times this season," Murali said.

"The third jump turned out to be a foul by just 3mm and had it been a legal one, Sreeshankar would have crossed at least 8.16m and won a medal. But we have to look ahead with this World Championships experience and do well in the Commonwealth Games."

In other events involving Indians, Parul Chaudhary ran her personal best of 9:38.09 in

women's 3000m steeplechase to finish 12th in heat number two to miss out on the finals. She finished 31st overall.

The top three finishers and the next six fastest across the three heats qualify for the finals.

Chaudhary's earlier personal best was the 9:38.29 she had clocked during the Indian Grand Prix series in Thiruvananthapuram in March.

In men's 400m hurdles, Madari Palliyalil Jabir also failed to advance to the semifinals after finishing seventh and last in heat number two with a time of 50.76s.

He finished 31st overall across five heats.

The top four finishers and the next four fastest across the five heats qualify for the semifinals.

He recorded a season's best of 49.76s while winning the gold at the National Interstate Championships last month. He has a personal best of 49.13s.

Bayern confirm Lewandowski move to Barcelona

AP ■ MUNICH

Bayern Munich confirmed on Saturday they have agreed a deal with Barcelona for the sale of Poland star Robert Lewandowski to Spanish club.

"We have a verbal agreement from Barcelona. It's good for both sides that we have clarity," Bayern president Herbert Hainer said on the club's Twitter account.

"Robert is a very deserving player, he has won everything with us. We are incredibly grateful to him."

Bayern did not give details but Spanish and German media reported the two-time FIFA men's player of the year had agreed a four-year deal worth 50 million euros, including five million in potential add-ons.

Later, the Catalans confirmed the move for the 2020 Champions League winner.

"Barcelona and Bayern Munich have reached an agreement in principle for the transfer of Robert Lewandowski, dependent on the player passing a medical and contracts being signed," they said in a statement.

Lewandowski told German television he would be joining



the Barcelona squad on their tour of the US from July 18-31. Media reported he would undergo his medical in Miami.

The agreement between the two teams closes the standoff

De Ligt wants to join Bayern: Kahn

AP ■ MUNICH

Bayern Munich are hopeful of luring defender Matthijs de Ligt away from Juventus, with club CEO Oliver Kahn saying on Saturday that the Dutch international is eager to join the Bundesliga giants.

"We have had talks for Matthijs de Ligt, I can confirm that the player wants to come to FC Bayern," Kahn said, according to The Guardian's Fabrizio Romano. "We'll have more talks and then we'll see how it goes."

It's understood that Bayern are preparing to submit an offer, with Romano reporting that

Juventus could demand a fee worth up to £100 million.

Last week, Bayer Munich board member Hasan Salihamidzic was in Italy to meet with Juventus officials and discuss signing the 22-year-old center-back.

"You all know that we had a conversation in Italy, you saw that. There will definitely be more talks," he told German outlet Bild on Friday.

De Ligt is three years into the five-year contract he signed after joining the Bianconeri from Ajax for £75 million. He appeared in 31 Serie A games last season.

Lewandowski joined Bayern in 2014, scoring 344 goals in 375 competitive matches and broke the Bundesliga single-season scoring record.

He won the Bundesliga in each of his eight seasons with the club as well as the Champions League, the Club World Cup and three German Cups.

Last season, "Lewy" scored 42 goals in 50 matches in all competitions, including 35 goals in 34 league matches and 13 goals in 10 Champions League games.

Hewitt inducted into Tennis Hall of Fame

AP ■ NEWPORT

Lleyton Hewitt, a two-time Grand Slam champion and former world number one, was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame on Saturday, a ceremony delayed from 2021 by Covid-19.

Hewitt won the 2001 US Open and 2002 Wimbledon titles among 30 career ATP triumphs and helped Australia capture the Davis Cup in 1999 and 2003.

The 41-year-old from Adelaide was unable to travel to the Hall of Fame last year from Australia so his induction was postponed for a year and staged after Saturday's ATP Hall of Fame Open semi-finals.

The ceremony was staged on the court where Hewitt won his first ATP grass court match as a teen in 1998.

Hewitt was a year-end world number one in 2001 and 2002 and his intense emotion combined with speed and skilled shotmaking made him a threat on any surface, great shots usually followed by the scream, "Come on."



Hewitt finished with a career record of 616-262 in ATP singles play. The Aussie icon won his first ATP title in Adelaide in 1998 and his last in 2014 at the Hall of Fame Open, defeating Ivo Karlovic.

"I feel fortunate I was able to play across generations," Hewitt said, "to play against my heroes like Andre Agassi and Pete Sampras" as well as against legends Rafael Nadal, Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic.

MANCHESTER IS BLUE

Rishabh Pant's 1st ODI century (125*) & Hardik Pandya's all-round show (71, 4/24) seal ODI series win for India

PTI ■ MANCHESTER

Skipper Jos Buttler top-scored for England with an 80-ball 60, but it was the flamboyant all-rounder from Gujarat, who dominated the first half of the match with his excellent bowling, sending out a warning to the opponents in the year of the T20 World Cup.

Rishabh Pant's maiden ODI century and Hardik Pandya's all-round heroics fired India to an emphatic five-wicket win over England in the series-deciding third match here on Sunday.

The visitors claimed the three-match rubber 2-1.

After India were in a spot of bother at 72 for four in a chase of 260, the crack team of Pant (125 not out off 113 balls) and Hardik (71 off 55 and 4/24) engaged in a battle to outdo each other, as the tourists completed the task with 47 balls to spare.

Hardik grabbed a career-best 4/24 as a disciplined India bowled out England for 259 with more than four overs left in the innings.

Skipper Jos Buttler top-scored for England with an 80-ball 60, but it was the flamboyant all-rounder from Gujarat, who dominated the first half of the match with his excellent bowling, sending out a warning to the opponents in the year of the T20 World Cup.

In the company of Hardik, Pant then showed his extraordinary skills with the bat as he smashed 16 fours and two sixes in his sublime knock at Old Trafford.

This was after lanky seamer Reece Topley (3/35) again proved to be the wreck-er-in-chief by removing the trio of Shikhar Dhawan, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli in quick succession.

Dhawan's subdued run in the series continued as he fell for one while Rohit (17) reached out to a delivery that was angling away only to nick it to Joe Root at first slip.

Kohli edged one to Buttler after Topley bowled a ball that angled across.

As has often been the case with him in

AFTER INDIA WERE IN A SPOT OF BOTHER AT 72 FOR FOUR IN A CHASE OF 260, THE CRACK TEAM OF PANT (125* OFF 113 BALLS) AND HARDIK (71 OFF 55 & 4/24) ENGAGED IN A BATTLE TO OUTDO EACH OTHER, AS THE TOURISTS COMPLETED THE TASK WITH 47 BALLS TO SPARE

recent times, Kohli looked good until he was in the middle, but one small mistake and the maestro was walking back shaking his head.

England were on top, as India were struggling at 38 for three in the ninth over.

Suryakumar Yadav made 16 before a Craig Overton ball took off awkwardly for him to nick it to Buttler. India could have been in a bigger hole had Buttler not missed a stumping off Moeen Ali to give Pant a life on 17.

Pant and Hardik then stabilised the innings by mixing caution with aggression. The duo quickly put up a half-century stand to ensure India remained in the game, gradually taking control of the proceedings.

With a wide array of strokes at their disposal, both Pant and Hardik went about their task in a professional manner, rarely looking in any sort of discomfort.

Hardik got out to a magnificent catch by Ben Stokes, but a flurry of boundaries by Pant meant India had it easy in the end.

Earlier, playing in place of injured Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj got a



massive confidence boost early on, when he dismissed Jonny Bairstow with his third ball of the day. As the England opener shaped up to play it on the leg-side, the bat turned in his hand and the ball ballooned to Shreyas Iyer at mid-off following a leading edge.

His tails up, Siraj then ran in to bowl to the prolific Root, got the ball to move away, and the outside edge was nicely taken by skipper Rohit at second slip. Siraj, in fact, squared Root up with his late movement.

With two of their in-from batters back in the hut for ducks, England were in trouble at 12 for two.

This was after Jason Roy (41) collected three boundaries off Mohammed Shami, including a four through mid off in the very first delivery of the match.

Rohit made a bold move to field first given that eight of the last nine games at Old Trafford have been won by teams batting first.

His English counterpart Buttler was happy to bat first and Bumrah not around was comforting for the hosts. But little did he know that the world-class bowler's replacement for the day would rock their boat so early into their innings, that too on a batting-friendly wicket.

Stokes showed what a good pitch it was to bat on when he offered the face of the blade to push the ball through the off-side for a four.

Roy and Stokes steadied the innings but when their counterattacking partnership reached 54 runs, Hardik had the former caught behind after tying him down by bowling to a tight line and length.

The ball was on the shorter side but there was hardly any room for Roy to free his arms, and the result was England losing their third wicket with 66 runs on the board.

In the middle of a fine spell, Hardik sustained the pressure from his end and soon he had the English Test captain caught and bowled. It was a reward for some brilliant bowling by Hardik who dropped the

ball short after he saw a frustrated Stokes stepping out, the all-rounder getting his second wicket maiden.

India's bowling was tight, so much so that England could score just 16 runs in seven overs since Roy's departure.

Returning to the attack, Siraj hit Buttler on the helmet twice in the space of three balls. On both occasions, the physio took a look at him as per the concussion protocol, but the batter seemed okay.

'BOWLING WITHOUT TROUBLE'

After bending his back without discomfort, premier all-rounder Hardik Pandya on Sunday said "my body is fine", just the kind of assertion the Indian team management needed in the year of the T20 World Cup.

Hardik, who had been dogged by recurrent back problems, took a career-best 4/24 to help India bowl out England for 259 on a good batting wicket in the series-deciding third ODI.

He used the short ball to good effect, picking up three wickets with that.

"I had to bend my back a bit, change my plans, realised that this was not the wicket to go full -- and go for the short-ball, use it as a wicket-taking delivery," Hardik said after his excellent effort with the ball.

His wicket included that of the big-hitting Liam Livingstone, who was caught at deep backward square leg after he failed to tackle a bouncer.

"I always fancy my bouncer. Livingstone likes to take the short ball on and that gives me goosebumps. He hit me for two sixes, but one wicket made a big difference.

"The body's fine, that's why I'm bowling so much and without trouble, the captain is fantastic at managing my workload. The captain has been fantastic on when I should bowl and when I should not, he has handled me nicely," the star all-rounder, who has his eyes trained on the upcoming T20 showpiece in Australia, added.

Babar's 119 rescues Pak against Sri Lanka

AP ■ GALLE

Pakistan captain Babar Azam pulled his side back from the brink with a century that helped the touring side dig themselves out of trouble on day two of the first Test against Sri Lanka on Sunday.

With Pakistan on 148-9, the writing appeared to be on the wall as they appeared set to concede a huge lead to the home side on a turning track. But a record partnership for the last wicket between Babar and Naseem Shah put Pakistan back in contention as they conceded just a four-run deficit in the first innings.

The 70-run stand between Babar and Naseem is a new record in Galle in Tests with the previous best being the 63-run partnership between Dimuth Karunaratne and Lakshan Sandman against South Africa in 2018.

Sri Lanka were 36-1 at stumps on day two for a lead of 40. Oshada Fernando was unbeaten on 17 while night-watchman Kasun Rajitha was on 3.

Pakistan were struggling in their reply after Sri Lanka had posted 222 in their first innings before Babar played a captain's knock.

On a track where most Pakistan batsmen struggled to play spin, Babar was solid. Often playing on the front foot with soft hands negating the turn, he left well and cashed in when there were opportunities to score.

The last wicket partner-



ship lasted for more than two hours and frustrated Sri Lanka, which had to take the second new ball to break the stand. By that time Babar, who was playing his first Test match in Sri Lanka had posted his seventh hundred. His knock lasted more than five hours in which he faced 244 deliveries, hit 11 fours and two sixes.

Babar also dominated the strike from the No. 11 with Naseem Shah contributing just five runs during the partnership.

Prabath Jayasuriya, meanwhile, continued his impressive run in Tests. Playing his second Test match, the left-arm spinner claimed his third five-wicket haul to finish with five for 82.

Asia Cup likely to be shifted to UAE: SLC secretary

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Asia Cup is "likely" to be moved out of Sri Lanka in the wake of political unrest in the island nation, SLC secretary Mohan de Silva said on Sunday, adding that the tournament could be played in the UAE.

Sri Lanka, which has been battling an economic crisis, has witnessed widespread protests against the government for weeks.

However, the situation worsened with president Gotabaya Rajapaksa fleeing the country on a military jet.

"The Asia Cup is very likely that it will be held in the UAE," Sri Lanka Cricket secretary de Silva told PTI when asked about a possible change in the venue of the T20 tournament.

The dates for the six-team tournament are expected to remain the same as scheduled earlier from August



26 to September 11.

A qualifier will also take place before the main event with Hong Kong, Singapore, Kuwait and UAE battling out for the one qualification spot.

Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh will be the five full member teams.

With Australia tour of Sri Lanka going off smoothly and Pakistan currently playing Test cricket in Sri Lanka, there were hopes that the SLC might be able to host the continental event.

The tournament serves as good preparation for the Asian teams ahead of the T20 World Cup in Australia in October-November.

An official announcement from the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) on the change in tournament venue is expected soon. The ACC is headed by BCCI secretary Jay Shah.

Captains should be suspended if teams are unable to bowl 90 overs in a day: Chappell

IAN S ■ SYDNEY

Former Australia captain Ian Chappell has asked for captains in Test cricket to be suspended if their teams aren't able to bowl 90 overs in a day.

As per the current playing conditions, a minimum of 90 overs have to be bowled in a day of Test match action.

Earlier this month, after losing the rescheduled fifth Test to England at Edgbaston by seven wickets, India have been fined 40 per cent of their match fees and penalised two ICC World Test Championship points for maintaining a slow

over-rate during the match. India, led by pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, were found to be two overs short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration.

"While England have recently done much to improve the image of Test batting, the worrisome DRS, and over rates that continue to be glacial, need urgent attention. Umpires don't enforce on-field protocol in this regard, probably because they lack the backing of the administrators. This is unfair on patrons, who are short-changed."

"The administrators could

make some compromises and demand that players bowl 90 overs in six hours with no deductions accepted. A captain should be suspended without question if this aim isn't achieved," wrote Chappell in his column for ESPNcricinfo on Sunday.

Chappell further delved into the causes behind over rates being constantly abysmal in Test cricket. "Over rates have been declining for decades and yet they are virtually ignored as the focus is on the money-making capabilities of T20. The reason 90 overs in a day were originally

recommended is because it's very much possible for a team to bowl that many in that time."

"Under Clive Lloyd, West Indies promoted the notion that over rates don't matter when matches are being won in less than the allotted time. That argument is flawed. The batting team should receive a reasonable number of deliveries in a six-hour day, while front-line bowlers tire at an acceptable rate. These days, overs are rarely completed even with extra time allowed - and those extensions are a blight on the game."



Dhoni supported me to win games for CSK when I was 22, says Ngidi

PTI ■ LONDON

South African pacer Lungi Ngidi has acknowledged his Chennai Super Kings skipper MS Dhoni's contribution to his career, saying "for someone of his calibre to put his trust in me to win him games at a young age was massive for me."

Ngidi was picked up by the CSK in 2018. The right-arm pacer grabbed 11 wickets in seven matches at an average of 14.18 that season, helping the Dhoni-led side to win the title. He was also part of the title-winning side in 2021.

"Having someone of Dhoni's calibre put his trust in me to win him games when I was 22 was massive for me," Ngidi told 'The Guardian'.

The 26-year-old credited the IPL for teaching him how to deal with massive crowds.

"The IPL also taught me how to handle a big crowd. I'd never played in front of 60,000 people and that was a bit overwhelming at the start. But once you get going it's a breeze," he added.

After the high of 2020,

which saw him win South Africa's T20 and ODI player of the year awards, Ngidi has had to deal with selection issues and lost his place in South Africa's attack this year.

At the IPL auctions this year, Ngidi was picked up by the Delhi Capitals and although he did not play for his new side, the pacer feels being around and bowling to the prodigious Rishabh Pant has helped him grow as a player.

"When I talk to Kagiso Rabada, if I am a little down he'll remind me: 'You're an IPL winner, twice, and you've won man of the match awards. So why are you sitting here denouncing yourself?'"

"Even this year, in Delhi, Rishabh Pant has been so good. He's young but he already has so much influence within the game and being able to bowl to him in the nets and run ideas past him helps you grow as a cricketer."

Ngidi made a comeback to South Africa's T20I team during the five-match series against India recently and he's hopeful of securing his place.

Bangladesh sweeps West Indies again in ODIs

AP ■ GUYANA

Bangladesh swept the ODI Series in the Caribbean by winning the third match against a depleted West Indies bowling attack by four wickets.

Bangladesh was favored to win an 11th consecutive ODI against the West Indies, especially after bowling out the home side in the 49th over for 178, its best total of the series.

The West Indies was handicapped further when all-rounder Keemo Paul pulled a hamstring and didn't bowl, and part-time medium-pacer Rovman Powell suffered a side strain after delivering 11 balls on Saturday.

The West Indies used seven bowlers, but after spinner Gudakesh Motie-Kanhai used up his 10 overs for a team-best



4-23, Bangladesh strolled to the win at 179-6 with nine balls to spare.

While Bangladesh respected Motie-Kanhai, who claimed captain Tamim Iqbal, caught and bowled Liton Das, bowled Afif Hossain and Mosaddek Hossain, the batters comfortably took runs off everyone else.

Tamim got 34 before mis-

cuing a sweep to fine leg and Liton pushed the scoring with 50 off 65 balls.

Mosaddek charged Motie-Kanhai and hit straight to the long off fielder to leave Bangladesh on a worrying 116-5. But Motie-Kanhai was finished, and Mahmudullah, 26, and Mehidy Hasan Miraz, 16 not out, stayed calm and collect-

ed the runs.

Bangladesh made one inspired change from the second ODI, giving spinner Taijul Islam his first international match on the tour ahead of pacer Shoriful Islam. Taijul took a career-best 5-28 in 10 overs.

He bowled Brandon King with his third ball and got Shai Hope stumped with his 11th.