

OPINION 6

INDIAN DEMOCRACY:
WORK IN PROGRESS?

WORLD 9

SUNAK TOPS NEW VOTE TO EDGE
CLOSER TO FINAL SPOT IN PM RACE

MONEY 10

'ECO ON COURSE FOR 8-8.5%
GROWTH BASED ON Q1 DATA'

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY JULY 20, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

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PAK NEED 120
RUNS TO WIN
FIRST TEST
12 SPORTHry DSP crushed under
wheels of illegal minerNuh cop was
probing illegal
mining when
loaded truck
ran over himPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
CHANDIGARH

In a shocking incident, a Deputy superintendent of police (DSP) investigating illegal stone-mining was on Tuesday run over by an overloaded truck when he signalled its driver to stop the truck near Pachgaon village in Nuh district of Haryana. Tauru DSP Surender Singh died on the spot. His gunman and driver jumped aside to safety.

One accused was later arrested after getting injured in a shootout with the police, said police officials.

"One accused has been arrested following an encounter. He got shot in the leg. Teams are conducting raids to arrest others accused also. Strict action will be taken," said a senior police officer.

Police sources said that acting on a tip-off, the 59-year-old Singh had arrived at Pachgaon under Sadar police station area around 11.30 am to conduct raids to stop illegal mining in Aravalli hills when he spotted the truck at 11.50 am. Spotting a suspicious-look-



Police personnel at the crime scene after DSP Surender Singh was killed by the mining mafia at Pachgaon in Nuh district, Haryana, on Tuesday

PTI

ing dumper there, the DSP who was accompanied by two policemen, a driver and a gunman, signalled the driver to stop. But the dumper driver, instead of applying brakes, in a bid to speed away from the spot, tried to run over the men present there. While the gunman and others jumped aside to safety, the DSP was crushed under the wheels of the truck. He was rushed to hospital where he was declared brought dead.

"When the DSP reached

the spot, there was an illegal truck. He alighted from his car and went near the truck. The truck driver, instead of coming out, ran over Singh," said Nuh police spokesperson Krishna Kumar.

According to local authorities Singh died on the spot.

Haryana ADGP (law and order) Sandeep Khirwar said a case under IPC sections 302 (murder), 307, 333, 186, 353 along with 379 and 188 has been registered, and the police will come out with full progress

report very soon. Singh was recruited as assistant-sub inspector in Haryana Police in 1994.

He was currently posted as DSP, Tauru, and was to retire in four months. He was a native of Sarangpur village in Hisar and lived with his family in Kurukshetra. Reacting to the incident, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said in the case of murder of DSP Tauru, orders have been given to take strict action.

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Lanka faces 'very serious
crisis': Jaishankar to OppIndia naturally
worried about
consequences
and spillover of
protests: MinPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Terming the situation in Sri Lanka as a "very serious crisis" External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday said India is naturally worried about its consequences and the "spillover" it can have for the country.

Underlining this point during the all-party meeting to discuss the situation in the island nation, Jaishankar, however, dismissed suggestions about such a situation arising in India.

Political parties from Tamil Nadu, including the DMK and the AIADMK, had demanded an all-party meet before Parliament's monsoon session began and suggested that India should intervene to help the neighbouring country overcome the crisis.

"The reason we took the initiative to request you all to join an all-party meeting was... This is a very serious crisis and what we are seeing in Sri Lanka is in many ways an unprecedented situation," Jaishankar said.

"It is a matter which pertains to a very close neighbour



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar chairs a meeting of Floor Leaders of political parties regarding 'Present Situation in Sri Lanka', in New Delhi on Tuesday

PTI

and given the near proximity, we naturally worry about the consequences, the spillover it has for us," he added.

Jaishankar also said there have been some "misinformed comparisons" in the context of Sri Lanka wherein some people have asked whether "can such a situation happen in India".

M Thambidurai (AIADMK), Saugata Ray

(Trinamool Congress), Farooq Abdullah (National Conference), Sanjay Singh (Aam Aadmi Party), Keshava Rao (Telangana Rashtra Samithi), Ritesh Pandey

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First in 44 yrs, Lanka
Parliament to directly
elect President today

PTI ■ COLOMBO

For the first time in 44 years, Sri Lanka's Parliament will directly elect a President on Wednesday in a triangular contest, with last minute political manoeuvring indicating an edge for Dulas Alahapperuma over Acting President Ranil Wickremesinghe after he received crucial backing from the Opposition parties as well as a majority of lawmakers from his parent party.

Wickremesinghe, Alahapperuma and leftist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake were proposed by lawmakers on Tuesday as the three candidates for the July 20 presidential election to pick the successor to Gotabaya Rajapaksa after he resigned following a popular uprising against his Government for mismanaging the economy that forced him to flee the country.

A majority of members of the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party was in favour of nominating

Alahapperuma, a leader of its breakaway faction, for the post of the President and principal Opposition leader Sajith Premadasa as the Prime Minister, Chairman of the SLPP, GL Peiris, said on Tuesday, ahead of Wednesday's presidential election.

Although analysts here believe that 73-year-old Wickremesinghe is in the lead, the evidence of numbers in the 225-assembly don't necessarily suggest it would be plain sailing. Without the ruling SLPP's backing, Wickremesinghe would be a non-starter as he only has his seat in Parliament to be in the reckoning.

Going back to the original parliamentary composition in August 2020, the SLPP number of 145 had seen reversals with 52 of the lawmakers breaking away. The total of 93 later became 97 with 4 lawmakers returning.

Wickremesinghe needs 16 more votes to cross the magical figure of 113 in the 225-member house.

Detailed report on P8

Govt trying to create Jaativeers in
guise of Agniveers, alleges OppGovt says following
old practice, no new
change introducedPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Agnipath scheme was back at the centre of a new controversy amid allegations by the Opposition parties that caste and religion were basis for recruitment in the armed forces under this scheme. However, the Government outrightly rejected the allegations and said it was following the age-old practice of recruitment.

The issue was raked up by Tejashwi Yadav (RJD) and Sanjay Singh (AAP) saying the registration form for the army recruitment mentioned that the aspirants have to furnish a caste certificate. Joining them



was BJP MP Varun Gandhi, who said if patriotism would be decided "on the basis of caste", BJP ally JD(U) too questioned the move.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh dismissed the Opposition's allegation and said, "It's just a rumour. Earlier system, existing since the pre-independence era, is going on. No change has been made. Old system is being continued."

Continued on Page 2

SC transfers PILs
against Agnipath to
Delhi High Court

The Supreme Court on Tuesday transferred PILs pending before it and in many High Courts challenging the Centre's "Agnipath" scheme for recruitment in the Armed forces to the Delhi High Court.

Shinde-backed Shewale now
Shiv Sena floor leader in LSBirla ignores Udhav
camp leader's letter
as 12 Sena MPs met
him seeking changePIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Tuesday won another political round against the Udhav Thackeray camp as Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla recognised Rahul Shewale as the Shiv Sena leader in the Lower House of Parliament.

"Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has recognised Rahul Shewale as the Shiv Sena leader in the Lower House," said the Maharashtra Chief Minister, who staged a political coup against Thackeray and ousted him from power in



Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, with 12 Shiv Sena MPs, poses for a photo during a press conference, at Maharashtra Sadan in New Delhi on Tuesday

PTI

Maharashtra.

The two factions are now fighting to claim the organisation and legacy of late Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray.

Shinde, who spoke to newsmen, was flanked by 12 Shiv Sena Lok Sabha members who had written to Speaker

Om Birla to change the leader of the Parliamentary party.

Rahul Shewale, the new leader of the party in the Lok Sabha, said, "Udhav Thackeray was keen on realigning with the BJP, but went back on his word."

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FM releases list of food
items exempt from GSTEven non-BJP ruled
States gave nod for
GST on daily use
items: SitharamanPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday released a list of food items that will be exempted from GST when sold loose and not pre-packed or pre-labelled. Facing criticism over GST on daily use items, Sitharaman identified these items as: pulses (daal), wheat, rye, oats, maize, rice, flour (atta), suji (rawa), besan, puffed rice, curd, lassi.

She said the imposition of GST was a collective decision of the GST council and the 5 per cent tax is being levied on wheat flour and other items after nod from all States,

including non-BJP ruled States. Non-BJP ruled States of Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kerala had agreed to imposing the 5 per cent levy, the FM said.

In a series of tweets, Sitharaman said States levied sales tax or VAT on food-grains in the pre-Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime and the present levy on cereals, pulses, flour, curd and lassi is an exercise to curb tax leakage.

The decision, she said, was taken by the GST Council, where all States are represented, through a consensus.

The Minister's comments have come against the backdrop of the first two days of the monsoon session of Parliament virtually getting washed away due to vociferous protests by Opposition parties over the GST on daily use items and other issues.

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SC grants Nupur interim
protection from arrest on
FIRs over Prophet remarks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Two weeks after admonishing her, the Supreme Court on Tuesday granted interim protection from arrest till August 10 to suspended BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma in connection with the FIRs/complaints filed against her in several States over her remarks on Prophet Mohammad made during a TV debate.

The apex court also protected her from any coercive action in the FIRs/complaints which may be registered or entertained in the future about the May 26 telecast.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and JB Pardiwala, which had earlier refused to club the multiple FIRs lodged against Sharma after coming down heavily on her for the controversial comments, took note of



the alleged threats to life extended to her after its July 1 order.

Observing that it never wanted Sharma to visit every court for relief, the bench issued notices to the Centre and several States, including Delhi, West Bengal, and Maharashtra, on her plea urging protection from arrest as well as the revival of her withdrawn petition seeking clubbing of nine FIRs lodged in several States.

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Filmmaker held for
tagging 2017 photo
of Shah-arrested IAS
officer as 'recent'

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat Police detained filmmaker Avinash Das from Mumbai on Tuesday in a case related to sharing on Twitter a photo of Union Home Minister Amit Shah with arrested IAS officer Pooja Singhal, officials said.

As per the FIR, in a caption to the photo Das had claimed the picture was taken a few days before Singhal's arrest, while it was actually taken in 2017.

The crime branch had alleged this was done with an intention to tarnish Shah's image.

"We detained Das from Mumbai on Tuesday. He is being brought to Ahmedabad by our team for further legal process," the city crime branch's Assistant Commissioner of Police DP Chudasama said.

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SKM rejects Centre's MSP
panel, says it has 'loyalists'
who backed farm lawsPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

A day after the Ministry of Agriculture notified the formation of a committee on Minimum Support Price (MSP), the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) has rejected it saying that "so-called farmer leaders" who supported the now-repealed farm laws are its members. The SKM said it had no plans to send three representatives to the Government's 29-member panel.

In a related development, the Centre on Tuesday informed Parliament that they had not assured the SKM of setting up a committee to provide legal guarantee on the minimum support price.

In its official statement, the SKM alleged that the Government has included five

of its "loyalists", who openly advocated the three "anti-farmer" laws, in the committee and all of them are either directly associated with the BJP-RSS or support their policies.

SKM, an umbrella body of farmers' organisations that led the over one-year-long protest at Delhi Borders against three Central farm laws, says the Centre's committee looks "bogus" as it did not talk about ensuring the legal rights of farmers. "By announcing this committee before the Parliament session, the Government has tried to complete the paperwork," it said.

"The chairman of the committee is former agriculture secretary Sanjay Agarwal, who drafted all three anti-farmer bills.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

MUMBAI EX-CP HELD IN
PHONE TAPPING CASE

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday arrested former Mumbai Police commissioner Sanjay Pandey in connection with a money laundering case linked to the alleged illegal phone tapping of NSE employees, officials said.

ED ARRESTS J'KHAND
CM'S POLITICAL AIDE

Ranchi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested Pankaj Mishra, a political aide of Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, on Tuesday in connection with a money-laundering probe.

SC TO HEAR AAP'S 'MCD
POLLS PLEA' TODAY

New Delhi: The Supreme Court agreed to hear on Wednesday the plea of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) challenging the postponement of the Municipal Corporations of Delhi (MCD) polls on the ground of delimitation of wards in the national Capital.

NCR-PULSE

3,500 CALLS FOR ‘PARYAVARAN MITRA’ REGISTRATION
New Delhi: The Delhi government has received 3,500 missed calls from those who want to be registered as ‘paryavaran mitra’ - an initiative to build a network of people who can work for environmental sustainability. Environment minister Gopal Rai also held a review meeting with officials on the Delhi government’s campaign to register people working or willing to work for environmental protection as paryavaran mitras.

FIRE BREAKS OUT AT NEW ASHOK NAGAR, 12 RESCUED
New Delhi: Twelve people were rescued after a fire broke out at a three-story building in east Delhi’s New Ashok Nagar on Tuesday. According to Atul Garg, the Director of Delhi Fire Service (DFS), a call about blaze was received at 3:34 pm following which five fire tenders were rushed to the spot and so far 12 people have been rescued.

HUSSAIN CHAIRS MEETING WITH HEADS OF GOVT SCHOOLS
New Delhi: Delhi’s Food and Civil Supplies Minister and MLA of Ballimaran, Imran Hussain, on Tuesday chaired a meeting with Regional Director (Education), Deputy Director, heads of various government schools of the Ballimaran assembly constituency along with members of School Management Committee (SMC). The meeting was also attended by senior officers and engineers of DUSIB and PWD.

PATHAK URGES LG TO LOOK INTO HARDAYAL LIB ISSUE
New Delhi: The AAP MLA and MCD in-charge Durgesh Pathak on Tuesday said that the employees of Hardayal Library haven’t been paid dues for 18 months but Poonam Parashar’s son has got a Rs 70,000 cheque issued to his name. “Poonam Parashar’s husband Anil Jha among the 4 people who were elected members of the library’s management committee. AAP once again appeals to the LG to wake up and conduct an investigation into the matter. I had written a letter to the LG, seeking time to discuss the matter but there is no reply, I will write a letter again with evidence,” said Pathak.

DU AWAITS NOD TO SET UP FACILITY FOR NEW PROG
New Delhi: Delhi University (DU) is awaiting clearance from the Finance Ministry for setting up the Faculty of Technology for offering three B.Tech programmes. The varsity has sought Rs 100 crore from the University Grants Commission (UGC) for setting up infrastructure facilities for the new three B.Tech programmes. DU Vice Chancellor Yogesh Singh had announced three technical courses -- Computer Science, Electronics and Communications and Electrical Engineering in March.

CONFERENCE ON ‘GANDHI’S CONCEPT OF EDUCATION’
Gurugram: SGT University, Gurugram, in collaboration with Samrachna and Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas, is organizing the International Conference on ‘Gandhi’s Concept of Education and National Education Policy 2020: Idea, Opportunity and Implementation’ on July 20 to 21 at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. Prof. Dinesh Singh, Director, Centre for Lateral Innovation, SGT University, said that three sessions of the conference will be held on the first day while four other sessions will be organised on the second day.

POLICE ALERT CUSTOMERS AGAINST FAKE TEXTS FOR KYC
New Delhi: Citing an increase in cyber frauds through misuse of the MTNL’s name and logo, the Delhi Police on Tuesday alerted mobile customers against WhatsApp messages received on the pretext of KYC updation. Talking to Twitter, the Delhi Police said that the state-run telecom service provider does not carry out KYC verification over WhatsApp and advised mobile customers not to respond to such fraudulent messages.

JNU STUDENTS’ UNION ALLEGES POLICY VIOLATION
New Delhi: The Jawaharlal Nehru University Students’ Union on Tuesday alleged violation of reservation policies in the hostel allotment process in the varsity, saying hostels are not being allotted to SC/ST students on a priority basis. The students’ union demanded that Jawaharlal Nehru University’s (JNU) SC/ST/OBC Cell and Equal Opportunity Office immediately take note of the ‘scuttling’ of reservation policies.

Lanka faces ‘very serious crisis’: Jaishankar to Opp

From Page 1
P Chidambaram and Manickam Tagore (Congress), Sharad Pawar (NCP) and TR Baalu and MM Abdulla (DMK) too attended the meeting.
Jaishankar, who made the initial remarks, and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi, were among the senior members of the Government at the briefing.
The External Affairs Minister later informed the media that 38 leaders attended the all-party meeting. “We had invited 46 parties, 28 parties attended. From our side, there were 8 ministers, including Pralhad Joshi and Purshottam

Rupala,” Jaishankar said.
The Government gave two presentations to the leaders, including from a political perspective and from a foreign policy view.
The participants explained the political turbulence and economic crisis besides the debt situation, he said. On India facing such a situation, the Minister said, “Many members were concerned about lessons of Sri Lanka and we had anticipated that question. We also have seen some very misplaced speculation in the Press saying something has happened in Sri Lanka so we should be worrying about situations in parts of India.”

Every Indian proud of ex-Prez Kalam: Kovind

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Tuesday said former president A P J Abdul Kalam was an ideal representation of Indo-Islamic culture and three traits of a powerful nation to him included maintaining brotherhood and the capability to work together.
Addressing the fourth A P J Abdul Kalam Memorial Lecture at the Rashtrapati Bhavan auditorium here, he said that “every Indian is proud of that great son of the country.”
The President said that Kalam used to say that there are three special things in any powerful country.
“The first thing is to take pride in what the country has achieved. The second thing is to maintain brotherhood. And the third thing is the capability to work together,” Kovind was quoted as saying in a state-



ment issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan.
Kalam wanted people to remember the stories of the great people of India and learn from them, Kovind said.
“He also used to say that every country that has moved forward has a sense of mission. Therefore, whatever work is to be done, there should be a passion to complete it like a mission. He wanted all of us to keep moving forward unitedly to strengthen the fabric of our country,” he said.
Kovind said that as much as Kalam used to lay emphasis on science, he used to give equal importance to spirituality.
Creating interest for science among the common people was one of his missions, he said.
“He carried forward this mission through an organisation. But it is also worth noting that he used to meet saints and mystics of all religions and tried to learn something from them,” Kovind said.

Shinde-backed Shewale now...

From Page 1
“We had also asked Thackeray not to support Margaret Alva for the VP’s post, but our views were ignored,” he added.
The Shiv Sena has 19 MPs in the Lok Sabha of whom 12 are lending their support to the Shinde camp.
Twelve Lok Sabha members of the Shiv Sena, including Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde’s son Shrikant Shinde, earlier met Speaker Om Birla and requested him to change the party’s floor leader in the Lower House of Parliament.
The rebel Shiv Sena MPs met Birla a day after the party’s floor leader, Vinayak Raut, gave a letter to the Speaker, asking him not to entertain any representation from the rival faction.
“Twelve Lok Sabha members of the Shiv Sena met

Speaker Om Birla and requested him to appoint Rahul Shewale in place of Vinayak Raut as the party’s floor leader,” Hemant Godse, one of the 12 MPs of the Shinde faction who met Birla, said.
Raut, in his letter submitted to the Speaker on Monday night, had made it clear that he was the “duly appointed” leader of the Shiv Sena Parliamentary Party and Rajan Vichare was the chief whip.
As per sources, 12 MPs backing the Shinde Government are - Dhairyasheel Sambhajirao Mane, Sadashiv Lokhande, Hemant Godse, Hemant Patil, Rajendra Gavit, Sanjay Mandlik, Shrikant Shinde, Shrirang Barne, Rahul Shewale, Prataprao Ganpatrao Jadhav, Krupal Tumane, Bhavna Gawli. Asked about his visit to Delhi, the Chief Minister said he was here for discussions with the legal team on the disqualification petition against 16 MLAs supporting him filed by the Uddhav Thackeray camp.
He will also hold discussions with the legal team on the Other Backward Class (OBC) reservations issue as the matter is expected to come up for hearing in the Supreme Court.
“The Maharashtra Government is committed to providing justice to OBCs,” Shinde told reporters here.
Faced by a rebellion in its ranks, senior Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut said the party was ready for a fight over the symbol and control of the organisation.
Interacting with the media here, Raut also claimed that the BJP was trying to break Maharashtra into three pieces, and making a dent in the Shiv Sena ranks was part of the saffron party’s conspiracy.

8 military personnel killed themselves every month in last 5 years: Centre to LS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On an average, eight armed forces personnel committed suicide every month in the last five years. The Centre on Tuesday informed the Lok Sabha that as many as 819 armed forces personnel took the drastic step in the last five years even as several steps have been taken to address the issue.
The highest number of such cases numbering 642 was reported in the Army followed by 148 in the IAF and 29 in the Navy, the government informed the Rajya Sabha. The Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt’s reply came following a question on the number of servicemen and ex-servicemen who committed suicide in the last five years.
On steps taken to address this serious issue, he said, “For

management of stress and suicides in services, the armed forces are continuously evolving measures to improve the stress mitigating mechanisms. An elaborate mental health programme has been formulated and is in vogue since 2009.” He said various mechanisms to observe and identify armed forces personnel with problems such as depression and suicidal tendencies are in place.
“Personnel at high risk of stress are identified and counseled by unit commanding officers, regimental medical officers and junior leaders as per laid down procedures,” the minister said.
He said all the personnel returning to their respective units after leave are interviewed, counselled and medically examined by the regimental medical officers.

ED files chargesheet against six Bangladeshi nationals under PMLA
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday said it has filed a Prosecution Complaint (chargesheet) against 6 Bangladeshi nationals in a money laundering case connected to the “offences of cross border implication”. These accused persons were arrested on May 14 under PMLA. Those chargesheeted in the PMLA case are Proshanta Kumar Halder, Imam Hossain, Amana Sultana, Swapan Maitra, Uttam Kumar Mistry, Pranesh Kumar Halder and others. The Special PMLA court in Kolkata has taken cognizance of the Prosecution Complaint. The ED said in a statement. “The subject was registered by the ED as an offence of Cross Border Implications under PMLA) as Proshanta Kumar Halder was found to be accused in a bank fraud in Bangladesh and has been alleged to have siphoned off money/ proceeds of crime outside Bangladesh to various countries,” it said.

FM releases list of food items exempt from...

From Page 1
“Is this the first time such food articles are being taxed? No. States were collecting significant revenue from food-grain in the pre-GST regime. Punjab alone collected more Rs 2,000 crore on food grain by way of purchase tax. UP collected Rs 700 crore,” she said.
Sitharaman also cited VAT on rice levied prior to 2017 in Punjab, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Bihar to buttress her point.
However, the tweets did not give instances of levy of tax on pulses, paneer and lassi as has been the case now.
“Recently, the GST Council in its 47th meeting recommended reconsidering the approach for the imposition of GST on specified food items like pulses, cereals, flour, etc. There have been a lot of mis-

conceptions about this that have been spread,” the minister said.
When the GST regime, which subsumed 17 central and state taxes including central excise and state VAT, was rolled out in July 2017, a 5 per cent tax was levied on ‘branded’ cereals, pulses, and flour.
“Later this was amended to tax only such items which were sold under registered brand or brand on which enforceable right was not foregone by the supplier,” she said.
“However, soon rampant misuse of this provision was observed by reputed manufacturers and brand owners and gradually GST revenue from these items fell significantly.”
Suppliers and industry associations asked the government to impose GST uniformly on all packaged commodities to stop such misuse, she said.

Filmmaker held for tagging 2017 photo...
From Page 1
The Ahmedabad crime branch had registered an FIR against the Mumbai-based filmmaker under Section 469 (forgery) of the Indian Penal Code as well as provisions of the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act and the Information Technology Act, as he had also posted on his Instagram and Facebook accounts another photo of a woman wearing the national flag.
The FIR against 46-year-old Das was registered in June after he shared a photo showing Singhal, who had been arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case, whispering something to Shah.
The filmmaker was also booked for insulting national honour by sharing on his Instagram and Facebook accounts a photo of a woman wearing the national flag.

Hry DSP crushed under wheels...

From Page 1
Not a single culprit will be spared. Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij said, “I have given directions for stringent action against the culprits. If needed, we will call the police from nearby districts to nab the culprits. No one will be spared.” Meanwhile, the Leader of Opposition, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, called the incident shameful. “Mining mafia is going out of hand. Law and order situation is deteriorating. MLAs are being threatened, police are also not safe. How will the public feel safe? The Government needs to act,” the Congress leader said. Expressing deep condolences on the unfortunate death of the DSP, Chief Minister Khattar announced a relief of Rs 1 crore and job to one of the family members of the DSP.

SC grants Nupur interim...

From Page 1
“In the meanwhile, as an interim measure, it is directed that no coercive action shall be taken against the petitioner pursuant to the impugned nine FIRs/complaints or such FIRs/complaints which may be registered/entertained in future pertaining to the telecast dated May 26, 2022,” the bench said. The top court sought responses of the Centre and the concerned States by August 10, the next date of hearing.
While taking note of the submissions made by senior advocate Maninder Singh, who appeared for Sharma and referred to the threats to her life, the bench said its concern is how to ensure that the petitioner will avail of the alternative remedy as permitted by the court on July 1.
“In the light of these subsequent events, some of which

have been noticed above, the concern of this court is how to ensure that the petitioner is able to avail the alternative remedy as permitted by this court in an order dated July 1,” the bench observed, issuing notices to different State Governments, where FIRs are registered.
The top court said, “The petitioner has approached this court to quash all FIRs registered against her. Since her prayer can be granted in exercise of powers under Article 226, this court had on July 1, 2022 relegated the petitioner to avail alternate remedy.” It added that now the petitioner has filed a miscellaneous application pointing out inter alia that it has become impossible for her to avail remedy granted by this court and that there is imminent necessity to protect her life and liberty as guaranteed under Article 21.

SKM rejects Centre's MSP panel, says...

From Page 1
He is accompanied by Ramesh Chand, a member of NITI Aayog, who was the main advocate of these three laws. The space has been left for three representatives of SKM but the Government has placed its five loyalists who openly advocated all three anti-farmer laws. All these people are either directly associated with BJP-RSS or support their policy,” SKM said in a statement.
SKM leaders said that Krishna Veer Choudhary is associated with the Indian Farmers’ Society and is a leader of the BJP. Syed Pasha Patel is a former BJP MLC from Maharashtra. Pramod Kumar Choudhary is a member of the national executive of the RSS affiliated Bharatiya Kisan Sangh. Gunwant Patil, associated with the Shetkari organisation, is a WTO advocate and general secretary of the

Swatantra Bharat Paksh Party. Guni Prakash has been a pioneer in opposing the farmers’ movement.
“These five people spoke openly in favor of all three anti-farmer laws and most of them have been spewing venom against the farmers’ movement,” SKM said, adding there is no mention of making a law on MSP in the agenda of the committee. That is, this question will not be placed before the committee. Some items have been put in the agenda on which the government committee is already established,” it said.
Krantikari Kisan Union president and SKM coordination committee member Dr Darshan Pal pointed out that despite Punjab leading the protests on the matter none of the experts in the 29-member committee were from the State. “We will expose the MSP committee,” said Pal.

CORRIGENDUM

**Branch Office:** ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

Notices under SARFAESI Act for Loan Account No. **LBNOD00001685562/ LBNOD00001685566**, Name of the Borrower **GURSAMARJIT SINGH** property address **FLAT NO- A- 15/26, BASEMENT & GROUND FLOOR VASANT VIHAR, NEW DELHI, DELHI** was published as Symbolic Publication Notice under section 13(4) in newspaper **THE PIONEER (English) & THE PIONEER (Hindi)** dated **April 27, 2022** and was published as demand letter notice under section 13(2) **THE PIONEER (English) & THE PIONEER (Hindi)** dated **February 1, 2022**. We wish to mention that inadvertently and unintentionally, a typographical error has occurred in the said demand notice and admeasuring area date was mentioned as **3956 SQ FT** instead **595 SQ YD**. We therefore, request you to read the same as **595 SQ YD**. All other details mentioned in the said Notice dated will remain same. We sincerely regret the inconvenience caused to you in this regard.

Date : July 20, 2022
Place: Delhi NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited


PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified to the general public by this public notice that Mr. Gautam Malhotra S/o Shri Shiv Kumar Malhotra R/o N-25, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi-110027, had become owner of movable and immovable properties as per the details mentioned in the will dated **23-12-2022**, executed by his cousin sister Rubinder Kaur (deceased on **18/06/2022**), D/o Captain Mehar Singh age **61 years** R/o 117, Central Avenue, Sainik Farms, Khanpur, New Delhi-110062.

This public notice is being given so that, if anyone has any objection on the same may contact the undersigned, Gautam Malhotra, N-25, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi-110027

Sd/-
Bharat Kumar, Advocate.
D/1705/2019

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

**Branch Office:** ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

Whereas
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.
As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	M/s Robotech Private Limited/ Nishant Jain/ Amit Jain/ Himani Jain/ Kshama Jain/ A/c No. 107905000850/ 107955000003	House Situated At Plot No-78p, Sector-07 Urban Estate Faridabad Haryana/ July 16, 2022	March 07, 2022 Rs. 1,45,33,210/-	Faridabad

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date : July 20, 2022
Place: Faridabad

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

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Woman delivers baby outside Safdarjung hosp emergency

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 21 year-old woman delivered her baby on the floor outside the emergency department of Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital on Tuesday morning, with the family alleging that she spent the night there after not being let inside the maternity ward or labour room.

Taking note of the incident, the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) on Tuesday issued a notice to Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital after a woman delivered her baby outside its emergency wing as she was allegedly denied admission by the Centre-run facility, and sought a report in the matter.

This comes after a video of the woman delivering her baby went viral on social media. The Union health ministry has also sought a report from the hospital in the matter.

In the video, some women are seen standing around the pregnant woman with a saree, covering her during the delivery. Some nurses are also seen at the spot. The woman's rela-



tives are heard alleging that the hospital did not admit her on Monday and she spent the night outside its emergency department. The hospital has also initiated an inquiry into the incident, according to sources. "The woman, a resi-

dent of Khera, Ghaziabad, and her baby have been admitted to the hospital and both are doing well. They are being treated under a senior doctor in the gynaecology department," said Manoj C, the Deputy Commissioner of Police



(DCP), Southwest district. The Delhi Commission for Women said taking suo-motu cognisance of the video, it has issued a notice to Safdarjung Hospital seeking details of its inquiry report and action taken against its staff for alleged medical neg-

ligence. The commission said it has also sought an action taken report from the hospital by July 25. "Such incidents, where even reputed government hospitals deny admission and care to critical patients, break the trust of common



people in the public healthcare system. I have issued a notice to Safdarjung Hospital and have asked the hospital authorities to fix accountability in the matter," said DCW chief Swati Maliwal. "The incident is shameful and urgent steps must

be taken to ensure action against the negligent officers and to rectify the situation so that it is never repeated again," she added. Meanwhile, Safdarjung Hospital in a statement issued on Tuesday said that in an unbooked case, a 21

year-old patient was referred from Dadri on July 18. "As Safdarjung Hospital has a no refusal policy, she was examined by the senior resident on duty at 5:45 pm on July 18 and her condition was found to be 33+6 weeks gestation with preeclampsia in early labor. The patient was offered admission but she did not return with the admission paper," the statement read.

"The next day the senior resident on morning duty was informed that a patient was delivering outside. A team from gynaecology department was dispatched immediately and the patient's delivery was taken care of," statement further read.

"The patient is currently admitted and the baby, weighing 1.4 kg is admitted in nursery nine in view of low birth weight. Both are in stable condition. There are six doctors, including two senior residents (SR) posted in the Gynae receiving room round the clock," said the spokesperson of the hospital.

Blue line develops snag in morning, office-goers hit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Services of Delhi Metro blue line were delayed due to a major technical issue on Tuesday at 8 am, following which several commuters, largely office goers, faced hardship.

However, The Delhi Metro senior official said that the repair work of the line will be conducted only in the night for three hours to fully resolve the issue. While the commuters also claimed that the metro is running at a very low speed than the normal and every train is delayed for 15 minutes.

The Blue Line connects Dwarka Sector-21 in Delhi and Electronic City in Noida with a branch at Yamuna Bank to Vaishali.

The snag was reported early morning and the Delhi Metro tweeted around 8 am to alert commuters, which in the morning hours largely comprised office-goers.

"Blue Line Update: Delay in services from Indraprastha to Yamuna Bank. Normal service on all other lines," it tweeted.

In a statement, the Delhi Metro said train services are affected between Indraprastha and Yamuna Bank stations of the Blue Line since morning because of a "suspected case of cable theft" on the down line.

"This has resulted in track circuit drop (signalling issue) in this section restricting the trains to move in manual mode in limited speed of up to 25 kmph only," a senior official said.

Because of this issue, there will be minor bunching of trains between these two stations, the DMRC said. Vani Bhatia, who stays in Noida and commutes to Delhi, said, "Today, the train I boarded from Noida Sector 52 station



was running at a normal speed. But, as soon as it reached Akshardham, all commuters were asked to disembark with frequent announcements being made that there was a technical snag. The next metro arrived after 15 minutes," she said.

Many commuters took to Twitter to share the hardships they were facing and reminded Delhi Metro that the Blue Line was witnessing snags a bit too frequently in the last two months.

DMRC officials said the restoration work on the affected stretch of the Blue Line will be completed on Tuesday night after the closure of revenue services. This is because "access to track" will be necessary for up to three hours to identify the exact location of the theft and carry out necessary replacement work, they said.

"To inform passengers about the matter, announcements are being made at the stations and inside the trains on Blue Line. The information has also been shared through social media," an official said.

Services on the Blue Line of the Delhi Metro were delayed for over two hours due to a technical snag on June 9. On June 6, services on the Blue Line were impacted for nearly

an hour-and-a-half due to a technical snag caused by a bird hit. Recently, DMRC chief Vikas Kumar, when asked about several technical snags being reported on Delhi Metro corridors, particularly on the Blue Line, had said, "Most of these were overhead equipment issues caused by bird hit and birds dropping something on it. In our report submitted to the Delhi transport department, we have mentioned that".

According to Delhi Metro officials, there have been seven instances wherein Metro services were impacted ranging from few minutes to couple of hours.

In four minor incidences, the services were delayed for few minutes on a very limited section to undertake the troubleshooting of the impacted train or signaling system, which is a normal procedure in such a vast technical set up which keeps providing safe, reliable and punctual Metro services for most part of the day throughout the year.

In remaining three incidents, two on the Blue Line and one on the Yellow Line, the services were affected for about one to two hours. "None of these incidences were result of a technical failure," claimed official.

BJP asks LG to direct AAP Govt to roll back hiked power tariff

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A delegation of Delhi BJP led by its president Adesh Gupta and Leader of the Opposition, Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Tuesday met Lt. Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena and demanded that Delhi Government should be directed to roll back enhanced power tariff as well as development charges for water. Delhi BJP also held protests in all 70 Assemblies in the national capital on this issue.

After the meeting with Lt Governor, Bidhuri said that from April 1, the IFC for water for commercial properties falling under category A and B increased by Rs 18.38 per square meter. For the properties coming under category C,

the prices increased by Rs 13.13 per sqm. For Category D, the rates rose to Rs 7.88 per sqm, and for the category E, F, G, and H the rates surged by Rs 5.25 per sqm, the revised rates are Rs 110.25 per sqm.

"The revised rates for the IFC for water for the residential properties in the national Capital for category A and B are Rs 220.50 per sqm, for C category it is Rs 165.38 per sqm, for category D it increased to Rs 110.5 per sqm and for the category E, F, G, and H it is Rs 55.13 per sqm," Bhidhuri said.

"The IFC for the sewer connection in the capital for the commercial building under category A and B increased by Rs 11.03 per sqm, for category C is Rs 7.88 per sqm, for category D rose by Rs 4.73 per sqm, and for category E, F, G, and H increased by Rs 3.15 per



sqm," he informed. The revised rates of the IFC sewer line for the residential buildings in Delhi for the category A and B are Rs 132.30 per sqm, for category C are Rs 99.23 per sqm,

for category D are Rs 66.15 per sqm and for the category E, F, G, H are Rs 33.08 per sqm, Bhidhuri added. Gupta claimed that an appointment was sought from CM Kejriwal

to discuss issues, including rise in power purchase adjustment cost. But instead of paying attention to local issues, he is busy planning his Singapore trip, Gupta alleged.

Delhi Govt to send forms to Delhiites on electricity subsidy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government will send out forms to consumers from next month with their electricity bills that will require them to state whether they want to avail power subsidy or not.

Officials said that the government has already prepared a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for having online and offline forms for seeking feedback, and it is likely to come up for approval before the Cabinet this month.

The power department plans to attach forms along with electricity bills that will read "I want to avail the power subsidy" along with a message from Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, according to a government official.

Consumers will have to submit the forms at the zonal offices of their respective discoms if they wish to avail the subsidy. In case of non-submission of the form, it will be assumed that the consumer is willing to forego the subsidy and from October 1, will be charged as per the applicable rates, the official said. The

forms will have to be submitted by the end of September.

Since the cost of printing so many forms is high, the forms will only be attached with the bills for two cycles. However, the option of availing the subsidy will remain open for the consumers, the official said.

Kejriwal had announced in May that from October 1, power subsidy would be provided to only those consumers who specifically ask for it.

He said there are many people who feel they can pay their power bills without the subsidy and the money thus saved can be spent on developing schools and hospitals in the city.

Domestic consumers who use up to 200 units of electricity in a month get 100 per cent subsidy. Such consumers number around 30.39 lakh. Further, the Kejriwal government provides 50 per cent subsidy (up to Rs 800) to over 16.59 lakh consumers who use 201-400 units per month.

As a large number of consumers in Delhi pay their electricity bills online, the usual platforms of discom portals and apps for opting for subsidy scheme will also be available.

DSP's killing is failure of Haryana Govt's machinery, says Kejriwal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday said the killing of a deputy superintendent of police in Haryana was the result of the failure of the entire government machinery in the state.

The deputy superintendent of police investigating illegal stone-mining was killed on Tuesday when a truck he signalled to stop in Haryana's Nuh district drove into him, officials said. Tauru DSP Surendra Singh had signalled a dumper-truck to halt to check documents. But the driver sped on, running over him.

"Extremely sad. The murder of a police officer in Haryana is the result of the failure of the entire government system in Haryana. How will the public be safe where the police is not safe? May the soul of the martyr police officer rest in peace and may God give courage to the family in this hour of grief," Kejriwal tweeted in Hindi.

According to police, the officer's gunman and his driver jumped aside to safety, but the DSP was hit.

SCERT holds joint orientation prog 'Mission Buniyaad' for schools

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) on Tuesday held a joint orientation programme on Mission Buniyaad for government schools in the national Capital. The programme was attended by 2700 head of schools (HoS) under Directorate of Education (DoE) and Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD).

The orientation was led by MCD Commissioner Gyanesh Bharti and Secretary (Education) Ashok Kumar. Officials said that the main aim of the orientation was to discuss the achievements and learnings from the previous phase of Mission Buniyaad, held between April and June, and draw a roadmap to further strengthen the foundational learning skills of students studying in DoE and MCD schools through this program.

Bharti said that around 26 lakh children studying in DoE and MCD schools are the future of Delhi. "With the introduction of Mission Buniyaad in all government schools we have seen 20-30 per cent improvement in the learning level of children, which is just the first milestone," said Bharti. He said that as a

good school leader, HoS should engage and motivate teachers to help every child learn better. Support of all teachers is required to achieve 100 per cent results in attaining the goals of Mission Buniyaad."

Further, Secretary Education, Kumar said that Mission Buniyaad was a success in its current phase due to collective efforts of teachers and HoS from both DoE and MCD schools. "We should not rest till we bring every child back to the mainstream. Our focus should be to build the foundation rather than completing the syllabus. HoS and teachers should own the project and do their best," said Kumar.

Discussing the report on Mission Buniyaad, the Director Education, Himanshu Gupta said that DoE and MCD's education department have worked hard to bring many children upto grade appropriate level to an extent. "Now DoE is also focusing on strengthening primary education significantly because 85 per cent of brain development in children happens till age six," he said.

Director Education (MCD), Vikas Tripathi said that at MCD schools, the learning trajectory of every child is tracked to help them individually, as per their learning requirements.

Madame Tussauds India reopens

STAFF RREPORTER ■ NOIDA

Madame Tussauds India, a museum featuring wax statues of celebrities, reopened on Tuesday after a brief closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic and at a new address in Noida.

The museum located at Delhi's Connaught Place was earlier shut down at the onset of a nationwide lockdown imposed to curb the spread of the coronavirus in March 2020.

The museum has now reopened and moved to the DLF Mall of India in Noida, a satellite town of Delhi in Uttar Pradesh, its operators Merlin Entertainments said.

"India, recognised for its rich cultural past, sparkling Bollywood star-studded actors and entertainment sector diversity, is an iconic destination to host the world renowned attraction brand," the operator said in a statement.

"The new wax attraction by Madame Tussauds will feature close to 50 figures from various genres, including history, sports, music, film and television," it added. Visitors will have the opportunity to meet current and late international and domestic figures such as



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, freedom fighters including Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Bhagat Singh and Subhas Chandra Bose, Cricket legends like Sachin Tendulkar, Kapil Dev and Virat Kohli, Bollywood stars like Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan, Anil Kapoor, Katrina Kaif and Madhubala, singing legends Asha Bhosle and Sonu Nigam, and many more.

Children will also get an opportunity to meet their favourite cartoon characters such as Motu-Patlu, according to the statement. "Each wax figure is crafted by over 20 international artists working concurrently for 3-6 months to create the magic. The attrac-

tion's audiences have long held a special place in their hearts for Madame Tussauds and visitors are promised an unforgettable star-studded experience," the statement said. Madame Tussauds has over 23 locations around the globe, from New York to Shanghai, Amsterdam to Sydney, and of course, London, where the story began, according to the statement.

Throughout its over-250-year-long history, Madame Tussauds has brought to life thousands of celebrities, stars and heroes -- in mindblowingly accurate detail -- allowing the visitors to brush shoulders with their idols and reach for the stars, the statement said.

SC to hear AAP's plea challenging postponement of MCD polls today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court agreed to hear on Wednesday the plea of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) challenging the postponement of the Municipal Corporations of Delhi (MCD) polls on the ground of delimitation of wards in the national Capital.

A bench comprising Chief Justice N V Ramana and justices Krishna Murari and Hima Kohli took note of the plea of the counsel for the AAP that the unification of three MCDs and the consequential delimitation exercise cannot be a valid ground to defer the civic polls. "Delimitation is not a ground to delay the municipal

elections. Please post this writ petition with the pending contempt plea tomorrow before a bench headed by Justice A M Khanwilkar," lawyer Shadan Farasat, appearing for the AAP, told the bench.

A bench headed by Justice Khanwilkar is hearing a contempt plea for not holding up municipal polls, the lawyer said, while seeking the tagging of AAP's plea with the one pending for hearing on Wednesday. "Post along with the contempt (plea)," the CJ said.

The announcement of the election schedule for the three Delhi civic bodies was deferred in March this year and later, the Centre brought a Bill for the unification of MCDs.

Man killed over parking fight near Saket Metro, 1 arrested

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A man was killed after being allegedly hit with stones and bricks by a group of men following an argument over parking near Delhi's Saket Metro station. Police said that they have arrested one of the accused while manhunt has been initiated to nab the remaining others.

The deceased identified as Rohit. According to Beniat Mary Jaiker, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), South district, on July 16, a police control room (PCR) call was received about a person lying near Saket Metro station in an injured condition. "When police reached the

spot, they found out that the injured had been shifted to Safdarjung hospital. Later in the day, the police was informed by the hospital that the person had died," said the DCP. Rohit along with his three friends — Rahul Yadav, Ashu Yadav and Amit Jain — were in a car and wanted to park the vehicle near the metro station.

However, five-six boys were standing at place where they wanted to park car, police said. This led to an argument between the two groups which soon escalated into a scuffle during which those standing near metro station hit Rohit with bricks and stones, said DCP. On the basis of Rahul's statement and Rohit's Medico

Legal Case (MLC), a case was registered under sections 302 (Murder), 308 (Attempt to commit culpable homicide) and 34 (Common intention) of the Indian Penal Code, the officer said.

The police formed different teams and checked footage from hundreds of CCTV cameras that helped nab one of the accused, identified as Priyanshu, (22), a resident of Saidulajab, the officer added. When interrogated, the accused disclosed that he along with his five friends were standing near gate a gate of the Saket metro station when the four people, including Rohit, came in a car and wanted to park their vehicle where they were standing, the DCP said.

Centre exempts strategic highway projects near LoC from green nod

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has exempted highway projects related to defence and strategic importance within 100 km of the Line of Control (LoC) or the Line of Actual Control (LAC) from the requirement of environmental clearance. It has notified amendments to environmental impact assessment rules.

The notification issued by the Union Environment Ministry also exempts projects pertaining to the expansion of terminal buildings at airports (without an increase in the existing area of the airport) from seeking green nod.



It also increases the exemption threshold of biomass-based power plants which also use auxiliary fuels such as coal, lignite or petroleum products up to 15 percent and fish handling capacity of ports and harbours which exclusively handle fish.

"Highway projects related to defence and strategic importance in border states are sensitive in nature and in many cases need to be executed on priority keeping in view strategic, defence and security considerations." "And in this regard, the central government deems it

necessary to exempt such projects from the requirement of environmental clearance in the border areas subject to specified standard operating procedure along with standard environmental safeguards for self-compliance by the executing agency," the notification read.

All highway projects are exempted up to 100 km from the LoC, LAC or the border, it said. Environmental activists had opposed the draft notification issued in April to exempt border projects from environmental clearance, saying it would cause environmental degradation in areas having a

fragile ecology.

With the amended policy coming into force, certain stretches of the Char Dham project in Uttarakhand, several other projects in the Himalayas and the northeast which fall within 100 km of the border or the LAC will not require the green nod. The project involves the widening of 899 km of roads in ecologically sensitive areas of Uttarakhand to improve connectivity to Kedarnath, Badrinath, Yamunotri, and Gangotri shrines.

After being challenged by an environmental non-profit organisation in Uttarakhand, Citizens for Green Doon, the Supreme Court had in September 2020 ordered that the carriageway width for the Char Dham project should not exceed 5.5m as prescribed in a 2018 circular of the Union Road Transport Ministry.

The Defence Ministry had then sought a modification in

the order to allow the width to be of 10m so that heavy machinery like missile launchers could be easily moved up to the India-China boundary in Uttarakhand. The top court had then asked a high-powered committee to look into the issue which said the width should be allowed to be of 10m in view of the strategic importance of these highways. The ministry said that biomass-based thermal power plants (TPP) using auxiliary fuel such as coal, lignite or petroleum products up to 15 percent are already exempted from the requirement of environmental clearance.

"In view of the activity of using the aforesaid fuel mix being eco-friendly, and in order to encourage such activities, the central government deems it necessary to increase the threshold capacity for such TPPs for which environmental clearance shall not be required," the notification read.

Railways removes on-board service charges on food items

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

After facing a backlash on taking an exorbitant service charge on tea being served in one of the premium trains, the Indian Railways has finally removed the on-board service charges on all meals and beverages that are not pre-ordered on premium trains. And the prices of tea and coffee will be the same for all passengers who have pre-booked it or ordered those on the train, and will see no increase in the rates.

The directives have come against the backdrop of a tweet by *The Pioneer journalist Deepak Kumar Jha*, on June 30. The tweet, which had gone viral, cited the resentment within passengers who had to pay ₹50 service charge for a ₹20 cup of tea on-board the express trains making the price of a cup of tea to ₹70. Under the previous norm of the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), if the person has not booked their

meals along with their train ticket, they had to pay an additional ₹50 while ordering food during the journey, even if it is just a ₹20 cup of tea or coffee.

Now, a passenger, who has not pre-booked his meals on board premium trains like Rajdhani, Duronto or Shatabdi, will pay ₹20 for tea (similar to the amount paid by those who pre-booked their meals). Earlier, the cost of such non-pre-booked tea was ₹70, including the service charge.

Interestingly, one finds in the latest July 15 order of IRCTC that while on one hand the service charge of ₹50 has been done away with, the prices of snacks, lunch and dinner have been increased by an identical Rs 50.

Previously, the rates for breakfast, lunch and evening snacks were ₹105, ₹185 and Rs 90, respectively while an additional service charge of ₹50 used to be levied with each meal. However, though the passengers will now not pay the service charge, still they will have to pay ₹155, ₹235, and

₹140 for these meals. "The removal of the service charge will only reflect in the prices of tea and coffee. In this, the passenger who has not pre-booked will pay the same amount as a passenger who has booked it."

However, for all other meals the service charge amount has been added to the cost of meals for non-booked facilities," a senior railway officer of catering department said.

For Vande Bharat trains, passengers who haven't booked the on-board services have to shell out the same amount for breakfast/lunch or dinner/evening snacks as they did when they were charged service charges, with the increase showing in the cost of the food instead of the charges.

Keeping the resentment in mind, the Centre last week reiterated that no hotels or restaurants can add service charges automatically or by default in the food bill which will also include the service charge for catering in Indian Railways premises including trains.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of my client i.e. Yes Bank Limited, Mr. Ankur Mohan is the owner of Shop No. 133/16/1 situated at Basai Road, Hidayatpur Chhaoni, Prem Nagar, Gurugram, Haryana by virtue of Transfer Deed dated 14.01.2020 (Doc No. 10739). Transfer Deed is hereby informed to the above mentioned owner, who wants to mortgage the said shop and intends to obtain loan from our client against the said shop, if anybody has any objections upon the ownership of above owner over the said shop, its Sale/ Mortgage/ Litigation, and any other objections, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.

Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Consultants)
10, 1st Floor, 23, Shriya Nagar, New Delhi-110028
Ph: 011-41112572-73, 9813228536 (M)
kumarassociatesadvocates@gmail.com

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform general public that Mr. Prem Parkash and Mr. Manoj Kumar Bhutani are the owners of Property bearing no. D-102-A/1, area measuring 60 sq. yds., out of khata no. 33/7, situated in the area of village Posaangpur, in the colony known as Urban Nagar, in Block D, East Urban Nagar, New Delhi -110059 vide Relinquishment Deed dated 27.06.2007 Doc. No. 132019. Mr. Prem Parkash and Mr. Manoj Kumar Bhutani have misdeed the below mentioned document, a Original Relinquishment Deed dated 27.06.2007 Doc. No. 132019 executed in favour of Mr. Prem Parkash and Mr. Manoj Kumar Bhutani respect of the said property Doc. No. 13019. Anyone who find the above said document shall handover the same to Mr. Prem Parkash and Mr. Manoj Kumar Bhutani R/o. Property bearing no. D-102-A/1, village Posaangpur, Urban Nagar, in Block D, East Urban Nagar, New Delhi -110059 in case anyone has any objection regarding the said property, the same may be raised within 7 days of the publication of the said notice. For legal aid, Jain (Advocates), Law Veritas, Unit no 907, 9th Floor, GD TLT Tower (B-08), Netaji Subhash Place, New Delhi-110034 or contact at 9067017122, 9813228536 (M).

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is given hereby to public at large that my client is in process of purchasing the lands falling in Khata No. 114/102(2-3), 11/1(3-18), 20/2(3-18), 21/1(1,2-8) 15/1(14-16), 16/1(1-3) situated within the revenue estate of village Bijwasan, New Delhi from its recorded owners namely Sh. Mahabir Prasad S/o. Sh. Sohan Lal & Sh. Krishan Kumar Prasad, Mahabir Prasad R/o. S-310, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi having 23rd Share in the above mentioned land. Whereas all persons including the individuals, companies, banks, financial institutions (banking and non banking), firms, creditors, claimants/family members etc. having any right, interest, claim, objection in respect of above mentioned land or part of the said land, are hereby requested to the same in writing by registered post, support with the original documents, to the undersigned at the address below within the period of 10 days from the publication of the said notice. If any person shall the claim or right if any, of the such person shall be considered to have been waived of and/or abandoned.

ABHILASH VASHIST ADVOCATE
Dwarka Courts, Sec-16, Dwarka, New Delhi

PUBLIC NOTICE
My client Ms. Suneeti intends to purchase Upper Ground Floor Front Side without roof rights measuring 60 Sq.Yards of freehold Property No. F/34, land measuring 100 Sq.Yards, Khata No. 84/6, Village Palam, Colaba, Mumbai-400005. In the event of any response to this notice, than our client shall presume that title of the said property is unencumbered and clear.

Karnail Singh, Advocate,
K-8, Basement, Jungpura Extension, New Delhi,
Contact No. 9811163363 & 9953983363

PUBLIC NOTICE
The general public is informed that the cars with the following car numbers which have completed their life Petrol Cars 15 Years Diesel Cars 10 Years. The MCD drive was confiscated by Pine View Technology Pvt Ltd and are being sold by auction on 21/07/2022. All these vehicle owners are informed to come to the company's office and claim the scrap value of the vehicle. Otherwise, all these vehicles will be scrapped in the next three days.

DL1SN6761	DL3CAP5756	DL8SA6239
DL8SM2433	DL4CA0809	DL9SE4438
WB7484550	DL1CO0936	DL9SE5882
DL9K45676	DL1E0936	DL9SE5882
DL2SK1265	UA0BD4436	DDP3903
DL8SK3015	DL4SG4667	DL4SA1336
DL1SA4920	DL4SB0237	DL8SM3426
DL8SE4382	DL3SAZ1808	DL4SBH6183
DEF1515	DL9SM6837	DL6S26841
DBS9255	DL7SA43441	DL4SAW8363
DL8SA1423	DL4SBF2686	DL8SAF0265
UA07A6935	DL4SAM8821	DL4SAE3600
DL8CE4740	DL6SY1897	DL7SN5640
DL9CB3895	DL6S26302	DL6SA0691
DL2CAA1421	DL4SAR6182	DL4SS1493
DL3CAD4245	DL3CU06300	DL4SAN8915
DL9CW1953	DNM01745	DL4SG5748
DL3CP3730	DL3SP1745	DL4SA0741
HR5107918	DL3SAND001	DL9S7670
DL6SP9053	DL4SN6837	DL1P6C9373
DL6S7224	DL4SU4634	DL4SA4688
DL8SAE6291	DL4SAW4722	DL6S25459
DL3SAK7528	DL5SN4354	HR29M1274
DL2FBSG5000	DL4SAW2901	DL6SH0473
DL9SD5037	DL8SD5476	DL4SAM9609
DL6SP2605	DL4SAF9236	DL4SAR1720
HR20F3928	DL4SX4406	DL4SW4155
DL6SR5721	DL6S10006	DL4SAM3851
DL3SP1522	DL4SAF5226	DL4SAN7165
DL6SP1566	DL8S77991	DL6SS1421
DL6SS5851	DL8SV7732	DL4SA0740
DL6SS5851	DL8SV6029	DL8S57574
DL8SAD1247	DL8SR9472	DL8SP4706
DD26448	DL8SK3316	DL8SAF6512
DL8SZ7326	DL8SP3841	DL5S01073
TM04AH0203	DL8SAJ3035	NO REG 18
DL9CK5723	DL2SA4643	DL9TC0151
DL4CAB6587	DL8SF6550	DL8SAF9508
DL8CL0337	DL4SAB7611	DL4SA15952
DL6CH9887	DL5S3392	MH43L11
DL2F00008	DL8SN2596	DL1P27254
DL2CL8625	HR13A7425	DL8CH7946
DL3CAD0528	DL4SM4370	DL3CN8183
DL9SK9323	DL8SV9399	
DL2CAG1557	DL8SG4943	

SC transfers all pending Agnipath PILs to Delhi HC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday transferred PILs pending before it and in many High Courts challenging the Centre's 'Agnipath' scheme for recruitment in the Armed forces to Delhi High Court.

A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud, Surya Kant, and AS Bopanna also asked the High Courts of Kerala, Punjab and Haryana, Patna, and Uttarakhand to transfer the PILs pending before them against the 'Agnipath' scheme to Delhi High Court or keep it pending till a decision from the Delhi High Court if the petitioners before it so desires.

"In this backdrop, we are of the view the three writ petitions which have been instituted before this court should be transferred to the Delhi High Court and numbered under Article 226 of the Constitution."

Ordinarily, we would have disposed of these petitions by granting liberty to the petitioners to move the Delhi High Court afresh but we are desisting from following that

course of action, to obviate any further delay in withdrawal of the petitions and filing of fresh petitions', the bench said.

The bench directed the registrar judicial of the top court shall accordingly transmit the record of the three writ petitions filed under Article 32 of the constitution to the registrar judicial of Delhi High Court so that the petitions can be renumbered and be placed before the appropriate bench in terms of the appropriate directions of the Chief Justice of the High Court.

"It would be appropriate to direct that the copy of the present order be placed on record of the proceedings in each of the High Courts by the counsel appearing on behalf of Union of India in those proceedings", said the bench.

"We request the Delhi High Court for expeditious disposal of the writ petitions after hearing the parties," the bench said, adding that the Union of India shall ensure that copy of this order is immediately placed before the registrar judicial of the concerned High Courts.

SC rejects plea of bereaved dad for autopsy by doc of his choice

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday did not agree to the plea of a man, whose 17-year-old daughter was found dead at a private residential school in Tamil Nadu, that a doctor of his choice be permitted to be part of a team of experts ordered by the Madras High Court to conduct a fresh postmortem on her body.

The death of the class 12 girl on July 13 in the premises of the residential school had sparked off violence in certain areas of Kallakurichi district in Tamil Nadu.

The Madras High Court, while taking strong note of violent incidents, had directed state police chief to constitute a special investigation team (SIT) to identify the rioters and take stern action against them. It had also ordered a re-post-mortem on the body of the girl.

Parl adjourned for 2nd day over Opp raising GST on new items

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha were adjourned for the second consecutive day on Tuesday without transacting any business amid protests by opposition members over imposition of GST on some new items and on price rise issue.

The Lok Sabha was adjourned in the morning by Speaker Om Birla after the opposition members moved to the well of the house and continued to raise slogans against the Modi government over the issue of price rise. One of the placards read "Gabbar Singh Strikes Again".

Birla first appealed to the opposition members to go to their seats and said carrying of placards inside the House is

against Parliamentary Rules. He said since the House is discussing farmers' issue, the members should participate in it. "You carry rules book but don't follow rules. The rules prohibit carrying placards here but you are carrying them. You raise farmers issue outside the House but not inside", he said and adjourned the house till 2 pm.

As soon as the Lok Sabha reassembled at 2 pm, opposition members belonging to the Congress, Trinamool Congress, DMK and others came to the well of the House carrying placards to protest against price rise and imposition of the GST on some new items. After laying of papers by the members, Kirit Premjibhai Solanki, who was on the chair adjourned the House for the

day. In the Rajya Sabha, proceedings in the pre-lunch session were adjourned without transacting any business as Opposition parties, including the Congress, pressed for an immediate discussion on issues ranging from price rise to the Agnipath scheme.

Members of the Congress, Left, and Aam Aadmi Party insisted on a discussion on the issues, forcing adjournment of proceedings till 2 pm.

Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu rejected notices given by Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge and other leaders under rule 267 that calls for setting aside the business of the day to take up the issues listed by them. "I am not admitting them," Naidu said soon after the listed papers were laid on the table.



Opposition parties' Vice Presidential candidate Margaret Alva files her nomination papers in the presence of Rahul Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge, Sharad Pawar, Sitaram Yechury, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and other Opposition leaders at Parliament House, in New Delhi on Tuesday PTI Photo

Opp candidate for Vice President Alva files her nomination

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Joint Opposition candidate for the vice presidential election Margaret Alva on Tuesday filed her nomination papers for the post and was accompanied by a host of leaders from various parties.

Alva said elections do not frighten her and winning and losing is a part of life but the trust of members of both houses of Parliament will help her bring people together, find common solutions and help build a strong and united India.

The vice presidential poll will be held on August 6 to elect the successor to M Venkaiah Naidu, whose term ends on August 10. Alva, 80, is pitted against NDA's Jagdeep Dhankhar, who resigned as West Bengal governor after being nominated on Saturday evening.

Several opposition leaders, including Congress' Rahul Gandhi, NCP's Sharad Pawar, Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, were present during her nomination filing.

Shiv Sena's Sanjay Raut, Samajwadi Party's Ram Gopal Yadav, DMK's Tiruchi Siva, CPI-M's Sitaram Yechury, CPI's D Raja and MDMK's Vaiko were also present during the nomination filing. No leader from the Trinamool Congress or the Aam Aadmi Party was present during the nomination

filing of the joint opposition candidate. Both the parties were not represented at the opposition meeting that decided on fielding Alva as their consensus candidate, but Pawar had said that he is in touch with both TMC leader and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee as well as AAP convener and Delhi Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Alva said the coming together of the opposition to support my candidature for the post of Vice President of India, "is a metaphor of the reality that is India". "We come from various corners of this great country, speak different languages, and follow different religions and customs."

Our unity, in our diversity, is our strength. We fight for what is important to us: to uphold the pillars of democracy, to strengthen our institutions, and for an India that is 'Saare Jahan se Accha', that belongs to each and every one of us. An India where there is respect for all," she said.

Alva was first elected to Parliament in 1974 and served four consecutive six year terms in the Rajya Sabha followed by one in the Lok Sabha.

During her 30 years in Parliament she served on several important and prestigious committees, served as presiding officer in both Houses and chaired the Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women for five years and was part of Indian delegation to many international conferences.

Centre gives approval for renaming 7 cities, towns

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has given its nod for renaming seven cities and towns, including Allahabad to Prayagraj, in the last five years. Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that a proposal has also been received from the West Bengal government for renaming the state as 'Bangla' in all three languages - Bengali, English and Hindi.

While the No Objection Certificate (NOC) to change the name of Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh to Prayagraj was given on December 15, 2018, the NOC for changing the name of Rajahmundry city in Andhra Pradesh to Rajamahendravaram was given on August 3, 2017, he said replying to a written question. Approval for changing the name of Nagar Untari in Jharkhand to Shri Banshidhar Nagar was given in August, 2018, he said.

Clearance was also given to change names of Birshingpur Pali, Hoshangabad Nagar and Babai city - all three in Madhya Pradesh - to Maa Birasini Dham (2018), Narmadapuram (2021) and Makhan Nagar (2021), respectively, the minister said.

Approval to change name of Punjab's Shri Hargobindpur city to Shri Hargobindpur Sahib was given in March 2022, the minister added.

IN SHORTS

SC: ARMY DISABILITY PENSION CONDITIONAL

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has said army personnel will be entitled to disability pension only if the disability is attributable to military service or was aggravated by such service and if such condition is more than 20 per cent. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and M M Sundresh was hearing an appeal filed by the Centre challenging an order of the Armed Forces Tribunal which granted disability pension to army personnel.

'3.92L INDIANS GIVE UP CITIZENSHIP IN 3 YRS'

New Delhi: Over 3.92 lakh Indians gave up their citizenship in the last three years and 1.70 lakh of them, the highest, took up American citizenship, Lok Sabha was informed on Tuesday. Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said that according to details provided by the Ministry of External Affairs, individuals renounced Indian citizenship for reasons personal to them and took citizenship in over 120 countries. As many as 1.6 lakh Indians renounced citizenship in 2021, highest in the past five years.

SC SEEKS RESPONSE ON VARAVARA'S BAIL PLEA

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought response from the NIA on a plea filed by Bhima Koregaon case accused, P Varavara Rao, seeking permanent bail on medical grounds. A bench headed by Justice U U Lalit issued notice on the plea, and said it would be heard on August 10.

SC TO HEAR PLEA FOR 23-WEEK ABORTION

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to consider listing the plea of an unmarried woman who was not allowed by the Delhi High Court to undergo medical termination of pregnancy at 23 weeks arising out of a consensual relationship. The High Court, while hearing the plea last Friday, had observed that it virtually amounts to killing the foetus.

SC ASKS TN TO CLARIFY ABOUT NEET EXEMPTION

New Delhi: The MHA has sought clarifications from the Tamil Nadu Government on a bill that seeks to give exemption to the state's students from the ambit of NEET, Lok Sabha was informed on Tuesday. NEET is a common qualifying test for MBBS and BDS courses in medical and dental colleges across India.

COVID DEATHS MATH MODEL ERRONEOUS: WHO

New Delhi: The mathematical modeling approach adopted by the WHO to project excess mortality estimates related to COVID-19 suffers from erroneous assumptions and is unscientific and India had registered its strong objection to this methodology, the government informed Parliament on Tuesday.

PAK MAN ON MISSION TO KILL NUPUR HELD

New Delhi: A Pakistani man, who had crossed the border to kill former BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma for her remarks against Prophet Mohammad, was apprehended by the Border Security Force (BSF) last week in Rajasthan.



Congress MP Rahul Gandhi with party MPs and other Opposition parties' MPs during a protest against inflation and the decision to increase GST on food items, near the Gandhi statue at Parliament complex, in New Delhi on Tuesday PTI Photo

41 named in coal smuggling chargesheet

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed its first chargesheet in the multi-crore coal smuggling case implicating for now 41 persons that include some top Eastern Coal Fields Limited (ECL) officials, and a former State-level Trinamool Congress leader.

The names of TMC national general secretary and Abhishek Banerjee and his wife Rujira Narula Banerjee however do not figure in the chargesheet. The duo have been questioned by the CBI and Enforcement Directorate on several occasions in the case.

The 41 individuals include Anup Maji alias Lala a local businessman the main mastermind who has allegedly

amassed wealth to the tune of several hundred crore, Vinay Mishra a former Bengal youth TMC vice-president --- who enjoyed an elaborate police protection before fleeing the country --- and his brother Vikash Mishra, presently in CBI custody.

Besides alerting the Interpol CBI has already announced a cash award of Rs 1 lakh for providing information about Vinay Mishra who is believed to be in hiding in the island country of Vanuatu. Mishra formerly known to be close to Banerjee is known to have surrendered his Indian citizenship and acquired the one of his new country.

A bevy of former top ECL officials including general managers, Agents and managers have also been named in the chargesheet. The senior

officials have been named both as facilitators and beneficiaries in the case. At least seven of them were arrested as late as last week. A number of serving and retired police officials have been named in the chargesheet. This apart, about 22 companies involved in coal trade have also been named in the document.

Both coal and cattle smuggling turned out to be high-profile cases after names of some senior politicians including Banerjee and Bengal minister Malay Ghatak and an MLA from Purulia bobbed up during investigations.

Both Abhishek Banerjee who is also the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Rujira his wife have repeatedly been questioned by the ED and CBI in relation to the case. According

to sources the couple have been asked questions regarding a transaction in a bank account in Thailand repeatedly mentioned by Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari in his speeches. During interrogation Rujira has allegedly been asked about an alleged transfer of heavy amounts to her account by principal mastermind Lala. She has however denied the knowledge of such transfer. Her husband, the TMC MP from Diamond Harbour --- who has also been questioned about the transactions --- has however alleged political vendetta saying the BJP Government was unleashing the central agencies behind him because the saffron party failed to win Bengal in 2021 Assembly elections.

"ECL and its coal mines belong to the Centre, the mines

are guarded by the CISF and the borders through which they are smuggled out are also guarded by the BSF ... so how can you blame the State government and its police ... it is clearly and act of vendetta and failing to win Bengal in 201 the BJP Government is trying to malign and harass us with the help of Agencies as they have been doing to the opposition parties all over the country ... but we will never bow down before them," said Banerjee in an earlier statement. Recently Bengal Minister Malay Ghatak was also summoned to Delhi along with a Purulia TMC MLA in connection with the coal smuggling case. The duo however failed to appear before the ED office. Ghatak is from Asansol from where the coal smuggling took place.

NCW, NCPDR seek action against NEET staff for innerwear removal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Women (NCW) and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR) on Tuesday sought action against the NEET frisking personnel for asking a 17-year-old girl to remove her innerwear before entering an exam centre in Kerala.

A case was registered by the police after the teen lodged a formal complaint.

The Indian Penal Code (IPC) Sections 354 (Assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty) and 509 (Word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) have been invoked, police said.

The NCW said it has taken serious note of the reported incident which is "shameful and outrageous to the modesty" of young girls.

"Chairperson Rekha Sharma has written to the chairperson of the National Testing Agency (NTA) to conduct an independent inquiry into the allegations levelled by the girl students and to take appropriate action in accordance with law against the responsible. The Commission has also sought a time-bound investigation in the matter," it said in a statement.

The NCW has also written to the Director General of Police (DGP), Kerala to conduct a fair investigation in the matter and register FIR if the

allegations are found to be true.

The action taken must be apprised to the commission within three days.

The NCPDR, on the other hand, has written to Kollam District Collector requesting an inquiry into the matter as to how many children underwent a similar treatment on July 17 during the checking/frisking of aspirants appearing in the National Eligibility Entrance Test examination.

"You are further requested to furnish statements of the affected children and inform the Commission about the staff involved and action taken against them," the NCPDR said in the letter

DGCA grounds Go First's 2 planes for faults in engine

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Tuesday grounded Go First's two A320neo flights, Mumbai to Leh and Srinagar to Delhi after facing engine-related issues. There have been multiple technical malfunction incidents in Indian airlines in the last one month. The DGCA has ordered a probe in the incident and grounded two planes having Pratt and Whitney engines till further clearance. Both aircraft reported faults in engine number 2.

The Go First aircraft A320 registered as VT-WGA operating as G8-386 from Mumbai to Leh on Tuesday diverted to Delhi as its engine No.2 EIU (engine interface unit) fault. Another A320 Neo aircraft

registered at VT-WJG that was flying from Srinagar to Delhi had to return to Srinagar. The flight G8 6202 that took off at 11:40am on Tuesday turned back due to the engine 2's exhaust gas temperature (EGT) overlimit. According to DGCA, the flight from Mumbai to Leh was redirected to Delhi while the Srinagar-Delhi flight made a turn back towards Srinagar.

Over the last three days, Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia has held multiple meetings with airlines and officials from his ministry and DGCA officials to ensure safety oversight.

6 out of 12 States where metro runs yet to constitute statutory UMTA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Parliamentary Standing Committee of the Housing and Urban Affairs (2021-22) on 'Implementation of Metro Rail Projects - An Appraisal, in its report said that despite a lapse of more than four years, six of the 12 States where Metro rail networks are either operational or under construction were yet to constitute Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority (UMTA) as a statutory body. These six States are -- National Capital Territory of Delhi, Karnataka, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra (in Mumbai only) and Rajasthan.

As per Metro Rail Policy, 2017, state governments are required to constitute UMTA

as a statutory body for preparation of a comprehensive mobility plan for the city.

"The committee, however, found that despite a lapse of more than four years, out of 12 states where Metro rail network had either commenced or was under construction, six states were yet to constitute UMTA, viz., NCT of Delhi, Karnataka, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra (in r/o Mumbai only) and Rajasthan," it said.

Noting the capital intensive nature of metro projects, the Committee recommended

adoption of less capital intensive MetroLite and MetroNeo networks in smaller cities with low ridership, and as feeder to high capacity metro systems," the statement said.

Noting that currently, metro rail projects are being governed by three central acts, the committee felt the need for a single and comprehensive legislation, as many metro projects are under planning, development and operating phases in different cities under different models viz. Exclusive ownership of state governments, JV (joint venture) with central government, PPP (public private partnership) basis, private ownership, etc. And many more cities are expected to take up the different kinds of metro projects- MRTS, LRTS MetroLite, MetroNeo, etc., it



further said.

The panel also said barring Delhi Metro and Mumbai's Line 1, many operational metros vis. Bengaluru Metro, Hyderabad Metro, Lucknow Metro, Chennai Metro, Kolkata Metro and Kochi Metro, had "low ridership leading to delay in achieving break-even".

The committee, therefore, recommended the need for increasing ridership, as per the statement.

Encourage more States for decentralised procurement of foodgrains: Parl Panel to Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A Parliamentary committee on Tuesday said the Government should take "proactive steps" to encourage more States to adopt the Decentralised Procurement (DCP) system for foodgrains. Under the DCP scheme, foodgrains are procured and distributed by the state governments themselves. The designated DCP states procure, store and issue foodgrains under public distribution system (PDS) and other welfare schemes of the Government of India.

The Standing Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution, headed by Sudip Bandyopadhyay, in its 13th report had observed

that only eight states have adopted the DCP scheme for wheat and 15 states for rice, even after 23 years of inception.

The committee had also observed that the DCP scheme has added efficiency to PDS by making it possible to supply grains suited to local taste, while recommending to the food ministry to promote it for adoption even though the scheme is mandatory for states.

Tabling the action taken report on recommendations made in its 13th report in Parliament on Tuesday, the committee said, "In its action taken reply, the ministry has merely stated that government is making all out efforts for implementing the scheme in all the states."

Coal allocation can't amount to proceeds of crime under money laundering law: Delhi HC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Coal allocation cannot amount to proceeds of crime per se under the money laundering law, the Delhi High Court Tuesday said.

The observation was made by Justice Yashwant Varma while quashing the proceedings initiated against a company by the Enforcement Directorate, including provisional attachment of properties, in connection with an alleged money laundering case arising from the allocation of a coal block to it by the authorities in 2003.

The court said that the

Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) seeks to confiscate assets that may be derived or obtained from criminal activity and therefore, only gains obtained by the utilization of the allocation could be viewed as proceeds of crime and not the allocation itself.

In the present case, the CBI, in 2010, registered an FIR alleging misrepresentation by the petitioner company for obtaining the coal allocation as well as diversion of extracted coal.

The FIR and the consequential charge sheet were quashed by the concerned court but after the allocation

was cancelled by the Supreme Court, a second FIR was registered by the CBI in 2016 and another charge sheet was filed in 2020 alleging that the petitioner fraudulently and dishonestly obtained the coal allocation.

While the Supreme Court stayed further proceedings before the trial court, the ED initiated proceedings against the petitioner based on the second charge sheet.

The court stated that the offence of money laundering rests on the commission of a predicate offence and it cannot possibly survive or subsist once the predicate offence is found to be not established



and since the first charge sheet concerning the allocation was quashed in the present case, it would have to "necessarily acknowledge that no criminal activity was indulged in".

"The criminal activity on which the allegation of money

laundering is constructed and raised is the allocation of the coal block. As noted above, there is no allegation that any illegal monetary gains were derived or obtained as on 04 September 2003 (when the allocation was made and the offence was stated to have been

committed and completed). This coupled with the fact that the allocation itself would not represent proceeds of crime leads the court to the unescapable conclusion that the impugned proceedings are rendered patently illegal," said the court.

The court stated that it is the gains obtained from a criminal activity that is concealed or projected to be untainted that can form the subject matter of the offence under PMLA and the allocation of a coal block in itself did not give rise to any monetary gains.

"An allocation of coal cannot possibly be viewed as

amounting to proceeds of crime per se. That document at best enabled the holder thereof to obtain a mining lease. Viewed in that backdrop it cannot be said that the allocation of coal is property as contemplated under the Act," it asserted.

The court also clarified that the offence of money laundering being a "stand-alone offense" only conveys that it is to be tried separately in accordance with the procedure prescribed under PMLA.

"The entire edifice of a charge of money laundering is raised on an allegation of a predicate offence having been committed, proceeds of crime

generated from such activity, and a projection of the tainted property as untainted. However, once it is found on merits that the accused had not indulged in any criminal activity, the property cannot legally be treated as proceeds of crime or be viewed as property derived or obtained from criminal activity," the court said.

In its 133-page order, the court further observed that is the date of the commission of the offence of money laundering and not the date of commission of a scheduled offence that is relevant and determinative to invoke PMLA.

While comrade lambasts airlines, actress showers praise

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A day after E P Jayarajan, the All powerful Left Democratic Front convener declared that he would boycott IndiGo Airlines in future for its decision to ban him for three weeks and described it as the worst in the world, the airlines got a pat on the back for its commendable services from a trans woman.

Actress Sukanyeah Krishna, who flew from Bangalore to Thiruvananthapuram in IndoGo praised the airlines for its 'splendid' service and courtesy extended to the passengers. "Though I have flown in many airlines, I would like to rate IndiGo as the best for the courtesy extended to the passengers, especially to persons like me who are always looked down by other airlines. There

were instances in the past when some airlines refused to allow me to travel despite my holding valid tickets," Krishna wrote in her social media pages on Tuesday. She said that recently she had an unfortunate experience while flying with another airlines. "Having understood that I was a trans woman, the staff denied me permission to board the aircraft. It is only after prolonged arguments that they allowed me permission to fly by the aircraft. The attitude of the staff throughout the flight was unbearable and discriminatory," writes Krishna.

But she was all praise for IndiGo for being kind and dignified in their behaviour to her. "Last June while I was flying from Bangalore to Trivandrum by IndiGo airlines, I had a surprise waiting for me. The airlines authorities informed me that I have been selected as the Pride Customer

of the Pride Month. Throughout the journey, I was treated like a celebrity by the crew as well as the commander of the flight. I could not believe what was happening around me as they suffocated me with love," writes Krishna who has also posted pictures of her with the flight crew.

Jayarajan was barred from flying IndiGo for his behaviour inside the aircraft last month when he allegedly assaulted two Congress activists for raising slogans against chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan who too was flying from Kannur to Thiruvananthapuram. Though Vijayan had come out of the aircraft as Thiruvananthapuram airport much before the Congressmen shouted slogans at him, Jayarajan who was travelling with Vijayan rushed to them and reportedly assaulted them. The airlines which held a probe



into the matter barred the Congressman from flying for the next two weeks while Jayarajan was slapped with a ban for three weeks.

The CPI(M) leader, on being informed about the temporary ban, declared that he would not travel by the airlines even of there are no other airlines in the world. "I prefer walking all the way from Thiruvananthapuram to Kannur. Let the K-Rail come, we will see to that the IndiGo

airlines disappear from the skies," said Jayarajan.

K Jayashankar, political critic, said that Jayarajan's decision not to fly IndiGo has put the airlines in real trouble. "Jayarajan being a powerful CPI(M) leader, partymen including Pinarayi Vijayan may have to declare that they would follow suit and express solidarity with Jayarajan," said Jayashankar. For the uninitiated, Kerala is not short of any kind of controversies.

Have sought MEA 'explanation' for cargo ship detention: Russian embassy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Russian embassy on Tuesday said it has taken up with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) the detention of a Russian cargo ship in Cochin port and requested for an "explanation" of the circumstances of the incident.

There was no immediate comment on the issue by the MEA. "The Russian embassy in India is aware of the Russian cargo ship detention in the Indian port of Cochin, on board of which a military cargo for the Indian armed forces was delivered," it said.

"According to the preliminary information, these actions are connected with the claim of the Estonian shore service company Bunker Partner OU, which claimed that the owners of the ship allegedly had a debt,"



it said adding the Russian Consulate General in Chennai is seized of the matter. "We would like to underline that the court allowed the unloading of cargo, since it has nothing to do with the lawsuit," the embassy added.

The embassy said it has sent to the MEA an official request for "explanation of the circumstances of the incident". "We have also asked the

Ministry to ensure unconditional observance of the rights of the Russian ship owners and the crew," the embassy said.

The Kerala High Court had on Monday ordered seizing of the ship for non-payment of Rs 1.87 crore of fuel charges to the Estonian company. Since the ship carried arms for Indian Navy it was allowed to unload the cargo while in detention.

Mumbai's ex-CP Sanjay Pandey held for illegal phone tapping of NSE staff

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday arrested former Mumbai Police Commissioner Sanjay Pandey in connection with a money laundering case linked to the alleged illegal phone tapping of NSE employees.

The retired 1986-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer was taken into custody by the ED after over seven hours of questioning in the case, officials said.

His arrest came after two consecutive days of question-

ing in connection with the money laundering case linked to the alleged illegal phone tapping of the National Stock Exchange (NSE) employees.

Last week, the agency had arrested former NSE CEO Chitra Ramkrishna in the case.

Pandey retired from service on June 30. Before his four-month stint as Mumbai's Police Commissioner, Pandey served as the acting Maharashtra Director General of Police (DGP).

Pandey is facing two connected FIRs by the ED and Central Bureau of

Investigation (CBI) of illegal interception of phones of NSE employees by iSec Services Pvt. Ltd, a company founded by him, and violation of Securities and Exchange Board of India guidelines in conducting NSE's system audit.

Before his arrest, the agency questioned him in connection with the functioning and activities of iSec Securities Pvt. Ltd, one of the firms that conducted a security audit of NSE around the time the co-location irregularities allegedly took place.

In its FIR, the CBI had



alleged that Ravi Narain and Ramkrishna, both former chief executives of the NSE, had roped in the company founded Pandey to snoop on the stock market employees by illegally intercepting their phone calls.

Pandey was earlier ques-

tioned by the ED on July 5 in the alleged NSE co-location scam case in Delhi.

The ED discovered secret phone surveillance while probing the alleged financial irregularities at the NSE following which it reported it to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), which asked the CBI to probe the charges, officials had earlier said.

The CBI had alleged in its complaint that during the period 2009-17, Narain, Ramkrishna, Varanasi and Haldipur conspired to illegally intercept the telephones of NSE employees for which

they hired iSEC Services Pvt Ltd.

The company allegedly received a payment of Rs 4.45 crore for illegal tapping which was camouflaged as "Periodic Study of Cyber Vulnerabilities" at the NSE, the CBI alleged in its FIR.

The company also provided transcripts of the tapped conversations to senior management of the stock market, it had claimed. "...Top officials of NSE issued agreement and work orders in favour of said private company and illegally intercepted the phone calls of

its employees by installing machines, in contravention of provisions under Indian Telegraph Act," the CBI had said in a statement.

Officials said the interception was stopped in 2019, months after the CBI started probing the NSE co-location scam in 2018, and the machines and other infrastructure used for interception were disposed of as e-waste by the bourse.

The co-location and phone tapping cases relate to manipulation of the stock market through electronic contrivances.

FIRST COLUMN

PERILS OF CHILDREN ON RAILWAY PLATFORM

Children who lived off at rail platforms face harsh realities



MAMUNI DAS

The Covid-19 pandemic had left a telling impact on the street children, particularly those who lived off the railway platforms. The children are coming back to the railway platform after they had left following the shutdown of the train operations and excessive restrictions afterward for the entry and exit at the stations. The overall trend was echoed by Railway Children India (RCI), which works with street children and communities around stations, including running initiatives like funding the operation of toll-free, helpline booths for children. “The number of children being rescued is nowhere near to the pre-lockdown era (as of July 2021). From 500 children every month in pre-lockdown to not more than 100 or maximum of 120 a month (in July 2021) to 250 a month in December 2021,” Navin Sellaraju, CEO, RCI, said, based on the experience at about 10 stations of Indian Railways.

Another NGO working in Central India explained that it saw a much lesser number of children being rescued since the Covid-19 struck. The trend of drop in the number of children surprises Sellaraju a bit, who knows that the root causes that were forcing children onto platforms or getting trafficked have not changed. “Rather, COVID-19 made the circumstances of those children more difficult. Most of the children that RCI rescued were from unemployed families, small farmers, and vegetable vendors,” Sellaraju said.

Sellaraju reckons stringent screening at entry-exit points at large railway stations, higher restrictions, and a drop in running unreserved coaches (the railway only restarted operating these in 2022), which are easy to access for the children may have led to an overall drop in the numbers of children found on platforms in the concerned time-periods. Other stakeholders feel many children have changed their mode of transport from trains to buses, and so have traffickers, who lure children into different cities. Also, traffickers are engaging in newer methods in the post-pandemic time.



A stakeholder from Salaam Balak Trust, a charity that works with street children, including children in contact with railways, explained, “Such children can be broadly grouped into those who lived around stations and came to stations for some time to earn their living; those who were lost while traveling in trains and those who used trains to escape difficult family situations, including poverty. With trains and stations closed for a good part of the year (2021), naturally, there were no new arrivals. However, those who stayed with families near stations stayed with their families; and the rescued kids who were there in our shelters stayed put in the shelters.”

But almost all stakeholders agree that the pandemic-induced conditions have made the children more vulnerable to adversities, including trafficking. Even according to official numbers shared by the Railway Police Force (RPF), the children rescued from traffickers at railway stations saw an increase in 2021. About 492 children were rescued from trafficking in 2021, up from 181 in 2020, 361 in 2019, and 367 in 2018.

The pandemic led to the death of parents, illnesses, and job losses, pushing families to poverty, and prompting an increase in child labor, said an International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UNICEF report of 2021, estimating that in early 2020, 160 million children (one in ten children globally) were involved in child labor. Stakeholders agree that there’s a need for the social inclusion of such vulnerable children who are in contact with the railways at its stations or premises and those who are on the streets be provided with identity cards. (Concluded)

(The author is a journalist.)

Why not have a ministry of Religious affairs?

Indians’ concept of religious tolerance does not necessarily involve the mixing of religious communities.

For quite some time, opinion makers from different quarters have been asking the Narendra Modi government to scrap the Ministry of Minority Affairs and replace it with a new Ministry of Religious affairs. There is a great deal of justification for such a demand. India is a growing international power, and the identity of India can be secured globally by presenting its culture and religion from a global perspective. The proposed Ministry of Religious affairs could be headed by a practicing spiritual leader to propagate the face of India’s spiritual strength.

India has all along respected all religions, but major religious groups see little in common with Hinduism and want to live separately. A learned spiritual leader at the head of the proposed ministry could bridge this gap and integrate the communities together.

In the West, some people could argue that Hinduism is an old-styled religion with a huge baggage to reconcile with the contemporary world. Modernity, which emphasises the relegation of religion firmly to an individual’s private life, is a challenging idea for any culture. In India, it faces a particularly unusual problem: the persistence of numerous traditional and religious practices means that religion and modernity have to cohabit here in a complex, plural, transient, and historically evolving relationship.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has already passed a resolution seeking an “immediate scrapping of both the Minority Commission and the Minority Affairs Ministry” as the “very idea” of these institutions “gives credence to a separatist mindset.”


The resolution noted that “the Jihadis and Missionaries are not the persecuted but the persecutors,” and “with the help of the Minority Commission, separate Ministry, they gather sympathy and carry out their anti-Hindu and anti-national activities.” It said that the National Human Rights Commission is “more than enough to take care of the rights of all citizens of the country.”

It contended that “the Minority Commission creates a false feeling that the Muslim and Christian communities are being persecuted,” whereas “the reality is that it is they who are responsible for the persecution of not only Hindus but on other minority communities like the Sikhs and the Buddhists.”

The main functions of the Ministry of Religious Affairs should be:

a) Extending overall co-operation in implementing development activities, providing grants, taking initiatives for resource mobilization, introducing online registration, and utmost use of ICT in religious affairs management;

b) Assisting research and publications in the field of religion, and providing cooperation in the management of charitable institutions;



INDIANS SEE RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AS A CENTRAL PART OF WHO THEY ARE AS A NATION. ACROSS THE MAJOR RELIGIOUS GROUPS, MOST PEOPLE SAY IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO RESPECT ALL RELIGIONS TO BE ‘TRULY INDIAN’

(The writer is a regular columnist of The Pioneer)



c) Arranging and participating in international conferences, seminars and dialogues on matters relating to religions and religious affairs and establishing connections and improving relations, and signing contracts, agreements, conventions with different countries and international organizations/institutions;

d) Conducting various programmes in the religious and educational institutions for social development, conducting research and strengthening anti-terrorism campaigns, religious values, integrity, brotherhood, and communal harmony;

d) Providing grants-in-aid including reforms of different religious organisations and institutions, matters relating to moon sightings and celebration of important religious festivals; and supporting the destitute people for their rehabilitation with financial assistance.

More than 70 years after India became free from colonial rule, Indians generally feel their country has lived up to one of its post-Independence ideals: a society where followers of many religions can live and practice freely. India’s massive population is diverse as well as devout. Not only do most of the world’s Hindus, Jains and Sikhs live in India, but it also is home to one of the world’s largest Muslim populations and to millions of Christians and Buddhists.

Indians see religious tolerance as a central part of who they are as a nation. Across the major religious groups, most people say it is very important to respect all religions to be “truly Indian.” And tolerance is

a religious as well as a civic value: Indians are united in the view that respecting other religions is a very important part of what it means to be a member of their own religious community.

These shared values are accompanied by a number of beliefs that cross religious lines. Not only do a majority of Hindus in India (77%) believe in karma, but an identical percentage of Muslims do, too. A third of Christians in India (32%) - together with 81% of Hindus - say they believe in the purifying power of the Ganges River, a central belief in Hinduism. In Northern India, 12% of Hindus and 10% of Sikhs, along with 37% of Muslims, identify with Sufism, a mystical tradition most closely associated with Islam. And the vast majority of Indians of all major religious backgrounds say that respecting elders is very important to their faith.

Yet, despite sharing certain values and religious beliefs - as well as living in the same country, under the same constitution - members of India’s major religious communities often don’t feel they have much in common with one another. The majority of Hindus see themselves as very different from Muslims (66%), and most Muslims return the sentiment, saying they are very different from Hindus (64%). There are a few exceptions: Two-thirds of Jains and about half of Sikhs say they have a lot in common with Hindus. But generally people in major religious communities see themselves as different from others.

Moreover, Indians generally stick to their own religious group when it comes to their friends. Hindus overwhelmingly say that

most or all of their close friends are also Hindu. Of course, Hindus make up the majority of the population, and as a result of sheer numbers, may be more likely to interact with fellow Hindus than with people of other religions. But even among Sikhs and Jains, who each form a sliver of the national population, a large majority say their friends come mainly or entirely from their small religious community.

Indians, then, simultaneously express enthusiasm for religious tolerance and a consistent preference for keeping their religious communities in segregated spheres - they live together separately. These two sentiments may seem paradoxical, but for many Indians, they are not. Indeed, many take both positions, saying it is important to be tolerant of others and expressing a desire to limit personal connections across religious lines. Indians who favor a religiously segregated society also overwhelmingly emphasize religious tolerance as a core value.

In other words, Indians’ concept of religious tolerance does not necessarily involve the mixing of religious communities. While people in some countries may aspire to create a “melting pot” of different religious identities, many Indians seem to prefer a country more like a patchwork fabric, with clear lines between groups. Most Hindus in India say being Hindu, and being able to speak Hindi are very important to be ‘truly’ Indian.

Against this backdrop, the time has come to scrap the Ministry of Minority Affairs without any further delay and create a unifying Ministry of Religious affairs.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

...THE CENTRAL DRUG STANDARDS CONTROL ORGANISATION, NEVER APPROVED THE ‘PRECAUTIONARY DOSES’ THAT PM MODI FLAGGED FOR ROLLOUT. —LAWYER AND POLITICAL ACTIVIST PRASHANT BHUSHAN



200 CRORE VACCINATIONS IN JUST ONE AND HALF YEARS. THIS REFLECTS THE WILL AND MIGHT OF NEW INDIA UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF PM NARENDRA MODI. —HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH


Unplanned population growth will result in chaos

The government needs to weigh the pros and cons of population growth and choose the right path

Is the population a boon or a bane for India, and will we be able to convert its human resources to productive use? Experts say it could be a boon but only if the people are involved in regulating it.

The topic has come to focus as India will be the world’s most populous country in 2023, surpassing China. According to the latest World Population Prospects report, it may go up to 1.429 billion next year when China’s would be 1.426 billion.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres released the UN report on the world population day this week and said that by November 15, it would reach an eight billion global population mark. It could grow to 8.5 billion in 2030 and 10.4 billion in 2100,



KALYANI SHANKAR

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

Those who support population growth believe that it would supply low-cost labour, a valuable resource for India. They say it is positive, resulting in higher incomes and wages and excellent export potential. India’s population is young and multitalented, so it could be more productive.

Historically, it took many centuries for the global population to reach one billion. In 2011 it reached the seven billion mark and tripled between 1950 and 2020. (Source: UN DESA)

From 23 crore Indians in 1901, the population growth was slow until 1951. In the next five decades, it shot up three times. The 2001 population census recorded 1.02 billion (102 crore).

Globally, there are about 1.2 billion Hindus. India, which

has a population of 1.4 billion, has 80 per cent Hindus. The BJP leaders are concerned about the declining population of Hindus and the increasing number of Muslims.

Those who oppose population rise argue that an accelerating trend means more people to feed and provide clean water, electricity, and adequate social services like education and healthcare. It also means a significant environmental impact.

Secondly, India’s economy was already showing signs of weakness before the Covid-19 crisis. A new report from the McKinsey Global Institute identifies a reform plan for the next 12 to 18 months. “If India does not create enough jobs and its workers are untrained, its demographic dividend may

become a liability. And education and skill development will be the biggest enablers for reaping this dividend,” the report said.

Thirdly, ‘demographic dividend’ is a result of investment in quality education, healthcare, and employment generation, and how best we deal with aging, disease, and disability.

Fourthly, children have lost almost two years of education due to the pandemic. The gap needs to be addressed. There should be more budget allocation for health and education, as seen as lacking during the pandemic crisis.

India’s efforts to curtail population growth began relatively early and were the first to launch a national family planning programme in 1952. And since then, there have been

many attempts to contain the growing numbers.

The “family planning” programmes became coercive and controversial in 1975 when Indira Gandhi declared a state of Emergency. In April 1976, the government adopted an “integrated” approach to family planning that incentivised contraception and sterilisation. Since then, the subject has been a no-no for politicians, and the family planning department has been renamed family welfare.

In his Independence Day address on August 15, 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi brought the issue to the national focus. He extolled the virtues of small families; he wanted the “uncontrolled growth” to be checked. According to BJP insiders, discussions are going

on to prepare a new population policy before the next general elections in 2024. Some BJP-ruled states like UP have already taken measures to regulate the population acceleration. Now is perhaps the time for formulating policies to contain it.

A national commission, set up by former prime minister AtalBihari Vajpayee in 2000, also recommended constituting population regulation laws.

Parliament has also been demanding regulation from time to time. Lawmakers from both the houses and from different parties have, till now, proposed 35 Private Bills.

The RSS, the parent organisation of the ruling BJP, has also advocated a uniform population policy. In his usual address to the RSS workers on

the last Vijayadasami Day, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said, “A population policy keeping in mind the next 50 years should be formulated, and it should be implemented uniformly for everyone.”

The family planning budget is only a meager 4 per cent of the health budget, and India spends only 1.5 per cent on birth spacing methods. We need to invest more in the health and education sectors.

Analysts believe population growth can be a double-edged sword, and the country needs to maximise its potential. The government needs to weigh the pros and cons of population growth and choose the right path. Unplanned growth will only result in chaos.

First time in 44 yrs, Lankan Parl to directly elect Prez

Acting Prez in poll race

Colombo: For the first time in 44 years, Sri Lanka's Parliament will directly elect a President on Wednesday in a three-way contest, with last minute political maneuvering projecting a close fight between acting President Ranil Wickremesinghe and Dullas Alahapperuma, a rebel leader of the ruling party who is backed by the opposition as well as a majority of lawmakers from his parent party.

Wickremesinghe, Alahapperuma and leftist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake were proposed by lawmakers on Tuesday as the three candidates for the July 20 presidential election to pick the successor to Gotabaya Rajapaksa after he resigned following a popular uprising against his government for mismanaging the economy that forced him to flee the country. A majority of members of



Trade Union activists and civil society members shout slogans against Acting President and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe as lawmakers prepare to elect a new president in Colombo, Sri Lanka on Tuesday AP | PTI

the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party was in favour of nominating Alahapperuma, a leader of its

breakaway faction, for the post of the President and principal Opposition leader Sajith Premadasa as the Prime

Minister, Chairman of the SLPP, G L Peiris, said on Tuesday, ahead of Wednesday's presidential election.

Although analysts here believe that 73-year-old Wickremesinghe is in the lead, the evidence of numbers in the 225-assembly don't necessarily suggest it would be plain sailing. Without the ruling SLPP's backing, Wickremesinghe would be a non-starter as he only has his seat in Parliament to be in the reckoning.

Going back to the original parliamentary composition in August 2020, the SLPP number of 145 had seen reversals with 52 of the lawmakers breaking away. The total of 93 later became 97 with 4 lawmakers returning.

Wickremesinghe needs 16 more votes to cross the magical figure of 113 in the 225-member house. He relies on at least 9 of the 12 Tamil party votes plus enough defectors from the main opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), most of whom are his followers having been introduced to politics by him.

In a politically significant move, Premadasa, the leader of the principal opposition party SJB, on Tuesday backed out in favour of Alahapperuma. *PTI*

Majority of Lanka's ruling SLPP party in favour of Alahapperuma as Prez Premadasa as PM: Report

Colombo: A majority of members of Sri Lanka's ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party was in favour of nominating Dullas Alahapperuma, a leader of its breakaway faction, for the post of the President and principal Opposition leader Sajith Premadasa as the Prime Minister, Chairman of the SLPP, G L Peiris said on Tuesday, ahead of Wednesday's presidential election.

Acting Sri Lankan President President Ranil Wickremesinghe and two others were proposed by lawmakers on Tuesday as the three candidates for the July 20 presidential election to pick the successor to Gotabaya Rajapaksa after he resigned following a popular uprising against his government for mismanaging the economy.

Wickremesinghe, 73, will face-off against Alahapperuma,

a 63-year-old staunch Sinhala Buddhist nationalist and a key member from the breakaway group of the SLPP and the leftist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake, 53, it was officially announced in Parliament.

SLPP Chairman Peiris said that the majority of his party was in favour of appointing Alahapperuma as the President, underlining that the people's voice be highlighted in Parliament, according to news portal News First.Lk.

Peiris added that the SLPP lawmakers have agreed to appoint Opposition Leader Premadasa, the 55-year-old leader of Sri Lanka's principal opposition party Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) as the Prime Minister.

Incidentally, Premadasa on Tuesday had withdrawn from the presidential race to support

Alahapperuma's nomination.

Peiris said both parties must come together and govern the country and implement a programme to realise the aspirations of the citizens, the report said. Wednesday's vote would also be a rare occasion when the House Speaker will vote.

Never in the history of the presidency since 1978, Parliament had voted to elect a president.

Presidential elections in 1982, 1988, 1994, 1999, 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2019 had elected them by popular vote.

The only previous occasion when the presidency became vacant mid-term was in 1993 when president Ranasinghe Premadasa was assassinated.

DB Wijetunga was unanimously endorsed by Parliament to run the balance of Premadasa's term.

Ranil Wickremesinghe says he was not part of Rajapaksa administration

Colombo: Ahead of Wednesday's presidential election, Sri Lanka's acting President

Ranil Wickremesinghe has distanced himself from the disgraced Rajapaksa government, saying he was not in the 'same administration' and was appointed to 'handle the economy' of the bankrupt country.

Wickremesinghe, 73, on Tuesday was among three candidates proposed by lawmakers for Wednesday's presidential election to pick Rajapaksa's successor.

The 225-member Parliament will elect the next president who will complete the remaining tenure of former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who resigned last week.

There's growing discon-

tent brewing amongst the public over Wickremesinghe's presidential nomination, who many consider to be "more of the same," since he was part of the previous Rajapaksa administration.

"I'm not the same, people know that...I came here to handle the economy," Wickremesinghe told CNN in an interview on Monday, as he sought to distance himself from Rajapaksa, the person under whom he had worked for the past two months to rescue the crisis-hit Sri Lankan economy.

Wickremesinghe said the erstwhile Rajapaksa regime was "covering up facts" about the country's crippling financial crisis, and assured the island nation's beleaguered economy

would stabilise by the end of next year.

He was sworn-in as the acting President on Friday after Rajapaksa fled to the Maldives and then to Singapore from where he resigned in the face of public revolt against his government's mishandling of the country's economy.

"The previous government was lying...covering up facts about the fact that Sri Lanka was bankrupt and we need to go to the IMF (for a bailout package)," Wickremesinghe said during the interview.

In March 2022, Sri Lanka had to pay USD 7 billion in debts, when it had a little over USD 1 billion in foreign exchange reserves. *PTI*

Over 4K books gutted, 125-year-old piano damaged: Wickremesinghe over attack on his private residence

Colombo: Sri Lanka's acting President Ranil Wickremesinghe has said that much of the contents in his private residence here were not salvageable after a group of irate anti-government protesters torched it on July 9, destroying his 125-year-old piano and more than 4,000 books, some of them centuries-old.

In remarkable scenes of a country in meltdown, anti-government protesters set Wickremesinghe's private residence at Cambridge Place on fire, hours after they stormed the President's House and other key buildings.

Wickremesinghe told CNN in an interview that much of its contents from his torched residence were not salvageable.

"I have lost more than

4,000 books, including some that were centuries old," he said.

A 125-year-old piano was also destroyed in the fire, he said.

A video released by Daily Mirror newspaper on Twitter on July 10 showed grim visuals of Wickremesinghe's charred residence and a damaged sedan among others.

Paintings and artworks were strewn across the house and the compound.

Wickremesinghe said he respects the rights of the protesters to peacefully undertake their demonstrations, but he asserted that he will not allow another government building like the Presidential Palace or the Prime Minister's private residence to be occupied. *PTI*

Security beefed up around Sri Lankan Parliament ahead of President election

Colombo: The security has been beefed up in and around Sri Lanka's Parliament complex on Tuesday after the Speaker lodged a complaint with the Inspector General of Police calling for a detailed investigation to be conducted into certain inflammatory posts published on social media threatening Members of Parliament.

The complaint by Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena came hours before Parliament was poised to accept the nominations for the post of president, which fell vacant last week after Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled the country and later resigned.

The Parliament is expected to elect the new president on July 20. On Monday, Sri Lankan Members of



Navy soldiers stand guard at the Fort railway station in Colombo, Sri Lanka on Tuesday AP | PTI

Parliament from the ruling party Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) had complained of receiving threat mes-

sages on social media, warning them against voting for Sri Lanka's Acting President Ranil Wickremesinghe. *PTI*

Amid Russia shelling, Ukraine aims to strengthen government

Kyiv: As Russia kept up its relentless shelling across the country, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy expanded the shakeup of his security services on Monday by suspending 28 more officials, a day after he dismissed two senior officials over allegations that their agencies harboured "collaborators and traitors."

In his nightly video address, Zelenskyy said a "personnel audit" of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) was underway, and the dismissal of the 28 officials was being decided.

"Different levels, different areas of focus. But the reasons are similar -- unsatisfactory results of work," Zelenskyy said.

On Sunday, he had fired SBU chief Ivan Bakanov and Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova.

Zelenskyy, citing hundreds of criminal proceedings into treason and collaboration by people within their departments and other law enforcement agencies.

"Six months into the war, we continue to uncover loads of these people in each of these agencies," said Andriy Smirnov, deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office.

Analysts said the moves are designed to strengthen Zelenskyy's control over the army and security agencies, which have been led by people appointed before the Russian invasion began on February 24.

"In the conditions of a war, Zelenskyy needs leaders that are capable of tackling several tasks at the same time -- to resist Russia's intrigues within the country to create a fifth column, to be in contact and coordination with international experts, to do their actual job effectively," Volodymyr Fesenko, a political analyst with the Penta Center think tank, told The Associated Press.

Bakanov is a childhood friend and former business partner of Zelenskyy, who appointed him to head the SBU. Bakanov had come under



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, right, is welcomed by his Iranian counterpart Ebrahim Raisi during a welcoming ceremony at the Saadabad palace, in Tehran, Iran on Tuesday AP | PTI

growing criticism over security breaches since the war began.

Venediktova won international praise for her drive to gather war-crimes evidence against Russian military commanders and officials, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, over the destruction of Ukrainian cities and the killing of civilians.

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price, speaking to reporters in Washington, said when asked about the personnel changes that the two governments were in close contact.

"The fact is that in all of our relationships, and including in this relationship, we invest not in personalities. We invest in institutions and, of course, President Zelenskyy has spoken to his rationale for making these personnel shifts," Price said.

He said Washington would continue to work with Kyiv on war-crimes investigations and information sharing. Intelligence, he said, is "an important element of the assistance that we are providing to our Ukrainian partners in an effort to help them defend themselves." Zelenskyy appointed the first deputy head of the SBU, Vasyl Maliuk, to be acting head. Maliuk, 39, is known for efforts to fight corruption in the security agencies; his appointment was seen as part of Zelenskyy's efforts to get rid of pro-Russian staffers in the SBU.

Fesenko said discontent with Bakanov and Venediktova had been brewing for a while, and it was possible that Ukraine's Western partners pointed out the underperformance of the SBU and the prosecutor general's office to Zelenskyy.

Meanwhile, Russia pressed

forward with its missile and shelling attacks, which Ukrainian officials said were designed to intimidate the civilian population and create panic.

The commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian armed forces, however, said his troops had "stabilized the situation" on the front, largely thanks to Western deliveries of technically advanced rocket systems.

"It is complex, tense, but completely controllable," Gen. Valeri Zoluzhny wrote on Telegram after a phone call with the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Mark A. Milley.

"An important factor contributing to our holding our defensive lines and positions is the timely arrival of the M142 HIMARS, delivering targeted strikes against enemy command posts, ammunition and fuel depots," Zoluzhny said. *PTI*

Putin heads to Tehran for talks with leaders of Iran, Turkey

Tehran: Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Iran starting Tuesday is intended to deepen ties with regional heavyweights as part of Moscow's challenge to the United States and Europe amid its grinding campaign in Ukraine.

In only his second trip abroad since Russian tanks rolled into its neighbour in February, Putin is scheduled to hold talks with Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan about the pressing issues facing the region, including the conflict in Syria and a U.N.-backed proposal to resume exports of Ukrainian grain to ease the global food crisis.

As the West heaps sanctions on Russia and the costly campaign drags on, Putin is seeking to bolster ties with Tehran, a fellow target of severe U.S.R sanctions and a potential military and trade partner.

In recent weeks, Russian officials visited an airfield in central Iran at least twice to review Tehran's weapons-capable drones for possible use in Ukraine, the White House has alleged.

But perhaps most crucially, Tehran offers Putin a chance for a high-stakes meeting with Erdogan, who has sought to help broker talks on a peaceful settlement of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as well as help negotiations to unblock Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea.

Turkey, a NATO member, has found itself opposite Russia in bloody conflicts in Azerbaijan, Libya and Syria.

But Turkey hasn't imposed sanctions on the Kremlin, making it a sorely needed partner for Moscow. Grappling with runaway inflation and a rapidly depreciating currency, Turkey also relies on the Russian market.

The gathering has symbolic meaning for Putin's domestic audience as well,



showing off Russia's international clout even as it grows increasingly isolated and plunges deeper into confrontation with the West. It comes just days after U.S. President Joe Biden's visited Israel and Saudi Arabia -- Tehran's primary rivals in the region.

From Jerusalem and Jeddah, Biden urged Israel and Arab countries to push back on Russian, Chinese and Iranian influence that has expanded with the perception of America's retreat from the region.

It was a tough sell. Israel maintains good relations with Putin, a necessity given Russian presence in Syria, Israel's north-eastern neighbor and frequent target of its airstrikes.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have so far declined to pump more oil beyond a plan approved by their energy alliance with Moscow.

But all the countries -- despite their long-standing rivalries -- could agree on drawing closer to counter Iran, which has rapidly advanced its nuclear program since former President Donald Trump abandoned Tehran's atomic accord with world powers and reimposed crushing sanctions. Talks to restore the deal have hit a deadlock.

Russia pounds Ukraine as Putin holds talks in Tehran

Kyiv: Russian cruise missiles struck villages around southern Ukraine's port city of Odesa early Tuesday, hitting houses, a school and a community centre as Russian President Vladimir Putin was in Iran to discuss a UN-backed proposal to unblock exports of Ukrainian grain.

Russian forces fired seven Kalibr cruise missiles at the Odesa region. The Russian Defence Ministry said strikes on the village of Bilenke had a legitimate military goal and "destroyed depots of ammunition for weapons supplied by the United States and European countries."

A local official disputed Moscow's claim and said six people were wounded.

"These strikes on peaceful people have one goal - to intimidate the population and the authorities and keep them in constant tension," Serhiy Bratchuk, the speaker of the Odesa regional government,

Ukrainian television.

The Russian military in recent weeks has targeted Odesa and parts of southern Ukraine where its troops captured cities earlier in the war amid indications that Ukraine was planning counterattacks to retake Russian-occupied areas.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian forces on the ground in eastern Ukraine are fighting to hold onto the declining territory under their control.

At least two civilians were killed and 15 more were wounded by Russian shelling across the country over the past 24 hours, Ukraine's presidential office said in a morning update.

"There remains a high level of threat of missile strikes throughout the territory of Ukraine," said Oleksandr Shtupun, spokesman of the General Staff of the Ukrainian armed forces. *PTI*

China warns ‘strong steps’ if Pelosi visits Taiwan

AP ■ BEIJING

China will take "resolute and strong measures" should the Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi proceed with reported plans to visit Taiwan, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said Tuesday.

Pelosi, who is second in line to the presidency, is due to visit the self-governing island China claims as its own territory in August, according to a report in the Financial Times.

She was originally scheduled to visit in April but had to postpone after she tested positive for COVID-19.

Pelosi would be the highest ranking American lawmaker to visit the close US ally since her predecessor as speaker, Newt Gingrich, travelled there 25 years ago.

China has vowed to annex Taiwan by force if necessary, and has advertised that threat by flying warplanes near Taiwanese airspace and holding military exercises based on invasion scenarios.

It says those actions are aimed at deterring advocates of the island's formal independence and foreign allies -- principally the US -- from coming to its aid, more than 70 years after the sides split amid civil war.

A visit by Pelosi would "severely undermine China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, gravely impact the foundation of China-US relations and send a seriously wrong signal to Taiwan independence forces," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijiang said at a daily briefing.

"If the US were to insist on going



down the wrong path, China will take resolute and strong measures to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity," Zhao said.

China in recent days has also ratcheted up its rhetoric over US arms sales to Taiwan, demanding the cancellation of a deal worth approximately \$108 million that would boost its armed forces' chances of survival against its much bigger foe.

China has the world's largest standing military, with an increasingly sophisticated navy and a huge inventory of missiles pointed across the 180 km (100 mile) -wide Taiwan Strait.

"The Chinese People's Liberation

Army...Will resolutely thwart any form of interference by external forces and separatist plots of Taiwan independence," the Defence Ministry said in a statement posted on its website Tuesday.

While Washington maintains a policy of "strategic ambiguity" over whether it would defend Taiwan in a conflict with China, US law requires it must ensure the island has the means to defend itself and consider threats to its security as matters of "grave concern".

Washington maintains only unofficial relations with Taiwan in deference to Beijing, but is the island's strongest political ally and source of defensive arms.

Zhao gave no details about what

potential actions China might take in response to Pelosi's visit, but Beijing has generally used military flights and war games to indicate its discontent.

Chinese pilots have also been accused of aggressive action toward surveillance aircraft from the US and its allies operating in international airspace off the Chinese coast, while using lasers and other methods to harass foreign warships in the South China Sea.

China's most serious threat against Taiwan came in 1995-96, when it held military exercises and lobbed missiles into waters north and south of the island in response to a visit to the US by then-President Lee Teng-hui.

Sunak tops new vote to edge closer to final spot in PM race

PTI ■ LONDON

Rishi Sunak topped another round of voting on Tuesday to edge even closer to his place as one of two candidates who will go head-to-head to be elected the new Conservative Party leader and British Prime Minister, as Kemi Badenoch became the latest candidate to be out of the running.

The British Indian former Chancellor received 118 votes in the fourth round of voting by his party colleagues, just shy of the 120-mark -- or one-third of Conservative Party MPs -- needed to confirm his place as one of the final contenders in the race to replace Boris Johnson.

He increased his tally from Monday's 115, while Trade Minister Penny Mordaunt got 92 votes and Foreign Secretary Liz Truss 86 votes leaving the race to clinch second place still open. The elimination of former equalities minister Badenoch with 59 votes will now turn the focus on where her considerable support within the Tory members of Parliament will go, as those MPs are wooed by both Mordaunt and Truss to shore up their chances of grabbing that all-important second spot.

Sunak extended his lead in the race to replace Boris Johnson as the Conservative Party leader and British Prime Minister, as he added 14 more votes to his tally in the latest



round of voting by Tory members of Parliament.

Sunak, 42, has consistently topped the shortlist since voting began last week and on Monday he bagged 115 votes in the third round, which leaves only four candidates in the race. Trade Minister Penny Mordaunt is holding on to second place with 82 votes followed by Foreign Secretary Liz Truss with 71 votes and former equalities minister Kemi Badenoch at 58 votes. Tom Tugendhat, Tory backbencher and House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee Chair, dropped his tally from the previous 32 to 31 votes and was knocked out of the contest with the least votes.

The fourth round of voting will take place on Tuesday, at the end of which another candidate with the least votes will be eliminated to edge towards a final shortlist of just two candidates by Thursday.

The battle remains poised for the all-important second

spot, with all eyes on the candidate who will go head to head with Sunak in the final leg of the race as the former finance minister's lead seems to be crystallising.

While Sunak picked up 14 more votes from the previous round of 101, Mordaunt dropped one from 83 in the second voting round last week. Truss has improved her tally from 64 and Badenoch is up from 49 in the last round.

The magic number is seen as 120, with the candidate receiving the backing of at least 120 of his or her Conservative Party colleagues guaranteed a spot in the final shortlist of two candidates to compete for the Tory membership votes.

The last few rounds of voting are being held this week as a third live television debate, scheduled to be hosted by 'Sky News' on Tuesday evening, was cancelled after the channel said both Sunak and Truss had declined to take part.



WHO: Covid triples across Europe, hospitalisation rises

AP ■ LONDON

The World Health Organisation said Tuesday that coronavirus cases have tripled across Europe in the past six weeks, accounting for nearly half of all infections globally. Hospitalisation rates have also doubled, although intensive care admissions have remained low.

In a statement on Tuesday, WHO's Europe director, Dr Hans Kluge, described COVID-19 as "a nasty and potentially deadly illness" that people should not underestimate. He said super-infectious relatives of the omicron variant were driving new waves of disease across the continent and that repeat infections could potentially lead to long COVID.

WHO said the 53 countries in its European region, which stretches to central Asia, reported nearly 3 million new coronavirus infections last week and that the virus was killing about 3,000 people every week. Globally, COVID-19 cases have increased for the past five weeks, even as countries have scaled back on testing.

Johnson chairs last Cabinet meet as UK PM



PTI ■ LONDON

Outgoing British Prime Minister Boris Johnson chaired his final Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, ahead of Conservative Party parliamentarians casting their votes for the fourth round in the secret ballot to elect a new leader.

Johnson, 58, defended his government's record and commitment to tackling climate change as he addressed the ongoing heat wave.

"Who can doubt that we were right to be the first major economy to go for net zero," he told his ministers at Downing Street.

"It may be sometimes unfashionable to say this but it is the right thing to do," he said.

It came after the Opposition Labour Party had accused him of clocking off his job as prime minister ahead of time by missing three emergency Cabinet Office Briefing Room A (COBRA) meetings on the measures to tackle the heat wave national emergency. It also followed a symbolic win for Johnson, forced to resign amid scandals rocking his leadership earlier this month, as his government won a no-confidence vote tabled to block Labour's efforts to overthrow the Govt and induce a snap election.

Pioneering low-cost device can detect eye diseases: UK scientists



PTI ■ LONDON

Researchers in the UK claimed to have developed a low-cost device that can take 3-D images of the eye, a pioneering technology which they say can transform eye screening and treatment across the globe.

The device, developed by researchers from the University of Strathclyde, captures 3-D images of the retina, the back of the eye and cornea, and can be added at low cost to a slit lamp, a device commonly used by optometrists.

Although there are existing instruments for 3-D imaging, including Optical Coherence Tomography technology -- the machines can cost up to 100,000 pounds, often making them too expensive for large-scale population use, especially in low-income countries.

The new technology is a simple and inexpensive add-on to a standard lamp, and can

extend 3-D eye imaging to all settings where optometrists are present, the University of Strathclyde said in a release on Monday.

It is so simple that a modified version of the technology brings potential of 3-D retinal 'selfies' without an operator, meaning it could also be deployed in unassisted settings, like pharmacies, it said.

The technology can also be used to image the front of the eye, which is important for cornea transplant patients as many machines can't measure the edge of the cornea, it said.

The device has been developed by Dr Mario Giardini, Dr Ian Coghill, and Kirsty Jordan, at the Department of Biomedical Engineering of the University of Strathclyde.

"Patients can be imaged easily and inexpensively, without the need for a specialist to be present. Our device reliably takes 3-D images, and it is comfortable and fast, at less than a second," Giardini said.

"The technology has the potential to revolutionise the screening and follow-up within the community of conditions such as glaucoma, as any optometrist, anywhere in the world, could afford it. This work makes eye diagnostics more accessible, reducing inequalities," Giardini added.

The researchers also hope it can eventually be used to detect eye cancer. Dr Livingstone, Consultant Ophthalmologist at NHS Forth Valley, who has collaborated with Dr Giardini on previous ophthalmology projects, said:"So much of what we do as eye doctors depends on seeing things in 3D.

UK heat wave sets new hottest temperature record of 40°C



PTI ■ LONDON

The UK broke an unwellcome record on Tuesday when Surrey in south-east England hit the highest temperature ever since records began at 40 degrees Celsius.

The previous record was 38.7°C set in 2019 at Cambridge Botanic Garden in eastern England. The Meteorological (Met) Office said the reading was provisional as the temperatures are expected to soar further with other regions reporting their readings at different times of the day.

The country was braced for "unprecedented" temperatures on Tuesday after the ongoing heat wave resulted in the hottest night on record at 26 degrees Celsius in parts of London overnight on Monday.

The Met Office red warning of danger to life from

extreme heat remains in place for much of central, northern, and south-east England, including the capital city. At least five people are believed to have drowned after attempting to escape the heat in rivers and lakes.

"Tuesday will be a pretty unprecedented day, with the mercury possibly reaching highs of 41°C in spots in England. This will make it the hottest day on record and the first time we have seen temperatures as high as 40°C," said Rachel Ayers, a Met Office forecaster.

"There are likely to be delays on roads, with road closures, as well as possible delays and cancellations to trains and maybe issues with air travel. This could pose a significant health risk to those stuck on services or roads during

the heat," she said.

A high of 38.1°C was reached in Suffolk, eastern England, on Monday, just short of the UK record of 38.7°C set in 2019. Scotland and Wales are also forecast to see their hottest days on record after a scorching Monday, when the latter set a new high temperature mark at 37.1°C.

Network Rail issued a "do not travel" warning for Tuesday, affecting services travelling through the "red zone" under the Met Office warning map. Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said the UK's rail network could not cope with the extreme heat, adding that it would take "many years" before upgrades would mean services could handle the hotter climate.

"The simple answer is no, the network cannot cope with the heat right now," he told the BBC. "In 40°C heat, tracks can reach 50°C, 60°C, and even 70°C, and there's a severe danger of tracks buckling and a terrible derailing. We are building new specifications, creating overhead lines that can withstand higher temperatures. But with the best will in the world, this is infrastructure which has taken decades to build, with some of our railways stretching back 200 years," he said.

White House former aides to testify at Jan 6 hearing

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Two former White House aides are expected to testify at the House Jan. 6 committee's prime-time hearing Thursday as the panel examines what Donald Trump was doing as his supporters broke into the Capitol, according to a person familiar with the plans. Matthew Pottinger, former deputy national security adviser, and Sarah Matthews, a former press aide, are expected to testify, according to the person, who was not authorised to publicly discuss the matter and requested anonymity. Both Pottinger and Matthews resigned immediately after the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection that interrupted the congressional certification of President Joe Biden's victory.

The two witnesses will add to the committee's narrative in its eighth, and possibly final, hearing this summer. The prime-time hearing will detail what Trump did - or did not do - during several hours that day as his supporters beat police officers and broke into the Capitol.

Previous hearings have



detailed chaos in the White House and aides and outsiders were begging the president to tell the rioters to leave. But he waited more than three hours to do so, and there are still many unanswered questions about what exactly he was doing and saying as the violence unfolded.

A spokesperson for the committee declined to comment. Lawmakers on the nine-member panel have said the hearing will offer the most compelling evidence yet of Trump's "dereliction of duty" that day, with witnesses detailing his failure to stem the angry mob.

"We have filled in the blanks," Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., a member of the House committee investigating the riot who will help lead Thursday's session, said Sunday. "This is going to open people's eyes in a big way."

MAHINDRA RURAL HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED
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SALE NOTICE

Branch Office: 3rd Floor 139-141 Mangal Pandey Nagar Opposite CCS University Meerut Uttar Pradesh 250002,

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR AUCTION-CUM-SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES
In exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (4) of Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (herein after referred to as "SARFAESI Act") and Rule 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (hereinafter referred to as "Rules") for the purpose of recovering the secured debts, the authorized officer of the secured creditor M/s Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as "MRHFL") has decided to sell the secured asset (immovable property), the possession of which had been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor under S. 13 (4) of SARFAESI Act, described herein below on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IT IS BASIS" and the public and all concerned including the concerned borrowers/ mortgagors, their representatives, as the case may be are hereby informed that the secured asset listed below will be sold, particulars of which are given below:

S.N.	Name of Borrowers/ Co-Borrowers/Guarantors/ Mortgagors	Date & Amount of 13(2) Demand Notice	Date of Possession	Description of Property	Reserve Price EMD Bid Increase Amount	Property Inspection Date & Time	Date & Time of Auction
1.	Branch: MEERUT Borrower: SANTOSH W/O RAMESH, 39 HOLI CHAUK, JASWANT NAGAR, MALYANA MEERUT, UP 250002 Co-Borrower: RAMESH S/O KALICHARAN, 39, HOLI CHAUK,JASWANT NAGAR, KISHANPURA, MALYANA MEERUT 250002 LAN: 722482/ XSEMMER00613439	4/Dec./2020 & Rs. 9,72,553/- (Rupees Twenty Three Lakh Forty One Thousand Seven Hundred Thirty Three Only)	1-Jun-22 Physical Possession	Khasra No. 1319 ^ Jaswant Sugar Mill Colony, Revenue Vill- Malyana ^ Pargana & Tehsil & Distt. Meerut Pin-250002, North : House Of Prakash Chand , South, Rasta 18ft Wide , East : House Of Rajwati, West: House Of Deep Chand	Rs.10,23,000/- Rs.1,02,300/- Rs.10,000/-	18-Aug.22 Time 10 Am TO -06 Pm	23-Aug.22 Time 10. Am TO - 03 Pm

- MRHFL acting through its Authorized Officer has now received offers to buy the same (offer amount is tabulated in the table above), and we intend to accept it, interalia considering the fact that the previous public auction held was unsuccessful.
- To Participate in Auction intended bidder has to deposit 10 % of the Reserve Price.
- The detail terms and conditions of the auction sale are incorporated in the prescribed tender form. Tender forms are available on www.mahindraruralhousingfinance.com as well as above branch office. The sale will be subject to terms and conditions mentioned in Tender Form.
- For further details, contact: the Authorised Officers, **Deep Joshi on Mobile 8853265434**. Last date of submission of sealed offers in the prescribed tender forms along with EMD is **20-Aug.22 Time 10. Am. -06 Pm** at the branch office address mentioned herein above. Tenders that are not filled up properly or tenders received beyond last date will be considered as invalid tender and shall accordingly be rejected. No interest shall be paid on the EMD.
- Date of opening of the offers for Property is **23-Aug.22 Time 10. Am. - 03 Pm** at the above mentioned branch office address at the tender will be opened in the presence of the Authorised Officer.
- Date of inspection of the immovable property is **18-Aug.22 between 10.00 AM to 6.00 PM**.
- The Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s) are hereby given **30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002** to pay the sum mentioned as above before the date of Auction failing which the offer received will be accepted and the immovable property will be auctioned and balance, if any, will be recovered with interest and costs. If the Borrower pays the amount due to Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Ltd., in full before the date of sale, auction is liable to be stopped.
- The immovable property will be sold to the highest tendered. However, the undersigned reserves the absolute discretion to allow inter se bidding, if deemed necessary.

Place :- DELHI, NCR Date:-20.07.2022

Sd/- Authorised Officer Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Limited

‘Eco on course for 8-8.5% growth based on Q1 data’

New Delhi: Finance ministry on Tuesday said that the economy is on course to achieve projected 8-8.5 per cent growth based on high-frequency indicators for the first quarter of the current fiscal.

The Economic Survey tabled in the Parliament on January 31, 2022 projected the real GDP during 2022-23 to grow at 8.0-8.5 per cent.

“Since then, sustained growth momentum has been observed in several High Frequency Indicators (HFIs), indicating that the projected growth path is on course in the first quarter of FY 2022-23,” minister of state for finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in a written reply to Rajya Sabha.

IMF, in its April 2022 update of World Economic Outlook, has also projected India’s real GDP growth at 8.2 per cent in 2022-23.

To ensure continued growth momentum, he said, the government has taken several steps to address high inflation imported from abroad.

These include cut in excise duty on petrol and diesel and special excise duty/cess on the export of petrol, diesel and aviation turbine fuel that are likely to alleviate inflationary pressures, he said.

Further, he said, to rein in inflation, RBI in its June Monetary Policy Committee meeting hiked the repo rate by 50 basis points, on top of the earlier hike of 40 basis points



in May 2022.

On the impact of geopolitical tension on Indian economy, he said, Russia-Ukraine war has led to global supply disruptions resulting in steep increase in global commodity prices, including prices of crude oil, gas, edible oils and fertilizers, among others.

The government is closely monitoring the global price movements and their impact on India’s economy through trade, he said.

Recently, prices of various commodities, including edible oils, metals and crude oil, have stabilised. Many central banks including the US Fed have also tightened their monetary policy to tackle inflation. The RBI and government is closely monitoring the situation and stand ready to take appropriate action, he said.

As per provisional estimates of annual national income 2021-22, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at current prices for 2021-22

stood at Rs 2,36,64,637 crore, he said in another reply.

Using the implied exchange rate for India for 2021-22 from World Economic outlook (WEO) of April 2022, the GDP for India at current prices stood at USD 3.2 trillion in 2021-22, he said.

The real GDP growth rate for 2021-22 stood at 8.7 per cent while the central government’s fiscal deficit for 2021-22 was Rs 15,86,537 crore, which is 6.7 per cent of GDP.

As per the quarterly report on public debt management for the quarter January- March 2022, he said, the provisional estimate for central government’s public debt at end of financial year 2021-22 was 52 per cent of GDP.

The reasons for increase in the debt include the pandemic-induced revenue shortfall in 2020-21 combined with the higher spending undertaken by the government to protect lives and livelihood of the people from the adverse impact of the pandemic, he said.

In reply to another question, he said, the size of India’s Current Account Deficit (CAD) depends on several factors, including exports, imports and price of crude oil, among others.

The Government is carefully monitoring the CAD and has recently increased customs duty on gold from 10.75 per cent to 15 per cent to restrain gold imports that is likely to reduce CAD. **PTI**

Sensex, Nifty recover after initial drop; climb for 3rd day



Mumbai: Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty bounced back after falling in initial trade on Tuesday amid foreign funds inflow and a mixed trend in global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 246.47 points or 0.45 per cent to settle at 54,767.62 after starting the trade on a weak note. In a volatile session, the benchmark hit a high of 54,817.52 and a low of 54,232.82 during the day.

On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty climbed 62.05 points or 0.38 per cent to close at 16,340.55.

Among the Sensex constituents, Axis Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank, Tata Steel, UltraTech Cement and State Bank of India were the major

gainers. However, Nestle India, HCL Technologies, Sun Pharma, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Infosys, Dr Reddy’s and Asian Paints were the biggest laggards.

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

Markets in Europe were trading on a mixed note during mid-session deals. The US markets had ended lower on Monday.

International oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.57 per cent to USD 105.7 per barrel. Foreign institutional investors turned net buyers on Monday, picking up shares worth ₹156.08 crore, as per exchange data. **PTI**

GST on daily use items: Decision taken with all States onboard, says Sitharaman

New Delhi: Facing criticism over GST on daily use items, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the 5 per cent tax is being levied on wheat flour and other items after nod from all states, including non-BJP ruled states.

Non-BJP ruled states of Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kerala had agreed to imposing the 5 per cent levy, she said.

In a series of tweets, Sitharaman said states levied sales tax or VAT on food-grains in the pre-Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime and the present levy on cereals, pulses, flour, curd and lassi is an exercise to curb tax leakage. The decision, she said, was taken by the GST Council, where all states are represented, through a consensus.

The minister’s comments come against the backdrop of the first two days of the monsoon session of Parliament virtually getting washed away due to vociferous protests by Opposition parties over the GST on daily use items and other issues.

“Is this the first time such food articles are being taxed? No. States were collecting significant revenue from food-grain in the pre-GST regime. Punjab alone collected more Rs 2,000 crore on food grain by way of purchase tax. UP collected Rs 700 crore,” she said.

Sitharaman also cited VAT on rice levied prior to 2017 in



Punjab Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Bihar to buttress her point.

However, the tweets did not give instances of levy of tax on pulses, paneer and lassi as has been the case now.

“Recently, the GST Council in its 47th meeting recommended to reconsider the approach for the imposition of GST on specified food items like pulses, cereals, flour, etc. There have been a lot of misconceptions about this that have been spread,” the minister said.

When the GST regime, which subsumed 17 central and state taxes including central excise and state VAT, was rolled out in July 2017, a 5 per cent tax was levied on ‘branded’ cereals, pulses, and flour.

“Later this was amended to tax only such items which

were sold under registered brand or brand on which enforceable right was not foregone by the supplier,” she said. “However, soon rampant misuse of this provision was observed by reputed manufacturers and brand owners and gradually GST revenue from these items fell significantly.”

Suppliers and industry associations asked the government to impose GST uniformly on all packaged commodities to stop such misuse, she said. The issue was referred to a Fitment Committee consisting of officers from Rajasthan, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Haryana and Gujarat.

The panel, she said, examined the issue over several meetings and made its recommendations for changing the modalities to curb misuse. **PTI**

Rupee rises 6 paise to close at 79.92 against US dollar

Mumbai: The rupee recovered from its all-time low of 80.05 to close 6 paise higher at 79.92 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, tracking its regional peers and a positive trend in domestic equities.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened lower at 80.00 against the greenback and fell further to an intra-day low of 80.05.

The local unit recouped losses later and settled at 79.92 (provisional), registering a rise of 6 paise over its previous close.

On Monday, the rupee for the first time declined to the low level of 80 against the US dollar in intra-day spot trading before ending the session 16 paise lower at 79.98 amid a surge in crude oil prices and unrelenting foreign fund outflows.

“The Indian rupee broke



the level of 80 after many days’ failed efforts by the dollar bulls amid higher crude oil prices. However, the central bank’s intervention and stronger regional currencies and equities supported the rupee to erase early morning losses,” said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

Parmar further said the near-term consolidation in the rupee is likely along with the dollar index ahead of the European Central Bank (ECB) and Bank of Japan policy meetings on Thursday. **PTI**

Gold gains marginally amid firm global trends



New Delhi: Gold in the national capital on Tuesday rose by ₹6 to ₹50,290 per 10 grams amid firm global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the yellow metal settled at ₹50,284 per 10 grams.

Silver, however, dipped by ₹137 to ₹55,539 per kg from ₹55,676 per kg in the previous trade.

“Spot gold prices for 24-carat gold in Delhi were up by ₹6 per 10 grams in line with firm COMEX gold prices,” said Tapan Patel, Senior Analyst (Commodities) at HDFC Securities.

In the international market, gold was trading higher at USD 1,711 per ounce while silver was flat at USD 18.80 per ounce. **PTI**

RBI imposes restrictions on two co-op banks; customers can’t withdraw funds

Mumbai: Customers of Karnataka-based Sri Mallikarjuna Pattana Sahakari Bank Niyamita and Maharashtra-based Nashik Zilla Girna Sahakari Bank will not be able to withdraw funds from their accounts with the RBI imposing restrictions on the lenders.

The restrictions have been imposed on the two cooperative banks by the Reserve Bank of India in wake of their deteriorating financial positions.

The restrictions on Sri Mallikarjuna Pattana Sahakari Bank Niyamita, Maski (Karnataka) and Nashik Zilla Girna Sahakari Bank, Nashik (Maharashtra) will remain in force for six months, as per two statements issued by the central bank.

In the case of Nashik Zilla Girna Sahakari Bank, the RBI said 99.87 per cent of the depositors are fully covered by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation



(DICGC) insurance scheme.

Also, 99.53 per cent of the depositors of Sri Mallikarjuna Pattana Sahakari Bank Niyamita are fully covered by the DICGC insurance scheme.

“Considering the bank’s present liquidity position, no amount from the total balance across all savings bank or current accounts or any other account of a depositor, may be allowed to be withdrawn, but are allowed to set off loans

against deposits...” the RBI said in regards to the Karnataka-based bank.

A similar condition has also been imposed on the Maharashtra-based lender.

In wake of the restrictions, the two banks cannot, without prior approval of the RBI grant or renew any loans, make any investment, incur any liability, including borrowal of funds and acceptance of fresh deposits. **PTI**

Goyal calls for deepening trade ties with Africa; exploring solar energy, startup ecosystem

New Delhi: Solar energy, infrastructure, military cooperation and startup ecosystem are four critical areas where India can be a valuable partner to African nations, Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal said on Tuesday.

The trade between India and African countries has been pretty balanced with exports of trade and services of about USD 40 billion and imports of USD 49 billion, Goyal said while speaking at the inauguration of 17th CII-Exim Bank conclave here.

“And we would like to continue this engagement and partnership where both African nations and India support each other in an endeavour to support each other’s economic growth.



“India gives 27 Less Developed Countries from Africa the benefit of duty free tariff preference..It’s time we also look at further deepening and strengthening the trade partnership and possibly look at giving greater trading access to both African continent and to India so that we can expand this trade in a much faster and greater way,” the minister said.

Speaking at the conclave on ‘India-Africa Growth

Partnership - Creating Shared Futures’, he said India and South African countries can work in several areas to bring cost effective, affordable and truly designed for local population solutions in several areas.

“And India would like to strengthen our offer of friendship, our offer of relationship based business so that we can meet the dream of 1.4 billion African people. There are four areas of partnerships that I believe can fulfil the aspirations of the people of Africa and India going forward,” Goyal said.

He said both the countries are blessed with significant amount of sunlight and solar power can be one area of engagement between Africa and India. **PTI**

DLF aims to double retail presence in 4-5yrs: Chief

New Delhi: Enthused by strong recovery in retail consumption, realty major DLF Chairman Rajiv Singh has said the company has initiated the development of new shopping malls and looks to double retail portfolio in next five years.

At present, DLF has a retail footprint of 42 lakh square feet comprising eight properties, including malls and shopping centres, mainly across Delhi-NCR. In a message to the company’s shareholders’, he said the company would also scale up development of housing and office projects.

Singh mentioned that the past couple of years have been one of the most challenging and uncertain times experienced across the globe because of the outbreak of the COVID-



19 pandemic.

“... Despite the hardships faced in the recent past, your company exhibited strong resilience during this challenging phase and has come out even stronger, delivering a strong performance across all key parameters during the (last) fiscal,” he told shareholders in an annual report for 2021-22. **PTI**

India’s passenger vehicle exports jump 26% in Q1

New Delhi: India’s passenger vehicle exports rose by 26 per cent in April-June 2022 aided by enhanced shipments to Latin America and Africa and a low base of the year-ago quarter that was hit by the second wave of Covid-19.

As per the latest data released by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), passenger vehicle shipments rose to 1,60,263 units in the April-June period of this fiscal as compared with 1,27,083 units in the same quarter of 2021-22.

Passenger car shipments saw an 88 per cent year-on-year growth at 1,04,400 units while utility vehicle exports rose 18



per cent to 55,547 units during the period under review, SIAM data showed.

Export of vans declined to 316 units in April-June as compared with 588 units in the same period of the last fiscal.

“In the recent past, there has been a higher penetration of India manufactured passenger vehicles in Latin America and Africa as the economies of these regions improve,” SIAM Director

General Rajesh Menon told PTI.

Indian manufactured vehicles meet the consumer requirement of these regions as the brands are global, have good build quality and are cost competitive, he added.

“Effect of trade agreement with Chile couple of years ago, has also recently helped in improving the competitiveness of India manufactured passenger vehicles,” Menon noted.

Domestic car leader Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) led the exports during the first quarter, followed by Hyundai Motor India and Kia India at the second and third positions, respectively. **PTI**

Godrej Consumer Projects to invest ₹100 cr on ecological awareness

Mumbai: Godrej Consumer Products will invest Rs 100 crore over the next three years to spread mass awareness about green lifestyles, a top official said on Tuesday.

The brand, which has launched a ready-to-mix body wash aimed at reducing plastic usage, will spend the money to promote better plastic consumption, its managing director and chief executive Sudhir Sitapati told reporters here.

Amid the widespread regulatory actions like the ban on

single-use plastics, Sitapati said banning plastics is not the answer to the current challenges.

He said plastic has solved a lot of problems and democratised consumption by making it possible for people from different strata of society to use various products.

Activist Afroze Shah said corporates need to do more when it comes to sustainability, and also stressed that it is the management of plastic where we need to direct our efforts. **PTI**

Review spectrum pricing mechanism for captive users to incentivise ministries: CAG to DoT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has pulled up the telecom department for not finalising policy on spectrum assignment for captive users and flagged the absence of spectrum price review for captive users administratively.

In its report titled ‘Management of spectrum assigned on the administrative basis to government depart-

ments/agencies’, the CAG asked the Department of Telecom (DoT) to review the spectrum pricing mechanism for captive users to incentivise ministries, departments and agencies, and for maintaining spectrum management discipline.

“They may consider differential pricing, depending on the features and usage of various spectrum bands,” the CAG said in a report tabled in Parliament on Monday.

It noted that despite receiv-

ing a legal opinion (July 2021) on its own reference, regarding the method for allotment of spectrum for captive uses, including government departments, the department had not finalised the policy for allotment and assignment of spectrum for captive uses/other commercial services with the approval of the Digital Communications Commission.

The DCC is the apex body for telecom policy formulation. “DoT” had also not

reviewed the pricing of spectrum assigned for captive users administratively, on formulae basis since 2012, though a Committee had recommended for a periodical review of the pricing policy in 2013,” the CAG report said.

There was no differential pricing for spectrum, depending on features and usage of various spectrum bands assigned to users, it observed. **PTI**

Russia defaults on LNG supplies to India

New Delhi: Russia has defaulted on the supply of at least 5 cargoes or shiploads of LNG to India after its retaliatory sanctions hit one of the companies that supply gas to India, sources said.

India’s largest gas firm GAIL has a long-term deal to import 2.85 million tonnes of liquefied natural gas (LNG) per annum from a Singapore-based unit of Russian gas producer Gazprom.

The company has since June defaulted on the supply of 5 cargoes of LNG under that contract citing difficulty in sourcing gas due to sanctions, two sources briefed on the matter said.

While the contract provides for making up of the volumes not supplied later, the Russian firm has so far not indicated how and when it will make up for the lost volumes. **PTI**

CHINA TO HOST ASIAN GAMES IN 2023 AFTER COVID POSTPONEMENT



AFP ■ KUWAIT CITY

China will host the 2022 Asian Games in autumn 2023, organisers said on Tuesday, after postponing the event in Hangzhou because of Covid-19. The Games were originally scheduled for September this year, but organisers postponed them in May as China tried to stamp out a large Covid resur-

gence in several parts of the country.

The event will now be held in Hangzhou from September 23 to October 8 2023, the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) said.

Hangzhou lies less than 200 kilometres (120 miles) from the country's biggest city Shanghai, which endured a months-long lockdown earlier this year as part of the ruling Communist Party's

zero-tolerance approach to the virus.

The OCA said on Tuesday that the new dates were chosen to avoid "conflict with other major international sporting events".

The Hangzhou organising committee vowed to "present a wonderful and marvellous sports and cultural event with Chinese characteristics", in a statement

confirming the new dates.

China is the last major economy committed to stamping out domestic spread of the virus through harsh lockdowns, mass testing and strict controls on international travel.

But that has hurt the country's international sporting ambitions, with the world's most populous nation cancelling or postponing almost all events since the

start of the pandemic, with the exception of this year's Winter Olympics in Beijing.

The World University Games, scheduled to begin in June in Chengdu and already delayed from last year, have also been postponed again, until 2023.

The Asian Games typically attract over 10,000 athletes from across the region.

Sports under zero-Covid

Organisers said in April that Hangzhou, a city of 12 million in eastern China, had finished constructing 56 competition venues for the Asian Games and Asian Para Games.

Hangzhou will be the third city in China to host the continental competition after Beijing in 1990 and Guangzhou in 2010.

Some events are also expected to be held in other provincial cities including Ningbo, Wenzhou, Huzhou, Shaoxing and Jinhua.

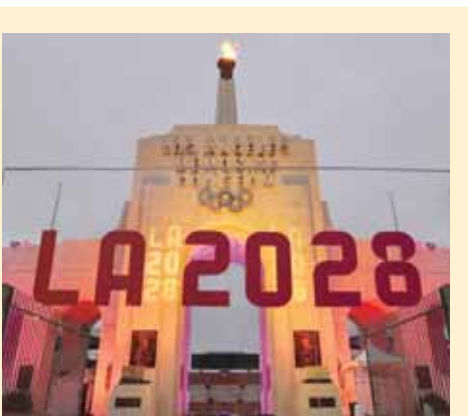
Almost all international sport has ground to a halt in China since Covid emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019.

The Beijing Olympics was an exception but was held in a "closed loop" with everyone inside it -- including athletes, staff, volunteers and media -- taking daily Covid tests and not allowed to venture into the wider city or have contact with the public.

The Chinese government has touted the zero-Covid strategy as proof that it values human life above material concerns and can avert the public health crises seen in many Western countries.

Covid restrictions around the country eased slightly this summer as case numbers from the earlier Omicron-driven outbreak dwindled.

But a rising wave of fresh infections this month have led to new restrictions in parts of the country, with millions of people receiving orders to stay home over the weekend.



Los Angeles Olympics to begin July 14, 2028

AP ■ LOS ANGELES

The 2028 Los Angeles Olympics kicked off a six-year countdown with the announcement of the dates for the Games' return to the city.

The opening ceremony will be July 14. Competition will run through July 30. The Paralympic Games will be Aug. 15-27.

"This milestone makes the games real for every athlete actively training for their LA28 dream and the fans who follow the journey," said LA chief athlete officer Janet Evans, a five-time Olympic medalist swimmer.

Los Angeles previously hosted the Olympics in 1984 and 1932.

International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach was on hand for the announcement. He visited future venues and met with LA28 leadership.

"I have been really impressed by the progress and creativity of the LA28 team," Bach said.

"They are using the power of the Olympic Games to inspire young people to get involved in sport."

The Games will use existing stadiums and venues across the region. The organizing committee said 15,000 athletes are expected to compete in both the Olympic and Paralympic games.



Spurs sign Middlesbrough defender Spence

AFP ■ LONDON

Tottenham signed Middlesbrough defender Djed Spence on Tuesday in a deal that could rise to a reported £20 million (\$24 million).

Spence agreed a five-year contract with Tottenham after impressing during a loan spell with Championship side Nottingham Forest last season.

The 21-year-old right-back's initial price is believed to be £12.5 million but that could rise to £20 million if add-on clauses are reached. Spence shot to prominence as Forest won promotion to the Premier League via the second tier play-offs last term.

He made 46 appearances, scoring three goals in a season that culminated

with victory over Huddersfield in the play-off final at Wembley.

Tottenham boss Antonio Conte has been on a major recruitment drive since leading his team to Champions League qualification via a top four finish in the Premier League.

The addition of Spence follows Conte's moves for Ivan Perisic, Fraser Forster, Yves Bissouma, Richarlison and Clement Lenglet.

London-born Spence came through Fulham's academy before moving to Middlesbrough in 2018, with his time at the Riverside Stadium disrupted by a host of managerial changes.

His temporary switch to Forest kick-started his career, earning him England Under-21 recognition in March and now a dream move to Tottenham.

Sable finishes disappointing 11th in 3000m steeplechase final in World Championship

PTI ■ EUGENE

India's Avinash Sable finished 11th in the final of the men's 3000m steeplechase event with a disappointing show on the fourth day of competitions at the World Championships here.

The 27-year-old Sable clocked 8:31.75, way below his season's and personal best of 8:12.48, which is a national record.

It was, however, the slowest 3000m steeplechase final race in World Championships history with all the three medal winners clocking way below their season's and personal best. The runners ran a tactical race with medal in mind.



Morocco's Olympic champion Soufiane El Bakkali, who has a season leading time of 7:58.28, won the gold, clocking 8:25.13, while Ethiopia's Lamecha Girma (SB: 7:58.68), who won silver in both the Tokyo Games and last World Championships, finished second in 8:26.01.

Kenya's defending champion Consalus Kipruto (SB: 8:08.76) was third with a time of 8:27.92. Kipruto had won gold in the last edition with a time of 8:01.35.

Sable had qualified for the final after finishing third in heat number 3 and seventh overall with a time of 8:18.75.

He had finished 13th in the last edition of the champi-

onships in Doha in 2019 with the then national record time of 8:21.37.

The Indian Armyman from a village in Maharashtra's Beed district was at 14th spot at the 1km mark with a time of nearly 3 minutes (2:59.46) and remained there at the 2km mark with 5:53.72.

He moved up to 12th in the last lap and to 11th in the final 100m stretch.

Sable, who has earlier served at the Siachen Glaciers before taking to athletics, has been on a national record breaking spree in recent times. His latest best was 8:12.48 when he finished fifth at the prestigious Diamond League Meeting in Rabat last month.

Harshada clinches Gold medal at Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting C'ships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fast-rising Indian lifter Harshada Garud won the women's 45kg gold at the Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championship in Tashkent.

The 18-year-old claimed the yellow metal with an aggregate of 157kg (69kg+88kg) on Monday. The total effort was four kgs better than her junior world championship title-winning lift of 153kg (70kg+83kg), which she had recorded in May.

Soumya Dalvi bagged the bronze in the 45kg youth event.



The youth world championship bronze medalist heaved 145kg (63kg+82kg) to make the podium.

In the men's 49 kg youth event, L Dhanush won the bronze in the snatch section with an 85 kg effort.

However, the Indian finished fourth overall with a best effort of 185kg (85kg+100kg).

Medals are awarded separately for snatch, clean and jerk, and total lift in continental and World Championships. But, just one medal - for total lift - is awarded in the Olympics.

CWG: A happy hunting ground for Indian lifters

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A new rule prevented India from rejigging the weight categories of its lifters for maximum advantage but country's 15-strong contingent, headlined by Mirabai Chanu, is still expected to return with a bagful of medals from the Birmingham Commonwealth Games.

The Commonwealth tournaments, be it the CWG or the Commonwealth Championships, have been a happy hunting ground for Indian weightlifters, who revel in the absence of traditional powerhouses like China and North Korea.

India have finished as the best-performing nation in the sport in the 1990, 2002, and 2018 editions.

They are the second most successful nation in the sport with 125 medals, including 43 golds, behind Australia (159), whose dominance has taken a hit in the last few editions.

Indian weightlifters reigned



supreme in the 2018 Gold Coast Games, bringing home a rich haul of nine medals including five golds. And this year too, all 15 lifters are capable of podium finishes.

However, only a handful of them

are expected to strike gold.

To increase India's chances of winning more gold medals in the women's events, the Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWLFF) and head coach Vijay Sharma planned to

field Tokyo Olympic silver medallist Chanu, a sure-shot title contender, in the 55kg weight division.

Jhilli Dalabehera and S Bindyarani Devi were to compete in the 49kg and 59kg respectively while Poppy Hazarika would have presented her challenge in the 64kg division.

But the entries were rejected based on a new rule that stated only the top-ranked lifter in a category will qualify for the CWG and if he/she withdraws, the next best lifter will not get the berth, as was the case before.

This forced Chanu (49kg), Bindyarani (55kg), and Poppy (59kg) to drop back a weight class each which resulted in Jhilli missing out on the quadrennial event and no Indian representation in 64kg.

At the Games, all eyes will, no doubt, be on Chanu but while all others will strive to stand atop the podium.

The former world champion, whose personal best in the women's

49kg stands at 207kg (88kg+119kg), a whopping 39kgs more than the second best lifter in the field, winning the yellow metal is almost a certainty.

All she has to do is execute two legal lifts, one each in the snatch and clean and jerk, to win her third CWG medal.

She doesn't even need to bring her A game as her nearest rival, Nigeria's Stella Kingsley's best effort to date is just 168kg (72kg+96kg).

However, the 27-year-old, who already has a CWG gold and silver in her trophy cabinet, has set herself bigger targets.

Chanu is expected to rewrite her clean and jerk world record of 119kg and is also eager to breach the much-anticipated 90kg mark in the snatch section. "CWG is relatively easy for me, I will be fighting with myself. We have planned to lift 91kg or 92kg at the CWG.

Hopefully, it will happen," she had told PTI in an interview last month.

11 players selected to join NBA Academy India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

11 players from ACG-NBA Jump 2022 will receive full scholarships to attend NBA Academy India, an elite basketball training center for the top prospects from across the country. From July 14-16, the ACG-NBA Jump National Tryout was conducted at Jaypee Greens, Noida, bringing together 30 of India's most promising young players.

The ACG-NBA Jump 2022 National Tryout marks the culmination of a nationwide talent search which tipped off on May 21, 2022, at Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, New Delhi, and visited six cities across India - Delhi, Kottayam, Ludhiana, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai. Currently in its sixth edition, the program saw participation from more than 1,600 aspirants.

Following are the selected prospects for the NBA Academy India: Harjeet Singh (Patiala), Tajinder Bir Singh (Jalandhar), Abhimanyu G (Chennai), Lavish Khanchi (Panipat), Jatin Hooda (Haryana), Mayank Chaudhary (Meerut), Mohammad Ishan (Jaipur), Guremaninder Singh Sandhu (Panipat), Vedansh Ranot (Mohali), Arshnel Dhaliwal (Chandigarh), Dorian Lal Sangmawia (Aizawl)

ACG-NBA Jump is India's first national basketball scouting program that provides aspiring basketball players from across the country with a platform to compete alongside one another, showcase their skills and receive additional basketball development opportunities. As part of the NBA and ACG's commit-

LAUNCHED IN 2015, THE 2022 EDITION OF ACG-NBA JUMP MARKS THE FIRST TIME THE PROGRAM HAS BEEN HELD SINCE 2020.

ment to grow basketball in India, the program provides talented young players from around the country an opportunity to develop their skills under the guidance of NBA-certified coaches.

Launched in 2015, the 2022 edition of ACG-NBA Jump marks the first time the program has been held since 2020. Palpreet Singh, the top prospect from program's inaugural edition, attended the 2016 NBA G League National Tryout in the United States and was subsequently drafted by the Long Island Nets in the 2016 NBA G League Draft. NBA Academy India, which is also supported by ACG, opened in 2017 and has seen multiple players earn scholarships to prep schools and junior colleges in the US or sign professional contracts, including Princepal Singh, who became the first NBA Academy India player to sign with the NBA G League and first player from India to win an NBA Summer League Championship.

GAVASKAR OFFERS HELP TO KOHLI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The legendary Sunil Gavaskar feels he can help the out-of-form Virat Kohli regain touch by sorting his batting woes, especially his weakness outside off stump.

Kohli is enduring a wretched run with the bat and has failed to score a century since November 2019. He could manage just 76 runs from six innings across formats on the England soil, which included the rescheduled fifth Test, two ODIs and as many T20s.

"If I had about 20 minutes with him, I would be able to tell him the things he might have to do. It might help him, I am not saying it will help him but it could, particularly with regards to that off-stump line," Gavaskar told 'India Today'.

"Having been an opening batter, having been troubled by that line, there are certain things that you try and do."

Kohli's lean patch has led to calls for his ouster from the T20 World Cup team, with even the legendary Kapil Dev voicing support for his exclusion.

However, many former and current cricketers, including Babar Azam, Kevin Pietersen and Shoaib Akhtar have backed him to come good in the upcoming games.

"It goes back to the fact that his first mistake turns out to be his last. Again, just because he is not amongst the runs, there is this anxiety to play at every delivery because that is what batters feel, they have got to score," Gavaskar said.

"You look to play at deliveries that you otherwise won't. But he has gotten out to good deliveries as well on this particular tour."

Kohli has been rested for the limited-overs series against West Indies which includes five T20Is



and three ODIs.

Gavaskar also praised Rishabh Pant for batting responsibly in the third ODI against England.

"Rishabh Pant seems to have learned from his mistakes against

South Africa. He chased balls outside off stump to slog them over the leg side often, but the way he batted with responsibility yesterday shows how well he paced his innings," the 73-year-old said.

"The way he smashed a flurry of boundaries towards the end showed that he is someone who can absorb pressure and then attack. We will need to wait and see (whether Pant is able to replicate this form in T20Is).

Have always admired energy and commitment Kohli gives to game: Stokes

PTI ■ LONDON

England Test captain Ben Stokes has returned the compliment to Virat Kohli, saying he has always admired the energy and commitment that the Indian star brings to the field.

Stokes had announced his retirement from ODI cricket on Monday, following which Kohli called the all-rounder 'the most competitive bloke' he has played against.

"Look, Virat is going to go down as one of the greatest players to play the game in all three formats. He is a phenomenal player. And I have absolutely loved every time I have played against someone like him," Stokes told Sky Sports. "The energy and the commitment that he gives to the game is something I have always admired even before I started playing against him. When you play against guys like that, you understand sort of what it means to not just yourself but for everybody else who was lucky enough to play at the top level. "I am sure we will have some other battles on the field. It was nice to hear what he (Kohli) said," said Stokes.

He might have found the right template to play white ball cricket."

Pant smashed a maiden ODI century against England at Old Trafford in Manchester to help India seal the three-game series 2-1.

End Warner's captaincy ban, says Greg Chappell



PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian batting great Greg Chappell on Tuesday called for the lifetime captaincy ban on David Warner to be lifted, saying the star batter has the capability to successfully lead a side.

Warner, former captain Steve Smith and batter Cameron Bancroft were banned from playing domestic or international cricket as punishment for their roles in the 2018 ball-tampering scandal in South Africa.

While Warner and Smith were banned for one year, Bancroft was suspended for nine months.

Additionally, Smith was stripped of the captaincy and banned from leading Australia for two years, while Warner was handed a lifelong leadership ban.

"He obviously had a central role in what happened but he was not the only one that was involved and I don't know why he should be treated any differently," Chappell told 'Fox Sports News'.

"He's served his punishment, he

is a good leader in the side and not doubt if he had had the opportunity, I'm sure he would have captained the side quite well.

"I think he's paid his penalty and it's time to open it up for leadership roles," he added.

According to Cricket Australia's investigation held in the aftermath of the incident, while Smith and Bancroft knew what they were getting into, it was Warner who had developed the "plan to attempt to artificially alter the condition of the ball".

Former skipper Ian Chappell had also questioned why Smith is eligible to captain Australia again when Warner is not.

Last month, Test skipper Pat Cummins had called for Warner's life ban to end.

The pacer said he "fundamentally" disagrees with banning someone for life.

However, Cricket Australia chief executive Nick Hockley last week said that although Warner was an "outstanding" leader in the side there were no plans to rescind the ban.

Pak need 120 runs to win 1st Test vs SL

AP ■ GALLE

Opener Abdullah Shafique was 112 not out and leading Pakistan at 223-3 in its chase of 342 to beat Sri Lanka in the first test at Galle Stadium on Tuesday.

The fourth day would have belonged entirely to Pakistan but captain Babar Azam was out six overs from the end for 55 after the best partnership of the match.

That gave Sri Lanka a sniff of hope that it can still win, but the odds are with Pakistan, which needs 120 more runs with seven wickets in hand and a full day.

The highest successful run chase in Galle is 268 and Pakistan went about achieving the unlikely showing determination and skill on a pitch that slowed down and lacked bounce.

Sri Lanka made it easy with poor field placements. Despite having almost 350 runs to defend, the host spread the field early in Pakistan's innings and the batters were happy to knock off the singles and put up a solid foundation.

The openers combined for 87 runs and the start Pakistan needed, although Sri Lanka claimed the wickets of Imam-



ul-Haq (35) and Azhar Ali (6) in quick succession.

First-innings century-maker Babar added 101 runs for the third wicket with Shafique to help Pakistan seize the initiative.

Shafique was unbeaten at stumps having batted for close to six hours. He'd faced 289 deliveries and hit just five fours and one six.

The second century of Shafique's six-test career could be a match-winning one. There was a nervous moment when

he was on 4 and a loud lbw shout was turned down. The Sri Lankans reviewed and Shafique was narrowly saved.

Spinner Prabath Jayasuriya, Sri Lanka's main weapon, broke the partnership when he got one to spin from the rough outside Babar's leg stump and the ball clipped the off stump bail much to Babar's bewilderment. A better defensive shot using his feet could have saved him.

Vice-captain Mohammad Rizwan, 7 not out, joined

Shafique and the pair ensured there were no further hiccups.

Earlier in the day, Sri Lanka's Dinesh Chandimal was left stranded on 94 when their second innings was ended on 337 with the addition of only eight runs. Jayasuriya was the last man out for 4.

The series is being played against the backdrop of an economic and political crisis engulfing Sri Lanka.

The second test, scheduled to start on Sunday, was switched from Colombo to Galle because Sri Lanka Cricket decided not to take any chances with potential political protests in the capital.

The venue switch was confirmed on Monday around the time Ranil Wickremesinghe declared a state of emergency. He became acting president last week after Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled abroad and resigned after months-long mass protests over the country's economic collapse.

SLC was forced to postpone the Lanka Premier League which was scheduled for next month due to the economic crisis. Officials also admitted the Asia Cup they were scheduled to host in late August is slipping away from them due to the crisis.

Washington looking to learn from Anderson

PTI ■ LONDON

Washington Sundar is looking forward to learn from the legendary James Anderson during his stint at Lancashire, a club he chose even while playing on his Playstation.

With his upcoming stint at the English county side, the 22-year-old will be making his comeback in red-ball cricket since sustaining a finger injury in July last year. The injury sidelined him from India's tour of England last year and also the second leg of the 2021 Indian Premier League. "I remember playing with my Playstation and choosing Lancashire against most of the domestic teams here. It is great to be here and playing for Lancashire," Washington said in an interview with the club's official YouTube channel. The young all-rounder added, "It has got some exciting talents and some experienced players. I am looking forward to sharing the dressing room with them and to sharing of knowledge about how cricket is played here.

Former SC judge Vineet Saran appointed BCCI ethics officer

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Supreme Court judge Vineet Saran has taken over as the BCCI's ethics officer and ombudsman, filling the dual posts lying vacant for a year.

Saran has succeeded Justice (Retd) D K Jain, whose term ended in June last year.

"Honourable Justice Saran's appointment was made last month," a BCCI official told PTI.

Saran, 65, is a former Chief Justice of Odisha High Court, and also served as a judge in Karnataka and Allahabad High Court.

When contacted, Saran, who calls himself a cricket lover, said: "I took charge last month, but I have not passed any order yet."

BCCI media rights, domestic cricket on Apex Council table

After the IPL windfall, the BCCI Apex Council will prepare the ground for the home season media rights (2023 onwards) and a full-fledged domestic season after two years at its meeting on Thursday.

Majority of the Apex Council meetings have been held virtually over the past two years due to COVID-19, but all members are likely to meet in person at the BCCI headquarters in Mumbai.

The 12-point agenda includes "update on the 2022-2023 domestic season, gradation of umpires and media rights for cricket in India".

Current rights holder Star India had paid Rs 6138.1 crore for the 2018-2023 cycle but the figure is set to go much higher considering the massive gains from the IPL media rights which fetched Rs 48390 crore.

"The media rights will be discussed as well as the upcoming domestic season," a the official said. While the Ranji Trophy could not be held for the first time ever in 2021 due to the pandemic, it returned this year in curtailed form with teams getting to play only three league games. With the COVID-19 situation allowing the BCCI to do away with bubble both for international and domestic games, the domestic season is likely to be a full-fledged one.

Ben made 'selfless' decision to retire from ODIs: Rob Key

AP ■ LONDON

England managing director of cricket Rob Key has praised Ben Stokes for his 'selfless' decision to ignore the 'financial implications' of retiring from one-day internationals.

Stokes will make his 105th and final ODI appearance at his Durham home ground against South Africa on Tuesday after taking his shock decision to quit the format 24 hours earlier.

Key's first act after being appointed was to hire Stokes as England's Test captain, but he knows the relentless fixture demands on top international players make it hard to feature in all versions of the game.

While the monetary terms of Stokes' central contract could come under review, Key feels England's Test and Twenty20 teams will stand to gain enormously from the all-rounder lightening his workload.

"It may well end up having financial implications to Ben Stokes in terms of his contract," Key told Sky Sports News.



"That's why it's a selfless decision, he could easily have said 'no, no, I'm the key' and kept getting picked in the 50-over team."

"But he wants to do the Test job as best as he can, he wants to take England's Test team forward."

"I was probably surprised at the timing but I'm not surprised that he's had to give one format away. I think it's a good decision from Ben that England will benefit from in the long term."

Key, who spoke to Stokes about his decision last Thursday, thinks the 31-year-old was also motivated by his desire to continue being a presence in both batting and bowling disciplines in the Test side.

England's Test form has been revitalised under Stokes and new red-ball coach Brendon McCullum.

Since the pair took charge, England have swept a three-Test series against New Zealand before defeating India in the final match of a Covid-delayed series.

"Him bowling is actually the thing he wants to be able to do, he doesn't just want to go and be a batter, he wants to be able to contribute as an all-rounder," Key said.

"To do that he feels this is the best way. I'm hoping and I'm betting that this is what gets him up to 120-plus Test matches."

New Zealand win T20I

AP ■ BELFAST

New Zealand earned a fourth straight win against Ireland to start their Twenty20 series 1-0 at Stormont.

Fresh off a 3-0 series win in the one-day internationals at Malahide, New Zealand won by 31 runs after posting 173-8 and bowling out Ireland for 142 with 10 balls to spare.

The Irish chase sputtered as no batter got a decent foothold and wickets fell regularly. Curtis Campher led with 29, one of only two scores above 15.

Lockie Ferguson spearheaded New Zealand's bowling with 4-14 in 20 balls. Jimmy Neesham and captain Mitchell Santner took two wickets each.

Set 174 to win, Ireland was cut down to 37-4 before the powerplay was over.

Andy Balbirnie fell to a great catch running back by Santner, Garth Delany and Paul Stirling were undone by Ferguson's slower ball, and Harry Tector edged Santner.

Lorcan Tucker also edged Santner, George Dockrell was caught in the deep off Ish Sodhi, and leading scorer Campher was trapped by a Ferguson yorker.



Mark Adair posed the last threat with 25 off 20 but he was taken in a double-wicket 17th over by Neesham.

The Black Caps had to bat first and were reduced to 54-4 but Glenn Phillips led the recovery with an unbeaten 69 and key partnerships with Neesham of 46 runs and Michael Bracewell of 45.

Ireland medium-pacer Josh Little took 4-35 by taking out Finn Allen and debutant Dane Cleaver, and returned in

the 19th over to bowl debutant Bracewell and Santner.

But Phillips held out, first with Neesham who hit the sightscreen in a 29 off 16 balls, and with Bracewell, who made 21 off 13.

Phillips helped plunder 16 runs in the 18th over, reach his third T20 fifty in the 19th, and take 19, including six extras, off the last over. Phillips hit seven fours and a six.

The second of three matches is on Wednesday.

Smith to oversee new SA T20 league

AP ■ JOHANNESBURG

Former South Africa captain Graeme Smith was on Tuesday named as the head of a new T20 franchise tournament to be staged in the republic in January and February next year.

The announcement was made by Cricket South Africa (CSA) six days after it revealed it had withdrawn from a scheduled World Cup Super League one-day international series in Australia in January, which would have clashed with the new tournament.

CSA and South African television company SuperSport are the major shareholders in the league, which is intended to be a major money-spinner for cash-strapped national body.

Reports from India claim the league will in effect be an offshoot of the Indian Premier League, with IPL owners having bought six franchises in South Africa.

The CSA statement on 41-year-old Smith's appointment did not give any detail about ownership of the franchises but said one of Smith's first tasks would be "to develop the brand and confirm the participating franchises for the cricket fest to take place annually in South Africa."

Smith, who retired as a player in 2014, did not renew his contract as CSA director of cricket when it expired in March but it was widely speculated that he would be involved with the T20 project.

"I'm extremely honoured to be entrusted with leading this exciting new venture. I'm deeply committed to South African cricket and happy to serve the game as best I can," Smith said.

"I'm excited by the opportunity to deliver the new league which I believe will be an extreme-



ly competitive product, one that can bring the much-needed investment into the game and provide new opportunities for players around the world and more importantly to our South African home-grown talent."

A spokesperson for CSA said he could not confirm the reports out of India which named Mumbai Indians, Chennai Super Kings, Lucknow Super Giants, Sunrisers Hyderabad, Rajasthan Royals and Delhi Capitals as buyers of South African franchises.

CSA said when it announced its withdrawal from the one-day series in Australia that it wanted its leading players to be available for the new league.

South Africa forfeited the Super League points available for the Australia series and as a consequence may be unable to qualify automatically for the 2023 Cricket World Cup.

"This new league promises to make a significant investment into both professional cricket and development in South Africa, along with a positive socio-economic and tourism injection into the country," the CSA's chief executive Pholetsi Moseki said.