

**OPINION 6**  
IS JUDICIAL  
OVER-REACH JUSTIFIED?

**WORLD 9**  
RUSSIA POUNDS MAJOR UKRAINIAN  
CITY AFTER EXPANDING WAR AIMS

**MONEY 10**  
MARKETS GAIN FOR 5TH  
STRAIGHT SESSION

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# INDIA GETS FIRST TRIBAL PRESIDENT

## Murmu secures votes worth 6,76,803 against Yashwant's 3,80,177

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Droupadi Murmu on Thursday won the Presidential election with a massive margin and created history by becoming the first tribal to occupy the top constitutional post in the country. Murmu, the second woman to reach the Rashtrapati Bhawan will be the 15th President of India. At 64, she is also the youngest President of India. Fielded by BJP-led NDA, Murmu beat the Opposition nominee and former Union Minister Yashwant Sinha.

A total of 4,754 votes were polled, out of which 4701 were valid and 53 were invalid. The quota sufficient to get a candidate elected was determined by dividing the number of first preference votes secured by both candidates by two and then adding one to the quotient. The said quota was 5,28,491. Droupadi Murmu secured 284 first preference votes, value of which was 6,76,803, whereas 1,877 first preference votes were secured

by Yashwant Sinha, value of which was 3,80,177. As the first preference votes secured by Droupadi Murmu was greater than the requisite quota, the Returning Officer, declared Droupadi Murmu duly elected to the Office of the President of India.

In every round of counting, she received more than two-third votes. At least 17 MPs from Opposition parties cross-voted in the presidential election in favour of Murmu, sources said.

After the announcement of the result, Opposition's presidential nominee Sinha extended best wishes to Murmu. "I join my fellow citizens in congratulating Murmu on her victory in the Presidential Election 2022. India hopes that as the 15th President of the Republic, she functions as the Custodian of the Constitution without fear or favour," Sinha tweeted.

He said the issues he raised during his campaign remain pertinent and despite the outcome of the election, he believes it has benefited Indian democracy in two important



Prime Minister Narendra Modi presents a bouquet to President-elect Droupadi in New Delhi on Thursday

ways. "It brought most Opposition parties on a common platform. This is indeed the need of the hour, and I earnestly appeal to them to continue — indeed, further strengthen — Opposition unity beyond the Presidential election. It must be equally evident in the election of the Vice-President," he said.

In his congratulatory message, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Murmu's life, her early struggles, her rich service and her exemplary success motivates each and every Indian. She has emerged as a ray of hope for our citizens, especially the poor, margin-



BJP workers and supporters celebrate NDA's presidential candidate Droupadi Murmu's victory in the Presidential elections, in New Delhi, on Thursday

## ED quizzes Sonia in Herald case, summons again on Mon

### Cong workers take to streets to protest her questioning

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday questioned Congress chief Sonia Gandhi in a money laundering case related to the National Herald newspaper. The issue of summons to the Congress president rocked Parliament even as the Congress workers took to the street to protest her questioning.

The agency summoned her again on July 25 for further questioning, officials said. She was questioned for about two hours and was allowed to leave



Congress MPs holding banner and placards stage a protest march at Parliament House complex to express their solidarity with the party chief Sonia Gandhi

on her request, officials said. However, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said the ED told Sonia that they had no further questions and she could leave.

"The Congress president told the ED officials that 'I am ready to return, I will answer your questions, it may take till 7 pm, 8 pm, 9 pm, I am ready to sit here'. But from the ED side it was said their doctor is not available in the afternoon and tomorrow the ED is busy with some court issue, Ramesh said.

## TMC to skip VP poll voting; Left, Cong allege tacit pact with BJP

**SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA**

The Trinamool Congress has decided to abstain from voting in the vice-presidential elections, party national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee said on Thursday following a high-level meeting of Trinamool MPs with party supremo and Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

The TMC, the Congress and all other parties had jointly fielded Yashwant Sinha in the presidential elections.

The TMC's decision to abstain from voting comes days after the Left Front and the Congress raised questions on the "timing, content and length" of a "secret meeting" between the Chief Minister and then Bengal Governor and NDA vice-presidential nominee Jagdeep Dhanekar at Darjeeling Raj Bhavan.

"The Trinamool Congress has decided to abstain from voting in the vice-presidential elections," Abhishek Banerjee, who is also the Diamond Harbour MP and nephew of the Chief Minister, said. He



accused the Opposition parties of not consulting Mamata Banerjee before deciding on the name of Margaret Alva as the Opposition candidate.

"The way Jagdeep Dhanekar had conducted himself — much like a BJP member — during his stint as the Bengal Governor, it will not be possible for us to vote for him. And for Madam Margaret Alva, though our leader Mamata Banerjee shares extremely cordial chemistry with her, we are of the view that

only good chemistry should not be considered as the only guiding factor for taking such decisions," he said.

Proffering his party's apology for not supporting Alva junior, Banerjee said Mamata was not consulted before deciding on the Opposition candidate. When asked about the invitation she was given by NCP chief Sharad Pawar, the TMC leader said the invite had come after Alva's name had already been decided on.

## CAPSULE

**URANIUM FOUND IN 18 STATES' GROUNDWATER**  
New Delhi: The occurrence of uranium in groundwater beyond the permissible limits was observed in around 409 samples against 14,377 samples analysed in 18 States, the Jal Shakti Ministry said.

**SC: MIGRANTS PLAY VITAL ROLE IN NATION-BUILDING**  
New Delhi: Migrant workers play a very vital role in building the nation and their rights cannot be ignored at all, the Supreme Court said Thursday.

**'NO NEED TO AMEND ANTI-DEFECTION LAW'**  
New Delhi: The provisions of the anti-defection law have stood the test of time and several judicial scrutinies and thus there is no need to amend it as of now, Law Minister Kiren Rijiju told the Rajya Sabha.

**ISRO DEVELOPING SPACE TOURISM CAPABILITIES**  
New Delhi: Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Thursday said the ISRO is in the process of developing capabilities towards space tourism through the demonstration of human space flight capability to Low Earth Orbit.

## After LG veto, Kejriwal sends online request to MEA for foreign trip nod

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal approached the Ministry of External Affairs on Thursday for visiting Singapore to attend the World Cities Summit hours after Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena turned down his request seeking clearance for the travel.

"I do not agree with the advice of the Lieutenant Governor," said Kejriwal, adding that if one goes by his logic, then the Prime Minister will also not be able to go anywhere.

The AAP Government shared Kejriwal's reply and the LG's letter on Twitter on Thursday. After the LG's rejection, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said they will directly go to the MEA to seek clearance for Kejriwal.

Later in the evening, the



MEA confirmed it has received request for political clearance for Kejriwal's visit to Singapore. MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said the "entry" for the clearance was made on the Ministry's dedicated online portal that receives such requests.

"I was just informed that an entry has been made in the Ministry's online portal. There is a system to request for political clearance," he said while replying to a question on the issue at his weekly media briefing.

## Met CM, he assured me of redressal, says Khatik

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**

The reported resignation of UP Minister of State for Jal Shakti Dinesh Khatik that raised the political temperature from Lucknow to Delhi forced Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to extend an olive branch to embattled Minister on Thursday when he met him along with his senior Minister Swatantra Dev Singh.

The meeting lasted for almost 45 minutes. "I have told the Chief Minister about the issues and he has assured me that he will take redressal steps soon," Khatik told reporters outside the CM's residence here on Thursday.

Khatik had reportedly sent his resignation to Union Home Minister Amit Shah alleging that he was "sidelined because he is a Dalit".

In his two-page letter, Khatik had alleged that he was not given any importance in decision-making because he

was a Dalit.

He said he has no authority as a Minister and was not called for any meeting and was not briefed about the development in the Ministry. Without naming Singh, he said he was not assigned any work.

To sort out the differences between the two, the CM invited the two Ministers for a meeting. Around 4 pm, Singh drove down to the CM's residence followed by Khatik.

"Everything is settled now. No one has resigned," Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya said in the evening.

Khatik had earlier gone to Delhi and met BJP president JP Nadda at his residence. Nadda assured him a solution would be found but advised that such issues should be raised at the party forum only.

After the resignation letter went viral, the Government and the party organisation started damage control.

## SC to await DJ's call on Gyanvapi mosque panel's objections

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Supreme Court on Thursday said it will await the Varanasi District Judge's decision on the Gyanvapi mosque committee's application raising objections to the maintainability of the civil suit filed by Hindu devotees.

The SC also refused to entertain two writ petitions seeking permission to worship Shivaling found in the Gyanvapi mosque premises during a court-ordered survey and carbon dating of the Shivaling to ascertain its age.

A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud, Surya Kant, and PS Narasimha said it is posting for October 20 hearing on the appeal of the Gyanvapi mosque committee's plea against the HC order on the appointment of a court commissioner.

## Outage halts Lankan Prez oath ceremony; investigation ordered



A power outage in the Sri Lankan Parliament complex stopped the live broadcast of President Ranil Wickremesinghe's swearing-in ceremony, forcing authorities to launch a probe by the Criminal Investigations Department into the incident, a media report said on Thursday.

Veteran politician Ranil was on Thursday sworn in as Lanka's eighth President and will face the tough task of leading the country out of its unprecedented economic crisis and restoring order after months of mass anti-Government protests.

Detailed report on Page 9



NCR PULSE

DSAWHU STAGES PROTEST AGAINST AAP

New Delhi: A representative body of anganwadi workers held a protest on Thursday, demanding the reinstatement of workers who were served termination notices by the Delhi Government for taking part in a strike and a hike in honorarium. The Delhi State Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union (DSAWHU) gathered outside the office of the city Government's Women and Child Development Department at Kashmere Gate and raised slogans against the AAP dispensation.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS SUMMIT HELD



New Delhi: The International Socio Economic Forum, Chalk Talk, Abhishek Foundation in association with Women and Child Welfare Department, Delhi, held a Sustainable Development Goals Summit on July 16. Minister of State in Ministry of Law and Justice S P Singh Baghel as chief guest of the event shared the initiatives taken by the Government to achieve the Global Goals. Reema Garg, Founder Director The International Socio Economic Forum, Chalk Talk, Abhishek Foundation also signed an agreement to promote Global Goals with the Ambassador Venezuela in India and Deputy High Commission Malawi and Zimbabwe in India.

SCUFFLE OVER WATCHING TELEVISION IN TIHAR

New Delhi: An argument over watching television led to an inmate in the Tihar jail being attacked by two others. The incident took place in jail number 5 on Wednesday. The scuffle broke out in a barrack where offenders aged between 18 and 21 years are lodged. The injured inmate had his face cut in the attack. He was taken to the Deen Dayal Upadhyay (DDU) hospital, from where he was discharged subsequently, the officials said.

GOVT TO START COACHING CLASSES FOR CHILDREN

New Delhi: The Kejriwal Government will start coaching classes for the children from next week under the Jai Bhim Mukhyamantri Pratibha Vikas Yojana. In this regard, Delhi's Social Welfare Minister, Rajendra Pal Gautam held a review meeting with senior officers and coaching operators of the Jai Bhim Mukhyamantri Pratibha Yojana. Gautam also took stock of the preparations for the classes for the 2022-23 session.

RAI CHAIRS MEET FOR VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

New Delhi: Delhi's Development Minister Gopal Rai on Thursday chaired a high level review meeting with the officials of the Delhi Village Development Board regarding the development of the villages of Delhi. During the meeting, it was decided to organise a special camp at the Delhi Secretariat on July 22 for the work related to the development of the villages of Delhi.

GOVT FELICITATES OUTSTANDING CRAFTS PERSONS

New Delhi: To motivate the handicraft artisans of Delhi and give an impetus to the development of handicrafts in the national capital, the Kejriwal Government felicitated the outstanding craft persons with the "State Handicraft Award". The awards were given by Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister, Manish Sisodia on Thursday. 16 craft persons in the field of various folk art and craft forms were awarded during the ceremony.

AAP TO START MOVEMENT AGAINST TAX HIKES

New Delhi: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Thursday announced to start a movement against the continuous tax hikes by BJP-ruled Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) from July 23 in the national Capital. Addressing a press conference, Durgesh Pathak, the AAP legislator from Rajinder Nagar said that the movement will be run in three phases and first phase will begin from July 23.

MCD FINALISES BUDGETARY ESTIMATES FOR 2022-23

New Delhi: The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has finalised budgetary estimates of Rs. 15,276 crore for the financial year 2022-23. The budget estimates are focused on education and sanitation for providing better civic services to the Delhiites. Before finalising the Budget, the MCD streamlined the disparate rates of various taxes such as property tax, general trade licence fee, health trade licence fee, among others, and made them uniform across the city.

18-YR-OLD GIRL DIES AFTER FATHER ATTACKS HER

New Delhi: An 18-year-old girl died on Thursday after her father attacked her mother and two other sisters following domestic issue in northeast Delhi's Karawal Nagar area. Police said that manhunt has been initiated to nab the accused, who is absconding. According to police, they received information around 1.05 pm that a person has attacked his daughters with the piece of glass and the injured were admitted in the hospital.

3 INMATES OF TIHAR JAIL DRINK PHENYL

New Delhi: Three inmates of Tihar Jail here drank phenyl while cleaning the barracks, officials said on Thursday. They were hospitalised and later discharged. According to a senior prison official, three inmates of central jail number 5, Tihar Prison drank a little quantity of phenyl on Tuesday while they were cleaning the barracks.

Adesh hails LG's decision to deny CM permission for Cities Summit

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta on Thursday hailed Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena's decision to deny Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal permission to visit Singapore to attend the World Cities Summit.



Addressing the media, Gupta said that the entire team of AAP is politicising the issue of Kejriwal's visit to Singapore where he would have publicised his "false" education and health model.

Gupta described the L-G's decision as constitutionally and factually right and said that the

meeting is of world cities Mayors and not of Chief Ministers and hence a CM has no logic going there. "Going to Singapore is just an excuse because when it is a Mayor's meeting then what does a Chief Minister of a State get to do there. The fact is that he is so busy in his publicity

and political expansion of his party and creating such an atmosphere as if the central Government and L-G are responsible for his failures," Gupta said.

"There are lots of problems in Delhi which come under the purview of the State Government directly and he should rather be focusing on resolving them than wanting to go abroad. He said CM Kejriwal in his eight years tenure never ever tried to meet people and solve their issues on the ground level. "But he is only interested in going abroad and eager to present his so-called overall model in every area

which is in shambles," Gupta added.

Meanwhile, while appreciating the L-G's decision, Delhi Assembly's Leader of Opposition, Ramvir Singh Bhidhuri said that when others State's CMs are not urging to visit the Singapore Summit which was organised for the Mayors of various cities, then why is Delhi's Chief Minister being so stubborn about the visit after the disappointments.

"Deputy CM Manish Sisodia is also misleading the people of the national Capital regarding this matter by giving false statements," Bhidhuri added.

TMC to skip VP poll voting; Left...

From Page 1

"We disagree with the process of announcing the Opposition candidate without keeping TMC in the loop. We were neither consulted nor was anything discussed with us. So we can't support the Opposition nominee," Banerjee said refuting allegations that the decision was a product of an earlier "secret" parley between Dhankhar and the Chief Minister at Darjeeling where Assam Chief Minister Hemant Biswa Sarma was also present.

"There is a myth about a meeting between the Chief Minister and Mr Dhankhar who was the then Governor ... but that is an absolute myth and ... I want to destroy the myth ... this will be seen in

days to come when the TMC will become more aggressive in the national politics," he said.

The unusually long two-and-a-half-hour meeting took place last Wednesday prompting the Left and the Congress to question the timing, content and long hours of the meeting.

"This is the same way the TMC and Mamta Banerjee is indirectly helping the BJP as she did by abstaining during the CAA and NRC bills which ensured that they had the passage of the Bill," the Congress leadership said.

CPI(M) State secretary Md Salim said TMC's stand was a quid pro quo for ED and CBI sparing (for now) TMC leaders in the coal and cattle smuggling cases.

Old grudge led to killing of Wazirabad man; 2 arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has arrested two men for allegedly killing a 38-year-old man in north Delhi's Wazirabad over an old grudge.

Police said that the accused identified as Sunny (29) alias Kallu, a resident of Khichari, and Sachin (27), a resident of Loni in Uttar Pradesh, were arrested on Wednesday. The body of Arun Kumar (38), a resident of Wazirabad, was found near the Tara chowk in Gandhi Vihar, Timarpur on Monday, police said.

Organisational appointments in BJP State units made

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

BJP president JP Nadda on Thursday made important organisational appointments in some state units of the party, appointing the RSS' Rajesh G V as general secretary (organisation) in Karnataka. Rajesh G V replaces Arun Kumar, who has returned to the RSS. Ajay Jamwal, who was the regional general secretary (organisation) in charge of north-eastern states, will now look after Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh units of the party in the same position, according to a BJP statement. Manthri Srinivasulu has been moved from Telangana to



Punjab as general secretary (organisation).

Satish Dhond, general secretary (organisation) in charge of Goa, is now the joint general secretary (organisation) in West Bengal. Organisational members holding posts in the BJP are mostly RSS members and go back to the fold after a stint in the party.

STATE/ PARLIAMENT	NO. OF MP	VALUE	TOTAL VALUE	VOTES POLLED		QUOTA FOR ELECTION		21-07-2022		21-24		
				Valid	Invalid	Value	Value	Value	Value			
ANDHRA PRADESH	10	159	173	27907	173	27907	4	32	173	27907		
ARUNACHAL PRADESH	5	59	472	58	440	58	350	59	472			
ASSAM	13	116	24	14364	134	10064	26	230	134	14364		
BHAR	243	173	241	41053	133	20009	106	18238	2	340	238	41047
CHHATTISGARH	90	129	90	11810	21	2703	69	8901	90	11810		
GOA	40	20	40	800	28	660	12	340	40	800		
GUJARAT	162	147	178	28190	121	17787	67	8379	178	28190		
HARYANA	30	112	89	9989	89	8609	30	3360	89	9989		
HIMACHAL PRADESH	8	51	64	3499	46	2294	22	1122	1	51	64	
JHARKHAND	81	178	80	14390	78	12230	3	1584	1	178	178	
KARNATAKA	224	131	224	29544	180	19640	70	9170	4	524	220	28830
KERALA	140	152	140	21280	1	152	139	21128	140	21280		
MADHYA PRADESH	230	131	230	30130	146	19128	79	10549	5	855	225	29475
MADHARASHTRA	208	175	203	49520	181	24973	96	17199	4	707	219	48020
MANIPUR	80	18	80	1280	84	872	6	108	80	1280		
MIZORAM	40	8	40	320	32	232	11	88	40	320		
NAGALAND	60	9	59	531	59	531	9	531	59	531		
ODISHA	147	149	146	21754	127	20413	9	1341	146	21754		
PUNJAB	117	116	114	13254	6	109	109	1176	5	580	109	13254
RAJASTHAN	200	129	168	2542	78	9873	123	18887	168	2542		
SIKKIM	32	7	32	224	32	224	32	224	32	224		
TAMIL NADU	1304	176	234	41384	78	13300	158	27868	1	176	233	41308
TELENGANA	119	132	117	15444	3	396	113	14916	1	132	116	15312
TRIPURA	80	29	59	1534	41	1066	18	468	59	1534		
UTTARAKHAND	70	54	67	4268	61	3264	16	860	1	54	67	4268
UTTAR PRADESH	403	358	401	43408	287	39921	111	23608	3	624	398	42794
WEST BENGAL	394	151	291	43941	71	18721	218	32616	4	604	287	43337
NCT-DELHI	70	58	68	3944	8	464	56	3248	4	232	64	3712
PUDUCHERRY	30	38	30	480	30	220	9	144	1	38	29	464
PARLIAMENT	776	700	753	53410	484	37899	209	14800	15	1000	748	52900
TOTAL	4800	4754	102377	3824	678803	1877	380177	53	15357	4701	100980	
QUOTA FOR ELECTION	5341			64.03%			35.97%				RS SECT./NIC	

Today's Election results for the President of India

INDIA GETS FIRST...

From Page 1

The NDA candidate's vote percentage widened to over 60 per cent with the support of non-NDA Opposition parties including Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, JDS, BSP, Shiv Sena, AIADMK and Akali Dal. Andhra Pradesh's ruling YSR Congress and Odisha's BJD also extended their support to Murmu.

Murmu was born on June 20, 1958, in Uparbeda village of Mayurbhanj district in Odisha in a Santhali tribal family to Biranchi Narayan Tudu. Her father and grandfather were village heads under the Panchayati Raj Systems.

She married Shyam Charan Murmu, a banker who died in 2014. The couple had two sons, both of whom passed away, and a daughter Itishri Murmu. Murmu started out as a schoolteacher before entering State politics. She worked as an Assistant Professor at the Shri Aurobindo Integral Education and Research Institute, Rairangpur, and as a Junior Assistant at the Irrigation

department of the Government of Odisha.

She joined the BJP in 1997 and was elected as the councillor of the Rairangpur Nagar Panchayat. In 2000, she became the Chairperson of Rairangpur Nagar Panchayat and also served as the national vice-president of BJP Scheduled Tribes Morcha. During the BJP and Biju Janata Dal coalition Government in Odisha, Murmu served in ministerial positions in Odisha. In anticipation of victory of their illustrious native, locals of Murmu's hometown Rairangpur prepared 20,000 laddoos for distribution among the people and hoardings have been put up congratulating "Odisha's daughter" as they expressed confidence in her win and geared up for celebrations. Various local organisations such as traders' bodies, bar associations, and religious and educational institutions, and even Government officials are waiting with palpable enthusiasm to congratulate the "daughter of the soil".

After LG veto, Kejriwal sends online request to MEA for...

From Page 1

In October 2019, Kejriwal wanted to visit Denmark to address a C-40 World Mayors' Summit, but his request was turned down by the MEA saying his visit there as a speaker at a panel discussion did not commensurate with the level of participation from other countries. Earlier, rejecting the Delhi Chief Minister's request to visit Singapore, the LG advised Kejriwal to not attend the World Cities Summit in Singapore next month since it

is a conference of mayors and won't be befitting for a Chief Minister to attend it.

"The subjects that are being deliberated in this conference cover different aspects of urban governance, which in the case of Delhi are addressed by diverse bodies ranging from the New Delhi Municipal Committee (NDMC), Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and Delhi Development Authority (DDA) in addition to the Delhi Government.

The Delhi Government does not have exclusive domain over these issues corresponding with the theme of the conference. A WCS Smart Cities workshop is also being organised as a part of the summit. In Delhi, the Smart Cities Project is being anchored by the NDMC. In such a context, it is not advisable for a CM to be attending such a conference," the LG said in his letter to Kejriwal.

Responding to the permission denial in a letter,

Kejriwal wrote, "I humbly beg to differ with the advice of the LG. If the visit of each constitutional authority in our country were to be decided on the basis of what subjects fall within the jurisdiction of that authority, it would create a funny situation and practical logjam. Then the Prime Minister would not be able to go anywhere because in most of his visits, he also discusses subjects which fall in the State list and do not fall in his jurisdiction," the letter added.

SC to await DJ's call on Gyanvapi...

From Page 1

The bench said it has been apprised of the fact that proceedings before the District Judge are still underway and it would be appropriate if the appeal of the mosque committee is kept pending till the outcome of the application filed under Order 7 Rule 11 questioning the maintainability of the suit. "The court has been apprised of the fact that the

application under Order VII Rule 11 of the Code of Civil Procedure 1908 is being argued before the District Judge, Varanasi, and the proceedings on the application are pending. In the above situation, further hearing of these proceedings shall await the outcome of the proceedings before the District Judge. List the Special Leave Petition on October 20, 2022", the bench said.

During the hearing, the bench told senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi appearing for the Committee of Management of Anujam Intezamia Masjid, Varanasi, that it will keep the proceedings on the appeal filed by it pending till the District Judge adjudicate upon the objections filed by the mosque committee on the maintainability of the suit under Order 7 Rule 11 of CPC.

After meeting Yogi, Khatik...

From Page 1

Singh held an emergency meeting with the officials of the Jalshakti department. BJP leadership is forced to placate Khatik as the Minister has cleverly used the Dalit card in his resignation. The party has taken this very seriously. This is the reason why the bureaucracy was instructed to respect Ministers.

ED quizzes Sonia in Herald case, summons her on...

From Page 1

She also told ED officials she was a Covid patient and needed to take her medicines so she should be informed about what time she should appear next.

"At 2:20 pm when the Congress president was preparing to leave for lunch, she was told by the ED officials that there was no need for her to come back. At 12:20 pm it was said 'you should come back after lunch break', at 2:20 pm it was said there is no need to come back," Ramesh said.

According to Ramesh, the ED said it had nothing to ask of her either on Thursday or Friday. After which Sonia said she was willing to appear on Monday, Ramesh added.

She was initially summoned again on July 26 but this was advanced to July 25 at her insistence. He said Sonia's questioning began at 12:20 pm and ED officials told her that the questioning will continue for two hours and then there will be a lunch break after which she would have to come back for questioning again. Her statement will be recorded

under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) like it was done for just over two hours on Thursday.

She reportedly replied to around 27-28 questions after which she told the officials that she needed to take her medicines at home owing to her recent Covid recovery. The agency allowed ending the day's session on her request, officials said. While the Congress president was leaving, the ED asked her to depose on July 26 but Sonia suggested that she can come on July 25, to which both sides agreed, sources said.

The questioning session was conducted keeping in mind Covid protocol with everyone participating equipped with a Covid negative certificate. Sonia was questioned by the same Assistant Director-level investigation officer who interrogated her son Rahul Gandhi in the case. A woman officer was part of the questioning team as per the norm.

The money-laundering case relates to alleged financial irregularities in the Congress-

promoted Young Indian Private Limited, which owns National Herald. The Congress president's questioning took political centrestage in Parliament, where Opposition leaders raised the issue, and on the streets with party workers staging massive protests. As parts of central Delhi went into gridlock, Sonia reached the agency's headquarters in Lutyens Delhi's APJ Abdul Kalam Road a little after noon escorted by her Z+ CRPF security contingent. Ahead of the questioning, Sonia was seen wearing a mask, and was accompanied by her children Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Priyanka was allowed to stay in the Pravartan Bhawan headquarters of the agency, away from the questioning room, so she could be with her mother in case of a health issue and give her medicines. However, Rahul left soon after her questioning started. The Congress party slammed the ED's action against its top leadership and termed it "political vendetta". "All Congress MPs and CWC members have courted mass arrest outside

our party headquarters in a show of collective solidarity with Congress president Sonia, a target of 'Vishguru's' political vendetta," said Congress general secretary Ramesh. Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said in a Press conference that ED called Rahul last time and questioned him for 50 hours. "The world knows that Sonia is an idol of renunciation. She turned down the post of Prime Minister. Who has seen the martyrdom of Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi. Such a woman is being harassed. The Government should be ashamed. She is being called for questioning at this age. But if there was anything to ask, then according to age and health, you could go home and ask," he said.

His party colleague P Chidambaram said the ED is not higher than the Supreme Court. "What is that the ED wants to 'investigate' that will not be examined by the SC," he asked.

Other Opposition leaders voiced their protest too. Leaders of 13 political parties, including the DMK, Shiv Sena,

RJD and the Left, met at Parliament House and issued a statement accusing the Government of unleashing a "relentless campaign of vendetta against its political opponents and critics through the mischievous misuse of investigative agencies". "Prominent leaders of a number of political parties have been deliberately targeted and subjected to harassment in an unprecedented manner," the leaders said. The opposition's Presidential candidate Yashwant Sinha said he strongly condemned the ED's attitude to humiliate political leaders. "The officers of ED should have gone to her residence even if they had questions to ask of Sonia," he said on Twitter. "Yet again the Extended Department (ED) of BJP is insulating the party from people's anger towards price rise, joblessness and inflation. By repeatedly calling Opposition leaders with zero evidence against them is deliberate political vendetta carried out on behalf of the BJP," said Shiv Sena leader Priyanka Chaturvedi.

In Parliament, the issue echoed as well where the Congress and other Opposition parties sought to raise the issue. With tempers running high on the issue, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi asked whether the Opposition party believes everyone is equal before the law or not. "Is she some 'super human' because she is the Congress president?" he asked.

The Congress chief had been summoned twice earlier but sought an exemption on grounds of Covid. Her statement was recorded by the agency under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). Last month, Rahul was questioned by the agency in the case for over 50 hours in sessions spread across five days. The move to question Sonia was initiated after the ED late last year registered a fresh case under PMLA. This was after a trial court here took cognisance of an Income Tax department probe against Young Indian on the basis of a private criminal complaint by BJP MP Subramanian Swamy in 2013.

**DISTRICT CONSUMER DISPUTES REDRESSAL COMMISSION**  
SAS NAGAR  
SCF No.-43, NEAR BASSI THEATRE, PHASE-2 SAS NAGAR (MOHALI).  
**PUBLICATION NOTICE**  
Consumer Complaint No.1827/2020  
Fixed for: **23.08.2022**  
Mamta Singhal W/o Dr. Vikas Singhal  
2. Dr. Vikas Singhal husband of Mrs. Mamta Singhal Both resident of Kothi No. 2732, Sector 38-C, Union Territory, Chandigarh.

.....Complainants  
Versus.....  
1. Club Resorto Hospitality Ltd, 305,806,907, Sky Lark Building 60, Nehru Place, New Delhi, through its Deputy General Manager.

.....Opposite parties.  
Whereas it has been proved to the satisfaction of this Commission that the Opposite parties above mentioned cannot be served in the ordinary way of the service. Hence this proclamation under Order 5 Rule 20 CPC is hereby issued against them and they should appear personally or through their counsel on **23.08.2022 at 10:30 a.m.** failing which ex-parte proceedings shall be taken against them.

Given under my hand & the seal of the Commission on this 27th day of May, 2022.

**President,**  
District Consumer Commission,  
S.A.S Nagar (Mohali).

Endst. No. DCDCR/CISAS Nagar Mohali /22 /1694  
Date: 31/05/2022



# RERA cracks down on builders in Gurugram

**Ansal, Raheja, M3M India, Vatika, Orris among 17 builders ordered to refund ₹ 50 cr to 63 buyers**

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

The Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority (HRERA) has ordered 17 builders including Ansal, Raheja, M3M India, Vatika, Orris Infrastructure Private Limited, International Land Developers (ILD) Private Limited, Anant Raj and CHD to refund a total of Rs 50 crore for not delivering housing units on time to 63 homebuyers of various under-construction projects.

The HRERA has issued multiple orders pertaining to 17 builders directing them to refund homebuyers' money along with interest at the rate of 9.70 per cent within 90 days.

The refund, the orders say, must be paid keeping the allottees' right to seek compensation and the expenses involved in legal proceedings. The authority orders have come in the wake of multiple complaints



from homebuyers who after losing all hope of getting their homes approached RERA for a refund of the amount paid by them to the builders. "The authority has ordered to refund deposited amounts to homebuyers after hearing both the parties i.e., builders and allottee and on finding builders guilty for non-delivery of units as per builder buyer agree-

ments. The builders should not take homebuyers for granted. The RERA has to protect their rights," RERA chairman, Dr KK Khandelwal said.

"The builders failed to complete the projects and deliver the promised units to homebuyers within stipulated time even after collecting good initial amounts," said Khandelwal. He informed that,

in July nearly 300 matters were listed before the authority for adjudication. In 63 cases, the authority adjudicated the matter allowing a refund with interest at the rate of 9.70 per cent. These adjudications pertain to 17 builders and refund the amount is close to Rs 50 crore. Raheja developers alone have to refund close to Rs 12 crore to 11 homebuyers, of

which one refund is Rs 2.35 crore.

VK Goyal, member, HARERA, Gurugram said, "The authority has directed the respondent builders to follow the order. In case they don't, the complaint can approach the adjudicating authority for execution of orders."

In another 15 matters, the authority ordered refund after a deduction of 10 per cent earnest money. In all 300 matters, the homebuyers largely wanted refund and that shows the callous attitude of promoters, the authority observed.

Adjudicating Ritu Gupta's matter, the authority directed Raheja developers to refund more than Rs 29 lakh the amount she had deposited with the builder in two parts at the time of booking in December 2013 a unit in an upcoming project Raheja Navodaya at Sector 92/95, Gurugram.

The authority has also asked the builder to pay interest at the rate of 9.70 per cent

as prescribed under the Rule 15 of the Act since the builder failed to offer possession to her in the stipulated time.

The modus operandi of builders was observed similar in all the cases - arbitrary execution of the agreement.

"In the case of Gupta and Raheja developers, Gupta had to pay balance amount at time of possession of unit that was due in June 2016 but builder failed and after expiry of what the homebuyer refused to pay further. Yet, the builder continued to send her demand notice arbitrarily.

Just to extract money from the buyer the builder offered her possession of the unit even without obtaining the Occupation Certificate (OC) from the Town and Country Planning (TCP).

"This is a complete violation of the agreement and mental harassment to buyer," the authority observed during scrutiny of a complaint lodged with the RERA in October

2020 adjudicated after thorough scrutiny. The officials said authority gets hundreds of

complaints daily in which buyers want a refund or delayed interest.

## Fine slapped on 2 pvt firms for negligence in Greater Noida

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A fine of Rs 2.50 lakh each was slapped on two private firms for negligence in maintenance of roads in Greater Noida, officials said on Thursday.

Both the firms, which were given contracts for maintenance works, have been directed to fix the problems or else they would be blacklisted, the Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA) said.

"The action has been taken due to negligence in the maintenance works of 60 metre road of Sectors Delta 1,

2 and 3 and 60 metre road of Sector Zeta One," the GNIDA said. "Both the firms have been directed to do all the maintenance work immediately and warned of being blacklisted for future contracts otherwise," it said in a statement.

The inspection of roads was carried out on instructions of GNIDA CEO Surendra Singh and during the review RCC post, wire fencing and curve stone were found damaged on the road stretches, it said. While bushes were not trimmed on some sections, other stretches were poorly maintained, the GNIDA said.

# Traffic restrictions, Cong protests disrupt vehicular movement in city

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Vehicular movement in the national Capital was disrupted due to restrictions imposed by Delhi Traffic Police in view of the protests staged by Congress workers against the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) questioning of party president Sonia Gandhi in an alleged money laundering case.

Some of the arterial roads that witnessed heavy traffic were Delhi-Meerut Expressway, Bhairon Marg-Ring Road junction, ITO, Vikas Marg, Delhi-Noida Direct Flyway, Sarai Kale Khan, India Gate circle, Dhaula Kuan, Rohtak Road, Barapullah elevated corridor and Aurobindo Marg.

The Delhi traffic police announced the restrictions on Wednesday evening on Twitter. Many commuters used the same platform to report the traffic snarls and inconvenience caused because of the jams. Some of them also posted images of vehicles stuck in traffic jams and sought the attention of traffic police officers. The Delhi Police deployed a huge force and barricaded the



Heavy traffic at Akbar Road in New Delhi on Thursday RANJAN DIMRI | PIONEER

entire stretch between Gandhi's residence on Akbar Road and the ED office. The traffic moved at a snail's pace at several key stretches connecting central Delhi with the rest of the city and satellite towns of Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurugram and Faridabad.

Delhi Traffic Police also took to Twitter to inform commuters regarding the alternate route and routes to avoid. In a series of tweets, traffic police said, "Kindly avoid Pandit Pant Marg, Gol Dak Khana, Ashoka Road, Patel

Chowk, Sansad Marg and Rafi Marg from 5:00 PM onwards due to special traffic arrangements."

"Kindly avoid Motilal Nehru Marg, Akbar Road, Janpath & Man Singh Road between 1400 hrs & 2000 hrs. Due to special arrangements traffic movement will not be possible on these roads," traffic police tweeted.

"Kindly avoid Gol Methi junction, Tughlak Road junction, Claridges Junction, Q-point Junction, Sunehri Masjid Junction, Maulana Azad

Road Junction & Man Singh Road Junction," it said in another tweet. Commuters going towards central Delhi were caught in traffic jams. Vaishali Katkurwar, a resident of Mayur Vihar-1, shared a similar experience and blamed authorities for the "traffic mess".

"It is a complete mess out there. I was stuck in traffic for around half an hour. Authorities are to be blamed for this. Be it a demonstration, a procession or waterlogging, traffic is the first to get affected. They should make arrangements for the smooth flow of traffic," she said.

The traffic police took to Twitter to inform commuters about traffic restrictions on various routes and advised them to plan their journey accordingly.

"Kindly avoid Motilal Nehru Marg, Akbar Road, Janpath and Man Singh Road between 0900 hrs and 1400 hrs on 21.07.22. Due to special arrangements, traffic movement will not be possible on these roads," it said in a series of tweets.

## Cong stages stir over Sonia's grilling

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Thursday staged a protest outside Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena's residence against the Enforcement Directorate's questioning of party president Sonia Gandhi in the National Herald money laundering case.

Several Congress workers and leaders gathered at Raj Niwas and raised slogans against the central government, party officials said.

The protesters carried placards and banners with slogans such as "Sonijai Sangarsh Karo, Ham Tumhare Saath Hai", "ED Se Na Dare Hai, Na Darenge, Janhit Me Awaz Udayenge" and "Sach Na Dara Hai, Na Darega" and "Satyamev Jayate".

Leaders of Youth Congress, Mahila Congress, NSUI and Seval Dal were also a part of the protest. Delhi Congress president Anil Kumar said that the Modi Government has been using various agencies to harass



and scare the Congress leaders and workers but Congress will not fear such tactics and bravely face any probe to expose the lies and falsehood of the Modi Government, which has hatched up a conspiracy to torment the top leadership of the Congress party through ED and CBI. Kumar said that despite the ED questioning Rahul Gandhi for nearly 54 hours, it could not unearth any wrong doing in the National

Herald case. "Rahul Gandhi stands for truth and integrity, and no force can stop him from telling the truth and working for the welfare of the people.

Congress workers will go to any length to uphold the truth, and ED's bid to put pressure on Sonia Gandhi will have no impact," he claimed. He also said that the National Herald was run on a "no profit, no loss" basis and there was no illegality in its functioning.

## Committee set up to look into issues facing DTC employees

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Government has constituted a committee to look into issues facing Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and to make recommendations for operational uniformity with partly private cluster model of buses. Officials said that committee will also examine ways and means to make operations of DTC technologically advanced so as to reduce human intervention wherever needed.

The committee, constituted by Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot, will be headed by Delhi Transport Commissioner Ashish Kundra and will also have the DTC MD as its member.

According to officials, the mandate of the committee is to make recommendations so as to bring uniformity in functioning of DTC and DIMTS (Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System) with regard to buses operating under cluster model as well as suggest measures to improve safety and comfort level of commuters.

## House panel calls CS over flooding in city

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Assembly's 'committee of petitions' called upon the Chief Secretary, Naresh Kumar to discuss the action plan for de-silting to prevent waterlogging in the national Capital. The officials said that the committee was pained to see media reports regarding waterlogging due to lack of co-operation between relevant departments.

Kumar initially declined to appear, citing lack of jurisdiction of committee to enquire into matter. However, he later appeared before the committee along with Commissioner (MCD), Chairman (NDMC) and Principal Secretary (PWD) "It was discussed and agreed

that all the executive engineers will submit a signed report regarding de-silting status of drains in their respective jurisdictions. This report will be consolidated by the HODs and will be submitted before the committee on August 1 this year," said an official.

"It was also agreed that department will create and publish a duty roster whereby senior officials will physically verify de-silting status of various drains in their jurisdictions," said official.

The Chief Secretary agreed that physical verification by senior officers can make a difference in services provided by departments and brings much needed accountability and transparency.

## 30 people chargesheeted over case of vandalism outside Kejriwal's house

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has filed a charge-sheet against 30 people in the case of vandalism outside the residence of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal earlier this year, the High Court was informed on Thursday.

The statement was made before a bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Subramonium Prasad on a PIL by AAP MLA Saurabh Bhardwaj seeking the constitution of an SIT to probe the March 30 attack during a protest against Kejriwal's remarks on 'The Kashmir Files', a film on the plight of Kashmiri Pandits. Advocate Sanjay Rao,

appearing for the Delhi Police, furnished to the court the agency's status report in a sealed cover and informed that two gates would be put on both ends of the road leading to the CM's residence. Sixty per cent of work is complete and the same would conclude in a few days, he added.

Earlier, the court had directed the Delhi Police to file a further status report giving details of the progress of its investigation into the FIR registered after the incident. The court listed the plea for further hearing on August 8 with a "clear understanding" that it would be deciding the matter on that day.

## Alert bus driver saves 21 students

The bus carrying Bal Bharati Public School students caught fire soon after it was evacuated by the driver

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

At least 21 children from Bal Bharati Public School had a narrow escape after their bus caught fire in north west Delhi's Rohini area on Thursday. No one was injured in the incident due to quick thinking by the driver of the vehicle, but three cars next to the bus also caught fire.

According to fire department officials, they received information about the incident at 2.14 P.M. following which three fire tenders were rushed to the spot to douse the blaze. Delhi Fire Services



Director Atul Garg said the vehicle caught fire near a dispensary at Sai Baba Mandir T-point in Rohini Sector 7. "The bus (Tempo Traveller) of Bal Bharati Public School carrying 21 children caught fire. All the kids and the driver escaped unhurt," he said. Pranav Tayal,

the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Rohini district, said at 2.21 P.M. a police control room (PCR) call regarding fire in a bus at Sector 7 Rohini was received at North Rohini police station following which the Station House Officer (SHO) along with staff reached

the place and the crowd was controlled. "On enquiry it was found that the vehicle was ferrying 21 children of Bal Bharati Public School, who were evacuated safe and sound by the driver of the mini bus, identified as Sanjay Solanki, a resident of Village Pooth," said DCP. The bus driver said he noticed a foul smell coming from the engine of the bus following which he immediately took all the kids out of it.

"After the children got down from the vehicle, it caught fire. One of my acquaintances was passing the area with his bus and I asked him to drop all the kids to their homes. I was alone today as the helper of the bus was unwell. All the students are safe and sound. The school authorities have asked me to meet them tomorrow morning," Solanki said.

# BJP celebrates Murmu's big win with massive Abhinandan Yatra

As news of Murmu leading presidential poll spread, thousands of BJP workers, waving Tricolours hit party HQ

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After the NDA presidential candidate Droupadi Murmu defeated Yashwant Sinha, the Delhi BJP took out a six-kilometer-long victory procession (Abhinandan Yatra) from the party's headquarters at Pandit Pant Marg to Rajpath to honour the President-elect, who would be the first tribal woman to hold the post.

As news of Murmu leading the presidential poll spread thousands of BJP workers, waving the Tricolour, party flags and banners congratulating

Murmu, gathered at the party HQ beating dhols and raising slogans. They distributed sweets even before the final result was declared.

After the final result came in party leaders and workers carried out a victory procession. Showering flower petals and moving to the sound of drum beats, the procession that began at Pant Marg wound through Gole Dak Khana, Ashoka Road before winding up at Rajpath. Party workers lined both sides of the road playing drums and singing patriotic songs.

Many senior BJP leaders including Union Minister Meenakshi Lekhi, Ramesh Bidhuri, Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, Member of Parliament Dr Harsh Vardhan were also present in the procession. Bidhuri, said that the credit of this victory goes to Prime Minister Narendra

Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP president, JP Nadda and other party leaders. "This is the first time that India will see a tribal woman at the topmost post of the country.

This will also help in the uplift of tribals in society," he said. Addressing people, Delhi BJP chief Adesh Gupta thanked Modi for ensuring a woman from the Scheduled Tribes reaches the top constitutional post in the country.

"By doing so, he has realized his slogan of 'sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas and sabka prayas.'

Murmu becoming the President is not only empowerment women but it is also an inspiration for many women in the country," he said. Gupta said despite facing several problems in her life, Murmu never went back on her resolve to achieve something in life and serve the people.

A party worker, Jagdish, a resident of Burari, who was distributing sweets during the procession said that a first

tribal woman as a President was made possible through the BJP and PM's efforts. "Earlier, no one had thought we

would see this day. People are filled with joy as they are seeing their dreams come true since 2014," said Jagdish.



## Students evacuated from Ukraine to hold 5-day hunger strike for admission to Indian medical colleges

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Medical students, who were evacuated from war-torn Ukraine, will hold a five-day hunger strike from Saturday over their demand for admission to Indian medical colleges as a one-time measure.

According to a statement by the Parents Association of Ukraine MBBS Students (PAUMS), 5,000 students and parents from 26 States will participate in the strike from July 23-27. "Due to war for more than four months in Ukraine, MBBS education has been hampered.

As time goes, students and parents are going through depression, anxiety and mental issues. Our demand from the Government of India is to accommodate all stu-

dents in Indian medical colleges," the PAUMS statement read.

The association said it has held multiple protests and also submitted a letter to Prime Minister's Office (PMO), but in vain. Last month, several students sat on a hunger strike at Jantar Mantar here demanding admissions to the country's medical colleges.

"We protested at Jantar Mantar thrice and twice at the National Medical Commission (NMC) office in Dwarka. We also submitted our demand-request letter to the PMO, Health Ministry, Education Ministry, NMC and the President of India.

But no assurance has been given till date. Students have now decided to sit on a hunger strike," the statement added.



# Govt rejects findings of int'l press freedom index: Thakur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Thursday rejected conclusions of the 'Reporters Without Borders' ranking India 150th among 180 nations in the World Press Freedom Index and said it was "questionable" and non-transparent.

Making this assertion in the Rajya Sabha, Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur in a written reply said the Government did not agree with the conclusions drawn by the organisation for various reasons including "very low sample size, little or no weightage to fundamentals of democracy, adoption of a methodology which is questionable and non-transparent."

Thakur enunciated the Government's position while responding to separate questions put by Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and AAP member Sanjay Singh. The



minister said the Government was committed to ensuring the right to freedom of speech and expression enshrined under Article 19 of the Constitution. Thakur said the Press Council of India (PCI) has been set up under the Press Council Act, 1978 mainly to preserve the freedom of the press and improve the standards of newspapers and news agencies in the country.

He said the PCI looks into the complaints filed by the Press regarding curtailment of press freedom. Thakur said the PCI was also empowered to

take suo moto cognizance in matters on the pressing issues concerning freedom of the Press and safeguarding of its high standards.

In response to Kharge's question on the arrest of journalists, the minister said the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) does not maintain data separately on attacks on journalists. According to the World Press Freedom Index, released in May, India's ranking dropped to 150th position from last year's 142nd rank among 180 nations.

# CBI files case against Gujarat cadre IAS officer in bribery case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has chargesheeted then Collector Kankipati Rajesh (IAS officer of 2011 batch), Surendranagar district of Gujarat and a proprietor of Surat-based private firm before the Competent Court at Ahmedabad (Gujarat) in a bribery case.

The CBI had registered the case against Rajesh and proprietor of Jeans Corner, Surat, Md. Rafiq Memon and unknown person on the allegations of demand and receipt of illegal gratification/bribe related to grant of arm licences, allotment of government land and regularization of encroached Government land in the name of ineligible beneficiaries.

A Preliminary Enquiry (PE) was earlier registered on a request of Gujarat government in the matter. The case is the outcome of the PE. Searches were earlier conducted at the premises of accused in Gandhi Nagar and Rajahmundry (Andhra Pradesh) which led to recovery

of several incriminating documentary and digital evidence. During the investigation, both the accused were arrested. "It was found during investigation that the alleged bribe money of Rs 98,000 was deposited in the account of the proprietor on the directions of said public servant.

The said amount was the part of the bribe amount, which was demanded by the public servant. It was also found that the said proprietor had prepared four fake invoices in the name of a private person claiming to have sold dress material, whereas the said four invoices were in the name of another person and "SIR", the CBI said in a statement.

The four invoices submitted by the Proprietor to the Enquiry Officer were forged. Investigation has also revealed that both the accused entered into a conspiracy wherein part of the alleged bribe demanded by the public servant was paid by other person into the account of the proprietor of said firm on the directions of the public servant (IAS officer), the agency said. It was also

found that the accused created false documents/false electronic records to shield the

public servant. The proprietor had allegedly forged documents/electronic record and

also destroyed, deleted/alters the information in the computer that he used in his shop.

# ED attaches ₹13.63 crore of TMC leader, arrests brother

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday said it has attached properties worth Rs 13.63 crore of a company linked to TMC youth wing leader Vinay Mishra and arrested his brother Vikas Mishra in a money laundering probe.

The money laundering investigation is linked to an alleged illegal coal mining and pilferage case of West Bengal that involves the two brothers, local coal operative and kingpin Anup Maji and TMC MP and Abhishek Banerjee, nephew of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, and his wife Rujira. Both Abhishek Banerjee and Rujira have been questioned by the agency in this case. A provi-



sional order for attaching the two assets, located in Gopinathpur of Purba Bardhaman district of the state, was issued on July 19 under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The immovable properties belong to Indo-American Electricals Limited (beneficially owned by LTB Infra consultant Pvt. Ltd.) in which Vinay Mishra and Vikas Mishra are directors and shareholders, the ED said in a statement. "Vinay Mishra and Vikas Mishra alias Chotu

delivered proceeds of crime worth ₹731 crore with help of business associates of Anup Maji alias Lala during July, 2018-March, 2020," the ED said.

The money laundering case stems from a November 2020 FIR registered by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) that alleged a multi-crore-rupee coal pilferage scam related to Eastern Coalfields Limited mines in West Bengal's Kunustoria and Kajora areas in and around Asansol.

The ED has claimed that Mishra brothers received "proceeds of the crime worth ₹730 crore on behalf of some influential persons and for themselves" in coal case involving an estimated amount of ₹1,352 crore.

# Opp accuses Modi of misuse of probe agencies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Several opposition parties including the Congress on Thursday accused the Modi Government of unleashing a relentless campaign against its political opponents through "mischievous" misuse of probe agencies.

On the day when Congress chief Sonia Gandhi was questioned by the ED in the National Herald money laundering case, leaders of 13 political parties met at Parliament House and condemned the action. Leaders of the Congress, DMK, CPI-M, CPI, IUML, NC, TRS (for the first time), MDMK, NCP, VCK, Shiv Sena, RJD and RSP were present in

the meeting. Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi attacked the government over its alleged lack of willingness to discuss issues such as inflation and "misuse of agencies" in Parliament and asserted that "truth will prevail over dictatorship". "Discuss GST — House adjourned. Discuss inflation — House adjourned. Discuss Aagepath — House adjourned. Discuss misuse of agencies — House adjourned," Rahul Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi.

"Today publicly, the voice of the people of the country is being suppressed. Truth will prevail over this arrogance and dictatorship," the former Congress chief said. As Sonia Gandhi appeared before the

ED, party MPs and Congress Working Committee (CWC) members "courted mass arrest" outside the AICC headquarters in a show of collective solidarity with their party chief. When former party chief Rahul Gandhi was questioned by the ED, the police had made elaborate arrangements.

A large number of Congress leaders were detained, taken to far-away locations and released only at midnight. Congress MPs had raised strong objections and complained to the president, vice president and Lok Sabha speaker against the police's "high-handedness".

Congress slammed the Modi government for "misusing" probe agencies against

opposition leaders and staged protests against the Enforcement Directorate's questioning of Sonia Gandhi, alleging the ruling BJP is treating the opposition as its enemies. Senior Congress leaders, including some MPs, courted arrest outside the party headquarters here to protest the ED action. "The Modi 'sarkar' has unleashed a relentless campaign of vendetta against its political opponents and critics through the mischievous misuse of investigative agencies.

Prominent leaders of a number of political parties have been deliberately targeted and subjected to harassment in an unprecedented manner," the leaders charged in a joint statement. "We condemn this

and resolve to continue and intensify our collective fight against the anti-people, anti-farmer, anti-Constitution policies of the Modi 'sarkar' that is destroying the social fabric of our society," they also said in the statement.

Senior Congress leader and Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said the probe agency should first hold a press conference to spell out under what charges Sonia Gandhi is being probed. Former Home Minister P Chidambaram said the ED is not higher than the Supreme Court.

Earlier in the day, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh had claimed that the media was also being prevented from entering the party headquarters

# Airlines can't charge for boarding pass

New Delhi: The Ministry of Civil Aviation on Thursday said that Airlines can't charge any additional fee for issuing boarding pass at check-in counters in airports.

According to reports, airlines such as IndiGo, SpiceJet and Go First currently charge a fee of Rs 200 if a passenger wants the boarding pass to be issued at the check-in counter.

"It has come to the notice of MoCA that airlines are charging additional amount for issuing boarding passes from the passengers," the ministry said on Twitter. This additional amount is not in accordance with the instructions according to the provisions of Aircraft Rules, 1937, it said. In view of the above,

the airlines are advised not to charge any additional amount for issuing boarding passes at the airport check-in counters, as the same cannot be considered within the 'tariff' as provided under Rule 135 of the Aircraft Rules, 1937, it mentioned.

On May 21, 2020, the ministry made it mandatory for passengers to do web check-in and get boarding pass then itself. However, on May 9, 2022, the ministry issued an order stating that airlines should encourage, facilitate and guide passengers for doing "timely web check-in and bag tag printing" and "minimise or avoid" imposing penal charges on passengers who did not do web check-in.

# Air India flight diverted to Mumbai due to pressurisation loss in cabin

New Delhi: An Air India Boeing 787 operating as flight AI 934 from Dubai to Cochin had to be diverted to Mumbai due to pressurisation loss in the cabin. According to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the flight landed safely. "Two senior officers of O/o DAS WR are assigned the task to carry out a preliminary investigation," it said.

# Govt blocked YouTube channels, 19 social media accounts working against country: Anurag

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting Anurag Thakur on Thursday informed Parliament that in 2021-22 the Ministry has taken strong action against YouTube channels working against the interest of the country.

Responding to a question in Rajya Sabha, Thakur said the Ministry has acted against 94 YouTube channels, 19 social media accounts and 747 URLs and got them blocked. These actions have been taken under the Section 69A Information Technology Act 2000, he said. The Minister further said that the Government has strongly acted against agencies working against

the sovereignty of the country by spreading fake news and spreading propaganda on internet. "Those (members of opposition) standing here (in the Well of the House) do not raise their voice against elements working against the interest of the country.

But we have taken action against them," he said, blaming the Opposition MPs protesting against the Enforcement Directorate's summons against Congress president Sonia Gandhi in National Herald case. The Rajya Sabha for the fourth consecutive day witnessed pandemonium with the Opposition raising a din over various issues including price rise and GST. The Question Hour took place amidst vociferous protests and I & B Minister Anurag Thakur

charged the Opposition with not voicing its concerns in the GST Council meeting about essential commodities and instead disrupting Parliament.

The Upper House was marred by two adjournments in the pre-lunch session and was finally adjourned for the day shortly after lunch break. Criticising the Opposition, Thakur said "They (representatives of non-BJP state governments) go to GST Council meeting and do not voice their concerns, but come here to protest and show placards." He said while replying to supplementary queries on whether the government is taking action against false propaganda carried on social media as well as by some elected representatives. The Upper House was marred by two



adjournments in the pre-lunch session and was finally adjourned for the day shortly after lunch break. Without naming anyone, Thakur also criticised some opposition leaders for creating doubts among the public regarding Covid vaccines and the Agnipath scheme.

He said despite this, 200 crore vaccine doses have been already administered. Thakur also said some elected members and former public representatives are engaged in creating confusion regarding GST on essential items, Covid vaccination and Agnipath scheme for recruitment in armed forces. Replying to Opposition on the cases against Al News co-founder Mohammed Zubair, the Minister said it is important

to differentiate between a fact checker and those who try to spread enmity in the garb of fact checking. "It is important to understand who is a fact checker and who is trying to spread enmity in society in name of fact-checking. If a complaint is registered against them, then action is taken under rule of law." He said this in response to a question by Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MP Manoj Kumar Jha. He had asked minister to outline procedure to deal with those who spread hatred and animosity through their commentaries. "I would like to ask the modus operandi on those who spread hatred and animosity using their commentaries where little to no action is being taken against

them. Whereas action is taken on

fact checkers and we have seen that recently," Jha said. It was in

apparent reference to Zubair case.

# Lok Sabha proceedings adjourned for 4th day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the fourth consecutive day on Thursday following a request from the Government that the Indian Antarctic Bill, 2022 be taken up for consideration when Opposition members are also present in the House.

In a day of vociferous protest by Congress members in the Well of the House holding placards of party president Sonia Gandhi who was interrogated by Enforcement Directorate in the National Herald money laundering case, the house proceeding remained disrupted.

The question hour and zero hour were run without most of the opposition members not present and those present continued to protest. The house was the adjourned for the day. After the House

reassembled at 2:15 PM following adjournment, Union minister Jitendra Singh said his request is that the bill be taken up for consideration only when Opposition members are present as it is an important legislation. The chair, Bhartruhari Mahtab, took the sense of the House noting that the presence of Opposition was negligible, and adjourned the proceedings for the day.

"As members are absent in large number and Opposition is not there, so it is my suggestion and request that this is a very important bill and for the first time this issue is to be discussed... So can we take it up some other time and not today," Singh asked as the House re-assembled.

"The government's desire is that the bill should not be passed without debate," Mehtab said. BJP MP P P Chaudhary said this was an important bill and the

Congress should have been in the House for debate as it is the primary responsibility of lawmakers that they stay in the House and discuss an important legislation. "It is a matter of regret that they are not in the House. If they could have been there, this bill could have been discussed," he said.

Mehtab said the sense of the House is to defer this bill to a different date and adjourned the proceedings till Friday.

The bill seeks to give effect to the Antarctic Treaty, the Convention on Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources and the protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.

Earlier, Union minister Pralhad Joshi asked whether the Opposition party believes everyone is equal before the law or not. "Is she some 'super human' because she is the Congress president?"

**छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल**  
पर्यावास भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19,  
नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.) 492002

**// सर्व संबंलित को सूचना //**

भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली की अधिसूचना दिनांक 14.09.2006 (यथा संशोधित) के तहत सर्व संबंलित को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेसर्स वंदना इंटरप्राइजेस (प्रो. श्री सुनील कुमार अग्रवाल, बेलसरा डोलोमाइंट रचन मॉडर्न), ग्राम-बेलसरा, तहसील-तखतपुर, जिला-बिलासपुर स्थित खसरा क्रमांक 216/1, 219/2, 216/4, 219/3, 216/2, 216/3, 218/1, 218/2, 219/1 एवं 220, कृ.क. क्षेत्रफल - 1.918 हेक्टेयर में प्रस्तावित डोलोमाइंट (पीपी खनिज) उत्खनन क्षमता- 13,323.75 टन प्रतिवर्ष के पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति हेतु लोक सुनवाई बाबत छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल में आवेदन किया गया है।

उक्त प्रस्तावित परियोजना के संबंध में आपत्ति / सुझाव / टीका-टिप्पणी इस अधिसूचना के जारी होने के दिनांक से 30 दिवस के अंदर क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, छ.ग. पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, बिलासपुर के कार्यालय में मौखिक अथवा लिखित रूप से कार्यालयीन समय में प्रस्तुत की जा सकती है।

**इस परियोजना के लिए लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 07/09/2022 को दोपहर 12:00 बजे शासकीय हाई स्कूल मैदान लिम्हा, ग्राम-लिम्हा, तहसील-तखतपुर, जिला- बिलासपुर (छ.ग.) में निम्नित की गई है।** यह भी सूचित हो कि लोक सुनवाई के दौरान भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली के ऑफिस मेमोरेण्डम No. 22-25/2000-IA.III दिनांक 14.09.2020 तथा कोरोना वायरस के नियंत्रण एवं रोकथाम हेतु शासन द्वारा जारी समस्त दिशा-निर्देशों का अक्षरशः पालन कराया जाना अनिवार्य होगा।

ई.आई.ए. अधिसूचना दिनांक 14.09.2006 (यथासंशोधित) के प्रावधानों के अनुसार झूपट ई.आई.ए. रिपोर्ट, कार्यपालककार की प्रति (हिन्दी व अंग्रेजी में) एवं इसकी सी.डी. (साफ्ट कॉपी) जन सामान्य के अवलोकन / पठन हेतु कार्यालय कलेक्टर बिलासपुर, कार्यालय मुख्य कार्यपालन अधिकारी, जिला पंचायत बिलासपुर, अनुविभागीय अधिकारी (रा.), कार्यालय अनुविभागीय अधिकारी (रा.) कोटा / तखतपुर / बिलासपुर, जिला-बिलासपुर, मुख्य नगर पालिका अधिकारी, कार्यालय नगर पालिका परिषद तखतपुर / कोटा, जिला- बिलासपुर, महापंचक, कार्यालय जिला व्यापार एवं उद्योग केन्द्र बिलासपुर, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, व्यापार विहार पं. दैनिक्याल उपस्थाय पार्क के पास, बिलासपुर, सरपंच / सचिव कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत-बांघा, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- बेलसरा, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- बेलसरा, तहसील-तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- भीमपुरी, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- बिलतपुर, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- दर्वा, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- डोमपुर, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- मन्नापुर, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- नूनानापुर, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- रजुनापुर, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- कनकनापा, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- कुसमौली, तहसील- कोटा, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- लिम्हा, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- मटसरा, तहसील-कोटा, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत-नाराजू, तहसील-कोटा, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- पाली, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- पोड़ी, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- पूरा, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- रानीडीहा (सकेरी), तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- सिलतारा, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- सोननाथा, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- ठाकुरकापा, तहसील- तखतपुर, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- मनपहरी, तहसील-कोटा, जिला- बिलासपुर (छ.ग.), डायरेक्टर, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, इंडिया पर्यावरण भवन, वायु विंग, ज़ोरबाग रोड, नई दिल्ली, मुख्य वन संरक्षक, एकीकृत क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, अरुण भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला रायपुर एवं मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, पर्यावास भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, रायपुर (छ.ग.) में रखी गई है।

सद्व्यवस्था  
छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल,  
नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.)

**BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL - II, DELHI.**  
4TH FLOOR JEVAAN TARA BUILDING  
PARLIAMENT STREET NEW DELHI-110001  
OA NO 351/2020 DATE: 22.06.2022  
AXIS BANK LTD. ....APPLICANT  
VERSUS  
MOHAMMAD MERAJ & ORS  
...RESPONDENT

To,  
DEFENDANTS  
1. MOHAMMAD MERAJ  
FLAT NO. 2, GROUND FLOOR REAR  
PLOT - 106 RESIDENTIAL, SECT-1  
MANESAR GURGAON HRV.  
ALSO AT: GROUND FLOOR AL UMRA  
INDUSTRIAL AREA HOLY MAKKAH KSA  
ABUDHABI ABU DHABI 44115 UNITED  
ARAB EMIRATES  
ALSO AT: AL MAJEED MODERN  
PERFUME INDUSTRY AL UMRA  
INDUSTRIAL AREA HOLY MAKKAH 21955  
P.O. BOX 203359 KSA ABU DHABI ABU  
DHABI - 07927 UNITED ARAB EMIRATES  
ALSO AT: MERAJ@AIMALKSA.COM  
3. ABDUL HAFIZ KHAN  
HOUSE NO - 153-B, 2ND FLOOR STREET  
NO. -9A NEAR HOLY FAMILY HOSPITAL  
OKHLA NEW DELHI - 110025.

Whereas the above named applicant (s) has/have instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 64,13,249/- (RUPEE SIXTY FOUR LAKH THIRTEEN THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED FORTY NINE ONLY) against you and where as it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal listed before the Hon'ble Presiding Officer on 01.08.2022 At 10.30 A.M. and before the Ld. Registrar on 29.09.2022 At 10.30A.M.

Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned date you will be heard and determined in your absence.

Due to ongoing Pandemic situation all the matters will be taken up through video Conferencing and for that purpose:-

(i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the 'Cisco Webex' application /software.

(ii) "Meeting ID" and "Password" for the date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Registrar/ Recovery Officer/And Recovery Officer-II shall be displayed in the daily case list self at DRT (Official) Portal i.e. drt.gov.in

(iii) In any exigency qua that the Advocate/ Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. 23748478.

Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal this the 22th day of June, 2022.

BY ORDER OF THE TRIBUNAL,  
SECTION OFFICER  
DRT-II, DELHI.

# SC allows unmarried woman to abort at 24 weeks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant order, the Supreme Court on Thursday expanded the scope of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act to include "unmarried woman" and allowed a woman to abort her 24-weeks pregnancy arising out of a consensual relationship.

A Bench of Justices DY Chandrachud, Surya Kant, and AS Bopanna directed the AIIMS Director to set up a medical board of two doctors to examine the woman by Friday under the provisions of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act.

The apex court asked the board to determine whether the pregnancy, if terminated, could risk the life of the woman or not. "We request the AIIMS director to constitute a medical board in terms of provisions of section 3(2)(d) MTP Act by tomorrow (Friday). In the event the medical board con-



cludes that the foetus can be aborted without any danger to the life of the petitioner (woman), the AIIMS shall carry out the abortion in terms of the petition....", the bench said.

The top court sought the report of the medical board within one week of the procedure and said that the order of the Delhi High Court stands modified to the above extent.

The bench said that provisions of the MTP Act amended in 2021 include the word "partner" instead of "husband" in the explanation to section 3, which shows the intent of

# Maninder Singh appointed as amicus curiae in BCCI case

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday appointed senior advocate Maninder Singh as an amicus curiae to assist it in the matter related to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and fixed the hearing on the plea of the cricket body for amending its constitution concerning tenure of office bearers on July 28.

It said that the use of the word "partner" ascribes to an intention of the Parliament to cover "unmarried woman" under the Act which is in consonance with the constitution. The apex court had taken an unduly restricted view by not allowing the woman to undergo medical termination of pregnancy at 23 weeks arising out of a consensual relationship on the ground that she was "unmarried".

Parliament that it was not to confine the situations arising only out of matrimonial relationships.

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# EPS scores big as Madras HC hands ADMK HQ charge to him

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

With Justice N Sathish Kumar of the Madras High Court pronouncing in his verdict on Wednesday that Edappadi K Palaniswami is the only person entitled or the possession of the AIADMK headquarters in Chennai, the former chief minister who is also the interim general secretary of the party has scored a strategic win in the race for the control of the 1.5 crore strong party. The judge also declared as null and void the proceedings initiated by the South Chennai Revenue Division Officer to lock, seal and attach the party head quarters on July 11.

With this verdict, the move by O Panneerselvam, the expelled coordinator of the steering committee to usurp the party structure has come a cropper. On Monday, the AIADMK had eased out Panneerselvam from the post of deputy leader of the legisla-



ture party and appointed R B Udhaya Kumar, former Revenue in his place. Both Panneerselvam and Udhaya Kumar hail from the Thevar community and the move is expected to prevent any more influx of the community members to the OPS camp.

The verdict by Judge Sathish Kumar is also a setback for the DMK Government ruling the State as it came under severe flak. The judge said that the RDO had acted in a mechanical fashion while the police failed to take prompt action to prevent the violence that took place in the party headquarters on July 11 while the general council meeting was in progress at a marriage hall 15 km away.

"The only option available for Panneerselvam is to cast his lot with the DMK as he has been defeated in his own game by Palaniswami and group. OPS has become irrelevant in the AIADMK," said Kolahala Srenivaas, author and political critic.

Palaniswami, reacting to the court verdict said that traitors had joined with the DMK to get the party headquarters sealed. "This building is a gift to the AIADMK cadres by party founder MGR and his heir Amma. Nobody other than the party cadres own this headquarters," declared Palaniswami, who was choked with emotions while addressing party members at Salem, his home town.

The three-way fight for the control of the AIADMK has come to an end, at least temporarily, said Srenivaas. "V K Sasikala, who travels across Tamil Nadu, claiming to be the general secretary of the AIADMK has become a persona non grata in the party. She

needs the party more than the AIADMK needs her," said Srenivaas.

Other political commentators are of the view that the judgment by Justice Sathish Kumar is a legal recognition for Palaniswami as the interim general secretary of the party. The committee of election officers appointed by the party general council is making elaborate arrangements for holding the election of general secretary within the first week of August.

Meanwhile as is the custom in Tamil Nadu politics, Palaniswami has been given the moniker of Puratchi Thalaimakan by O S Manian, senior leader of the party. It means he is the Revolutionary Commander and syncs with Puratchi Thalaivar (Revolutionary Leader) MGR and Puratchi Thalaivi Jayalalitha. Sasikala claims herself as Puratchithai Chinnamma (revolutionary mother) and has sent word to her followers to address her like that.

# Didi calls for banishing BJP from India in 2024

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday called upon the nation to "banish" the BJP in 2024 general elections holding it responsible for all the odds that India had been facing for the past several years. Slamming the saffron outfit from the Trinamool Congress mega Martyrs' Day rally, an annual show of strength, Banerjee attacked the BJP for pulling down governments all over the country and dared them to do so in Bengal.

"I have heard some of their leaders saying after Maharashtra they will target Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and then Bengal ... but I must remind them that Bengal is infested with the ferocious Royal Bengal tigers that bite hard as it did in 2021 (Assembly elections)," Banerjee said adding "they want us to mortgage our spine to them like many other parties do ... but we are Trinamool Congress ... our



spine is not made of ED and CBI like that of the BJP"

Attacking the Narendra Modi Government for "destroying the economy of the country through its unplanned tax regimes and bad fiscal policies," Banerjee said "today even there is tax on poor people's food like puffed rice, flattened rice and even sweets, curd and batasha ... they won't even spare the patients ... tomorrow they will charge tax on the dead people and the coffins."

Alleging how Rupee was falling to the Dollar and how inflation and unemployment was on an all time high Banerjee said "this is a government that has declared

direct war on the people by increasing the price of gas, diesel, petrol."

To rub salt to injury the Government was selling out out of closing down public sector units like the SAIL, Coal India, Air India and even the Indian Railways. "They have cut down 80,000 railway jobs ... they are selling out PSUs at a time when the country needs job creation the most," she said slamming the saffron outfit for its arrogance.

"They are trying to rewrite the history of the nation such is their penchant for re-writing history and such is their arrogance that they are even discarding the old parliament building," Banerjee said.

# Eye on all issues of security: MEA on Chinese village near Doklam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid reports and satellite imagery indicating that China has built a village near the Doklam plateau across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Sikkim, the Government on Thursday said it keeps an eye on all developments having bearing on national security.

Giving this assurance here, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi also said the government takes measures accordingly.

"We keep an eye on all developments having bearing on national security and take measures accordingly," he said.

Bagchi was replying to a question on new satellite images that showed construction of a Chinese village east of the Doklam plateau on the Bhutanese side.

The Indian and Chinese armies were locked in a 73-day stand-off at the Doklam tri-junction in 2017 after China tried to extend a road in the area that Bhutan claimed belonged to it.

# CPM leader in trouble as police file FIR in attempt to murder case

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A day after the Kerala State Motor Vehicles Department seized a bus owned by Indigo Airlines at Kozhikode Airport on charges of non-payment of taxes, the Kerala Police filed a First Information Report naming E P Jayarajan, the CPI(M) leader and convener of the LDF and two others in a murder case.

The gun man and personal assistant of chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan are the other two who figure in the FIR as accused numbers two and three.

All three have been slapped with charges of 307, 308 and 506 of the Indian Penal Code (attempt to murder and threat to murder). The FIR was filed in response to an order by the Judicial First Class Magistrate of Trivandrum.

The FIR states that Jayarajan tried to strangle Farzeen Majeed, a Congress leader from Kannur who raised slogans against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan after the latter got down from the aircraft at Thiruvananthapuram airport.

Majeed and Naveen Kumar, another Congress leader who flew in the aircraft from Kannur

to Thiruvananthapuram had raised the slogan after Vijayan had come out of the aircraft. Seeing the Congress leaders raising slogans against the chief minister, Jayarajan, who was accompanying Vijayan rushed to them and assaulted them physically and abused the duo by showering invectives.

Though the chief minister had told the legislative assembly that no case would be filed against Jayarajan, the Airlines had debarred the latter from flying in its aircraft for three weeks following an investigation by its own staff. Jayarajan declared that he would not fly

in IndiGo hereafter even if it remains as the one and only airlineK in the State.

The seizure of the bus owned by the airlines has led to another uproar in the State with many entrepreneurs and business leaders criticizing the action of the MV department. "This is a deplorable action and would lead to rethinking on the part of entrepreneurs and investors about their plans to set up shops in the State. Last six years have seen many entrepreneurs leaving the Kerala shores in search of business friendly States," said Rajmohan Pillai, chairman, Beta Group.

Pillai said that the Motor Vehicles Department seizing the bus owned by airlines could not be questioned. "It was the responsibility of the airlines to ensure that all payments were made and papers were in place. But the non-payment of taxes by the airlines was not a serious issue which demanded the seizure of the bus. The question is whether the airlines were issued notices about the outstanding amount," said Pillai.

Meanwhile the LDF Government is on a spree of arresting political leaders who are critical of the CPI(M) and the chief minister.

# Hate speech: SC asks Home Secy to collate info on preventive measures

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Union Home Secretary to collate information from States and Union Territories (UTs) regarding the compliance of directions given earlier by the apex court regarding preventive, corrective, and remedial measures to curb untoward situations, like mob violence and hate speech. The top court, which was hearing a batch of petitions concerning hate

speech and rumour-mongering, said the Secretary may collate necessary information by corresponding directly with the Secretary of the Home department of respective states and UTs within three weeks and compile it state-wise.

A bench headed by Justice AM Khanwilkar referred to some previous judgments delivered by the apex court in 2018 and said they specifically provide for a structure and the follow-up action to be taken and the collation of information would reflect how

the states and UTs have complied with these directions. "It is not adversarial," the bench, also comprising Justices A S Oka and J B Pardiwala, orally said.

"The Secretary, Home Department, may collate necessary information by corresponding directly with the Secretary, Home Department, of the respective states/UTs within three weeks and compile the information....," the bench said, adding the state-wise information be placed before it within six weeks.

# Yashwant, Rahul congratulate Murmu on being elected 15th President

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition candidate Yashwant Sinha on Thursday congratulated Droupadi Murmu on her win in the presidential polls and said every Indian hope that as the 15th President she functions as the "custodian of the Constitution" without fear or favour.

NDA's presidential candidate Murmu crossed the 50 per cent mark after the third round

of counting to emerge victorious in the poll over her rival Sinha. In a statement, Sinha thanked the leaders of the Opposition parties for choosing him as their consensus candidate in this election.

"I also thank all members of the Electoral College who voted for me. I accepted the offer of Opposition parties solely guided by the philosophy of Karma Yoga preached by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita -- 'Do your duty without expectation of

the fruits thereof'," Sinha said. "I have performed my duty conscientiously out of my love for my country. The issues I had raised during my campaign remain pertinent," he said. Sinha also said that till his last breath, he shall continue to serve the cause he believes in -- the very cause that guided him to contest the election for the highest office of the Republic.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi also congratulated Murmu on being

elected as the 15th President of India. He was among the first opposition leaders to wish Murmu after she crossed the crucial 50 per cent votes mark, even when counting for the presidential poll was on.

"Congratulations and best wishes to Smt. Droupadi Murmu ji on being elected as the 15th President of India," Gandhi said on Twitter. Murmu emerged victorious in the presidential poll, defeating Opposition's Yashwant Sinha who conceded defeat.

# SC asks Centre, States to devise mechanism for distribution of ration without cards

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked Centre and States to devise a mechanism so that people receive food grains without ration cards.

The top court also observed that "citizens are dying due to hunger despite our development and modalities should be set out to ensure that maximum migrant workers are given rations." The apex court said the welfare schemes

devised by the Centre should reach a maximum number of workers and the State Governments will have to cooperate and assist the Union of India.

"As far as our country is concerned, two people are very important. First is the farmer i.e the agriculturist and the second is migrant workers. Migrants also play a very important role in building the nation. Their rights cannot be ignored at all. Therefore you have to reach them. They may be illit-

erate and may not know how to avail benefits of government schemes. Concerned states will have to ensure benefits of the scheme reaches them," a bench of Justices M R Shah and B V Nagarathna said.

"The Food and civil services department in each state must have a target of how many ration cards they are going to register. This has to be worked locally as each state will have its own criteria. There must be a fixed criterion.

"Ultimately, the aim is that no citizen should die of hunger in India. Unfortunately, this (starvation deaths) is happening despite our development, citizens are dying of hunger and lack of food. In villages, they tie their stomach tightly so that they do not feel hungry. I know it. They tie their stomachs with a sari or some other cloth and drink water and sleep. Children and elders do it because they cannot afford food," Justice B V Nagarathna observed.

# Have set out to build Shiv Sena afresh: Aaditya as he embarks on 'Shiv Samvad Yatra'

PTI ■ THANE

Shiv Sena leader and former Maharashtra minister Aaditya Thackeray on Thursday said he is setting out to build the party organisation afresh, and added that the current government in the state led by Eknath Shinde would collapse as it was formed "illegally".

He was speaking at the launch of his three-day 'Shiv Samvad Yatra' in Bhiwandi town in Thane district, where he received a rousing welcome by his supporters.

The Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi

(MVA) government comprising Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress collapsed last month after Shinde raised a banner of revolt against the Sena leadership with majority of party MLAs. A day after Thackeray resigned as the chief minister on June 29, Shinde took oath of the top post with BJP's Devendra Fadnavis as his deputy.

Speaking at the rally, Aaditya said, "I am embarking on this yatra and come to Bhiwandi to get the blessings of people. I have set out to build the Shiv Sena and Maharashtra afresh."

"The MVA government

had carried out development works in the state. But in the present dispensation, there only two members in the cabinet (Shinde and Fadnavis). The state is facing floods, but amid this situation, they (rebels) are trying to threaten us. But we will not pay heed to such tactics. I am sure this government will collapse. It was formed illegally," the Yuva Sena chief said.

He challenged the rebel MLAs to resign and face the elections again.

"Shinde rebelled when my father (Uddhav Thackeray) was unwell. They (Sena rebels) were given an oppor-

tunity in the state cabinet, but they betrayed us and deserted us. Those who left us are not Shiv Sainiks.

They are traitors...See what is the condition of the rebel MLAs, who have to be brought into buses for voting as they are kept in hiding," he said.

"Our only mistake was that we could not play politics and hence we had to face this situation.

We did not trouble those who were against us," Thackeray added.

He, however, said if at all the party rebels want to return, the doors of

'Matoshree' (the personal residence of Thackerays) are always open for them.

Political drama and circus is going on in the state and good people have no place in politics. We are good people and will do good politics, he said.

Their (rebels') only issue was that Uddhav Thackeray and Aaditya were in the state Legislature. They could not digest the fact, the Worli MLA said.

After Bhiwandi, Thackeray is scheduled to visit Shahapur and Igatpuri, Dindori and Nashik as part of his 'Shiv Samvad Yatra'.



# Kejriwal promises free, uninterrupted power supply in Gujarat

PTI ■ SURAT

Am Aadmi Party's (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday gave a "guarantee" that his party will provide free electricity up to 300 units per month to each household in Gujarat if voted to power. Addressing people at a town hall meet here, the Delhi chief minister also promised round-the-clock power supply without any cuts to people of Gujarat, where the Assembly elections are due in December this year.

"This is being done for the first time in the history of India," claimed Kejriwal, who has made free electricity a major poll plank in Gujarat.

He also assured that all pending electricity bills issued before December 31, 2021 will

be waived, saying majority of them did not reflect the real power consumption and electricity companies "harassed" people to settle such matters.

"Electricity was already free in Delhi and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) made it free in Punjab within three months of forming government in that state," he said.

"As people of Gujarat also want such a relief, I hereby give a guarantee that we will provide free electricity up to 300 units to each family if voted to power after the forthcoming Assembly elections," Kejriwal told the gathering during his second visit to the state this month.

The AAP leader said what he is promising today is his guarantee and not a "jumla" (rhetoric) which other political parties mention in their man-

ifesto ahead of polls.

"I am giving you a guarantee. If you find any fault afterwards, you are free not to vote for the AAP in subsequent elections. We will fulfil all the guarantees once we come to power," Kejriwal said.

After consumption of 300 units of power per month for free, normal rates will be applicable, he said. Hitting out at the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party for calling such freebies as "revadi culture", Kejriwal said it was the BJP which had promised to provide 200 units of free electricity to the people of West Bengal ahead of the Assembly polls there.

Before Kejriwal arrived in the state on Wednesday night, the BJP's Gujarat unit chief C R Paatil, without naming anyone, said people should not get



misguided by the "revadi culture" of freebies as it could

eventually turn the state and India into Sri Lanka, which is

currently going through a severe economic crisis.

# Goa Assembly: BJP MLA De Souza files nomination for post of Dy Speaker

PTI ■ PANAJI

BJP MLA Joshua De Souza on Thursday filed his nomination for the post of Deputy Speaker in the Goa Assembly, elections to which will be held on Friday amid the ongoing session.

Mapusa MLA De Souza filed his nomination before Secretary, Legislature, Namrata Ulman in the presence of Chief Minister Pramod Sawant.

"Joined filing of nomination of @BJP4Goa MLA Shri



@Joshua\_DeSouza, for the position of Deputy Speaker of the Goa Legislative Assembly. I am sure he will dispose his responsibility with integrity and honesty. My best wishes to him," the CM tweeted.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## The road ahead

Vis-à-vis the government, the ideal Indian President is neither obsequious nor obstreperous

The victory of the National Democratic Alliance's candidate Droupadi Murmu in the Presidential election was a foregone conclusion. The Bharatiya Janata Party-led NDA was shrewd to choose a tribal, and a woman to boot, as its candidate. In a polity where identity and tokenism reign supreme, it was very difficult for political parties to vote against a tribal woman. Even Shiv Sena Uddhav Thackeray, who was recently removed as Maharashtra chief minister and who has no reason to oblige the NDA, was forced to support her, lest he be dubbed as anti-tribal, anti-poor, etc. Ditto with Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren. Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik was also forced to support Murmu as she belongs to his state. Even a Congress MLA in Odisha reportedly voted for Murmu, who earlier served as governor of Jharkhand, voted for her. Congress MLAs are also said to have voted for her in Meghalaya and Telangana. Such are the wages of identity politics.

The Opposition's candidate Yashwant Sinha, quite apart from less political support, didn't have a background that is politically attractive. While he was supported by 34 parties, Droupadi Murmu got support from 44 parties. But, as mentioned earlier, she also benefited from cross-voting. She will take oath on July 25.

Now that the Presidential poll is over, she will have the onerous task of upholding the Constitution. The very office she will occupy after a few days confers authority in her to do that. There are several paths from which she has to choose. The seemingly easiest one



is to become the rubber-stamp President: just do what the government of the day wants her to do, and thus hope to avoid any controversy. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, among some others, seems to have adopted this path. The perfunctory manner in which he signed the Emergency proclamation on June 25, 1975, without the consent of the then then Cabinet, precluded a tiff with prime minister Indira Gandhi — but it also tarnished his memory as being a President who was lackadaisical, if not timid, while putting his stamp of approval to a decision that undermined democracy for 21 months. Then there was president K.R. Narayanan (1997-2002), who was kind of antithesis to Ahmed. The Left-leaning Narayanan kept intervening all the time; the worst thing he did was disregard the precedent of asking the leader of the largest party to form government; he asked Atal Bihari Vajpayee to present him letters of support. Precedents multiplied, thus creating such a constitutional mess which our system is yet to get rid of. The best path for Murmu — indeed for most people — would be the Buddhist one: the middle way, avoiding the extremes of passivity and hyperactivity. Vis-à-vis the government, the ideal Indian President is neither obsequious nor obstreperous. This will also restore the dignity of the top office which got compromised by the behaviour of some of her predecessors. Hopefully, she chooses the middle path.

## PICTALK



Sunflowers are in full blossom in front of the European Central Bank, in Frankfurt, Germany.

# Is judicial Over-Reach justified?

The Supreme Court is also not above the law and its judges must weigh their words before making remarks that can endanger one's life



VIVEK GUMASTE

While responding to a plea petition filed by the embattled Nupur Sharma (the ex-BJP spokesperson in the eye of a storm for making controversial remarks that have hurt a community and facing several death threats) seeking transfer of all FIRs filed against her to Delhi, Justice Surya Kant made some remarks that not only violate the spirit and letter of the law but just don't seem right coming from a Supreme Court Judge.

At the outset, his honor surmised: "The way she has ignited emotions across the country. This lady is single-handedly responsible for what is happening in the country..."

She and her loose tongue have set the entire country on fire."

Even a layperson is aware that a person is deemed innocent until proven guilty by a fair trial. In this case, the honorable judge has pre-empted the whole process and passed a judgment of guilt even before a trial. Such unverified charges can be a part of an opposition leader's rhetoric but cannot find a place in the vocabulary of a learned judge.

The Supreme Court also said that her outburst was responsible for the unfortunate incident at Udaipur, where a tailor was murdered.

First, it a cold-blooded murder. Murder cannot be justified whatever the provocation. By his remarks, Justice Surya Kant has not only fed into the frenzy of rabid religious fundamentalism but inadvertently granted a modicum of legal sanction to the death threats swirling in the air. The decision to refuse relief to Nupur Sharma flies in the face of judicial precedence. When this was pointed out by the defense counsel citing the Arnab Goswami vs Union of India case (2020), the court countered that Goswami being a journalist was privy to relief while Nupur Sharma was not. That rationale does not



pass muster as the SC unequivocally indicated in that case that the Constitution guarantees the same free speech rights to all citizens and not journalists alone: "But to allow a journalist to be subjected to multiple complaints and to the pursuit of remedies traversing multiple states and jurisdictions when faced with successive FIRs and complaints bearing the same foundation has a stifling effect on the exercise of that freedom.... Our decisions hold that the right of a journalist under Article 19(1)(a) is no higher than the right of the citizen to speak and express."

The vacation bench finally summed up its decision by claiming "if the conscience of the Court is not satisfied, the law can be molded".

Can a judge's conscience overrule the Constitution?

And by this decision, the SC has intentionally increased Nupur Sharma's vulnerability. In a civilized, democratic society even a serial killer is not left to the



THE HONORABLE JUSTICE HAS FLOUTED A BASIC TENET OF JUSTICE THAT HOLDS A PERSON INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY, JEOPARDIZED A FAIR TRIAL,

mercies of a mob to be lynched. Rather uncaringly the Justice also remarked: She has (a) threat or she has become a security threat?

In summary, the Honorable Justice has flouted a basic tenet of justice that holds a person innocent until proven guilty, jeopardized a fair trial, flouted judicial precedence, and obliquely justified a murder.

Speaking at an event in San Francisco, Chief Justice of India NV Ramana recently averred: "As we celebrate 75th year of Independence this year.... we still haven't learned to appreciate wholly the roles and responsibilities assigned by the Constitution to each of the institutions. The party in power believes that every governmental action is entitled to judicial endorsement. The opposition parties expect the judiciary to advance their political positions and causes.... It is the vigorously promoted ignorance among the general public which is coming to the aid of such forces whose only aim is to run down the

only independent organ. i.e., the judiciary. Let me make it clear. We are answerable to the Constitution and Constitution alone."

True the SC is answerable to the Constitution and Constitution alone. But the Constitution does not give anyone including an SC judge a right to dub a person guilty without a fair trial or mitigate a barbaric crime. Justice Surya Kant has erred. He has crossed the Lakshman Rekha.

The Supreme Court of India is the only institution that even in these trying times continues to be respected, revered, and held in awe by all Indians. To maintain the decorum and credibility of the Supreme Court and above all to protect our democracy, Justice Surya Kant must retract his words.

(Disclaimer. This article is not about the merits or demerits of what Nupur Sharma said.)

(The author, a US-based academic and political commentator, frequently writes on current affairs in India. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### MBA CHAI WALA IN CHENNAI

Sir — 'MBA chai wala' opens its first outlet in Chennai. Sometime back Pakistan asked its citizens to cut the consumption of chai by drinking less tea. The fact that a Chai wala became India's PM, Barack Obama worked in a coffee shop has motivated many students. Many startups have now come up with serving branded chai and coffee. Cutting chai, which is dividing a cup in half to share with a friend makes friendships strong. It builds strong relationships "Majbooth rishtey aur kadak chai dhere dhere bante hain" and teaches you to see life with positivity as the glass is half full.

T.S.Karthik | Chennai

### DOWRY IS ILLEGAL, MUST END NOW!

Sir — Dowry is the Indian practice of giving valuable presents in the form of materialistic items to the girl at the time of her marriage. In ancient times, dowry helped the newlywed to settle but gradually with time it became a condition to marriage, which if remain unfulfilled, the women were subjected to physical and mental torture, harassment, insults, acid attacks, and even death. The Dowry system has led to "Marriage Loans" that are often struggled to repay. There is no denying the fact that the Dowry System is still practiced but is confined to a particular extent. And this is due to strict governmental laws, a growing literacy rate, social awareness, etc.

According to a recent study conducted by World Bank, it has been found that the Dowry Payments in India's villages have been stable over the past few decades. 95% of the marriages under study, paid dowry although it has been declared illegal in India since 1961.

The study included 17 Indian states containing 96% of India's population. The NCBI (National Crime Bureau of India) recorded nearly 7000 dowry-linked death cases in 2020. There is a greater need for social awareness against such inhuman practices both in urban as well as rural areas. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Any young man, who makes dowry a condition to mar-

### Zubair is now a free bird!



It is good to note that after twenty-four days of his arrest Alt news co-founder Mohammed Zubair is going to walk free as Supreme Court has granted him interim bail. Supreme Court's decision proves that law still prevails in this country, it is the only hope for poor, downtrodden, and marginalized peoples.

The Supreme Court has rightly given bail in all cases stemming from FIRS lodged in Uttar Pradesh. The Supreme Court ordered disbanding of SIT by UP police and all FIRS clubbed and handing over to Delhi police is a welcome deci-

sion. The observation of the Supreme court that the exercise of the power must be used sparingly is a slap to the people who abuse it.

The Supreme Court has rightly said that there is no justification to keep Zubair in custody. The Supreme Court has rightly denied the UP government's request to have tweeting also. The Supreme Court has rightly said that it is like asking a lawyer not to argue. A person not to speak. Whatever he does, he will be responsible for it but we can't ask a journalist not to write. A voice of dissent is necessary for a healthy democracy.

The Court pointed out that the tweet in question was actually of a film still of Hrithikesh Mukerjee's movie 'Kissi se na kahna'. The film was certified by the Central Boarding film certificate, which is a statutory body of the government of India, and is available for public viewing.

Zeehaan I Kazipet

riage discredits his education, country, and dishonors Womanhood".

Ishita Patidar | Ujjain

### RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

Sir — It has been reported that two gangsters believed to be involved in the murder of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala have been killed in a five-hour encounter. It is good that precious time of courts has been saved. The encounter killing of the gangsters is instant and retributive justice to avenge the heinous crime.

The AK-47 and a pistol along with heavy ammunition recovered from the dead are a gain to the nation whereas the food supplied in jails to such criminals is a national waste. By firing at the securing forces, the gangsters courted trouble and invited death for themselves. It took a very long time for the Nirbhaya killers to go to gallows. In many proven cases, the killers have gone scot-free with life imprisonment.

Life imprisonment does not necessarily mean that the culprits have to serve sen-

tences till they breathe their last. "Life imprisonment is any sentence of imprisonment for a crime under which convicted people are to remain in prison for the rest of their natural lives or indefinitely until pardoned, paroled, or otherwise commuted to a fixed term". It has been reported that the Karnataka Prisons Development Authority has proposed to increase the minimum wages of prisoners from the present ₹8000 per month to ₹14000 per month. It means an increase of ₹200 per day. These days some people are not able to earn ₹10000 per month even after they toil from dawn to dusk. If periodical upward revision of wages is done, then the unemployed youth may find it beneficial to commit a crime and go to jail. A hike in wages for prisoners should not be so attractive that it would be beneficial to serve a jail sentence and find it as a source of employment.

K.V. Seetharaiah | Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## SOUND BITE

A Principal should be the 'Lead Learner' with a keen interest in learning and deep affinity with students to make the school future-ready.



Delhi deputy CM —Manish Sisodia

Fighting inflation is one of our top economic priority. We are lowering the cost of living.

President Joe Biden and I are always fighting to make sure that working families can get ahead-and stay ahead.

Vice President USA —Kamala Harris

Today, after 5 years Ayaan has been declared cancer free. Thank you for all your prayers and wishes. Love and prayers for all the cancer fighters out there



Actor —Emraan Hashmi

For a new player to anchor a large 4th innings run chase is extraordinary. Abdullah Shafique is a very good player.

Cricket Commentator —Harsha Bhogle

It is a great honour for Chennai to host a marquee event like Chess Olympiad for the first time in India.



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister —MK Stalin

## Why are they leaving India?

The government must take a serious note of large number of Indians renouncing Indian citizenship

It may not be a headline though but is a cause of concern as statistics reveal that a record number of Indians applied to give up their Indian citizenship last year. Needless to say, these are all high-net-worth individuals who can afford citizenship abroad which doesn't come cheap. Indeed there are various reasons but they must be analyzed as they not only harm the country economically but also psychologically.

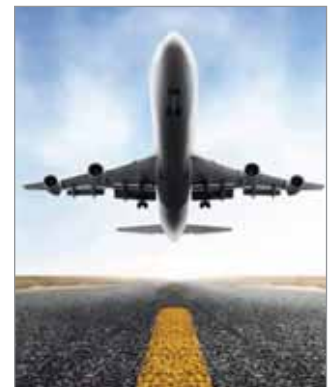
Rush to get an H1B visa in the US or seeking employment abroad is one thing but leaving the citizenship altogether is quite another. 1,63,370 Indian nationals renounced their Indian citizenship in 2021. It is also unfortunate that the government has no clue why Indians are leaving their country. Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai when asked in Lok Sabha the reason, replied they were 'personal.'

India does not have the provision for dual citizenship — and all Indian nationals who acquire foreign nationalities are supposed to give up their Indian citizenship. Interestingly enough there is no way of cross-checking if a person has acquired foreign citizenship. Renouncing Indian citizenship has to be done by the person himself voluntarily.

The total number of people who have renounced their citizenship since 2017 is 9,32,000, officially. This number does not include people who might have already acquired foreign citizenship and are yet to apply for renouncing their Indian citizenship.

Due to the absence of any credible data, one can only assume the reasons for leaving Indian citizenship. Last year, the government eased procedures and enabled online applications and that could be a reason for the surge in applications. Shrinking of job opportunities and declining wage packets in the aftermath of the pandemic could be yet another credible reason for leaving the country. Though the figures available now do not reflect that as there is a big gap between applying and getting a foreign nationality. In 2020, 48,125 Indians got US citizenship. Indeed rush to leave the country's nationality is not a commentary on the condition of the country economically and politically, but is a cause of concern. The internet and online application process and information on the internet have made it easier to settle abroad. But the rise in unemployment is a big factor as many skilled and educated people are now looking westward for a life they dreamt of. The government must take it as a wake-up call and have at least a credible database that can throw light on the cause of such a high number of people renouncing Indian citizenship.

the government must take it as a wake-up call and have at least a credible database that can throw light on the cause of such a high number of people renouncing Indian citizenship.







## FIRST COLUMN

### SPIRITUALITY IS BEDROCK FOR EXCELLENCE IN LIFE

Spirituality builds code of ethics for personal, professional life



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Professionals spend enormous amounts of time, money and energy to build their career. In this pursuit, they toil for long hours, while making personal sacrifices. Despite physical and mental challenges, they strive to maintain self-esteem, higher level of know-how and expertise, automatic development of a wide range of skills, communication skills, while progressing towards a refined way of life. The exhilaration of learning, application and achievement are powerful motivators for professional excellence.

The standard guiding codes of ethics of industry, law, commerce, medicine, etc., enable an honest worker to move quickly along the path of professional excellence. Yet, there exists a checklist one needs to consider to maintain standards of ethics and codes of conduct, while maintaining purity of purpose and staying free from corruption of wealth, position, fame and power. This also helps in ensuring professional life being free from guilt, inner conflict, competition and jealousy.

One must always keep this in mind that we are all on a journey of lifelong learning. Hence, learning to let go of ego, dishonesty or superficial interaction with others is not a small thing. There are many fears along the way, and heartburn is often experienced. We try to cover these wounds with bandages, but eventually we need to remove them and begin the process of healing and become whole again. It sounds simple, while reading, but practically it is not so easy to develop an attitude of renunciation and austerity and also with ease and freedom. This is because we all are deeply attached to limitations and chains that bind us.



Moreover, individual 'karmic' accounts have led to accumulation of unlimited negativity in one's 'samskaras', thereby compelling souls to forget their original loving nature of peace and love. Today, vices of greed have penetrated all strata of society — political, civil and even medical. With massive scandals happening on a daily basis, there has been a "trust deficit" in society at a mass scale, putting the entire humanity in turmoil. Under such a scenario, how can one even think of experiencing inner power and peace? The only hope for humankind under such a crisis lies in the almighty's wisdom and connectivity, by which we feel blessed, energetic and secured, for it is this divine wisdom which empowers us to have a clear vision of ourselves and our roles in this world drama. With trust and courage, if we take a step of determination, then we would surely receive the strength to shed the false identity that we have created. One needs to ask himself whether my dealings are pure and honest. Do I accept bribery in the form of praise, favours and wealth? Is my service/role/product totally beneficial? Am I maximizing my time, energy and resources for the company/nation? Do I maintain a personal standard of integrity and balance? A professional, who has mental and spiritual balance, and has a sense of professional worth and responsibility will maintain equanimity of mind and steadiness in progress.

It's to be understood that while playing our roles as engineers, doctors, lawyers, businessmen, etc., we are essentially 'brother souls'. This will help us focus on self-progress against external show and accumulation of material wealth. The worldly gains are visible signs of achievement, financial security and profit, but one also needs to monitor one's own consciousness, attitudes, actions and perspectives as they manifest outwardly and reflect the culture of the company as a whole. Lastly, one must remember that my personal effort-practical way of being and doing-is ultimately the precursor to my own happiness, uplift and downfall.

*(The writer is a spiritual educator. The views expressed are personal.)*

# Electricity Bill: Where is the spark?

## After dilution of its key provisions, the Electricity Bill, 2021, falls short of reform objectives



UTTAM GUPTA

In the draft Electricity (Amendment) Bill or EAB, 2021, proposing amendments to the Electricity Act, 2003 introduced in February last year, the Narendra Modi-led NDA Government intended to bring about two transformative reforms — de-licensing of the electricity distribution business and direct benefit transfer (DBT) of subsidy. Delicensing of the distribution business aims to bring in competition, and give the consumer power to choose suppliers (or "open access").

Even as the Union ministry of power prepares to table a Bill in the upcoming Monsoon session (2022) of Parliament, both the provisions have been dropped. Under the extant arrangements, an overwhelming share of power generated by public sector undertakings (PSUs) such as the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), etc., and independent power producers (IPPs), besides generating stations of State Electricity Boards (SEBs) is procured by power distribution companies or discoms (these are mostly owned and controlled by State governments) under power purchase agreements (PPA). Most of these PPAs are long-term contracts up to 25 years. A mere five percent of the electricity is traded.

Under instruction from the top political brass in the State establishment, discoms sell a major slice of electricity — thus procured — to some preferred consumers, viz., poor households (HHs) and farmers, either at a fraction of the cost of purchase, transmission, and distribution, or even free. On the units sold to these target groups, they incur colossal under-recovery. This is aggravated by aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses — most of it is plain theft.

Inflated tariff allowed to IPPs/PSUs under a cost-plus formula (under the PPAs) adds to the revenue shortfall. In a bid to offset the loss, discoms charge high tariffs on supplies to industries/businesses besides non-poor HHs (NPHHs). The former are the sole suppliers of electricity; hence, the latter have no option but to pay. It is a different matter that despite this cross-subsidization, overall discoms continue to incur huge losses.

There is no reason why the industries/businesses and NPHHs should not get access to electricity at a 'reasonable' rate. But, this will be possible only when they get access to alternative sources by allowing private firms in the distribution business. In this backdrop, the Government's decision to include a proposal to this effect in the bill was apt. To drop it now, is a retrograde move.

The trigger behind volte face by the Centre is the resistance to the proposal from the Opposition-ruled states which argued that this is an attack on federalism and will be tantamount to an "infringement on the sovereignty of the state."

Under the Constitution, generation and transmission (G&T) are under the purview



THE TRIGGER BEHIND VOLTE FACE BY THE CENTRE IS THE RESISTANCE TO THE PROPOSAL FROM THE OPPOSITION- RULED STATES WHICH ARGUED THAT THIS IS AN ATTACK ON FEDERALISM AND WILL TANTAMOUNT TO AN 'INFRINGEMENT ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE STATE'

*(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)*



of the Union Government while distribution is a State subject. The States are using this broad subject matter classification to argue that the Centre has no right to make changes in policies relating to distribution of electricity. The generation and transmission along with the distribution are essential components of an 'integrated' supply chain for ensuring uninterrupted supply of electricity in required quantity at affordable price to all consumers. All need to be maintained in a robust and healthy state for achieving the desired objective even as weakness in any one can lead to malfunctioning of the entire system.

Power distribution is the biggest weakness in the supply chain and there is a dire need for reforms in this segment. The States should let the Centre proceed with its proposal and not allow jurisdictional issues to put a speed-breaker. Meanwhile, the Centre has proposed amendments to provide for multiple suppliers in a single area. Prima facie, it appears that other suppliers would be there to provide electricity at rates lower than what State discom charges. This is illusory as the network ownership remains with the latter, its real boss (read: State government) won't let any supplier — other than the state discom — come in.

Pertinently, even under the amended Electricity Act (2003), there was a provision for 'open access', which gave choice to bulk consumers to choose their suppliers. But, another provision in the Act required such customers to pay an 'open access surcharge' (OAS) to the discom that they wanted to leave. By fixing the surcharge at a high level, the States ensured that post-switch, the effective cost of power — tariff

charged by the new supplier plus OAS — was higher than what they paid to the discom.

That rendered the switch uneconomical. Even two decades thereafter, nothing has changed. The other major reform in the bill was DBT. Under the extant arrangements, subsidy to target groups such as farmers and poor households is embedded in the tariff charged from them. For instance, if the cost of purchase, wheeling, and distribution is say Rs 5 per unit, instead of asking farmer to pay Rs 5/-, the discom charges him 'nil'. The latter in turn, claims reimbursement of this amount from the State government.

Under DBT, the discom will charge Rs 5/- for every unit from the farmer even as the State government will directly transfer this amount to the latter's bank account. This will yield multiple dividends. In view of the farmers/poor HHs paying the full cost-based tariff, discoms won't face any under-recovery on such sales, thereby helping them avoid losses.

They need not charge more from industries/businesses and NPHH which they do under the present regime to cross-subsidize supplies to target beneficiaries. When the States stop riding piggyback on discoms for extending subsidy, it would be easier to free the latter from controls. If, discoms can be turned into autonomous corporate entities, it will help them reduce costs by negotiating lower price of power purchased from IPPs under PPAs and reigning in theft. Furthermore, in view of discoms standing on their own feet and able to compete with private suppliers, there won't be any resistance to 'de-licensing of distribution business'

and it will also be easier to implement "open access". Yet, DBT is being opposed by the States. This is because unlike the present dispensation of routing subsidy through discoms wherein, the State government can afford to take things leisurely - not making reimbursements (albeit to discoms) upfront, not paying in full and delaying payment - under DBT, they cannot enjoy any of these luxuries.

Adding to pressure on the Centre was a demand by farmers protesting against the three farm laws (Nov 2020-Nov 2021) to drop DBT from the EAB, 2022. The twin reforms - DBT and de-licensing of distribution - hold the key to pulling discoms from the brink and making them financially viable. These will also ensure supply of power to all consumers at affordable rates. Putting them off will mean business as usual - ever increasing losses of the discoms, their escalating dues to IPPs/PSUs, high tariffs charged from industries/businesses and NPHHs and mounting NPAs (non-performing assets) of banks.

The EAB, 2022, contains a number of provisions such as 'Payment security mechanism' for generating companies (gencons), empowerment of the grid operator National Load Dispatch Centre (NLDC) to stop dispatch of power to states that do not provide payment security against their contracted supply and so on. These are meant to force discoms to make timely payments of their dues.

But, alas! without the aforementioned twin reforms which are fundamental to making discoms 'robust' and 'healthy'-now dropped from the Bill-imposing such discipline will prove to be counter-productive.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

IT IS CRUEL TO RAISE TAX RATES WHEN CPI INFLATION IS OVER 7%, WPI INFLATION IS OVER 15%, UNEMPLOYMENT IS HIGH, — CONGRESS LEADER

JAIRAM RAMESH



THIS DECISION WAS A MUCH-NEEDED ONE TO CURB TAX LEAKAGE. IT WAS CONSIDERED BY THE GROUP OF MINISTERS, AND WAS FINALLY RECOMMENDED BY THE GST COUNCIL.

— FINANCE MINISTER NIRMALA SITHARAMAN

# Nepal, despite credit shortage will not be Sri Lanka

## Unlike Sri Lanka, Nepal is witnessing an uptick in tourism and remittances and the Himalayan nation may survive current financial crisis

Nepal is currently experiencing a credit shortage due to the liquidity problem. Nepal witnessed a similar situation last year also. The credit deposit ratio of nearly all banks has surpassed 90 percent, preventing them from lending money to clients. During this time span, deposit interest rates have shot up. This is despite the fact that deposits are insufficiently substantial. The government is unable to utilise its budget as planned, which has a severe impact on the flow of funds into Nepal's economy.

NEERAJ SINGH MANHAS

The current financial crisis in Sri Lanka has set off political uncertainty and conflict in the island nation. It is considered "debt-trapped" and unable to service the international debt obligation. In this backdrop,

*(The author is Director, Indo-Pacific Consortium, New Delhi.)*

some Nepalese economists are pessimistic about Nepal's economy and compare Nepal's predicament to that of Sri Lanka. However, financial indicators show that Nepal will not face a situation as dire as Sri Lanka on account of following reasons:

■ The government and Nepal Rastra Bank have already taken proactive financial measures to stabilise Nepal's foreign currency reserve

■ Nepal's current currency reserve can cover imports for approximately six and a half months, which is a slightly alarming foreign currency position but is not cause for concern if certain financial measures are taken

■ Nepal's foreign debt is not at an alarming level, and its repayment of foreign loans can

be met from its current foreign currency reserve. In addition, Nepal has taken out a foreign loan with a nominal interest rate and with a longer repayment period, which ensures that it will not run out of foreign exchange reserves immediately.

■ Over the past two months, remittance inflows have begun to increase. This is anticipated to continue in the coming days as a result of COVID-19 relaxation in overseas markets, the lifting of movement restrictions in the majority of countries, and the significant increase in outbound Nepali migrant workers in recent years, which will strengthen remittances.

■ The tourism industry has begun to recover, which is another key source of foreign cash for Nepal. To address Nepal's trade deficit, the govern-

ment and central bank have imposed import restrictions.

However, there is a need to separate luxury items that will have an effect on foreign currency reserves.

Foreign liquors: Despite being a luxury item in Nepal, tourists are likely to prefer the flavour of alcohol they are familiar with, even during their stay in Nepal. So, in a sense, easing the prohibition on alcohol imports could actually help to increase the foreign currency reserve.

Non-essential and necessary items: Permanent categorization of essential and non-essential items is required to address the trade imbalance and preserve foreign currency reserves.

Electric vehicles: Due to the growing demand for fossil fuels, electric vehicles must be

encouraged in order to save considerable amounts of foreign currency. In the coming years, the reliance on petroleum products must be diminished. In the foreseeable future, Nepal's economy will continue to rely heavily on remittances sent home from abroad.

Since more than four million Nepalis work abroad and the number continues to rise, this has been the country's primary source of foreign money. As a result of Covid-19, the tourism industry has also made improvements. However, the foreign currency they create for the country should not be wasted on the import of luxury items.

Major hydro projects are being connected to the national grid, which can help the nation earn foreign money by

exporting excess energy to its neighbours. The hydro energy sector can be utilised to boost the country's foreign currency reserves. The agriculture sector is another sector with the potential to add to Nepal's foreign currency reserve by exporting organic commodities around the world.

Lastly, the export of unique Nepalese handicrafts and handmade ornaments can contribute to the country's foreign currency reserves. The latest MCC Nepal agreement aims to boost the supply of electricity and reduce transportation costs in Nepal by improving road connectivity. These investments will aid the Nepalese government in providing essential services to its citizens, facilitate the movement of goods around the nation, and provide new oppor-

tunities for private investment.

In addition, the MCC Nepal Compact will boost the availability of power and reduce the cost of transportation, which will help in spurring investment, accelerating economic growth, and reducing poverty. With the 500 million dollar project funding supplied by the United States, the MCC accord would pave the road for development in Nepal. Recent pledges by the United States to give Nepal a donation in installments and international financial institutions, namely the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Asian Development Bank, also committing to provide grants to middle-income countries may improve Nepal's financial conditions, including its foreign exchange reserves.



# Russia pounds major Ukrainian city after expanding war aims



AP ■ KHARKIV (UKRAINE)

Russian shelling pounded a densely populated area in Ukraine's second-largest city Thursday, killing at least two people and injuring at least 21 with a barrage that struck a mosque, a medical facility and a shopping area, according to officials and witnesses at the scene.

Police in the northeast city of Kharkiv said cluster bombs hit Barabashovo Market. A public bazaar where Associated Press journalists saw a woman crying over her dead husband's body. Local officials said the shelling also struck a bus stop, a gym and a residential building.

The bombardment came after Russia on Wednesday reiterated its plans to seize territories beyond eastern Ukraine, where the Russian military has spent months trying to conquer Ukraine's Donbas region, which is south of Kharkiv. Ukrainian officials recently aired their plans to try to recapture Russian-occupied areas near the country's southern Black Sea coast.

Kharkiv Mayor Ihor Terekhov said the attacks early Thursday targeted one of the most crowded areas of the city, which had a prewar population of about 1.4 million.

"The Russian army is randomly shelling Kharkiv, peaceful residential areas, civilians are being killed," Terekhov said. "Be careful!"

The police claim that cluster bombs hit Barabashovo Market could not be independently confirmed. The AP journalists at the scene shortly after the attack reported seeing burned-out cars and a bus pierced by shrapnel. The Kharkiv region's governor, Oleh Syniehubov, said four people were in grave condition and a child was among those wounded in the shelling. Russian forces also have shelled wheat fields in the area, setting them on fire, he said. Elsewhere, Russian forces shelled the southern city of Mykolaiv overnight as well as the eastern cities of Kramatorsk and Kostiantynivka, where two schools were destroyed after a civilian was killed Wednesday, Ukrainian officials said.

As of 8 a.m. Thursday, Russian shelling of cities across Ukraine killed at least five people and wounded at least 17 more in

24 hours, Ukraine's presidential office reported. The scattered attacks illustrate broader war aims beyond Russia's previously declared focus on the Donbas region's Donetsk and Luhansk provinces, where front line battles mostly unfolded in recent weeks.

When it invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, Russia quickly seized territory but withdrew from the capital region and north after about six weeks to concentrate on seizing Donetsk and Luhansk, which pro-Moscow separatists have partly controlled since 2014. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told state-controlled RT television and the RIA Novosti news agency in an interview published Wednesday that Russia plans to retain control over more territory, including the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions in the south. Moscow's current strategy also envisions making gains elsewhere, Lavrov said. His comments indicated the war could flare up rather than wind down in the weeks to come.

With Western countries providing Ukraine with longer-range weapons, Lavrov said Russia's "geographical tasks will be pushed even further from the current line because we cannot allow the part of Ukraine under control of (Ukrainian President Volodymyr) Zelenskyy or whoever comes to succeed him, to have weapons that will pose a direct threat to our territory and the territories of those republics that have declared their independence." Analysts from the Institute for the Study of War, a think tank based in Washington, said they think the current Russian offensive in Donetsk may result in the capture of the cities of Sloviansk or Bakhmut, though Moscow's troops have not yet made "meaningful" progress.

The think tank's latest analysis also noted that "Russian troops are now struggling to move across relatively sparsely-settled and open terrain. They will encounter terrain much more conducive to the Ukrainian defenders," the institute's most recent analysis said.

The General Staff of Ukraine's military reported Thursday that Russian forces attempted to storm the Vuhlehirsk power station in the Donetsk region, but

"Ukrainian defenders made the enemy resort to fleeing." Ukraine forces also on Wednesday struck a key bridge on the Dnieper River for the second time in as many days, apparently trying to loosen Russia's grip on the southern Kherson region.

"Russia is prioritizing the capture of critical national infrastructure, such as power plants," the British Defense Ministry said Thursday. "However, it is probably also attempting to break through at Vuhlehirsk, as part of its efforts to regain momentum on the southern pincer of its advance towards the key cities of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk."

Fighting also persists in the Luhansk region, next to Donetsk, but it has not been fully captured by the Russian military, governor Serhiy Haidai said.

### In other developments on Thursday:

■ The operator of a major pipeline from Russia to Europe says natural gas has started flowing again after a 10-day shutdown for maintenance. But the gas flow was expected to fall well short of full capacity and the outlook was uncertain. The Nord Stream 1 pipeline to Germany had been closed since July 11 for annual maintenance work. The pipeline is Germany's main source of Russian gas. German officials had feared that the pipeline might not reopen at all amid growing tensions over Russia's war in Ukraine. Operator Nord Stream AG said that gas was flowing again Thursday morning and its network data showed gas beginning to arrive.

■ Swiss technology, industrial products and robotics company ABB said it is exiting the Russian market over the war in Ukraine and related sanctions. The company previously suspended accepting new orders from Russia after the invasion of Ukraine. The Zurich-based company, which has two production sites and about 750 people in Russia, posted a second quarter hit of \$57 million in financial impact due to the situation. The company says Russia accounted for 1%-2% of its annual revenues — which totaled nearly \$29 billion last year — before it stopped taking new orders from Russia.

# EU imposes more sanctions on Moscow over Ukraine invasion

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The European Union imposed more sanctions on Russia on Thursday over the war in Ukraine after the bloc's member states backed a series of measures that would include gold imports and tighten export controls on some high-technology goods.

European Commission Ursula von der Leyen said that the "reinforced, prolonged EU sanctions against the Kremlin" send "a strong signal to Moscow: we will keep the pres-

sure high for as long as it takes." The details of the sanctions were still unclear since they still need to be posted in the EU's official journal.

EU officials have been seeking all week to tighten the extensive package of sanctions on Russia and looking at ways to add a ban on gold exports in hopes that the measures might finally start to have a decisive impact on the war in Ukraine.

EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell said Monday that at the moment "the most important thing is a ban on Russian



gold," which is Moscow's second-largest export industry after energy.

The Group of Seven leading industrial nations last month already committed to a gold ban, arguing the Russia has used its gold to back up its currency to circumvent the impact of several rounds of sanctions that nations around the world had already imposed on Moscow for its Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine.

On top of the restrictive measures, the EU also decided to grant 500 million euros to boost military aid to Ukraine.

# US sending more military aid to Ukraine as war grinds on

AP N WASHINGTON

The US and allies committed more rocket systems, ammunition and other military aid to Ukraine Wednesday, as American defence leaders said they see the war to block Russian gains in the eastern Donbas region grinding on for some time.

Speaking at the close of a virtual meeting with about 50 defense leaders from around the world, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said it will be "hard work" to keep allies and partners all committed to the war effort as the months drag on.

"We're pushing hard to maintain and intensify the momentum of donations," Austin said. "This will be an area of focus for the foreseeable future, as it should be, in terms of how long our allies and partners will remain committed ... There's no question that this will always be hard work making sure that we maintain unity."

Officials have been reluctant to say how long the war may last, but Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, suggested it could be a long slog.

"We have a very serious grinding war of attrition going on in the Donbas. And unless there's a breakthrough on either side — which right now the analysts don't think is particularly likely in the near term — it will probably continue as a grinding war of attrition for a period of time until both sides see an alternative way out of this, perhaps through negotiation or something like that."

Officials said Wednesday that the U.S. will send Ukraine four more High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) and precision-guided rockets for them, as well as additional artillery rounds. A more detailed announcement is expected later this week.

The aid comes as Russian forces try to solidify gains in the two provinces in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region, Donetsk and Luhansk, while also expanding attacks into other areas. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told state-controlled RT television and the RIA Novosti news



agency that Russia has expanded its "special military operation" from the Donbas to the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions and other captured territories.

Austin said Lavrov's comments come as no surprise to allies who have known Russia has greater ambitions in capturing Ukraine.

But Ukrainian troops have been using the HIMARS to strike Russian logistics nodes and command and control centers, including behind the front lines to disrupt supply chains. And on Wednesday they struck and damaged a bridge that is key to supplying Russian troops in southern Ukraine, where Lavrov said Moscow is trying to consolidate its territorial gains.

Milley said the Ukrainian strikes are "steadily degrading the Russian ability to supply their troops, command and control their forces, and carry out their illegal war of aggression."

He said that, due to Ukraine's resistance, Russia has been able to gain just six to 10 miles of ground in the Donbas over the past 90 days, with "tens of thousands of artillery rounds" fired in each 24-hour period. And he said he does not believe that the Donbas region has been lost to Russia. "It's not lost yet. The Ukrainians are making the Russians pay for every inch of territory that they gain and advances are measured in literally hundreds of meters," Milley said.

# European wildfire threat recedes as temperatures drop

AP ■ MADRID

Europe's recent spate of wildfires abated amid cooler temperatures Thursday, with no outbreaks reported in Portugal while French firefighters started to get the upper hand over two major blazes and Spain tamed a fire that killed two people last weekend.

Spanish firefighters were tackling nine blazes, with two said to be especially dangerous in northwestern Galicia.

Some of the 11,000 people evacuated because of the fires in Spain began returning home, and a major highway in the northwestern Zamora province reopened after two days.

Temperatures above 40 C (104 F) and a drought have worsened Spain's wildfires this year. Thursday's highest temperature in Spain was forecast to be 32 C (90 F).

In France, more than a week of round-the-clock battling against ferocious flames by more than 2,000 firefighters and up to 10 water-dropping planes was slowly winning out against two major wildfires in tinder-dry pine forests in southwest France.

The Gironde region's fire service said both blazes, which forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of people, were contained.

Though still fighting hot spots that could reignite blazes, the fire service said it expects to have tamped down flare-ups and tamed the fires' embers within days. Officials said they will probably be able to declare the fires completely extinguished within weeks.

# Sunak vows to work 'night and day' in campaign to be UK PM

PTI N LONDON

Rishi Sunak has vowed to work "night and day" as he embarked upon the final and toughest stretch of his campaign on Thursday to win over the Conservative Party membership to be elected party leader and British Prime Minister.

The British-Indian ex-minister won a decisive mandate from the Tory parliamentary party to take on Foreign Secretary Liz Truss in the race to replace Boris Johnson.

The 42-year-old former Chancellor was a clear frontrunner among the Tory members of Parliament — 137 of whom voted in favour of him against Truss' 113 — but his camp knows they face an uphill task to replicate the winning streak of every voting round since last week with the wider party membership.



Thursday's latest bookie odds on the betting aggregator Oddschecker after Wednesday's final round of MP votes show Truss in a comfortable lead over Sunak.

"I will work night and day to deliver our message around the country," said Sunak.

He used a column in "The Daily Telegraph" to soften some of the harsh rhetoric of the live television debates by saying he "likes and respects" his opponent after they clashed bitterly over key policy issues, specifically taxes.

# Pickup driver hits family in Montana, kills 2 with shotgun

AP ■ BILLINGS (US)

A man drove his pickup truck into a family as they walked in a tourist village bordering Glacier National Park and opened fire with a shotgun, killing one man and mortally wounding a toddler who was in her mother's arms before the mother's sister-in-law managed to kill the assailant after he ran out of ammunition, authorities said. Killed in the weekend attack on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in northwestern Montana were David Siau, 39, of Syracuse, New York, and Siau's 18-month-old daughter, McKenzie.

The assailant, Derick Amos Madden, 37, had been in a prior relationship with the woman who killed him and had mental health issues, the Glacier County Sheriff's Office said. Authorities on Wednesday would not say how he was killed. Madden plowed a Toyota Tacoma onto a sidewalk and into the Siau family just before 9 p.m. Sunday as they walked in the small town of East Glacier Park, hitting some of them before crashing into a tree, the sheriff's office said.

Madden got out and shot and killed David Siau and mortally wounded McKenzie. The young girl was being held by her mother, Christy Siau, 40, who was shot and wounded as she tried to run away.

Madden then ran out of ammunition and used a knife to attack the sister-in-law, Christina Siau, 30. But the woman fought back and fatally wounded Madden, who



authorities said died at the scene, said Capt. Tom Seifert with the Glacier County Sheriff's Office.

Seifert declined to release details on how Siau killed Madden or if any other weapons were recovered from the scene. "She fought back and she won," he said.

Two other children of David and Christy Siau were present but managed to run away and were not injured.

McKenzie Siau was pronounced dead at the Indian Health Service hospital in Browning. Christy and Christina Siau suffered critical injuries and were flown to another hospital with a higher level of care.

Due to Christy Siau's injuries, investigators have been unable to interview her about what happened, Seifert said.

Bystanders in the area witnessed the attack and reported it to authorities, Seifert said. He added that police responded to the scene within minutes, but the attack already was over.

The Montana Highway Patrol was trying to determine the exact speed Madden was driving when he hit the family. Seifert described it as faster than the posted speed limit, which he said was at least 25 miles (40 kph) per hour.

# Indiana Republicans propose banning abortion with exceptions

AP ■ INDIANAPOLIS (US)

Leaders of Indiana's Republican-dominated Senate on Wednesday proposed banning abortion with limited exceptions — a move that comes amid a political firestorm over a 10-year-old rape victim who came to the state from neighbouring Ohio to end her pregnancy.

The proposal will be taken up during a special legislative session that is scheduled to begin Monday, making Indiana one of the first Republican-run states to debate tighter abortion laws following the U.S. Supreme Court decision last month overturning Roe v. Wade. The Supreme Court ruling is expected to lead to abortion bans in roughly half the states.

The Indiana proposal would allow exceptions to the ban, such as in cases of rape, incest or to protect a woman's life. Its fate is uncertain, though, because some hardline Republicans want to ban all abortions.

Ohio's so-called fetal heartbeat law, which bans abortions after a fetus' heartbeat can be detected — typically in around the sixth week of pregnancy — led the 10-year-old rape victim to go to Indiana to get a medication-induced abortion on June 30, according to the doctor who performed it.

Indiana Republicans have pushed through numerous anti-abortion laws over the past decade and the vast majority signed a letter in March supporting a special session to further tighten those laws. But legislative leaders and Republican



Gov. Eric Holcomb had been tightlipped since the Supreme Court decision over whether they would push for a full abortion ban or allow exceptions.

Indiana law generally prohibits abortions after the 20th week of pregnancy and tightly restricts it after the 13th week. Nearly 99% of abortions in the state last year took place at 13 weeks or earlier, according to a state Health Department report.

Before lawmakers announced their proposal, the leader of the state's most prominent anti-abortion group told reporters that the group would pressure legislators to advance a bill "that affirms the value of all life including unborn children" while not taking questions on whether any exceptions would be acceptable.

Indiana Right to Life President Mike Fichter said the vast majority of Indiana

lawmakers have "campaigning as pro-life, they've run multiple election cycles as being pro-life."

"This is not the time when legislators should be drafting legislation that would appear that Roe versus Wade is still in place," Fichter said. "Roe is no longer in place. The Roe shield is no longer there."

Democrats have criticized Republicans for meeting privately for weeks over the abortion legislation.

"If anything, what we should be spending our time on is preparing, strengthening our safety net before we began to take away access to abortion care in this state," Democratic state Sen. Shelli Yoder, of Bloomington, said before the proposal was unveiled.

The state's debate comes as an Indiana doctor has been at the center of a political firestorm after speaking out about the 10-year-old rape vic-

tim from Ohio.

A 27-year-old man was charged in Columbus, Ohio, last week with raping the girl, confirming the existence of a case that was initially met with skepticism by some media outlets and Republican politicians. The pushback grew after Democratic President Joe Biden expressed sympathy for the girl during the signing of an executive order aimed at protecting some abortion access.

Dr. Caitlin Bernard, an Indianapolis obstetrician-gynecologist, said she gave the girl a medication-induced abortion on June 30 because the child couldn't get the procedure in Ohio under a newly imposed state ban on abortions from the time a fetus' cardiac activity can be detected. A judge lifted a stay on the Ohio ban after the Supreme Court's ruling.

Indiana's conservative GOP lawmakers have had a history of conflict over social issues. In May, they overrode a veto by Holcomb of a bill that banned transgender women and girls from participating in school sports that match their gender identity.

That came seven years after Indiana faced a national uproar over a religious objections law signed by then-Gov. Mike Pence that opponents maintained could be used to discriminate against gays and lesbians.

The Republican-dominated Legislature quickly made revisions blocking its use as a legal defense for refusing to provide services and preventing the law from overriding local ordinances with LGBTQ protections.

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WHITE HOUSE INSIDERS TO TALK ABOUT TRUMP'S ACTIONS ON JAN 6

Matthew Pottinger was a journalist in China, concerned about the country's drift toward authoritarianism, when he decided — at age 31 — to enlist in the U.S. Marines after the invasion of Iraq.

investigating the attack. The other is Sarah Matthews, who resigned from her position as a deputy press secretary the same day.



Pottinger, 49, and Matthews, 27, may be able to illuminate what was happening behind the scenes as Trump resisted pleas from family, aides and Republicans to condemn the riot and urge people to leave the building.

White House director of strategic communications, said Pottinger and Matthews could make potent witnesses, particularly because of their very different backgrounds.

Matthews was hired as a deputy press secretary for Trump's reelection campaign and was brought over to the White House by press secretary Kayleigh McEnany.

Power outage stops Ranil's swearing-in event, CID to probe

Lanka's new Prez says he is not a 'friend' of Rajapaksas, vows to bring in system change



A power outage in the Sri Lankan Parliament complex stopped the live broadcast of President Ranil Wickremesinghe's swearing-in ceremony, forcing authorities to launch an investigation by the Criminal Investigations Department into the incident, a media report said on Thursday.

investigations Department will investigate the power outage that took place on Thursday in the Parliament complex when the swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected President Wickremesinghe was proceeding, the Colombo Page web portal reported.

minutes at the time of the swearing-in of the President. Due to this reason, TV channels could not telecast the swearing-in ceremony.

Meanwhile, Wickremesinghe says he is not a 'friend' of Rajapaksas, vows to bring in system change. "I am not a friend of the people," President Wickremesinghe has told Sri Lankans, pledging to bring in the much-needed system change they are yearning for.

The anti-government protesters, who succeeded in forcing the powerful Rajapaksas family to leave their official positions amidst the unprecedented economic crisis, are also demanding Wickremesinghe's resignation as he is seen as close to Gotabaya Rajapaksas. After being elected as the President, Wickremesinghe visited the Gangarama Temple, one of the oldest Buddhist temples in Colombo, on Wednesday.

Biden: Military say Pelosi Taiwan trip 'not good idea'

President Joe Biden said on Wednesday that US military officials believe it's "not a good idea" for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to visit Taiwan at the moment.

international travel in advance, due to longstanding security protocols. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijiang said such a visit would "severely undermine China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, gravely impact the foundation of China-U.S. Relations and send a seriously wrong signal to Taiwan independence forces."

Ex-Lankan Prez Rajapaksa granted short-term visit pass: Singapore

Singapore has granted a 14-day short-term visit pass to former Sri Lankan president Gotabaya Rajapaksa as he entered the country on a "private visit" on July 14, according to immigration authorities here.



Those who need to extend their stay here may apply online for an extension of their STVP. Applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, said the ICA.

Former Israeli PM denies blame for deadly stampede

Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu testified on Thursday that he bears no responsibility for the safety gaps that led to a deadly stampede that killed 45 people last year.



coronavirus regulations limiting outdoor assemblies to 500 people, and in spite of longstanding warnings about the safety of the site.

China's Didi Global fined \$1.2 bn for data violations

China's internet watchdog on Thursday fined ride-hailing firm Didi Global more than 8 billion yuan (\$1.2 billion) following an investigation into the company's cybersecurity practices.

"illegal operations" had brought "serious" national security risks, affecting the country's information infrastructure and data security.

Italy's Draghi resigns after Govt implodes

Italian Premier Mario Draghi resigned on Thursday after key coalition allies boycotted a confidence vote, signaling the likelihood of an early election and a renewed period of uncertainty for Italy and Europe at a critical time.

Instead, the center-right parties of Forza Italia and the League and the populist 5-Star Movement boycotted a confidence vote in the Senate, in a clear sign they were done with Draghi's 17-month government.



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SBFC Finance Pvt. Ltd. advertisement including contact information and public notice regarding gold ornaments.

BOI advertisement for possession notice regarding immovable property, including details of the property and the bank's terms.

Public Notice regarding the death of a person and the transfer of their assets.

Public Notice regarding the death of a person and the transfer of their assets.

Public Notice regarding the death of a person and the transfer of their assets.



# Markets gain for 5th straight session

## Sensex climbs 284 points



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Market benchmarks marched higher for the fifth straight session on Thursday as investors accumulated energy, financial and IT stocks amid a mixed trend in global equities.

A rebounding rupee and fresh buying by foreign funds added to the momentum, traders said.

Clawing back lost ground in early deals, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 284.42 points or 0.51 per cent to settle at 55,681.95. During the day, it jumped 340.96 points or 0.61 per cent to 55,738.49.

Likewise, the broader NSE Nifty went higher by 84.40 points or 0.51 per cent to 16,605.25.

IndusInd Bank was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising 7.88 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, Asian Paints, Tech Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro, Axis Bank and Power Grid.

Shares of IndusInd Bank climbed 7.88 per cent after the company reported a 60.5 per cent jump in net profit for the quarter ended June.

On the other hand, HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries, Kotak Bank and Dr Reddy's were the losers, sliding up to 1.89 per cent.

"With support from FII buying, the domestic market was able to withstand the downward pressure from global markets to close on a positive note. Global indices traded lower on rate hike worries..." said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

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

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

# Rupee unlikely to get any tailwind this fiscal: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee, which has plumbed the 80-level against the US dollar, is unlikely to get any tailwind this fiscal and may fall further in the medium term due to higher crude prices and imports, says a report.

In the report on Thursday, Swiss brokerage UBS Securities said the rupee, which has lost 7.5 per cent so far this year against the US dollar, will settle at the 80 level by March.

There will be no tailwind for the rupee and it may plumb further in the medium term, given the pressure on the Current Account Deficit (CAD). This will be due to rising trade gaps and the massive sell-off by foreign funds.

Foreign funds have pulled out investments worth USD 29 billion or 4.4 per cent of their India holdings since the beginning of the year.

UBS India Chief Economist Tanvee Gupta-Jain said at the 80 level, the rupee is trading near its fair value from the Real Effective Exchange Rate (REER) basis and by



adjusting for the productivity differential with trading partners.

The rupee is trading near its equilibrium value and "even as we expect the rupee to trade at 80 by the

fiscal end, there is a risk of rupee to depreciate more in the near term as the current account deficit remains high, which we see more than doubling to 2.9 per cent," she said.

She also noted that compared to its emerging market peers, the rupee has not under performed due to the strong underlying macroeconomic fundamentals.

The forex reserves remain reasonable at USD 580 billion but down from the peak of USD 642.4 billion in September 2021 on valuation adjustment and RBI's market intervention of over USD 40 billion plus in the spot and forward markets so far to support the rupee.

Currently, the forex reserves cover 95 per cent of external debt, up from around 70 per cent in FY13. Imports cover for reserves is at 10.5 months currently, much better than the seven months in FY13 but below the peak of 14.4 months in FY08, the report said.

The external debt increased by USD 91 billion in the past five years to USD 621 billion, which is 19.5 per cent of the GDP but forex reserves rose USD 156 billion during the same period. This indicates external buffers are being created on policy initiatives to withstand global volatility

better than the 2013 taper tantrum episode.

Even as the size of external debt of USD 621 billion has increased since FY17 by around USD 150 billion, most of the increase was led by non-resident deposits, commercial borrowings, and the short-term trade credit.

Gupta-Jain expects widening of CAD to 3.5-4 per cent of the GDP in the first half of this fiscal due to slowing exports and sticky imports before moderating in the second half, assuming global commodity prices ease from the current levels.

For FY23, it expects CAD to widen to 2.9 per cent of GDP from 1.2 per cent in FY22 but well below the 4.8 per cent touched in pre-taper tantrum level in FY13.

Capital outflows on the back of the worsening growth-liquidity mix, deteriorating trade balance, slowing global growth amid a tightening global monetary landscape and broad dollar strength have been material headwinds for all currencies and the rupee is no exception, she said.

## Rupee rises 20 paise to close at 79.85 against US dollar



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee recovered from its all-time low of 80.06 to close 20 paise higher at 79.85 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday following overall weakness in crude oil prices and fresh foreign fund inflows. At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened lower at 80.03 against the greenback and fell further to an intra-day low of 80.06. The local unit recouped losses later and settled at 79.85 (provisional), registering a rise of 20 paise over its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee for the first time settled below the 80-level against the US currency due to strong dollar demand from importers and fiscal slippage concerns.

The dollar index, which measures the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was down 0.04 per cent at 107.03.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, fell 4.46 per cent to USD 102.15 per barrel.

"After the last four days' underperformance, Indian Rupee becomes the second best-performing currency among Asian currencies on probable dollar selling by state banks on behalf of central banks and mild foreign fund inflows."

"All eyes will be on the European Central Bank (ECB) meeting, which will impact the dollar index. With the Euro holding the major weight in the dollar index, any unexpected outcome from the meeting will be dollar positive and in turn, weigh on other currencies," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 284.42 points or 0.51 per cent higher at 55,681.95, while the broader NSE Nifty advanced 84.40 points or 0.51 per cent to 16,605.25.

Foreign institutional investors remained net buyers in the capital market on Wednesday as they purchased shares worth Rs 1,780.94 crore, as per exchange data.

## RBI postpones MPC meeting by a day to August 3

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India has postponed the meeting of its interest rate setting Monetary Policy Committee by a day to August 3 due to administrative exigencies.

The RBI said the decision of the MPC will be known on August 5 as against the earlier schedule of August 4.

"Due to administrative exigencies, it has been decided to reschedule the MPC meeting from August 2-4, 2022 to August 3-5, 2022," RBI said in a statement on Thursday.

The MPC announces the bi-monthly monetary policy after deliberations on the prevailing domestic and economic situations.

The panel, headed by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, has two representatives from the central bank and three external members.

It is widely expected that the RBI may increase benchmark interest rate to cool down high inflation. The retail inflation print was 7.01 per cent for June, higher than the RBI's upper tolerance level. The central government has tasked the RBI to ensure that inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on the either side.

The inflation target for the period April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2026 under the RBI Act 1934 is 4 per cent with an upper tolerance of 6 per cent and a lower tolerance of 2 per cent.

To tame inflation, the RBI has raised interest rate by 90 basis points in the last two months. The repo rate has gone up from 4 per cent to 4.90 per cent.

# Bad loan ratio of banks likely to fall to 5-5.5% by March 2024: S&P Global



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

S&P Global Ratings on Thursday said non-performing loans of banks are expected to decline to 5-5.5 per cent of the total advances by March 2024.

As per the latest Financial Stability Report published by the RBI, the gross non-performing assets (GNPA) declined to a six-year low of 5.9 per cent in March 2022.

"We project the banking sector's weak loans will decline to 5-5.5 per cent of gross loans by March 31, 2024. Likewise, we forecast the credit costs to stabilise at 1.5 per cent for fiscal 2023 and further normalise to 1.3 per cent, making credit costs comparable to those of other emerging markets and India's 15-year average," the rating agency said in a report.

The small and midsize enterprise sector and low-income households are vulnerable to rising interest rates and high inflation, but it expects these risks to be limited, the agency added.

With an economic pick-up, residual stress for these segments should start abating, it said, adding that NPL recoveries are likely to also gain momentum.

It also said India's economic growth prospects should remain strong over the medium term, with GDP expanding 6.5-7 per cent annually in fiscal years 2024-2026.

The economy's long-term higher growth rate versus peers highlights its historical resilience.

India's wide range of structural trends, including healthy demographics and competitive unit labour costs, work in its favour, it noted.

Additionally, it said, the government is likely to remain supportive of the system and there is a very high likelihood the government will continue to support public-sector banks, notwithstanding plans to privatise two such banks.

In the next few years, the report said, loan growth to stay somewhat in line with the trajectory of nominal GDP, and loan growth to the retail sector to continue to outperform the corporate sector.

Corporate borrowing is also picking up momentum, with both working-capital needs and capital expenditure-related growth driving demand, it said.

Still, if risk management does not improve, the coming growth cycle could produce a new crop of sour loans, the agency added.

Lower credit costs and a pick-up in loan growth should sustain the turnaround in banks' earnings, it said.

Improving profitability should augment capital formation. Capitalisation has increased in the past few years due to banks' capital-raising and the government's capital infusions into public-sector banks, it noted.

Capital ratios are comparable to those of international peers for India's large private-sector banks, though they are lower for public-sector banks, S&P Global added.

# India's installed wind capacity touches 40,788 MW mark; solar 57,705 MW: Khuba

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's installed capacities of wind and solar energy projects were at 40,788 MW and 57,705 MW, respectively, till June-end this year, Minister of State Bhagwanth Khuba informed the Lok Sabha on Thursday.

India has set a target of having 175 GW of renewable energy capacity, including 100 GW of solar and 60 GW of wind energy, by 2022.

The cumulative installed capacity of wind power projects in the country was at 40,788 MW as of June 30, 2022, the



MoS for New and Renewable Energy Khuba said in a reply to the lower house.

In another reply, he said solar power projects totalling 57,705.70 MW, including over

6,000 MW in rooftop solar installations, have been installed as of June 30, 2022.

"Electricity generation from renewable energy sources (including large hydro) has increased from 227.96 Billion Units (BU) in the year 2017-18 to 322.53 BU in the year 2021-22 in the country," Khuba said.

The minister further said that as against the target of achieving 175 GW of renewable energy, excluding large hydro installed capacity by 2022, a total of 114.07 GW renewable energy capacity (excluding large hydro) has been installed in the country by June-end 2022.

## Europe's central bank backs larger-than-expected rate hike

AP ■ FRANKFURT

The European Central Bank raised interest rates Thursday for the first time in 11 years by a larger-than-expected amount, joining steps already taken by the US Federal Reserve and other major central banks to target stubbornly high inflation.

The move raises new questions about whether the rush to make credit more expensive will plunge major economies into recession at the cost of easing prices for people spending more on food, fuel and everything in between.

The ECB's surprise hike

of half a percentage point for the 19 countries using the euro currency is expected to be followed by another increase in September, possibly of another half a point. Bank President Christine Lagarde had indicated a quarter-point hike last month.

The bigger hike was justified by an "updated assessment of inflation risks," the ECB said, and means the bank leaves an era of negative interest rates.

"Economic activity is slowing. Russia's unjustified aggression towards Ukraine is an ongoing drag on growth," Lagarde said at a news conference.

# Buy toys bearing 'ISI mark', BIS asks consumers



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) on Thursday urged consumers to buy toys bearing 'ISI mark' from the market as such products have mandatory quality certification.

Also, consumers must complain if they see any toy being sold without the 'ISI Mark'. Complaints can be filed through BIS Care app or write to complaints@bis.gov.in, it said in a statement.

ISI mark on a product certifies that product has been manufactured as per standards

set by the BIS, which is a national standard setting body that functions under the Consumer Affairs Ministry.

Since January 2021, toys are required to mandatorily have quality certification.

As a result, no person is permitted to manufacture, import sell or distribute, store, hire, lease or exhibit for sale toys which do not conform to the Indian standard and do not bear BIS Standard Mark i.e. 'ISI mark' under a licence from BIS.

More than 800 toy manufacturers, mostly from the MSME sector, have already taken BIS certification.

# India Innovation Index: K'taka, T, Haryana bag top 3 ranks

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Karnataka, Telangana and Haryana have been ranked as the top three states among 17 major states in Niti Aayog's third innovation index. Niti Aayog's India Innovation Index 2021 examines innovation capacities and ecosystems at the sub-national level.

The index, released by Niti Aayog's Vice Chairman Suman Bery in the presence of Chief Executive Officer Parameswaran Iyer on Thursday, has been developed on the lines of the Global Innovation Index. States and Union Territories were

divided into '17 Major States', '10 North-East and Hill States', and '9 Union Territories and City States', for effectively comparing their performance. Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Bihar have been ranked at the bottom of the index among major states. Karnataka topped the index for the third year in a row. Among Union Territories, Chandigarh topped the chart, while in the North-East and Hill States category, Manipur occupied the top spot.

"Among the 17 major states, Karnataka, with a score of 18.01, is the top performer, followed by Telangana and Haryana. Chhattisgarh has scored



the least, 10.97. And the average score for the major states' category is 14.02," the index showed.

The overall index score is 14.56. According to the index,

Karnataka's high score can be attributed to its peak performance in attracting FDI and a large number of venture capital deals. Uttar Pradesh and Haryana have registered signifi-

cant gains in promoting an innovative business environment with a large base of internet subscribers and a safe ecosystem for further investment in the region, it said. The average score of North-East and Hill States' category was 14.41, the index said, adding that Manipur with a score of 19.37 was at the top and Nagaland with a score of 11 was at the bottom.

While Manipur scored best in the knowledge workers and safety and legal environment pillars, Uttarakhand had the second highest score due to the state government's high R&D investment.



## Twin delight for Tanisha, P Kashyap too win



PTI ■ TAIPEI

Talented Indian shuttler Tanisha Crasto registered straight-game wins to enter the quarterfinals of women's and mixed doubles competition at the Taipei Open Super 300 tournament here on Thursday.

Former Commonwealth Games Gold medallist Parupalli Kashyap also entered the last eight round but Mithun Manjunath and Kiran George missed out after suffering narrow defeats in the men's singles second round.

Tanisha and Ishaan Bhatnagar, seeded sixth, beat Chinese Taipei's Cheng Kai Wen and Wang Yu Qiao 21-14, 21-17 to enter the mixed doubles quarterfinals.

The 19-year-old Dubai-born Tanisha, who had represented Bahrain in her junior days, then combined with Shruti Mishra to get the better of local hope Jia Yin Lin and Lin Yu-Hao 21-14, 21-8 in a women's doubles second round tie that lasted 22 minutes.

Tanisha and Ishaan will face Malaysia's Hoo Pang Ron and Toh Ee Wei next in mixed doubles, while either Taipei's Kuo Yu Wen and Wang Yu Qiao or Hong Kong's sixth seeded Ng Tsz Yau and Tsang Hui Yan will be their opponent in women's doubles.

On a comeback trial, Kashyap, seeded third, prevailed 21-10, 21-19 over Chinese Taipei's Chia Hao Lee to set up a clash against Malaysia's Soong Joo Ven.

In other results, Mithun and Kiran suffered heart-breaking losses, while Priyanshu Rajawat too failed to cross the second round hurdle.

Mithun, who had finished runners-up at Orleans Masters Super 100 tournament, fought for an hour and four minutes before going down 24-22, 5-21, 17-21 to Japan's fourth seed Kodai Naraoka.

Odisha Open champion Kiran's gallant fight ended with a 21-23, 21-16, 7-21 loss to top seed and world number 4 Chou Tien Chen in 58 minutes.

Priyanshu, who was part of India's Thomas Cup winning team, suffered a 19-21, 13-21 loss to Chen Chi Ting of Chinese Taipei.

In women's singles, Samiya Imad Farooqui went down 18-21, 13-21 to local shuttler Wen Chi Hsu to end her campaign.

In men's doubles, fifth seeds MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila were no match for local pair Su Ching Heng and Ye Hong Wei, going down 17-21, 15-21, while top seeds Ye Yang and Wang Chi-Lin of Chinese Taipei ended the run of Ishaan Bhatnagar and Sai Pratheek K with a 21-19, 21-23, 21-9 win.

# Serena, Djokovic on US Open entry list



AP ■ NEW YORK

Serena Williams was included on the entry list for the US Open on Wednesday as was Novak Djokovic even though his refusal to be vaccinated will bar him from entering the country.

Williams, who won the first of her six New York titles in 1999, remains frustratingly one Grand Slam short of Margaret Court's record of 24.

The American star won the last of her 23 majors at the 2017 Australian Open while pregnant. Her most recent US Open title triumph was in 2014.

Former world number one Williams only returned to singles action at Wimbledon last month after a year on the injury sidelines.

Djokovic, fresh from capturing his seventh Wimbledon title and 21st major, is on the list for the August 29-September 11 tournament, the season's final Slam event.

The three-time winner will, however, be unable to enter the United States after refusing to be vaccinated against Covid-19.

"Per the Grand Slam Rule Book, all eligible players are automatically entered into the men's and women's singles main draw fields based on ranking 42 days prior to the first Monday of the event," said a statement by the United States Tennis Association.

"The US Open does not have a vaccination mandate in place for players, but it will respect the US government's position regarding travel into the country for unvaccinated non-US citizens."

Men's world number one Daniil Medvedev returns to defend his title.

Medvedev and his fellow Russians were banned from Wimbledon this year as a result of the invasion of Ukraine.

They can play in New York although not under their national flag.

Women's champion Emma Raducanu and two-time winner Naomi Osaka are also on the entry list.

### FISSETTE-OSAKA SPLIT

Belgian tennis coach Wim Fissette said on Wednesday he was calling a halt to working with Japan's four-time Grand Slam title winner Naomi Osaka.

The two teamed-up at the end of 2019 and together won the 2020 US Open and Australian Open in 2021.

"It has been a privilege to coach Naomi since 2019 and see her grow into the champion she has become," the 40-year-old wrote on Instagram.

## Venus given singles wildcard to play Toronto

AP ■ TORONTO

Seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams has been handed a wildcard entry to the WTA 1000 tournament in Toronto in August, Tennis Canada said on Wednesday.

Williams will be playing in Toronto for the first time since 2019, and tackling WTA singles for the first time since August of 2021.

"I love the city, the tournament, and I look forward to being back in Toronto," Williams, owner of 41 WTA singles titles, said in a statement.

Venus Williams played her first event since Chicago in August of 2021 when she played mixed doubles with Britain's Jamie Murray at Wimbledon.

They won their first round match but exited in the second.

She joins her sister Serena in the main draw at Toronto, where Serena Williams will be playing her first North American hardcourt tournament in two years. In her most recent Toronto appearance in 2019 Serena Williams retired with back spasms against Canadian Bianca Andreescu, who has also received a wildcard into the tournament that runs August 6-14.

## Sumit Nagal returns to Indian Davis Cup team, Divij Sharan dropped

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sumit Nagal on Thursday made a comeback to the Indian Davis Cup team for the away World Group I tie against Norway while doubles specialist Divij Sharan was dropped after falling behind in the pecking order.

Expectedly, country's number one singles player Ramkumar Ramanathan (ranked 196), Prajnesh Gunneswaran (295), Sasikumar Mukund (431), Yuki Bhambri (571), doubles exponent Rohan Bopanna (21) have been named in the team as the Nandan Bal-led selection committee picked four specialist singles players.

Arjun Kadhe (519) and Sidharth Rawat (566) are ranked above Yuki but if the Delhi player is to use his Protected Ranking, he would be in top-100. And going by the class of Yuki, it only makes sense to have a player of his calibre in the side.

Of the six players, one would be named a reserve by captain Rohit Rajpal after assessing conditions in Norway and it will be a five-member unit that will compete on September 16 and 17.

Most likely, Sasikumar, who is yet play a Davis Cup tie, will be a reserve player.

Sumit Nagal, who underwent a hip surgery in November 2021, began competing on the circuit from April this year. In eight tournaments this season, Nagal has won four matches.

The 24-year-old player from Haryana last played a Davis Cup tie against Croatia in March 2021 and missed the subsequent matches against Finland (September 2021) and Denmark (March 2022).

"The courts are expected to be slow in Norway, so Sumit comes into play there. Slow courts suit the game style of Sumit. If courts are faster we have the option of Yuki and Ramkumar. So we have to have four singles players in the side," Nandan Bal said.

Divij has lost his place in top-100 doubles rankings. He is now ranked 196 and there are seven Indian players ranked above him apart from the top-ranked Rohan Bopanna.

It will be first time that India and Norway will compete against each other in Davis Cup.

India had blanked Denmark 4-0 in New Delhi in the World Group Play-offs in March this year.



## Semenya falls well short in bold bid at world 5000m

AP ■ EUGENE

Caster Semenya's first appearance in a world championships in five years on Wednesday saw the controversy-mired South African fail to qualify for the women's 5000m finals.

In roasting mid-afternoon temperatures, Semenya finished 13th in the first of two rounds at Hayward Field, Eugene, in 15:46.12, more than 45sec off the 15th and final qualifying place.

"Cooking!" said Semenya post-race. "It was hot, I could not keep up with the pace, I tried



to stick as much as I can, but you know, it is a part of the game.

"I think it is great to be able to run here," she added. "Just being able to finish the 5k, for me it is a blessing. I am learning and I am willing to learn even more."

Her time was far off the heat-winning 14:52.64 set by Ethiopian Gudaf Tsegay, fresh from her Silver in the 1500m.

Semenya sat 13th of the 18-strong field as Japan's Kaede Hagitani set the early pace in her heat.

When a nine-strong pack broke clear, it was clear Semenya would not be part of the break-away and she quickly fell to a full 80 metres off the lead with 2km to go.

That has increased to a clear 100 metres as American Karissa Schweizer hit the lead with three laps to run.

Tsegay kicked and led a pack of five through the bell with Semenya a distant figure 300 metre off the pace.

The South African last competed at a world championships in London in 2017 where she won her third 800m world crown.

A year later she won double Gold in the 800m and 1500m at the Commonwealth Games which is the last time she represented South Africa in a global international competition.

Semenya was forced to switch from her favoured distance to the longer event due to gender eligibility rules that required her to take testosterone-reducing drugs to compete in races between 400m to a mile.

## Lewandowski says 'hungry' for success

AP ■ MIAMI

Robert Lewandowski officially unveiled as a Barcelona player on Wednesday and insisted he still has the hunger to continue his incredible goalscoring exploits.

The Polish striker, signed from Bayern Munich for around 50 million euros, was formally introduced as a Barca player alongside club president Joan Laporta.

Lewandowski, 33, who left the German champions under a cloud after a dispute over a new contract as well as clashing with coach Julian Nagelsmann over tactical choices, cannot wait to get started.

Lewandowski joined Bayern in 2014, scoring 344 goals in 375 competitive matches and broke the Bundesliga's single-season scoring record.

But he could make his Barca debut in Las Vegas this weekend against arch-rivals Real Madrid and said: "We worked hard to get to this



moment but we got there in the end.

"I am always hungry to succeed and have the winning mentality. This is a new challenge for me and I have already seen this is a squad with huge potential.

"There is a lot of quality and

## De Bruyne at the double

AP ■ HOUSTON

Kevin De Bruyne's double strike was enough to help Manchester City see off Club America 2-1 in Houston on Wednesday as Pep Guardiola made Erling Haaland wait for his debut.

The Belgian international's superbly taken brace set a feisty clash at NRG Stadium but City's new \$61 million striker could only look on from the bench as the Premier League champions began their two-match US tour with a win.

I want to do my best for the club. I am ready."

"We are doing our best to restructure," said Laporta. "We did a lot of work to make this happen."

"There is a big expectation for you (Lewandowski). You are a football star."

## England women rally to reach Euro semis



AP ■ BRIGHTON

England rallied from the brink of elimination to beat Spain 2-1 after extra time and reach the semi-finals of Euro 2022 thanks to Georgia Stanway's stunning strike.

Ether Gonzalez's opener had the hosts heading for an early exit, but Ella Toone rescued the Lionesses six minutes from the end of normal time before Stanway's winner took England into the last four of a fourth consecutive major tournament.

Sarina Wiegman's side will face Sweden or Belgium in the last four on Tuesday.

England were given a boost pre-match with the return of Wiegman to the touchline after she tested negative for coronavirus earlier in the day.

The Lionesses had everything their own way in the group stage as they plundered 14 goals without reply against Austria, Norway and Northern Ireland.

However, despite their own struggles to reach the knockout stages, Spain were a big step up in class.

Spain's ability to keep the ball off the hosts frustrated England and another sell out crowd of 29,000 in Brighton for the vast majority of the first 90 minutes.

But they again struggled to turn their possession into goals.

England have still never lost in now 18 games since Wiegman took charge in September.

But they have never come so close to defeat in that time

and had to show admirable fight to battle back from a goal down.

Spanish substitute Athenea Del Castillo jinked past Rachel Daly and squared for Gonzalez, who had time to take a touch before firing low into the far corner.

Mary Earps then had to make a brilliant save to prevent a cross from the lively Del Castillo floating into the far corner to double Spain's lead.

Wiegman did not waste time in turning to her bench with White, Fran Kirby and the tournament's top goalscorer Beth Mead surprisingly sacrificed for the introduction of Chloe Kelly, Alessia Russo and Toone.

Those changes had the desired effect to keep England's hopes of a first major tournament win in the women's game alive.

Lauren Hemp's cross was headed down by Russo for her Manchester United teammate Toone to fire in from close range.

Suddenly the momentum completely swung in England's favour and six minutes into extra-time they led.

Stanway drove forward before the Bayern Munich-bound midfielder smashed the ball past Sandra Panos from outside the box.

Aitana Bonmati came closest to a reply when she fired wide early in the second period of extra time.

But Spain's wait to win a knockout game at a major women's tournament goes on.

## Debut goals for Mane, De Ligt as Bayern thump DC United

AP ■ WASHINGTON

New signings Sadio Mane and Matthijs De Ligt scored debut goals as Bayern Munich thumped Major League Soccer's DC United 6-2 in a friendly on Wednesday.

Senegalese international Mane, who joined Bayern from Liverpool last month in a transfer worth a reported \$42 million, opened his account for the Bundesliga champions from the penalty spot after five minutes.

Mane's spot-kick was awarded after DC United centre-back Donovan Pines upended Lucas Copado as the teenage striker surged into the penalty area.

The early strike set the tone for a one-sided clash at Washington's Audi Field that underscored the work facing

former England and Manchester United star Wayne Rooney, recently installed as manager of the struggling MLS side.

Elsewhere, however, the mid-season form of MLS clubs made a difference against Premier League rivals as Minnesota United downed Everton 4-0 and Charlotte FC came out on top in a pre-season penalty shootout over Chelsea after holding the English giants to a 1-1 draw in 90 minutes.

Arsenal, meanwhile, used two second half goals to subdue Orlando City 3-1.

Bayern doubled their lead in the 12th minute when Marcel Sabitzer's shot from outside the area wrong-footed DC United goalkeeper Jon Kempin.

Serge Gnabry made it 3-0



just before half-time, tucking away a low cross from Mane in the 44th minute.

De Ligt then marked his move from Italy's Juventus earlier this week with a goal on debut after coming on as a substitute at half-time.

The Dutch defender crashed in a volley from a corner to make it 4-0 after 47 minutes.

Joshua Zirkzee added a tap-in after a patient build up from Bayern to make it 5-0 in the 51st minute before Skage Lehlund's consolation effort for DC United three minutes later.

Theodore Ku-Dipietro added a second for DC United three minutes from time before German veteran Thomas Mueller made it 6-2 deep into injury time.

The matches in Charlotte and Orlando both started more

than an hour late because of severe weather.

In Charlotte, the excitement of seeing Raheem Sterling in Chelsea colors for the first time was tempered as the hosts came out on top 5-3 in the shootout.

In Orlando, Arsenal notched their fourth straight pre-season win.

Eddie Nketiah scored the go-ahead goal in the 66th minute and Reiss Nelson sealed it in the 80th.

The Gunners had seized the lead in the fifth minute when Gabriel Martinelli's shot was deflected in.

Uruguayan Facundo Torres pulled Orlando level in the 29th with a blistering shot past goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale, but with their top players brought in at halftime Arsenal pulled away after the break.



# INDIA'S FRINGE PLAYERS TO BATTLE AGAINST WI

PTI ■ PORT OF SPAIN

India's fringe players will get valuable game time in a format fighting for context when Shikhar Dhawan leads the team in the three-match ODI series against the West Indies, beginning here on Friday.

Ben Stokes' surprise announcement from ODIs has fuelled the growing debate on hectic international scheduling, especially bilateral cricket. The premier English all-rounder made it clear that playing all three formats regularly is not sustainable anymore.

Sandwiched between Tests and T20s, ODI cricket has been jostling for space for a while now.

West Indies came to India for three ODIs and as many T20s in February and the two teams meet again for a total of eight limited overs games (five T20s).

In a T20 World Cup year, ODIs anyway assume less significance but players who will be getting the opportunity in the absence of senior players would be eager to make an impact.

Dhawan, who plays only the ODI format, will lead India for the second time in his career with regular captain Rohit Sharma rested from the series.

Mohammad Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya and Virat Kohli have also been rested.

The England series showed that it is tough for anyone who doesn't play at the highest level regularly. Dhawan, who is known for his consistency, looked far from his best.

It will be interesting to see who

opens alongside Dhawan in the series-opener.

Shubman Gill has been brought back into the team. He and Dhawan make a left-hand right-hand combination but the others in the squad who could open include Ishan Kishan and Ruturaj Gaikwad.

The team management will have a hard time picking the middle-order. The in-form Deepak Hooda is expected to bat at number three and Suryakumar Yadav is also a certainty in the playing eleven, which leaved the management to decide among Shreyas Iyer and Sanju Samson.

Pressure will be on Iyer, who was once again found wanting against the short ball on the England tour.

In the absence of Hardik, Shardul Thakur is the pace bowling all-rounder option for India.

The pitch here tends to aid the spinners so it is expected that Yuzvendra Chahal will play in all three games alongside Ravindra Jadeja. The third spin option is Axar Patel.

Arshdeep, who could not play the ODIs in England due to an abdominal strain, could make his debut on Friday as he was seen in the nets on Thursday.

Prasidh Krishna and Mohammad Siraj are expected to start as the two frontline pacers.

West Indies are smarting from their 0-3 loss at home in the ODIs against Bangladesh.

All-rounder Jason Holder has made a comeback and will give much needed balance to the side, led by Nicholas Pooran.

The Caribbean side would like to improve upon one crucial aspect.



They have struggled to complete their 50-over batting quota in recent times. Since the 2019 World Cup, they have managed to bat full 50 overs just six times in 39 innings and that should be a concern for the side.

## KL TESTS COVID +ve

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Star India batter K L Rahul on Thursday tested positive for COVID-19, which is likely to rule him out of the upcoming five-match T20 series against the West Indies, starting July 29 at Tarouba.

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly informed about Rahul after the Board's Apex Council meeting here.

Rahul on Thursday itself had addressed the candidates, who attended the Level-3 coach certification course at National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru.

Ganguly also informed that a member of the Commonwealth Games-bound India women's team was also down with COVID-19. He, however, did not disclose the name of the player.

## SQUADS

**India:** Shikhar Dhawan (C), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Shubman Gill, Deepak Hooda, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer, Ishan Kishan (wk), Sanju Samson, Ravindra Jadeja, Shardul Thakur, Yuzvendra Chahal, Axar Patel, Avesh Khan, Prasidh Krishna, Mohd Siraj and Arshdeep Singh. **West Indies:** Nicholas Pooran (C), Shai Hope, Shamarh Brooks, Keacy Carty, Jason Holder, Akeal Hosein, Alzarri Joseph, Brandon King, Kyle Mayers, Gudakesh Motie, Keemo Paul, Rowman Powell and Jayden Seales.

## We have to bat 50 overs: Windies coach Simmons

PTI ■ PORT OF SPAIN

The West Indies have struggled to bat for full 50 overs in the last couple of years and head coach Phil Simmons said that is one aspect of the game they would look to improve on in the three ODIs against India.

To put things into perspective, West Indies have played out 50 overs just six times in 39 innings since the 2019 World Cup, and lost nine of their 13 ODI series since the showpiece event.

Simmons' side also faced a humiliating series defeat against Ireland at home earlier this year.

"The main thing is how we bat our 50 overs...we have to bat 50 overs and put our innings together and partnerships together," Simmons told reporters in the pre-series press conference.

"Somebody has to be looking to score a hundred and hold the team together. Batting-wise that is it," he added.

Simmons, who has been the head coach of the West Indies side since 2019, also said that he is hopeful of "friendly" surfaces that will benefit his side more "than the opposition" team.

"The better wickets we get, the better it will be for our batters and bowlers. The conversation is currently on with the concerned individuals, as always," he said.



Simmons, however, does not seem to be too worried about his fielding and bowling departments.

"The bowling and the fielding has been improving daily. We rank ourselves very high on the fielding," Simmons said.

"The bowling, we had a couple of games on those wickets where, yes, people might say we should have gotten more wickets but the wicket got better every time we fielded because they had put out the second roller on it and it had dried out from earlier in the day.

"So, the bowlers have been doing well and we have to continue restricting and getting wickets — that's the only way we can keep totals low and continue to win games," he added.

# Delhi to host SA ODI, Mohali to stage T20 against Australia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's Feroz Shah Kotla will be hosting the last of the three ODIs against South Africa in the second week of October while the T20 World Cup bound team is set to play three games against Australia and South Africa before leaving for the ICC event.

It is learnt that India will play Australia in Mohali (Sept 20), Nagpur (Sept 23) and Hyderabad (Sept 25).

They will round off their World Cup preparations with three more T20 against the Proteas in Trivandrum (September 28), Guwahati (October 1) and Indore (October 3).

The three ODIs will be held in Ranchi (October 6), Lucknow (October 9) and Delhi (October 11).



With the BCCI wrapping up the pending series which were postponed due to COVID-19, South Africa are coming for a

short three-match ODI series during Durga Puja where a second string Indian team will be seen in action.

"As our secretary Jay Shah had said recently, we will have two national teams of equal strength available. So the three ODIs will be played at a time when national team leaves for the World T20," a BCCI source said.

While South Africa played five ODIs in India in June, the three T20s have been included for quality match time before the World Cup.

"The ODI as per rotation was to come to Kolkata but it was during the time of Durga Puja and CAB won't be able to organize the police deployment during festival time. Hence one match has been allocated to Delhi," a BCCI source added.

## Rain forces Indian cricketers to hit indoor nets

PTI ■ PORT OF SPAIN

With rain playing spoilsport, the Indian cricket team was forced to train indoors ahead of the first ODI of three-match series against the West Indies here on Friday.

Led by the veteran Shikhar Dhawan, the Indian bowlers and batters sweated it out at the indoor training facility here as rain lashed parts of Trinidad.

"As we have just come from the UK, we thought that it would be nice to have an (outdoor) practice session. But it started raining. So, it's always better to have a knock in the indoor facilities rather than having no session," opener Shubman Gill said in a video posted by BCCI on Twitter. "It was a good session as we got to do some specific things like playing underarm balls. I am feeling great and we all are really excited and really buzzed about these three ODIs. We feel that it would be a good series."

Dhawan alongwith other batters spent some time at the nets, while young pacer Arshdeep Singh rolled his arms.

Dhawan had earlier led India to Sri Lanka for



an ODI series last year. Regular skipper Rohit Sharma, senior batter Virat Kohli, Rishabh Pant, star all-rounder Hardik Pandya, Jasprit Bumrah, who led India in the rescheduled fifth Test against England, and Mohammad Shami have all been rested. It has opened a window of opportunity for the likes of Ruturaj Gaikwad, Sanju Samson, Ishan Kishan to make their presence felt.

## SC appoints Singh as amicus in BCCI matter, to hear on July 28

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday appointed senior advocate Maninder Singh as an amicus curiae to assist it in the matter related to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and fixed the hearing on the plea of the cricket body for amending its constitution concerning tenure of office bearers on July 28.

A bench comprising Chief Justice N V Ramana and Justices Krishna Murari and Hima Kohli took note of the fact that an earlier amicus curiae has now been elevated as a judge of the apex court.

"We will appoint senior advocate Maninder Singh as an amicus in place of P S Narasimha (now Justice P S Narasimha)," said the bench and fixed the plea of BCCI for hearing on July 28.

The plea of the cricket body seeks to amend its constitution concerning the tenure of its office bearers including its President Sourav Ganguly and Secretary Jay Shah by doing away with the mandatory cooling-off period between tenures of office bearers across state cricket associations and the BCCI.

Earlier, the Justice RM Lodha-led committee had recommended reforms in the BCCI which have been accepted by the top court.

According to the recommendations, there should be a three-year cooling-off period for the office bearers of the BCCI after a tenure of six years once a post comes to an end at the state cricket association or the BCCI level.



## ODIs have become run-of-the-mill, scrap it permanently: Akram

PTI ■ LONDON

Pakistan pace bowling legend Wasim Akram feels ODI cricket has become "run-of-the-mill" stuff now and wants the administrators of the game to scrap the format for good.

Akram's comments came close on the heels of England all-rounder Ben Stokes' sudden retirement from ODIs, which has triggered a serious debate over the existence of 50-over cricket.

"I think so (ODIs should be scrapped). In England you have full houses. In India, Pakistan especially, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, South Africa, one-day cricket you are not going to fill the stadiums," he said in a video on the Tuffers Cricket Club podcast.

"They are doing it just for the sake of doing it. After the first 10 overs, it's just OK, just go a run a ball, get a boundary, four fielders in and you get to 200, 220 in 40 overs and then have a go last 10 overs. Another 100. It's kind of run-of-the-mill." Akram supported Stokes' decision to quit from ODIs, citing "unsustainable" workload.

"Him (Stokes) deciding that he is retiring from one-day cricket is quite sad but I agree with him," said the left-arm pacer, who scalped 502 wickets in 356 ODIs during his career, besides bowling Pakistan to victory in the 1992 Cricket World Cup final.

"Even as a commentator... one-day cricket is just a drag now, especially after T20. I can imagine as a player. 50 overs, then you have to pre-game, post-game, the lunch game," added the cricketer-turned-commentator.

Akram said the 50-over game has no future in front of the ever-growing T20 format.

"T20 is kind of easier, four hours the game is over. The leagues all around the world, there is a lot more money - I suppose this is part and parcel of the modern cricket. T20 or Test cricket. One-day cricket is kind of dying. It is quite tiring for a player to play one-day cricket. After T20, one-day cricket seems it is going for days. So players are focussing on more shorter format. And longer format obviously (with) Test cricket," he said.

## BCCI mulling to restart Duleep Trophy, Irani Cup

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The BCCI is mulling to restart the prestigious Duleep Trophy and the Irani Cup, while a full Ranji Trophy season is also on the cards for the upcoming domestic season.

The Duleep Trophy and the Irani Cup have not taken place for at least three seasons, while the BCCI had to cancel the Ranji Trophy for the first time in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Last season, BCCI held a curtailed Ranji Trophy season.

The BCCI Apex Council on Thursday discussed various options for the 2022-23 season with Board President Sourav Ganguly announcing that a full domestic season will take place in 2022-23. The Board is mulling to

start the men's senior season with the Duleep Trophy, which is likely to be played from September 8. It is also considering to host the Irani Cup from October 1-5.

Earlier, the Duleep Trophy used to be contested between five zones on a knockout basis but later it became a three team affair with the top two sides advancing to the final after the round-robin format.

In Irani Cup, the current Ranji Trophy champions take on the Rest of India squad.

The options to host Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, the Vijay Hazare Trophy and the Ranji Trophy were also discussed.

While the Mushtaq Ali Trophy (T20) could take place from October 11, the Vijay Hazare Trophy (the ODI format) is expected to take place



## FIH delegation to visit India next month

CEO Weil says it will be a shame if World Cup is taken away from India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A three-member FIH delegation, led by newly-appointed acting president Seif Ahmed, is expected to visit India on August 15 for an emergency meeting to assess progress made with regards to adoption of a new Constitution, which is a must to salvage the World Cup, the country is scheduled to host in 2023.

FIH CEO Thierry Weil and Executive Board member Tayyab Ikram, who is also the CEO of Asian Hockey Federation, will be part of the International Hockey Federation (FIH) delegation.

The FIH on Wednesday sought a "detailed timeline" from the court-appointed Committee of Administrators (CoA) on adoption of amended Constitution and holding of fresh elections of Hockey India.

If Hockey India does not adopt a Sports Code-compliant Constitution at the earliest, the country runs the

risk of losing the hosting rights of World Cup, scheduled to be held from January 13 to 29.

FIH CEO Weil said they have set a tentative date for the visit and are now awaiting a confirmation from the CoA, which is running the game in the country after the Delhi High Court suspended Hockey India's Executive Board for violation of the National Sports Code.

"We are planning to visit India on August 15 for 2 to 3 days. We will do whatever is required to solve the matter but we are still awaiting a response from the CoA," Weil said.

"It would be a three-member delegation led by acting president Seif Ahmed. We are ready to meet anyone and extend all possible help to sort out the issues."

FIH has written thrice to CoA on the matter but has not got any response as yet.

Weil said the FIH is still hopeful of hosting the World Cup in

Bhubaneswar and Rourkela but if things don't work out next month, a possible ban on Hockey India is a possibility.

"Definitely, there will be penalties coming in on Hockey India for non-delivery of commitments and one of those will be a ban from international hockey. They have signed an agreement for staging the World Cup and they are obliged to deliver on this."

"But we are not thinking on those lines yet, as it will be the athletes who will be the biggest sufferer of any penalty. Plus the hockey loving Indian fans will be deprived of world-class action. We don't want this," he said.

The FIH is yet to set in motion a 'Plan B' for staging the World Cup and hopes that such situation doesn't arise at all.

"We have not started to work on this (alternate venue) because we want the World Cup to be hosted in India. It would be a huge disappointment for the fans," Weil said.



## Bracewell hat trick seals T20I series for Kiwis

AP ■ BELFAST

Dane Cleaver's 78 not out and Michael Bracewell's hat trick powered New Zealand to an 88-run win over Ireland to clinch their T20I series 2-0 at Stormont on Wednesday.

New Zealand posted 179-4 and bowled out Ireland for 91 to secure its fifth straight win over the hosts. The visitors beat Ireland by 31 runs on Monday after a 3-0 series win in the ODIs at Malahide.

New Zealand can sweep the

three-match T20 series on Friday. Cleaver's total came off 55 balls and included five fours and four sixes in just his second T20I appearance. Finn Allen contributed 35 off 20.

Ish Sodhi took three wickets for 21 and Ireland was at 86 for seven when Bracewell came on for his first over. The off-spinner had Mark Adair and Barry McCarthy caught in the deep with successive deliveries before Craig Young slipped to backward point from the next ball as Ireland was all out for 91.