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Country getting ready to make 21st century India's own: Prez



President Ram Nath Kovind addresses the nation on the eve of demitting office, in New Delhi on Sunday.



The outgoing President A view of the residence where outgoing President Ram Nath Kovind will stay post-retirement, at 12 Janpath in New Delhi.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Outgoing President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday said he firmly believes that the country is getting equipped to make the 21st century “the century of India”. He advised the citizens to heed the signals of climate change and protect nature, air, water and animals” and remain “connected with their villages and roots”.

“I believe the National Education Policy will go a long way in making it possible for young Indians to connect with

their heritage and also find their feet in the 21st century,” he said strongly backing the Government's NEP.

In his last address to the nation as the President of India, Kovind once again invoked Mahatma Gandhi — he had in his farewell speech too on Saturday — saying Mahatma Gandhi's principle of remembering the “poorest of poor” was his “guide” during his five-year tenure in the Rashtrapati Bhawan. He also recalled the “wise counsel” of his predecessor Pranab Mukherjee.

Prime Minister Narendra

Modi termed it “an inspiring address” and said, his remarks “showcase his passion towards national progress and reflect the spirit with which he served the nation as our President.”

Besides many other leaders including Lokmanya Tilak, BR Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru, Syama Prasad Mukherjee and Subhash Bose, whom he remembered, Kovind quoted Ambedkar saying “political democracy” has to be satisfied with “social democracy” which means “Swatantrata, Samanta aur Bandhutva” (freedom, equality and brotherhood/har-

mony). “ “These three cannot be separated...if done so will mean negating democracy,” said the President.

He saluted the “power of vibrant democratic system” of India and said “staying connected to one's roots is the speciality of Indian culture.”

“A strong connect to the roots is a feature of India's culture. I urge the youth to continue this tradition of remaining connected with their roots..of being associated with their village or town and their schools and teachers,” Kovind added. *Continued on Page 2*

Murmu to be sworn in as Prez today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President-elect Droupadi Murmu will take charge as the new President of India in the Central Hall of Parliament on Monday.

The Chief Justice of India NV Ramana will administer the Oath to Murmu, the first tribal and second woman President of the nation.

“The Ceremony of assumption of Office by Shrimati Droupadi Murmu, the President-elect will be held on Monday, July 25, 2022 at 10:15 AM in the Central Hall of Parliament House, New Delhi,” said a communiqué by the Union Home Ministry.

Murmu (64), also the youngest President, belongs to the Santhal tribe and is the second woman after Pratibha Patil to helm the top Constitutional post.

Apart from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu and Union Ministers, Chief Ministers of all the States and Diplomats of several countries will grace the function at the Central Hall of Parliament.

Continued on Page 2

Now, one monkeypox case reported in Delhi

India's tally goes up to 4; DGHS holds high-level meeting

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared monkeypox a global health emergency, the national Capital has reported the first case of the “monkeypox” virus after a 34-year-old man without any history of foreign travel tested positive on Sunday.

This is India's fourth case, with the other three being in Kerala. This is second disease which the WHO has declared as a global emergency after Covid-19 since 2020.

A high-level meeting was chaired by the Directorate General of Health Sciences (DGHS), after the fourth case was detected, to review the situation. The meeting was attended by officials from the Health Ministry, the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) among others.

“States/UTs have been advised to keep a close watch. The Delhi Government has been advised to do contact tracing of the monkeypox case. The Delhi Government has



started contact tracing and a report in this regard is expected soon,” sources said.

Sources said, the man has no travel history and he had attended a stag party recently in Manali in Himachal Pradesh. He was admitted two days back with fever and skin lesions. He is a resident of West Delhi.

“We kept him under observation in the designated isolation centre. His samples were sent to the National Institute of Virology (NIV) Pune on Saturday which came out positive. He is being treated as per the standard operating procedure in the monkeypox cases,” said Suresh Kumar, Director, Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Hospital (LNJP).

The officials from the Ministry of Health said that the patient is recovering at the designated isolation centre at the Lok Nayak Hospital. “Public health interventions like identification of the source of infection, enhanced contact

tracing, testing sensitisation of private practitioners etc. are being carried out as per the Ministry of Health's guidelines,” the Ministry said. Three cases of monkeypox had earlier been reported from Kerala.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said a separate isolation ward has been set up at the LNJP Hospital here for patients affected by monkeypox.

Asking people not to panic, Kejriwal said the patient is stable and recovering. “The patient is stable and recovering. There is no need to panic. The situation is under control. We have made a separate isolation ward at LNJP. Our best team is on the case to prevent the spread and protect Delhiites,” he tweeted.

Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region said that monkeypox has been spreading rapidly to many countries that have not seen it before. *Continued on Page 2*

CAPSULE

NGT: 50% UNTREATED SEWAGE IN GANGA

New Delhi: Untreated sewage continues to flow into the River Ganga even after decades of monitoring, the National Green Tribunal said on Sunday, noting that the National Mission for Clean Ganga does not appear to be in a position to take stringent measures against defaulters. **P4**

MP RECORDED DEATH OF 27 BIG CATS IN 2022

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh, which is known as the “Tiger State” of India, has also earned the dubious distinction of accounting for the highest number of deaths of these majestic striped felines. **P2**

CHINA LAUNCHES SPACE STATION LAB MODULE

Beijing: China on Sunday successfully launched the first lab module for its under-construction space station, the latest step in the country's ambitious programme to complete it by year's end.

India to set up Joint Theatre Commands soon: Rajnath

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday announced that India is moving in the fast lane to set up Joint Theatre Commands in order to meet future challenges and bring synergy among the armed forces.

Singh also announced that India has set a target to achieve ₹ 35,000 crore worth of exports by 2025 and become a top exporter in the times to come.

Paying glowing tributes to the freedom fighters and the Armed Forces personnel who laid down their lives since Independence in the service of the nation, Rajnath Singh, who was in Jammu on the Kargil Divas said, “The Kargil war underlined the dire need to achieve cohesion and self-



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh felicitates family members of a martyr during a programme commemorating 'Kargil Vijay Divas', in Jammu on Sunday.

reliance in the Defence sector. It has been our endeavour to achieve these qualities to remain prepared for future challenges. Setting up of Joint Theatre Commands and

reforms to achieve self-reliance in Defence are the steps taken in that direction. We are moving ahead very fast in the same direction.”

Details on page 5

Irani sends legal notice to Cong leaders over slur against daughter

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after she announced that she would be seeing them in court, Union Minister Smriti Irani on Sunday sent a legal notice to the Congress and its leaders Jairam Ramesh, Pawan Khera and Netta D'Souza asking them to apologise for their “baseless and false” allegations against her and her daughter.

Irani's action came after the Congress leaders alleged that her 18-year-old daughter Zoish Irani ran a bar illegally in Goa and also targeted the Minister over this, demanding that Prime Minister Narendra Modi sack her from his Cabinet.

The legal notice asked the three leaders to tender an unconditional and unequivocal apology.

Continued on Page 2

Police tore CM's poster and replaced it with PM's: AAP

Rai says Centre tried to hijack AAP Govt event at Asola Bhatti

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the ongoing tussle between Delhi Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, an event on “Van Mahotsav” at Asola Bhatti Mines has become a new point of friction after the Delhi Chief Minister on Sunday skipped a pre-decided event organised by the State Government's forest department.

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai alleged that the Centre hijacked an



event of the Kejriwal Government and Delhi Police personnel tore the banner of the Chief Minister's pictures and replaced it with pictures of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the venue late on Saturday night.

He alleged that the Delhi Police acted on the directions of the Prime Minister's Office. “The Delhi Police warned people not to touch banners car-

rying pictures of Modi while the banners belonging to the AAP Government were torn down,” he claimed. Rai said Kejriwal was supposed to attend the event but decided not to participate in it following the incident.

Kejriwal had also skipped the weekly meeting with the L-G on Friday, against the backdrop of the L-G recommending a CBI probe into alleged lapses and irregularities in the implementation of the Delhi Government's excise policy. “I wanted Kejriwal to attend this event but due to some reasons, he could not. This is a programme where all of us should work together. I expect him to be present in future events to give a message that we want to work together for Delhi's development,” the L-G said later. *Continued on Page 2*

Partha to be shifted to AIIMS, Bhup: HC

Money trail in Bengal recruitment scam has deeper roots, says ED

PNS ■ KOLKATA

In a setback to the arrested West Bengal Minister Partha Chatterjee, the Calcutta High Court late on Sunday directed the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to transfer him to AIIMS Bhubaneswar in an air ambulance on Monday morning. The court was hearing the ED's plea against the transfer of the arrested West Bengal Minister to the State-run SSKM Hospital.

The Minister's aide, Arpita Mukherjee, from whose residence the ED seized ₹21 crore in cash, has been remanded to one-day ED custody. She will be produced before the special court on Monday. The court said that the accused Chatterjee would be taken to the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata



Arpita Mukherjee, close aide of West Bengal Minister Partha Chatterjee, being produced at a court a day after she was arrested by the ED in connection with its investigation into the teacher recruitment scam, in Kolkata on Sunday.

by an ambulance from the SSKM Hospital and would be accompanied by his advocate and an SSKM doctor. The court has asked the AIIMS Bhubaneswar authorities to medically examine the accused by a team of specialist doctors in cardiology, nephrology, respiratory medicine, and endocrinology. *Continued on Page 2*

Blast in Saran's illegal home-run cracker unit kills 6, injures 8



Police inspect the site of a blast in a house where firecrackers were being made illegally in Khoibagh market at Chapra in Saran district on Sunday.

PTI ■ SARAN (BIHAR)

At least six people died and eight are feared trapped under the debris, after a part of a house collapsed following an explosion inside the home of a firecracker businessman in Khudai Bagh village in Khaira police station area of Bihar's

Saran district on Sunday.

The businessman running the illegal firecracker unit has been identified as Shabir Hussain and such was the intensity of the blast that a portion of the house blew up and the remaining part of the building caught fire.

Continued on Page 2

Chopra scripts history with silver

He is first Indian male athlete to win medal in World Ch'ships

PTI ■ EUGENE

Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra scripted history again as he became only the second Indian and first male track and field athlete to win a medal in the World Championships by clinching silver in the javelin throw final here.

The 24-year-old Chopra, who had come into the showpiece as a hot medal favourite, produced a best throw of 88.13m to finish second.

Legendary long jumper Anju Bobby George was the first Indian to win a medal — bronze — in the World Championships in the 2003 edition in Paris.

Defending champion Anderson Peters of Grenada won gold with a best throw of 90.54m while Olympic silver winner Jakub Vadlejch of Czech Republic took the bronze with 88.09m.

Chopra had topped the Group A qualification round and qualified for the final at



Athlete Neeraj Chopra competes in the men's javelin throw event at the World Athletics Championships, in Eugene, USA. Chopra won the silver medal with his best throw of 88.13m.

second place behind Peters by sending his spear to 88.39m for his third career-best throw. Peters had topped Group B with an effort of 89.91m.

The other Indian in the fray, Rohit Yadav finished at

10th with a best throw of 78.72m. Rohit had finished 11th overall in the qualification round with a best throw of 80.42m. The 21-year-old Indian had recorded a season's and personal best of 82.54m

while winning a silver at the National Inter-State Championships last month.

Chopra had won Indian athletics' maiden gold in the Tokyo Olympics last year.

He is only the second Indian to have won an individual gold in the Olympics, after shooter Abhinav Bindra, who clinched the yellow metal in 2008 Beijing Games.

Later, speaking to reporters at a virtual press conference the athlete said that he was determined to do his best.

“I will take it,” said Neeraj Chopra, who felt “something” on his strapped thigh, on way to what he termed a challenging history-scripting silver at the World Championships javelin throw final here.

The reigning Olympic champion admitted that his comeback from outside medal position midway into the final was “challenging”.

Chopra, however, also knew that a good throw was around the corner.

Detailed report on Page 11

India’s ‘Tiger State’ saw deaths of 27 big cats till July 15

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh, which is known as the “Tiger State” of India, has also earned the dubious distinction of accounting for the highest number of deaths of these majestic striped felines.

Till July 15 this year, of the total number of 74 tiger deaths registered in the country, MP alone accounted for 27 of them - highest for any state during this period, the data published by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) on its website has revealed.

The centrally located state is followed on this front by Maharashtra, which registered 15 deaths during the period. Karnataka comes next with 11 fatalities, Assam five, Kerala and Rajasthan four each, Uttar Pradesh three, Andhra Pradesh two, Bihar, Odisha and Chhattisgarh one each, among other states, as per the NTCA figures.

According to officials, territorial fights, old age, ailments, poaching and electrocution are some of the prominent reasons for their deaths.

Madhya Pradesh had regained the coveted tag of being the 'tiger state' of the country in the 2018 census.

As per the All-India Tiger Estimation Report 2018, the state was home to 526 tigers, the highest for any state in the country.

There are six tiger reserves in the state, namely Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench, Satpura, Panna and Sanjay Dubri.

Of the 27 tiger deaths this year, nine were males and eight females. In other cases, the gender of the animals was not mentioned in the data. The deceased included adults, sub-adults and cubs.

Tigers live, breed and hunt in forests and they are at the top of the food chain. As apex predators, their presence indicates a healthy and broader ecosystem.

Expressing concern over the rising number of tiger deaths, wildlife enthusiast and Right to Information (RTI) activist Ajay Dube told PTI, “In Panna, no tigers were found about 10 years back.

After that, the NTCA advised the states to set up their own Special Tiger Protection Forces (STPFs) for safeguarding the big cats, especially from poachers.”

The Centre has made budgetary provisions for supporting the STPFs, but the MP government has so far not constituted any such force due to its own vested interests, he alleged.

If established, this force will check, besides poaching, other activities like illegal mining and felling of trees in the forest areas, he said.

Dube also said that states like Karnataka, Odisha and Maharashtra have created STPFs and their results are visible as Karnataka, despite having a sizable population of tigers, has a lower mortality rate

of big cats than Madhya Pradesh.

Principal chief conservator of forests (PCCF) wildlife, J S Chauhan, said, “The higher number of tiger mortality is due to the fact that Madhya Pradesh has the highest population of big cats in the country. Due to this, the number of their deaths is naturally also high.”

“Territorial fights amongst tigers can’t be avoided as it is a natural process for them. Old age is another issue,” he said.

The forest department can only try to prevent poaching and it always strives to do so, he said.

On the issue of formation of the STPF, he said Madhya Pradesh was the first state to give a nod for it, but it has not been formed yet somehow.

On the positive side, Chauhan pegged the number of tiger births in the state this year at around 120, although the exact count could not be confirmed.

Hathras SP removed after 6 kanwariyas’ deaths in mishap

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A day after half-a-dozen kanwariyas were killed in a road accident in Hathras, the state government on Sunday shunted out Superintendent of Police (SP) Vikas Kumar Vaidya and posted him as the commandant of Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) in Mirzapur. Devesh Kumar Pandey was made the new SP of Hathras.

On Saturday, six Kanwariyas were fatally mowed by a dumper truck near Sadabad in Hathras. The errant driver had fled the spot but was arrested later, police said. According to a preliminary probe, the driver lost control of the vehicle and crashed into the pilgrims, a senior police officer said. Five of them died on the spot while the sixth succumbed at Sarojini Naidu Medical College in Agra. The pilgrims blamed it on the police for failing to regulate traffic on the route.

All the victims hailed from

the Chaupal village in Bahangi Khurd in Gwalior. They were returning from Haridwar after collecting the holy water from the Ganga river early Saturday morning when the tragedy struck. One of the deceased, identified as Jawar Singh (26), a labourer, has left behind a 1-year-old daughter and it was only the second time in his life that he had taken part in the Kanwar Yatra.

In each lane of the dimly-lit village, which has over 150 houses, people sat on tarpaulins and charpays through the night, letting the tragedy sink in. “A group of over 20 people from our village had gone to Haridwar last week. People here have been going on Kanwar Yatra for decades but such an incident has never occurred before. For two years due to the Covid pandemic, the yatra could not take place. People had been looking forward to completing the pilgrimage this year and were in high spirits,” said Mohan Swaroop Sharma, a local resi-

dent who lost his kin in the mishap.

Naresh Pal (45), one of the victims, was a labourer and used to earn Rs 300 per day. He is survived by his wife and three children. He was the only earning member in the family, Sharma said.

Naresh’s nephew Manoj Kumar (38) also worked as a labourer in the Gwalior market. He is survived by his wife and four children — two daughters and two sons, his relatives said.

Naresh’s cousin Ramesh Pal (52) was also killed in the incident. Ramesh’s brother Suresh, who had accompanied him to Haridwar, said he was in Agra when he came to know that his brother and six others had been mowed down by a dumper.

“Our group was walking ahead. My brother was among the group that had stopped to catch up with some rest and refreshments near Hathras. Three men in our extended family have died. It’s an

irreparable loss,” Suresh said.

Another victim, Vikas Sharma (28), who was a farmer, had spoken to his family over the phone when he reached near Aligarh on Friday morning. “He (Vikas) had gone on the yatra several times in the past. He was unmarried and we had been looking for a girl for him for marriage,” his brother-in-law Ramesh Sharma said.

Meanwhile, expressing grief over the mishap, Communist Party of India (CPI) state secretary Dr Girish said it was a fallout of the mismanagement on the part of the administration. Dr Girish himself inspected the accident site and took stock of the arrangements for kanwariyas. He alleged that the administration destroyed evidence to avoid getting the blame. He demanded an ex gratia of Rs 50 lakh each for the family of the deceased and Rs 10 lakh each for the critically injured. He also demanded a high-level probe into the incident.

Country getting ready to make...

From Page 1

Speaking of the direction of development in the country, he said he was confident that the 21st century would be an Indian century.

The President drew the attention of the citizens to the rapid changes in climate. “If one suggestion I have to give is...we have to protect nature, air, water and animals,” he said.

As about him- ‘a humble poor boy from Kanpur village’- reaching the highest constitutional post of the country, Kovind said it reflects the vibrancy of “our democratic system”.

“Ram Nath Kovind, who grew up in a very ordinary

family in Paraunkh village of Kanpur Dehat district, is addressing all of you countrymen today, for this, I salute the power of the vibrant democratic system of our country,” said President Kovind, who will demit office on Monday.

He said visiting Kanpur and ‘touching feet of my old teachers there were my memorable moments’.

In the beginning the President said, “Five years ago, you put faith in me and elected me as the president. I express my gratitude to all the Indians and their public representatives,” he said in a televised address to the nation.”

“During my five-year long

tenure, I have fulfilled my duties with the best of my abilities. I have been quite aware of being the successor of greats like Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. S Radhakrishnan and Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam,” he said.

In his farewell speech on Saturday, Kovind called for protests to always be conducted in the “Gandhian mould” and urged political parties to rise above partisan politics. “Citizens and political parties have many constitutional avenues open to them, including protests. After all, the father of our nation employed the weapon of satyagraha for that purpose, he had said.

Caste equations delay decision on UP chief’s successor

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Even though Swatantra Dev Singh has completed his three-year tenure as the Uttar Pradesh BJP chief, the ruling party has yet to decide on his successor. The party is said to be working on a strategy in view of the complex caste equation in state politics.

The decision about the next state president holds importance as the leader will spearhead the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Swatantra Dev Singh, the fifth state BJP chief to complete his three-year tenure, is also an influential Other Backward Classes (OBC) leader who holds a place in the Yogi Adityanath cabinet. He is

the Leader of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council as well.

He has been a minister since March 25, the day Yogi Adityanath 2.0 government was sworn in despite the BJP’s principle of ‘one-member, one-post’.

It has been a week since Singh completed his tenure and the BJP insiders say the process to choose the next party chief for UP has been put on the backburner as both the state and Central units are busy with a series of events in recent times — MLC elections, Lok Sabha bypolls, presidential election, canvassing for the vice-presidential poll, and the ongoing parliament session.

“The main reason is that the party is weighing its options of going with either a Brahmin or an OBC face, for which consultations have not been completed with UP leaders, including CM Yogi Adityanath. The Brahmin lobby wants a leader from amongst them as the state party president,” a BJP leader said. Another senior party leader said feedback was taken from UP leaders informally a few months ago but no decision was made. The dilemma, the leader added, was also about “balancing the caste equation.”

“Since Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak is a Brahmin and the CM is also

from the upper caste (Thakur), it is not necessary to appoint another Brahmin even though the community can’t be ignored,” a BJP functionary said.

A BJP leader, who didn’t wish to be named, said that apart from the caste factor, the party also had to keep in mind several other factors in mind, such as region, grip on organisational matters, and potential efficiency to run the party in such a huge state.

“Both the state elections (2017 and 2022) happened under the leadership of OBC presidents. Maurya’s retention as the deputy CM despite losing the election is a clear message that the party will not risk

losing the OBC vote,” the BJP leader said.

Union ministers BL Verma and Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma (OBCs), Kaushambi MP Vinod Kumar Sonkar, MLC Laxman Acharya, and Etawah MP Ram Shankar Katheria (Dalits) are being touted as the contenders for the BJP state chief post.

One source said: “The senior leadership will consider various factors. They have to think about 2024 since the new president’s first assignment will be to maintain the BJP’s lead in the Lok Sabha. Only the prime minister and the home minister know when to appoint the BJP president in Uttar Pradesh.”

Murmu to be sworn in as Prez...

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“The Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice of India, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Members of the Council of Ministers, Governors, Chief Ministers, Heads of Diplomatic Missions, Members of Parliament and principal Civil and Military Officers of the Government of India will assemble in the Central Hall for the Ceremony.

“The President and the President-elect will arrive in the Central Hall in a cere-

monial procession. The President-elect will take the Oath of Office in the presence of the Chief Justice of India, followed by a 21-Gun Salute. The President will then deliver an address. On the conclusion of the Ceremony in the Central Hall, the President will leave for Rashtrapati Bhavan where an Inter-Services Guard of Honour will be given to her in the Forecourt and courtesies will be extended to the outgoing President, said Union Home Ministry in a Communiqué.

She got 64 percent votes in the

Presidential Election of 2022 and defeated the combined Opposition candidate Yashwant Sinha by a margin of almost 3 lakh votes.

Murmu had worked as a junior assistant in the Irrigation Department of Odisha Government and as a school teacher before entering politics and becoming a Councillor from Rairangpur in 1997. She went on to become a two-time BJP MLA and a Minister in her home State Odisha. She was also the Governor of Jharkhand till last year.

Irani sends legal notice to Cong leaders over slur against...

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It said that if they don’t withdraw their allegations, Irani will initiate civil and criminal proceedings against them.

Former Union Minister Ramesh is the chief spokesperson of the Congress while D’Souza is a ‘Mahila’ Congress leader.

“The false allegations were intended to hurt the reputation of our client as a Minister and a person in public life, and also to outrage her modesty and that of her daughter,” the notice said.

The Congress leaders stooped to a new low, morally and ethically, by attacking Irani’s young daughter who is in her first year at university and at the threshold of a new chapter of her life pursuing her professional aspirations, the notice sent by Irani said.

“These aspirations of our client’s (Irani) daughter are sought to be cruelly marred, jeopardised and prejudiced by the addressees (Congress leaders) through their inhumane, insensitive and false narratives as

collateral damage,” it said.

“The insistence of addressees to invoke value systems of our client with a reference to her ‘sanskar’ is an effort to make our client and her young daughter social outcasts by proclaiming that by the act of ‘running’ a bar our client and her young daughter are women of disrepute,” it said.

Zoish Irani has never applied for any licence for “running” any bar or for any business enterprise, it said.

She has not been served with any show cause notice from the excise department in Goa as alleged by the Congress leaders, it asserted.

“These allegations are sought to be sensationalised and magnified by a series of innuendos and suggestive statements which not only hurt our client and her daughter’s reputation but are equally an attempt at outraging their modesty,” it claimed.

These allegations have been made with the knowledge of their falsity or at least in careless disregard of the truth, it said.

The Congress on Saturday demanded Irani’s sacking, alleging her daughter was running an illegal bar in Goa, but the Minister had claimed the ‘malicious’ charge was made at the Gandhi family’s behest due to her vocal stand in the National Herald case and vowed to fight back.

Now, one monkeypox...

From Page 1

“This is a matter of great concern. However, with cases concentrated among men who have sex with men, it is possible to curtail further spread of the disease with focused efforts among at-risk population.

“Though the risk of monkeypox globally and in the Region is moderate, the potential of its further international spread is real. Also, there are still many unknowns about the virus. We need to stay alert and prepared to roll out intense response to curtail further spread of monkeypox,” Dr Khetrapal Singh said.

The Health Ministry had last week reviewed the screening procedure of international travellers arriving in India at airports and ports after cases of the virus were reported in the country. Airport and Port Health Officers (APHOs and PHOs) and regional directors from regional offices of health

and family welfare were advised to ensure strict health screening of all arriving international travellers to minimise the risk of importation of monkeypox cases into the country, a ministry statement had said.

The WHO had on Saturday declared monkeypox as a global public health emergency of international concern. Monkeypox virus is transmitted from infected animals to humans via indirect or direct contact. Human-to-human transmission can occur through direct contact with infectious skin or lesions, including face-to-face, skin-to-skin, and respiratory droplets.

Globally, over 16,000 cases of monkeypox have been reported from 75 countries and there have been five deaths so far due to the outbreak. In the WHO South-East Asia Region, besides India, one case has been detected from Thailand.

Blast in Saran’s illegal home-run...

From Page 1

The house is located on the banks of a river, into which a major part of it collapsed. As many as eight people are still feared trapped under the debris, while eight of the injured have been admitted to the Sadar hospital in Chhapra where their condition is stated to be critical.

“Six people dead after a house collapsed due to a blast in Chhapra. Efforts are being made to rescue people trapped under the debris. We’re investigating

the reason behind the explosion. Forensic team and Bomb disposal squad have also been called,” said Santosh Kumar, Saran SP. According to the police, firecrackers were made inside the house where the blast took place and explosions were heard continuously for an hour.

The businessman allegedly sold crackers illegally during marriages. It is alleged that the house was an illegal manufacturing unit for firecrackers, reports news agency PTI.

Police tore CM’s poster and...

From Page 1


When contacted, sources in the Raj Niwas said the CM did not appear at the programme due to ill health despite prior agreement to launch the plantation drive for one lakh saplings together by him and Saxena.

“Delhi Environment Minister has said in the Press conference the programme was ‘hijacked’ and Kejriwal’s posters were torn. Nothing could be far from truth.

Standees and bill boards displaying Chief Minister’s pictures are there for all to see even now,” sources said

Sources further added that the said programme of Tree Plantation corresponding with the ‘Van Mahotsav’ was to be undertaken by the LG and the CM jointly. “A mutual decision in this regard had been taken on July 4th, 2022. 1,00,000 trees are to be planted as a part of the programme, and the LG and the CM were to launch the

same together on Sunday. It was a mutually agreed upon programme involving various dignitaries, departments and agencies, under the overall aegis of the “Van Mahotsav” programme of the Government of India that has been running for decades and is organised by respective State Governments. Everything had to be mutually decided. The organising Department was Environment & Forest Delhi,” the sources said.



Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005

PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

(See proviso to rule 8(6))

Notice for sale of immovable assets

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the **Physical possession** of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd. will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is", as per the brief particulars given hereunder;

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Roop Narain Kaushik (Borrower), Chanchal Kaushik, Frames Twenty Four Communications Pvt Ltd (Co-borrower) Lan No. LBFDB00003334292	Plot No A 10A, Basement Front Side, Green Park, Delhi 110016 Plot No A 10A, 2nd Floor Rear Side With Terrace, Green Park, Delhi 110016	Rs. 3,50,62, 393.03 as on July 14, 2022	Rs. 57,45,000/- (For Basement front side only) Rs. 5,74,500/- (For Basement front side only) Rs. 2,89,50,000/- (For 2nd Floor Rear Side with Common terrace) Rs. 28,95,000/- (For 2nd Floor Rear Side with Common terrace)	August 03, 2022, From 12:00 Noon to 02:00 PM	August 31, 2022, From 12:00 Noon to 01:00 PM

The online auction will be conducted on website (URL Link- <https://disposalhub.com>) of our auction agency **M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited**. The Mortgagor's/noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till **August 30, 2022 before 05:00 P.M** else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule.

The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at **ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005** and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only or before **August 30, 2022 before 05:00 P.M** along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, incase prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at **ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005** on or before **August 30, 2022 before 05:00 P.M**. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/ Scheduled Bank in favour of "**ICICI Bank Limited**" payable at Delhi.

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Please note that Marketing agencies **1. M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited.2. Augoe Asset Management Pvt Ltd** have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.

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Date: July 25, 2022
Place: Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

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Chandni Chowk, Majnu Ka Tila to be developed as food hubs



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Arvind Kejriwal Government has identified Chandni Chowk, one of the oldest markets which is also known for various popular food joints in Central Delhi and Majnu Ka Tila in north Delhi known for Chinese foods and shopping centres to be developed as food hubs.

Addressing a digital Press conference, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday announced this saying this will be done in the first phase of a major development programme for food hubs. Kejriwal said the idea behind the development of food hubs is to promote food businesses and create jobs. The plan was a part of the Delhi Government's annual budget 2022-23 which aimed at creating 2 million jobs in five years through various interventions like creation of food hubs, redevelopment of markets,

shopping festivals, etc. Kejriwal said Delhi is known as the food capital, but with the development of these food hubs, the city will actually live up to its name. "Delhi has various food hubs known for serving different cuisines.

Some of the hubs serve all varieties of food. So, in the first phase, we will develop Majnu Ka Tila, a favourite of the Delhi University students and known as Capital's Little Tibet, which offers a range of pan-Asian cuisine.

On the other hand, Chandni Chowk's food market is famous for all over the world and its culinary origins here trace back to the kitchens of Mughal emperors," he said. The Chief Minister said that after extensive research and several meetings with market associations, Majnu Ka Tila and Chandni Chowk have been selected to be developed as food hubs. "We will make arrangements for roads, elec-

tricity, water and sanitation inside the food hubs; all guidelines of food safety and hygiene will be strictly followed.

Delhi's Food Hubs will be promoted with unique branding all over the country and the world, so that people coming to Delhi from across the globe can experience our food hubs."

The Chief Minister said the government will focus on creating physical infrastructure, food safety and branding of the identified food hubs. "Delhi is considered the food capital of India. People are fond of eating and hosting people over food. All kinds of food from all over the world are available in the capital. Some places are known for Punjabi foods, some for south Indian food.... We have planned to take forward this concept (food capital)," said Kejriwal, adding that the government will initiate branding of the food hubs which are likely to create a large number of jobs.

"Within the next six weeks, we will conduct a design competition, in which designs will be sought from the country's top architecture firms to develop both the markets.

In the next 12 weeks, the architectural design will be finalised and the contracts will be granted to start the work of developing both the food hubs," he added. Kejriwal further added that based on the experiences received from both the food hubs, all the food hubs in Delhi will be identified and developed in the next phase.

'City Govt claim that revenue from excise policy increased to ₹1484 cr nothing but blatant lie'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The claim made by the Delhi Government that the revenue from excise policy increased to Rs 1484 crores in the first quarter of 2022-23 is nothing but a blatant lie as out of total revenue Rs 980 crores are refundable security deposits, according to sources in the Raj Niwas.

"In the last five years between 2017-18 to 2021-22, the Revenue earned by the Delhi Government through liquor sale has come down by a whopping Rs 567.98 crores. Even the Revenue for the first Quarter of 2022-23 has been artificially inflated to Rs 1594.84 by including the 'Refundable Security Deposit' to the tune of Rs 980 crores," sources added.

"The claim that the Delhi Government collected around Rs 400 crores in GST in lieu of the sale of liquor in the first quarter of 2022-23 which can be counted as 'Revenue' is a bogus one. GST is a Constitution provision, and that 'tax' cannot be counted under the 'Revenue' head," they further added.

"Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal's rhetorical, weak and lame defence lacking any substance whatsoever, on the massive mal-practices and scam in the Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22 involving illegal amendments and implementation for subsequent kick-backs received by the Aam Aadmi Party government is an exercise of hoodwink the people of Delhi," officials added.

Even as the people of Delhi suffered due to lack of oxygen during the second wave of COVID-19, the self-proclaimed 'Imaandar Sarkar' allowed a waiver of Rs. 144.36 Crores singularly to the liquor cartel, on the tendered license fee under the excuse of COVID-19 pandemic.

"With the losses that the restaurant and hotel industry faced during the pandemic, leave apart the poor residents and migrants in the city standing in queues to get one square meal, it would only be justified on their part to demand a Covid compensation from Arvind Kejriwal following the same formula.

After all, he did, for kick-backs, give a waiver of Rs. 144.36 Crores to the liquor mafia through a secret back-door illegal decision," they said.

"Only a thorough CBI investigation into the wrongdoings will unearth the entire saga of self-aggrandizement by Minister in-charge, Manish Sisodia and others. The much-touted claim by Aam Aadmi Party leaders that Revenue through the sale of liquor in Delhi has gone up is a white lie. The fact is Revenue has actu-

AAP has replaced its happiness classes model with happiness glasses: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday hit out at AAP over its Government's liquor policy in the national Capital saying the party has replaced its "happiness classes" model with "happiness glasses."

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla took a dig at Arvind Kejriwal's Delhi model of governance and called it a "liquor model" of governance. "Arvind Kejriwal liquor model can be explained in ABCD.

Where 'A' stands for 'advertising', 'B' for 'bahane Baazi' (making excuses) and 'blame game', 'C' for 'corruption' and 'cover-up' and 'D' for 'deviation' or 'diversion'....," Poonawalla said. Alleging that the AAP government has given "Rs 144 crore waiver to liquor mafia," he said those who promised to make Punjab and Delhi addiction-free are now working overtime to turn people into addicts. "This new liquor policy of the Kejriwal government is ... 'happiness glasses' model replacing their 'happiness classes' model. And this policy was exposed after

Amid row, excise policy likely to be extended by two more months

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid controversy, the Delhi Excise Policy 2022-23, is likely to be extended by two more months as it expires on July 31. The new policy for 2022-23 was supposed to be implemented from June 1 but has been delayed for some reasons.

The Delhi Cabinet approved the Revised Excise Policy 2022-23 and the new proposals by the excise department and the group of ministers on May 5, but final approval for amendments and implementation on the ground has to be done by Delhi Lieutenant Governor V.K. Saxena. However, the new policy has not been sent to LG for approval which has caused the extension of this controversial ongoing policy. The department is mandated to come out with a revised policy every financial year. The Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22, which should have been replaced by the revised policy of 2022-23, has

already been extended twice for two months each - firstly by May 31 and secondly by July 31 and now again it is likely to be extended for two months. Talking on the issue, a source said that the work to implement the new policy is in progress, but that may not be completed in time to implement from August 1.

The AAP government under the revised excise policy 2022-23, is planning to allow restaurants, bars and clubs to stay open till 3 am to promote city's nightlife, allow home delivery of liquor, discontinue the compulsion opening of two liquor stores per ward, allow retailers to sell liquor chocolates and cigars etc to provide a better walk-in experience to consumers.

Meanwhile, the Delhi LG has recommended a CBI probe into the current policy which has "deliberate and gross procedural lapses". The policy has been alleged to provide post tender undue benefits to liquor licensees for the year 2021-22.

I expected Kejriwal to be present at tree plantation drive: L-G

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Sunday sent out a message to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal who missed a Government event amid the AAP Government's allegations against the Delhi Police at the launch of the massive plantation drive of one lakh saplings at Asola Bhatti Mines Wildlife Sanctuary.

At the event, the LG said he expected the CM to be present at the event. "I wanted CM Arvind Kejriwal to attend this event but due to some reasons, he could not. This is a programme where all of us should work together.

"I expect him to be present in future events to give a message that we want to work together for Delhi's development," he said.

Earlier, Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai alleged that the Centre hijacked an event of the Kejriwal Government at the Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary with the Delhi Police putting up banners carrying pictures of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the venue last night.

He said Kejriwal was supposed to attend the event but decided not to participate following the incident.

According to the statement released by the LG office, amidst over 400 school children, jawans from the paramilitary forces, Delhi Police, and a large number of people from the civil society as well as volunteers of the civil defence, Saxena launched the plantation of a wide variety of native species as well as fruit-bearing trees like Jamun, Moringa, Arjun, Sheesham, Sagwan-Teak, Guava, Chembu, bamboo, etc. that would protect and rejuvenate Delhi's ecology.

"What makes this plantation drive unique is that each of the 1 lakh pits dug up for planting the trees has been geotagged so that the growth of these trees can be monitored on a regular basis, both through satellite imagery as well as physical verification. One can

keep actual track of their numbers, growth, and maintenance," it read.

"Saxena termed the plantation of 1 lakh saplings a historic moment for the national capital as, he said, these plants would contribute immensely to protect the ecology which is facing a severe threat from unchecked pollution," it read. "Interacting with the school children, the LG lauded their passion for the environmental cause and their efforts to protect Delhi's ecology.

He was pleasantly surprised at their awareness of the issues of environmental concerns. Saxena made a fervent appeal to the people of Delhi, particularly the youths and school children, to plant and nurture trees to make Delhi greener and a truly livable city. He stressed upon collective



participation of the society to fight the menace of growing pollution and global warming, the statement read. Many senior dignitaries including, member of Parliament, Ramesh Bidhuri, Chief Secretary, Naresh Kumar,

Commissioner of Police, Rakesh Asthana were also present on the occasion.

Meanwhile, Delhi BJP has accused Kejriwal saying he did not attend the closing ceremony of Van Mahotsav scheme, which was started at the ini-

Modi sent Delhi Police to hijack city Govt event: AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh and MLA Saurabh Bhardwaj on Sunday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi over sending Delhi Police in the middle of the night in an official event of the Delhi Government to gain popularity.

AAP leaders questioned when PM Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat, did he put up photos of the then Prime Minister of India, Dr Manmohan Singh in his programmes? "If that is the case, we will happily put his pictures in our events," they said.

Addressing the media, Singh said, "PM Modi's hatred for CM Arvind Kejriwal has increased so much that he sent the Delhi Police to hijack an official event of Delhi Government to get his photo on the banners.

"This is a part of a series of events that are part of a larger conspiracy to sabotage the progress of the Delhi Government. Till now more



than 150 fake cases have been registered against AAP leaders," he said. "They cooked up stories to implant fake cases against Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain. Their castles of lies collapsed in the case of Satyendar Jain after which, one of their leaders had to apologise. PM Narendra Modi is extremely fearful of CM Arvind Kejriwal's Delhi Model.

He cannot stop the juggernaut of the Kejriwal model. His immature and immoral actions will only increase Kejriwal's popularity. We should collectively think how a State Government will function if the country's PM is blazing all his guns against it," Singh said.

"Prime Minister's hate for

AAP alleges corruption in construction of underbridge

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP MLA from Rajinder Durgesh Pathak on Sunday claimed that the BJP-ruled Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has sanctioned a bridge with a budget of Rs 55 crore in 2006, but despite spending Rs 87 crores the bridge hasn't been completed till the date.

Addressing the media, AAP MLA and MCD In-charge Pathak said, "The railway underbridge was to be built by 2010 in the Sadar Bazar area of Kishanganj, Delhi, but it started construction only in 2022.

Corruption is taking place under the nose of PM Modi, so far Rs 87 crores have been spent on a bridge budgeted for 55 crores. The bridge should be built as soon as possible and the

corrupt officers should be arrested as soon as possible." "Today I am going to expose such corruption of the BJP ruled MCD which underlines BJP's entire tenure under PM Modi.

The corruption under our beloved PM Modi seems to only grow over and over. PM Modi's BJP-ruled MCD is betraying the people of Delhi. Whatever work MCD announces Delhi, ends up becoming a victim of corruption," he said. "Back in 2006, when there was talk of holding the Commonwealth Games in Delhi, many development projects were sanctioned in Delhi.

At the same time, a railway underbridge was to be built in the area of Sadar Bazar of Kishanganj located in the Wazirpur assembly. The bridge was completed in 2006 and was to be inaugurated in 2010.



A four box bridge was to be built, but in 2022, work is going on only on the first box. The other interesting thing is that the cost of the bridge was fixed at Rs 55 crore, but so far Rs 87 crore has been spent on it," he claimed. "This matter needs to be investigated. It is my humble request that this bridge should be completed as soon as possible. Also, those who have gobbled money in the project should be arrested as soon as possible," Pathak concluded.

Traffic will be hit due to swearing-in ceremony of Prez, says traffic police

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi traffic police on Sunday said that traffic at some parts of the city will be affected during the the swearing-in ceremony of the President-elect of India. Special arrangements have been made to ensure the smooth flow of traffic. The Personnel Ministry on Friday directed partial closure of certain Government offices as well.

The swearing-in ceremony of Droupadi Murmu, the 15th President of India, will be held in Central Hall of Parliament House on July 25, said an order issued to all central government departments and ministries. A senior police officer has asked commuters to avoid roundabout Kautilya, Teen Murti Marg, roundabout Teen Murti, Akbar Road,



tiative of Central Government to reduce Delhi's pollution, just because for that programme, his photo was small in the poster. "Kejriwal is most fond of shining his face.

He is just hungry for publicity and you will find many examples of this. Kejriwal, who is doing propaganda-based politics, has fallen so much in his desire for shining his face that in those small and innocent hands in which he should have given a pen, he rather gave them hoardings of his name and smiling face to throw dust at crossroads," Delhi BJP said in a statement.

gle use plastic has been put up all over. Due to his hate & jealousy towards the Delhi CM, all the hoardings from Civil Lines to Asola Bhatti Mines have been torn down."

"PM Modi is so eager about his image that he wants his picture on every stage; this is like the film Raja Babu, in Govinda character imagined himself as Police inspector, sometimes as doctor and sometimes as lawyer; PM Modi is fond of putting his own photos in the same way.

The way the pictures of the rulers of Dubai & Qatar are installed in every shop & hotel there, it seems that soon a law is going to be made to put the picture of PM Modi everywhere in the country," he said.

"All these events which panned out in the past few days are not mere coincidence. It is a well-laid conspiracy against the people of Delhi and Kejriwal. They first fiddled with Health Minister Satyendar Jain and got him arrested in a fake case which was going on for seven years but not an iota of evidence was found," Bhardwaj added.

Traffic will be hit due to swearing-in ceremony of Prez, says traffic police

roundabout Gol Methi, Krishna Menon Marg, Vijay Chowk, K Kamraj Marg from 9 am to noon on Monday. Other roads to be avoided are roundabout Sunehri Masjid, Rafi Marg, roundabout Rail Bhawan, Sansad Marg, Imtiaz Khan Marg, Gurudwara Rakabganj Road, roundabout Patel Chowk, Raisina Road, Dr Rajendra Prasad Road, Maulana Azad Road and Motilal Nehru Marg.

The Ministry of Personnel on Friday directed partial closure of certain government offices as well. The construction work of new Parliament building will also be stopped during that time.

According to order, a total of 30 offices are required to be vacated by 6 am for carrying out an anti-sabotage check. This exercise will continue till ceremony is over, it said.

GGSIPO announces setting up of three new schools

New Delhi: Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University has announced to set up three new schools, namely the School of Liberal Arts, School of Film Making and School of Fire and Industrial Safety.

These new schools and centres of excellence are being created in view of the rising demands for trained professionals in these areas, the varsity said in a statement.

The decision was taken at the recently held 77th Board of Management (BoM) meeting of the University.

The University has 14 schools, 12 at the Dwarka campus and two at the newly established East Delhi campus, Surajmal Vihar. It also has one centre of excellence in pharmaceutical sciences at Dwarka campus. It has also decided to upgrade the existing Centre of Disaster Management Studies (CDMS) as a Centre of Excellence in Disaster Management at same meeting.

Ensure good governance: PM to BJP CMs

Implement welfare schemes and make har ghar Tiranga mass movement, says Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday asked the Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled States to ensure good governance, "timely implementation" of welfare schemes and "making har ghar tiranga a mass movement".

The PM participated in the 'Mukhyamantri Parishad' - BJP Chief Ministers' meeting - here at the party headquarters. Chief Ministers and deputy-Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled States attended the meeting presided by party president JP Nadda. The PM sought the Chief Ministers to ensure 'time' implementation' of welfare schemes and benefits reaching-out to the lowest in economic strata. The Assembly polls in several States including Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Mukhyamantri Parishad meeting at BJP headquarters in New Delhi on Sunday PTI Photo

Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Tripura were also deliberated upon with states CM presenting their report cards and detailing the development goals ahead in the respective states. While the last such meeting was held in

Varanasi in December 2021, as a two-day conclave, where the Prime Minister pushed for rolling out development projects and welfare schemes, the current meeting is being organized in the backdrop of the high-stakes assembly elections

slated in different states later this year and next year. BJP recently received set-back in urban local polls in Madhya Pradesh, losing Gwalior Mayor seat to Congress and AAP winning the mayoral election in Singrauli. Assembly polls in

Madhya Pradesh are slated next year with Congress expected to give a tough electoral fight to ruling party. 'Har Ghar tiranga' programme for hoisting tricolour in about 20 crore houses was also taken up in meeting, sources said with Prime Minister being keen to make programme a 'big success.'

Ahead of Independence Day, Modi has appealed all for hoisting 'tiranga' in houses from August 13 to August 15.

Adopting "best practices" of BJP-ruled states by each other was emphasised in the meeting which simultaneously also outlined the organizational preparedness of BJP states in the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

The chief ministers and deputy chief ministers of 18 states where BJP is in power on its own or in alliance with other parties attended meet. UP CM Yogi Adityanath, Madhya Pradesh CM Shrivraj Singh Chouhan, Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Dhami, Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma, Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel among other attended Mukhyamantri Parishad meeting.

CBI takes over student's murder probe in Ranchi on J'khand HC's direction

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has taken over the murder case of a Class VII student of Sapphire International School, Ranchi in 2016 for re-investigation following a direction from the Jharkhand High Court on a petition from the deceased's father. Thirteen-year-old Binay Mahto's body was found outside the teachers quarters in the school campus under Dhurwa police station of Ranchi. The victim was a student of the said school.

Earlier this month, the Jharkhand High Court passed an order in respect to a criminal writ petition of 2018 filed by the victim's father Manbala Mahto directing the CBI to re-investigate the FIR Number 45 of 2016 of Dhurwa police station against unknown persons.

Following the High Court order, the Anti-Corruption Branch, CBI, Ranchi. In his criminal writ petition, the victim's father submitted that his son was murdered in the wee

hours of February 5, 2016 at around 1.30 AM and the petitioner received information from the officer of the said school who lodged the complaint with the police against which the original FIR was registered.

The case was probed by the officer-in-charge of Tupudana OP and later on by the Assistant Superintendent of Police, Hatia, Ranchi who issued instruction note to the Investigating Officer to investigate the case.

The Inspector General of Ranchi police had also directed to investigate the case on certain lines but the probe was not accordingly. Subsequently, a chargesheet was also filed in the case and trial began.

The trial court observed that the investigation was not concluded in a proper way and the prosecution story is creating doubt. The trial court further observed that it was surprising that three persons—Kanika Bose, Atanu Nag and RN Pradhan of school were entitled to care for the boys of

the school hostel surrounded by a boundary wall and locked gate but how the deceased reached before the teachers residence gate, is a question of investigation. However, the Investigating Officer did not take the statement of hostel in-charge and produced a concocted story before the court.

Through an earlier order dated September 26, 2018, the High Court observed that the supplementary investigation was kept pending and no further chargesheet has been filed before the trial court. An order of the trial court dated June 1, 2018 further substantiated the contention of the petitioner with respect to perfunctory investigation being conducted by the police.

Through another order dated October 4, 2018, the High Court had stayed further proceedings by trial court. During course of probe by Ranchi police, two juveniles were also tried but the Juvenile Justice Board through its order on July 6, 2018 acquitted two minor accused.



President Ram Nath Kovind receives the first copy of 'Interpreting Geometries: Flooring of Rashtrapati Bhavan' from I&B Minister Anurag Thakur. The book documents and analyses the intricate play of geometry applied to evolve the unique flooring patterns in Rashtrapati Bhavan PNS

Country's security, youth's future in danger with new experiment of Modi: Rahul on Agnipath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Sunday attacked the Centre over the Agnipath military recruitment scheme, saying the country's security and the future of the youth are in danger with this "new experiment" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "laboratory".

Sixty soldiers retire every year, out of which only 3,000 are getting government jobs, Rahul said in a tweet in Hindi "What will be the future of thousands of 'Agniveers' retiring after 4-year contracts," the former Congress chief asked.

"With this new experiment of the Prime Minister's laboratory, both the security of the country and the future of the youth are in danger," the Congress leader said Several



parts of country had witnessed protests after announcement of scheme that seeks to recruit youths between age bracket of 17-and-half years to 21 for only four years with a provision to retain 25 per cent of them for 15 more years For 2022, the upper age limit has been extended to 23 years.

Opposition members, including KC Venugopal and Uttam Kumar Reddy, had on Friday walked out in protest from a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence, alleging they were not allowed to discuss the Agnipath scheme.

Members of Congress and BSP urged Committee chairman Jai Oram to allow a discussion on Agnipath scheme, arguing it has huge implications and required parliamentary scrutiny but were denied.

Alva reaches out to Assam, K'taka CMs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition's vice presidential candidate Margaret Alva on Sunday reached out to Chief Ministers of Assam and Karnataka a day after doing so with their Delhi counterpart.

While she had met Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday and sought his support for her candidature, she spoke with Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma and Karnataka CM Basavaraj Bommai on Sunday when she also took charge of her campaign office at 1, Pt Ravi Shankar Shukla Lane.

"Smt. @alva_margaret took charge of her campaign office at 1, Pt Ravi Shankar Shukla Lane today. She spoke to CM Assam, CM Karnataka, & CM Delhi as part of her Vice Presidential campaign," Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said on Twitter.



The conversations were very cordial and friendly given her long political career and associations, he said. Responding to Ramesh's tweet, Sarma said he did speak with Alva, but told her he had no role to play in the vice president's election. "Smt. @alva_margaret spoke to me this morning. I politely told her that I'm not a member of the electoral college. As such I have no role in the election of Vice President of India," Sarma said on Twitter tagging Ramesh's post. It was Alva's turn to respond then: "As part

of my campaign for VP, I'm reaching out to leaders from across political parties. Mr Sarma is an old friend & we've worked together long enough for him to know that after 30 yrs. in Parliament, I know what constitutes the electoral college. We had a nice chat though!" Alva and Kejriwal also discussed the current political atmosphere of the nation, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) had said in a statement after the meeting.

The meeting between Alva and Kejriwal concluded "with both leaders expressing mutual respect and acknowledgement," the party had said.

Kejriwal had not attended the meeting of 17 opposition parties held at NCP leader Sharad Pawar's residence last Sunday which decided on Alva's candidature. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee too gave it a miss.

Baghel holds meet on HP polls

Booth management training, grassroots organisation discussed

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, who was recently appointed senior observer for the upcoming Himachal Pradesh Assembly polls, held a meeting with the party's top leaders from the State here on Sunday.

The meeting was attended by AICC state-in-charge Rajeev Shukla, observers Sachin Pilot and Partap Singh Bajwa, Pradesh Congress Committee chief and MP Pratibha Singh among others, during which Baghel deliberated on imparting booth management training and strengthening grassroots organisation ahead of the polls. "There is tremendous anti-incumbency in Himachal

Pradesh, people are reeling under price rise and absence of jobs. We will fight this election unitedly and are confident of securing a majority," Pilot said after the meeting. The leaders, also including chairman of the campaign committee Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu and Pradesh committee working president Vinay

Kumar, ideated the campaign going forward and discussed the media strategy, sources said. Assembly elections in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh are likely to be held later this year. The Congress is looking to wrest power from the BJP in both states.

In the last round of Assembly elections, the grand old party lost Punjab to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and gave a dismal performance in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur, with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) retaining power in four states.

Nearly 50% of untreated sewage still being discharged in Ganga: NGT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Untreated sewage and effluents continue to flow into the River Ganga even after decades of monitoring, the National Green Tribunal has said, noting that the National Mission for Clean Ganga does not appear to be in a position to take stringent measures against non-compliance.

While seeking an action taken report from the National Ganga Council (NGC) on the matter, a bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adesh Kumar Goel said the quality of water in Ganga has to be as per norms as it is used not only for bathing but also 'achman' (taking sips of water before prayers or rituals).

It directed the Member Secretary, NGC to file an action taken report before October 14, the next date of hearing. Even after decades of monitoring, still nearly 50 per cent of untreated sewage and substantial industrial effluents are continuing to be discharged in the river or its tributaries/drains, in absence of requisite function-

al treatment capacity, the NGT said. "Instead of indefinitely continuing the proceedings without success, as has happened in the last 37 years, we suggest that the Member Secretary, NGC i.e. DG, NMCG may place the agenda of reviewing the existing mechanism for executing the work of setting up and maintaining requisite treatment systems to ensure prevention of pollution of Ganga in the next meeting of the NGC, which is the highest authority under the 2016 Ganga Order, preferably within one month or as early as possible," it said.

The NGT said in view of the disappointing factual position, a paradigm shift in execution and monitoring appears to be necessary. The tribunal said it appears that execution by State authorities is not adequate, too slow and lacking ownership and the National Mission for Clean Ganga does not appear to be in a position to take stringent measures against non-compliances and failure to achieve goals in a time bound manner. "In dealing

with such a long pending challenge, the executing agency has to be proactive and effective, with simpler and flexible procedures and timelines being sacrosanct.

There has to be zero tolerance to further delay. Working has to be goal oriented with defined accountability, followed by strict consequences for defaults. It may not be advisable to fix loose and convenient distant timelines with no consequences for breach.

At the moment the reverse is happening," it observed. "None is accountable for breaching the timelines in the last four decades. Blame is shifted from one authority to another. In dealing with Ganga pollution, there has to be a change in attitude of those who have to execute remedial measures.

Unless such change takes place, no purpose is achieved in the ritual of monitoring by this Tribunal and direction of the Supreme Court for effective monitoring is defeated," the bench said. The NGT said close monitoring by the



Tribunal even in recent years shows that progress in preventing discharge of sewage and trade effluents is not taking place on expected lines.

"Either the necessary treatment systems are yet to be set up at several locations or STPs/treatment facilities established are not fully functional. There is unacceptable and unchecked delay with no accountability.

"Substantial funds are provided by the NMCG without expected results. Reasons for not achieving results may be due to tardy processes or lack of effective credible mechanisms. Timelines have kept changing conveniently since

decades. Even now there is no commitment for any fixed timeline in future, to the great and irreversible detriment of Ganga," the bench said.

This disappointing state of affairs needs change which is possible with the intervention of highest authority under the 2016 order, it said. "With every interval of time, there should be graphic reduction in pollution load which is not happening. It is high time that alternative credible executing mechanisms are explored so that treatment systems are established and operated in a fixed timeline and errant persons are made accountable so that not a drop of pollution goes to Ganga.

Expelled for cross-voting in RS polls, Cong MLA meets Nadda

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indicating at the likelihood of this joining the BJP in near future, MLA Kuldeep Bishnoi, who was expelled from all party positions by the Congress after he cross-voted in the Rajya Sabha polls, met BJP chief J P Nadda and Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Sunday and "discussed political issues with them".

This was Bishnoi's second meeting with the BJP leadership within a span of two weeks, Bishnoi had, on July 10, met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP chief Nadda in Delhi. The 53-year-old legislator was expelled by the Congress from all party positions last month.

After meeting Nadda and Khattar in Delhi, Bishnoi heaped praise on the two leaders. "During the meeting discussed current political issues with him," Bishnoi said after meeting Nadda. On his meeting with Khattar, Bishnoi, who has been warming up to the



BJP, said, "We held an important discussion regarding the current political issues of the state and development work of Haryana".

Bishnoi, a four-time MLA and two-time MP and younger son of former Haryana chief minister Bhajan Lal, has been sulking ever since the Congress ignored him for the post of its Haryana unit chief during a revamp earlier this year.

The party appointed Uday Bhan, a loyalist of former chief minister Hooda, as its Haryana unit chief. After cross-voting in the Rajya Sabha polls, Bishnoi had posted a cryptic tweet saying, "I know how to crush a snake's hood. I do not leave the

jungle in fear of snakes." On his expulsion from the party, Bishnoi had said the Congress has rules for some leaders and exceptions for others.

Rules are applied selectively. Indiscipline has been repeatedly ignored in the past. In my case, I listened to my soul and acted on my morals. The Congress, which is the main opposition party in Haryana, was assured of one Rajya Sabha seat by virtue of the number of MLAs it has in the 90-member assembly. However, Congress candidate Ajay Maken failed to secure the berth after Bishnoi cross-voted, while the vote of another MLA Kiran Choudhry was declared invalid.

‘India moving towards Joint Theatre Commands for better synergy’

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday announced India is moving in the fast lane to set up joint theatre commands in order to meet future challenges and bring synergy among the armed forces.

Singh also announced that we have set a target to achieve Rs 35,000 crore worth of exports by 2025 and become a top exporter in the times to come.

Paying glowing tributes to the freedom fighters & the Armed Forces personnel who have laid down their lives since Independence in the service of the Nation, Rajnath Singh in Jammu said, “the Kargil war underlined the dire need to achieve jointness and self-reliance in the defence sector. It has been our endeavour to achieve these qualities to remain prepared for future challenges. Setting up of Joint Theatre Commands and reforms to achieve self-reliance in defence are the steps taken in that direction”. “We are moving ahead very fast in the

same direction”, he added.

At least four new integrated theatre commands are proposed to be set up to utilise the military’s resources for future wars and operations. The three services chiefs were also directed to study the different models and submit their reports.

Dattatreya Hosabale, General secretary of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) also attended the programme organised by the Jammu Kashmir People’s Forum to honor the families of martyrs here at Gulshan ground, Jammu. Speaking on the occasion Rajnath Singh said, Singh said India has become a strong & confident nation which is well-equipped to protect its people from anyone who tries to cast an evil eye. He said under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi India is moving quickly from being the world’s largest importer of defence equipment to an exporter.

“Our priority is to achieve ‘Aatmanirbharta’ in Defence as it is central to developing a robust security apparatus for the safety and security of the

nation. He asserted that the sole aim of the government is to safeguard the interests of the Nation and it has taken a series of steps to develop a self-reliant defence ecosystem that provides indigenous state-of-the-art weapons/equipment to the Armed Forces to fight all kinds of future wars.

To realise this vision, 68% of the defence budget has been earmarked for procurement of defence equipment from domestic sources. From a net importer, we have now become a net exporter which is not only catering to our own needs, but is also fulfilling the requirements of our friendly countries, in line with the ‘Make in India, Make for the World’ vision. Due to the recent measures taken by the Government, India today finds itself among the top 25 exporters of the world in defence items. We have set a target to achieve Rs 35,000 crore worth of exports by 2025 and become a top exporter in the times to come. Our aim is to make India a global superpower. This will be a fitting tribute to our fallen heroes who made the supreme

sacrifice while dreaming of an India which is strong, prosperous, self-reliant and victorious,” said the Defence Minister.

Sharing his views on the numerous challenges faced by India post-independence, Singh said, the entire area of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) and Ladakh became the ‘Main War Theatre’ during 1948, 1962, 1965, 1971 and 1999 wars, when enemies tried to cast an evil eye, but whose plans were thwarted by the gallant Indian soldiers. He spoke about the brave deeds of Brigadier Usman & Major Somnath Sharma in 1948; Major Shaitan Singh’s valour in 1962; India’s historic victory in 1971 war and the contribution of Kargil bravehearts Captain Vikram Batra & Captain Manoj Pandey who laid down their lives to protect the unity & integrity of India and continue to be an inspiration to the people, especially the youth. He also paid respects to the Indian soldiers who displayed unmatched bravery during the Galwan valley incident and ensured that the Indian tricolour con-

tinues to fly high.

“After tasting defeats in direct wars of 1965 and 1971, Pakistan adopted the path of Proxy War. For over two decades, it has tried to ‘Bleed India with Thousand Cuts’. But, time and again, our brave soldiers have shown that no one can disturb the unity, integrity and sovereignty of India,” the Raksha Mantri added, assuring the Nation that the Armed Forces are ready to face all future challenges.

Rajnath Singh remembered the then Prime Minister late Atal Bihari Vajpayee for his leadership and words of encouragement to the Armed Forces personnel during the Kargil war despite numerous challenges and international pressure. He termed the victory as a prime example of jointness among the three Services and their coordination with the Government which safeguarded the sovereignty & integrity of the nation during testing times. He stated that J&K will always be an integral part of India and the Government is ensuring that the Union



Territory, like the rest of the country, touches newer heights of progress. Terming Article 370 as an artificial legal barrier, he asserted that its abrogation brought a new dawn of hope to the dreams and aspirations of the people of J&K, especially the youth. The decision opened new avenues for the welfare of the people and the Union Territory is now pro-

gressing at a much faster rate, he said.

On PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan, the Raksha Mantri stated that these areas are illegally occupied by Pakistan and a resolution to free it has been unanimously passed in Parliament of India. Pak Occupied Jammu Kashmir was a part of India, is and will remain a part of India. A large

number of families of martyred security personnel as well as veterans, including Param Vir Chakra awardee Captain Bana Singh, were among those present on the occasion. Singh also chaired a meeting with BJP leaders at the party office in Trikuta Nagar where he reportedly took stock of the party’s preparations for the assembly elections.

Mumbai cops serve notices prohibiting unlawful assembly at Aarey protest site

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Mumbai police have started serving notices under the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) to people gathering to stage demonstrations against the construction of the metro car shed at Aarey colony here, an official said on Sunday.

The city police have started issuing notices under section 149 of the CrPC, prohibiting unlawful gathering at the protest venue in the western suburb of Goregaon, he said.

Notices have been served to two protestors, Tabrez Sayyed and Jayesh Bhise, in the last two days warning them not to assemble unlawfully and violate the law, the official said.

Hundreds of protestors,

including women and senior citizens, have been staging demonstrations with placards and “Save Aarey” banners. A few people were seen with placards appealing to the newly elected President Droupadi Murmu to intervene and save the forest area in the city.

The police have barricaded the venue and no one is allowed to go near the car shed site, the official said.

Amrita Bhattacharya, one of the protestors, said “People come to the protest venue from different parts of the city and the police have been taking down their names and addresses to serve them a notice.”

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Zone 12 Somnath Gharge said, “Leaders, chiefs of NGOs and people heading various groups



have been approaching the police seeking permission to stage demonstrations.

Hence, we issued notices under section 149 of the CrPC just to warn them to maintain law and order.” Soon after the assuming office, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde directed the state administration to submit a proposal to

build the Metro-3 car shed in Aarey Colony instead of Kanjurmarg. The previous Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government had shifted the proposed car shed site to Kanjurmarg from Aarey Colony on the ground of environment protection, but the issue got embroiled in a legal dispute.

Mumbai Police bust mobile phone theft racket operating via hawala channel

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Police have busted a mobile phone theft racket operating through the ‘hawala’ channel and selling the stolen gadgets in Nepal and Bangladesh, an official said.

Hawala denotes illegal transaction of funds by skirting the legal banking channels.

The scale of the crime can be estimated from the fact that during a single raid, 480 mobile handsets including iPhones were seized from a location at Maharashtra Nagar in Mankhurd area here on July 15, he said.

A preliminary investigation suggested the gang had links in other countries also, he said.

Besides the mobile phones, the police had also seized 9.5 kg of ganja, 174 bottles of foreign liquor, two swords and a laptop during the raid, all collectively worth about Rs 75 lakh, the official said.

The Mumbai crime branch on Thursday arrested one of the accused, Asif Idrisi (25), from Jahangirabad town in Uttar Pradesh.

The police had earlier nabbed two other gang members Mehboob alias Lallu Badruddin Khan (37) and Faiyaz Sheikh (31) from here, he said.

During the probe, the crime branch found the gang was purchasing mobile phones from thieves in the city.

“They would then change



the IMEI numbers of the phones and sell them in different parts of India, Nepal and Bangladesh and receive money through the hawala channel,” the official said.

The gang also had links with people in ‘Chor Bazar’, one of the largest flea markets

in south Mumbai, he said.

“We seized 480 mobile phones in just one raid. We can only assume how many gadgets they have sold in Nepal and Bangladesh,” the official said.

After Idrisi being nabbed from UP, more arrests are likely in the case, he added.

Bihar terror module case: ‘Accused received funds in cryptos from Qatar’

PTI ■ PATNA

The investigation into the Phulwari Sharif terror module case in Bihar has revealed that the accused used to receive funds in the form of cryptocurrencies from Qatar, police said on Sunday.

Marguv Ahmad Danish (26), a resident of Phulwari Sharif, was arrested on July 15 for allegedly operating two WhatsApp groups -- ‘Ghazwa-e-Hind’ and ‘Direct Jihad’ -- to propagate anti-India views, they said.

“Evidence, collected during the investigation, revealed that Danish received funds in the form of cryptocurrency from Qatar-based organisation Alfalhi,” a police officer said.

The case is at present being probed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA).



“Investigations have also revealed that Danish was connected with a Pakistan-based fundamentalist group, Tehriq-e-Labbaik. He was also in regular touch with Faizan, a Pakistani national,” the officer said.

“Investigators have found that messages disrespecting the national flag and symbol were being shared on the group (Ghazwa-e-Hind),” he said.

Danish was administrator

of the group and also in touch with several other overseas groups, he added.

The terror module was unearthed by the police on July 14 with the arrest of three people.

The NIA on Wednesday carried out searches in Jamia Maria Niswa Madrasa, located in Bihar’s East Champaran district, and arrested a teacher, identified as Asghar Ali, in connection with the case.

Rhapsody of Rains reverberates in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

R Monsoons of Kerala, a twenty minute long non-feature film that bagged the national award for narration in the 68th National Film Awards 2020 announced on Friday is the new talking point in the State. This is the first time in the history of Kerala the Monsoon has been portrayed in its full splendor by a film maker. What makes Rhapsody of Rains distinct is the effort by film producer M R Hari and director Siraj Shah to offer the viewers the hitherto unexplored facets of Monsoon rain. And this is the first time a short film is discussed and debated by film fans in the State.

“Usually, the Monsoon months in the State (June to August & mid-September to mid-November) are seen as the

season of sorrow because of the floods caused by the heavy downpour. What has not been discussed till now is the spectacle of the State during this period. It is the real season filled with myriad events like snake boat races, temple festivals, presentation of folklores and a lot of activities,” said Hari who wrote the script along with Dr Meena T Pillai.

It took five years for Shah and other crew members to shoot the various aspects of Monsoon for which they travelled the entire length and breadth of the State. The Tourism Department of the Government of Kerala had commissioned Hari and team to make a unique film on Monsoon season.

The month of Karkkadaka, the Malayalam equivalent of Shraavan, is the period when Monsoon peaks. Old timers take a break from their routine life and undergo Ayurvedic

rejuvenation therapy that includes oil bath, massaging and steam bath. “The menu during the Karkkadaka too is different. Non-vegetarian food is out and the menu is made up of porridge cooked with plants, herbs and raw vegetables. The 30-day long treatment is like a thorough overhauling of a machine,” late Raghava Pothuval, veteran Ayurvedic physician wrote in his memoirs.

Monsoon season in Kerala is not just heavy spells of rain as it is made out by politicians and farmers. It is true that heavy rains disrupt the farming operations and daily wage earners face severe difficulties.

Hari says that there are lot of things to do and felt in the Monsoon rains of Kerala. “Nature comes alive and is at its best during these rainy days. But the outside world is familiar only with the flood and fury of the Monsoon



Rains. It is just a small aspect of the season,” said Hari, who is the managing director of Invis Multimedia, an IT company based in Thiruvananthapuram.

“Our mission is to tell the world that the Monsoon Rains are as serene and scenic as any other seasons seen outside Kerala,” said Dr Meena T Pillai. The film is packed with some of the beautiful and enchanting shots of the Monsoon landscape. When it

was announced that the Rhapsody of Rains won Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan, sister of the irrepressible Sasi Tharoor, the national award for best narration, it came as no surprise to Hari and team. They have shot the movie to tell the world that Monsoon Rains offer a lot to the travellers, ranging from ayurveda to shopping. “Monsoon in Kerala will not be the same once the film reaches the viewers,” said director Siraj Shah.

UP Police to beef up security for Kanwariyas at night

PNS ■ HATHRAS

After the death of Kanwariyas in a road accident in Hathras, questions are being raised on the security arrangements of Kanwariyas in the month of Shraavan. In this regard, the district police has set a new system with immediate effect. Now PRVs will be installed on the roads of the district at night for the safety of Kanwariyas. This PRV will be traveling at a fixed distance from 8 PM to 8 AM and after seeing the Kanwariyas, they will be sent to their safe destination. In this regard, a meeting was held and a strategy was prepared.

SP City Kuldeep Singh Gunawat and SP Traffic Mukesh Chandra Uttam said that the route diversion system is already in force in the district from Sunday night to Monday evening regarding the month of Shraavan. But now a new system has been implemented for every day till the month of

Shraavan.

Under this arrangement, one PRV will be deployed at every 10 km on all the major routes connected with Kanwariyas, in which four wheeler PRV outside the urban limits i.e outside the bypass and two wheeler PRV in the urban limits, two wheeler PRVs have also been installed on the highway bypass.

A total of 14 four-wheeler, four two-wheeler PRVs, in addition to the second mobile van of the police stations, will also be active within the limits of eight police station areas. On moving to another district, that district will be informed. During this, the Kanwariyas will be encouraged to walk on one side of the road and the heavy vehicles and small vehicles drivers will be encouraged to move at a slower speed.

This step has taken after the incident where some kanwariyas going from Haridwar to Gwalior carrying Gangajal were trampled by a dumper on

the Aligarh-Agra National Highway on Friday night. In this horrific accident, five kanwariyas died on the spot, while one died in SN Medical College, Agra. One Kanwariya was seriously injured. Later, agitated by the incident, the Kanwariyas blocked the roads in Agra and Gwalior.

A group of Kanwariyas from Gwalior went to Haridwar to collect Gangajal. They were returning on Friday. These kanwariyas were trampled by a dumper coming from behind near village Badar under Sadabad area on Agra-Aligarh National Highway. Seven kanwariyas came in the grip of the dumper.

DM Ramesh Ranjan, SP Vikas Kumar Vaidya reached the spot in addition to Sadabad police as soon as the information about the accident was received. The officers obtained information about the accident from the other Kanwariyas involved in the group and within a short time ADG Agra



Rajiv Krishna and DIG Aligarh Deepak Kumar also reached the spot.

Post-mortem of the five dead bodies was conducted at Hathras’s post-mortem home in the night itself.

The police started looking for the dumper and in a while the police caught the dumper along with the driver. This dumper is also being told to be of Gwalior. Its driver was returning after unloading the ballast at Sikandarau. Since the matter was serious, the officials of the government also kept taking information about the

incident.

After the incident, Additional Director General of Police (ADG) Agra Zone, Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Aligarh and other top officials reached the spot. In the morning the post-mortem of the dead bodies was done and they were sent from here. The police have arrested the driver along with the dumper. In the morning, on the instructions of the government, DM Ramesh Ranjan announced financial assistance of one lakh rupees each to the kin of the deceased.



A sun halo is seen in the sky in Dehradun on Sunday.

PTI

Media needs introspection

CJI NV Ramana’s scathing remarks on the media should be regarding in right spirit

There can be three media responses to Chief Justice of India (CJI) NV Ramana’s scathing remarks on the media. The first, and most inappropriate, would be whataboutery: what about the judiciary’s own failings? The huge backlog, the glacial pace of justice dispensation, entertaining frivolous petitions, judicial overreach, malpractices — long is the list of issues that plague the system. The second is defensive: okay, the media does things it should not be doing but it is also because of the outcry raised by journalists that justice was served. There have been innumerable cases which resulted in the guilty getting their comeuppance because of journalists — Jessica Lal, the Ryan International School murder, the fodder scam, the securities scandal of 1992, etc. The third and appropriate media response would be the acceptance of guilt.

“Media trials cannot be a guiding factor in deciding cases. Of late, we see the media running kangaroo courts at times on issues even experienced judges find difficult to decide. Ill-informed and agenda-driven debates on issues involving justice delivery are proving to be detrimental to the health of democracy,” Ramana said. In fact, an agenda-driven section of the media is more dangerous than even the one that is ignorant and corrupt. As the CJI said, “Biased views being propagated by the media are affecting the people, weakening democracy, and harming the system. In this process, justice delivery gets adversely affected. By overstepping and breaching your responsibility, you are taking our democracy two steps backward.” He was especially critical of the electronic media. It is time media barons and senior journalists did some introspection



about the state of journalism—and tried to find the way out. Just bemoaning the falling professional and ethical standards of journalists will do no good; it has been done earlier a zillion times, the latest being that by the CJI. Often the decline is linked with liberalisation: this is usually that Leftist analysis of the situation, and it is a well-known fact that in the Left’s scheme of things anything bad is the result of market forces and corporate greed. The term ‘corporate media’ has a ring of sin around it. But this analysis fails to explain why the Western media, mostly owned by corporations, is largely from the problems plaguing its Indian counterpart.

The degradation of the Indian media is primarily because the top media houses and senior editors working there indulged in unscrupulous practices paid news, slanted presentation of events, and politically-motivated coverage. This brought short-term benefits to many of them but, in the long run, damaged their own credibility and that of the entire profession. There are journalists who are identified—not just by fellow journalists but even by ordinary people—with political parties. In short, they have forgotten their dharma and karma. Which also means that redemption of the media lies in something very simple: journalists following their dharma and karma.

PICTALK



A Hindu devotee dances after piercing a rod as part of a ritual in the temple of goddess Sheetla Mata in Jammu

AP

Akhilesh’s Predicament

The two allies of Samajwadi Party, Rajbhar and shivpal Yadav have quit, leaving it in disarray

The Samajwadi Party led by Akhilesh Yadav is still grappling with its defeat in the assembly elections. Nonetheless, its chief Akhilesh Yadav is in no mood to accommodate leaders who could challenge his authority or his decisions now or in the future. The Samajwadi Party that has ruled Uttar Pradesh is indeed struggling and finding it difficult to keep its allies along. Recent open letters to Shivpal Yadav and Om PrakashRajbhar are a case in point which led to the exit of its two important allies.

In the open letter, the Samajwadi Party had asked them to leave the alliance if they could command more respect elsewhere. Both soon after obliged. It is noteworthy that both Rajbhar and Shivpal Yadav had joined hands with the Samajwadi party to give a united fight against Yogi Adityanath. The alliance however failed to garner enough votes to dislodge the BJP government in the state.



has six MLAs in the UP assembly.

Shivpal Yadav had earlier criticized Akhilesh Yadav for not inviting him to party meetings and had held him responsible for the sorry state of affairs. Shivpal Yadav heads the Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party-Lohia. He was powerful in Akhilesh Yadav’s government in UP. He formed his own party but returned to SP before the 2022 assembly polls. Now the two of them would be at cross purpose with the Samajwadi Party

The departure of two is a big blow to the Samajwadi party but may not be the end of the road for it as its roots go deep. It may be down but is certainly not out. The legacy of Mulayam Singh Yadav that Akhilesh inherits will not wane so fast. Samajwadi party perhaps is the only party in Uttar Pradesh that can take on the BJP and give it a run for the money. But to do that it must set its house in order first.

Combating religious phobias

The United Nations as well as world at large needs to have better understanding of religious phobias which have many shades.

India has again cautioned the world about the dangers inherent in religious phobias. Raising the issue of Hindu phobia as also anti-Sikh and anti-Buddhist phobias, it once more called upon the United Nations to take appropriate steps to ensure logical balance while considering or discussing such phobias prevalent in the world. There cannot be double standards on religious phobias and combating these should not be a selective exercise.

Early this year UN General Assembly adopted a Pakistan-introduced resolution to proclaim 15th March as International Day to combat Islamophobia. Speaking at a high-level event on the eighteenth of June to mark the celebration of the first anniversary of International Day on Combating Hate Speech, India’s permanent representative to the UN T.S.Tirumurti said that the selective approach to dealing with religiophobias could well set a precedent that will lead to multiple resolutions on phobias based on selective religions which could turn the world body into religion camps.

The selective approach is completely unrelated to realities on the ground, lopsided and illogical.

Earlier in a major such incident in March 2020 a bomb attack by fundamentalists on a Gurudwara in Kabul killed twenty-five Sikh worshipers. During the last several decades such attacks and atrocities on Hindus and Sikhs in Afghanistan have almost completely diminished their population in Afghanistan which stood well over seven lacs before the occupation of the country by erstwhile Soviet forces in 1979.

In 2001 when the Taliban were at the zenith of their power in Afghanistan, explosives were laid at the base and the shoulders of the two Buddhas at Bamiyan blowing those to pieces. The whole world was outraged and aghast. Was the outrage a reaction to Islamophobia or fulfilment of an edict to pull down the gods of infidels and ultimately domi-



ne the world? It is such faulty approaches of the world body unrelated to the reality that depicts its colossal inadequacy and adds credence to calls for its urgent restructuring to make it fully representative and subsequent reformation.

The worst is that in Pakistan even attacks on holy places of minorities have turned into recurring occurrences. On December 31, 2020, a Hindu temple including the Samadhi of a Hindu religious leader in its premises in Karak District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan was set on fire by a mob led by some clerics and supporters of radical Islamist Jamiat-e-Islam party Fazalur Rehman group in Pakistan.

Such heinous crimes bring into focus almost perpetually continuing decades-old discrimination and persecution on religious grounds against minorities in Pakistan and draw attention to Nehru-Liaquat Pact arrived at between the then Prime Minister of India JawaharLal Nehru and the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Liaquat Ali Khan at New Delhi in April 1950.

The fact is that after the partition of India in 1947, the population of Hindu, Sikh,

“THE FACT IS THAT AFTER THE PARTITION OF INDIA IN 1947, THE POPULATION OF HINDU, SIKH, BUDDHIST, JAIN, AND CHRISTIAN MINORITIES WHO LIVED IN PAKISTAN HAS DWINDLED DRASTICALLY

Buddhist, Jain, and Christian minorities who lived in Pakistan has dwindled drastically whereas the population of Muslims who lived in areas which later became Indian Union has grown fabulously. While in India rights and security of minorities have been continuously and effectively safeguarded, Pakistan has persistently contravened the provisions of the Pact through consistent neglect and persecution of minorities.

India has also told the world body that it is equally concerned about attempts to characterize the motivation behind terror groups which could push the world back to pre-eleventh September 2001 era when there was hardly any compunction even in using terrorist groups to aid the state policy. Referring to the latest UN strategy to fight terror, India has also cautioned the Security Council to guard against new terminologies and false priorities which could dilute the fight against terrorism. Any dilution of terrorism could well turn it into a recognized means to achieve an undesirable end.

India has been the worst victim of terrorism particularly cross-border terrorism even though it has been the

strongest bulwark against intolerance and hatred. Its multicultural edifice has always made it a haven for all those who sought refuge in India at one time or the other irrespective of whether they were Jews, Zoroastrians, Tibetans, or those from India’s neighborhood. India has been following the principles of democracy with its necessary checks and balances and whenever or wherever any aberration occurs, it is addressed within the confines of the law and the country does not need selective outrages from outsiders. Indis strongly believes that a society based on pluralism where every religion is respected is the sine qua non for tolerance and harmony.

Terrorism hampers the evolution of global human civilization and globalized order. India has consistently pleaded including at UN platforms for concerted efforts by the international community to combat hate, violence, fundamentalism, extremism, and terror not just only against Abrahamic religions, but equally against followers of all other religions. .

(The writer is a former IIS officer and freelance journalist. Views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CHANGING PM WON’T HELP SRI LANKA

Sir — Sri Lankan economy can stabilize by the United world’s big (interest-free) financial help, NOT by changing PMs or Presidents. Just one or two nations like India cannot help in such a gigantic economic pathetic situation. The World Bank and IMF too should lend their (interest-free) helping hand. All the aforementioned should help Srilanka with short-term and long-term economic plans, organized plans for services, industrial and agricultural production, and stable self-reliance on a long-term basis.

The UNO, EU, and the World should ponder over this.

Madhu P. V | Secunderabad

SMRITI IRANI CORNERED

Sir — By playing the victim card and blaming Gandhis for the revelations in the matter of some skulduggery involving her daughter, Smriti Irani is stretching the truth too much especially as a video is available of well known food blogger Kunal Vijaykar interviewing her. To be able to run a restaurant at 18 is a privilege not given to many except the most favored.

Her son too recently graduated from a foreign university. All this makes in India and study in India is meant for the common citizens, not for the children of politicians. It would be unfair to target only Smriti Irani for this because most politicians would ensure their children are well placed in life. Citizens must realize that all this nationalistic fervor is for the consumption of the masses, while they ensure their children are well placed in life.

Anthony Henriques | Mumbai

PRESIDENT KOVIND CITES MAHATMA GANDHI

Sir — Just a day before his retirement, President Ram Nath Kovind advised that MPs should always follow Gandhian philosophy while exercising their rights of debate and dissent in Parliament. This is amusing in the sense that he has not opined so anytime during his long tenure of five years in the Raisina Hills and had

Raise awareness about Drowning



World Drowning Prevention Day (25 July) is the day to raise awareness about the mishaps and deaths of many people because of water. It is a day to elucidate the devastating and significant effects of drowning on families and communities while providing life-saving strategies to prevent it. This day was introduced last year by the United Nations.

The World Health Organization (WHO) will

do well by hosting a global event to tell the world about the importance of this day. The theme of World Drowning Prevention Day 2022—“Do one thing to prevent drowning”, emphasizes some methods which we can use to save our lives from drowning; Research estimates that 2, 36,000 people die from drowning each year in the world. Children and young people are more likely to die.

Drowning can occur as a result of failing to take precautions. Proper care of infants in water, carelessness of teens, drunk youths, or natural calamities can prevent such deaths.

There are some measures which we can take, like instead of using fences, we can use alarms and pool covers; children should be under the surveillance of the elderly; have life-saving equipment; know how to swim, and learn first aid and CPR. Let’s not experience the ache of drowning and save lives and humanity.

Vijaya Khede I Ujjain

GIVE INCENTIVE TO PLANT TREES

Sir — Growing urbanization poses a serious threat to the environment. According to data from the Forest Survey of India, every state’s tree cover has decreased by a minimum of 40 sq km in the past ten years. More trees would be cut down nationwide as a result of the Central Government’s forest conservation rules.

To improve tree cover every state has to come up with attractive offers to people. Every state in the nation should offer 5 to 6 units of free electricity in exchange for planting and maintaining a tree on a specific campus, similar to what the state of Jharkhand state government is doing now. The offer should be applied only to a suitable tree that will aid in future nature preservation. The offer of free electricity should focus on increasing people’s participation. Otherwise, every state government has to set a target to plant crores of saplings every monsoon to increase the state’s forest cover.

Vijaykumar H K | Raichur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

We see media running kangaroo courts, on issues even experienced judges find it difficult to decide. Ill-informed and agenda driven debates are proving to be detrimental to the health of democracy.

Chief Justice of India
—NV Ramana



Founder Microsoft
—Bill Gates

As the producer of Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior, it gives me immense joy to receive an honour at the 68th National Film Awards for the Best film .



Actor
—Ajay Devgn



I had the will to become stronger, become fitter and play for my country. Always grateful to those who stood by me, who guided me.

Cricketer
—Harik Pandya

You’re (Kejriwal) silent on CBI probe. Satyendar Jain lost his memory in jail. Will Manish Sisodia too lose memory?




I&B Minister
—Anurag Thakur

FIRST COLUMN

MOVING BACKWARDS WITH DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION

Rajasthan's move to reintroduce old-pension regime is politically motivated



S KALYANASUNDARAM

The Rajasthan government has decided to move back to the scheme for its employees. It has made a budget proposal for the same. The government employees (Central as well as states) were previously enjoying the benefit of defined pension. But the government sought to reform following much deliberations and efforts by unveiling a new pension scheme in 2004, which became applicable to employees who joined services from 1st January 2004.

The old pension scheme was linked to the last pay drawn by the employee, while also guaranteed with Dearness Allowance revision, ensuring the benefit of 50 per cent of last pay drawn as basic pension. In the new pension scheme, employees' contribution of 10 percent of pay plus employers' contribution of 14 percent of pay will be invested and pension would be incumbent upon the corpus. Thus, there is no assured pension based on the last drawn pay. The new pension scheme has limited the government's commitment to the extent of monthly contribution of 16 per cent.

For the past many years, government employees (Central as well States) are demanding continuation of the old pension scheme. Now if the Rajasthan government concedes to the demand, it will be difficult for other state governments to refuse such a demand. The Central government will also be forced to concede for such a demand when more state governments go back to defined pension schemes.



There is a difference between pension schemes of the Central and State governments and other public sector enterprises like the public sector banks. Governments do not have any pension corpus fund maintained separately, and liabilities are met from the revenue as part of the revenue expenditure. Public sector banks have a dedicated pension fund which is accumulated from monthly contributions by banks and based on the actuarial valuation any shortfall is also made good out of by the yearly profit of the banks. Hence, the fund created is out of profit generated by the banks and it is part of the staff cost. The pension fund is used to pay pension and family pension every month.

As the government does not have any such funding, it necessarily has to pay pension out of taxpayers' money every year and consequently the government may have to collect more tax from the general public to meet the additional demand.

According to the 2018-19 Annual Report on Pay and Allowances of Central Government Civilian employees, compiled by the Department of Expenditure under Ministry of Finance, the total outgo on salaries and pension of central government employees in that year was Rs 2.08 lakh crore. This was more than seven per cent of the previous year's figures.

In this connection, the Department of Information and Public Relations Government of Rajasthan has issued a full page advertisement in all leading newspapers on 26th April. The advertisement claims that the implementation of the old pension scheme will not result in deduction of even a single rupee from development expenditure of the state and welfare of its people. What does it mean? When the state expenditure is going to increase on account of reverting back to the old pension scheme, if it has to continue all the welfare schemes and infra funding, then it means, it has to find ways and means either to tax more or to borrow more.

The cumulative spending by states on pensions was over Rs 4 lakh crore in FY 2022 and the governments may not be able to sustain the defined pension without passing on the burden to the citizens. The move is aimed at electoral gains, which is essentially bad economics.

(The writer is a retired banker. The views expressed are personal.)

Swavlamban: A call for defence indigenisation

Big defence suppliers sell arms to rival countries, so India needs to fast-track indigenisation of military hardware



NISHTHA KAUSHIKI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently addressed the Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation (NIIO) seminar 'Swavlamban'. While he underlined that India has talent, PM Modi stressed that "it's not smart to let my soldiers go to the field with the same 10 weapons that the world has." He also significantly mentioned about the countries who capitalized on the challenge of the World War to emerge as the big arms exporters, which is indeed a crucial remark in the context of the arms sales.

Throughout the Cold War, the U.S. and the former Soviet Union used arms sales as an essential element of their strategic outreach. Future repair, maintenance services and modernization (path dependency), apart from the supply of spare parts, were used in favour of the suppliers. In a nutshell, recipient countries not only buy security-enhancing tools but also closely bind themselves to the supplier's strategic thought, which is reflected widely through their dealings with the third-party states.

Trend Indicator Value (TIV) from SIPRI indicates that the U.S. and the former Soviet Union dominated the arms market from 1950-1990 with a cumulative share of 70 per cent, worth USD 861 billions. Each power strictly adhered to its clients/ allies for sales of arms. Thus, the world witnessed a condition of strict bipolarity. One of the advantages of the arms trade was that it was an effective mechanism to "wield force and exert influence" without having to undertake risks of sending troops abroad. Consequently, the two Cold War rivals occupied the positions of the topmost exporters of arms.

In the context of geo-economics, the military-industrial complexes are also a source of direct and indirect employment generation. For instance, in 2002, China was not in the top 100 arms-producing and military services companies. It was the U.S. that had previously occupied a predominant position. By the time the year 2020 ended, five Chinese companies had made their way to the top 20. China's recent rise as an arms exporter gives a severe competition to the US. In 2020, a report by the US Department Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) expected a rate of 8,215 jobs per billion dollars of exports. Thus, for every billion arms trade lost would mean a sizable number of lost jobs.

Coming back to geopolitics, the role of swing states like Iran and Pakistan and their fear psychosis becomes important for suppliers. For example, from 1965 to 1979, when the U.S. ruled the roost in West Asia, arms transfers to Iran amounted to USD 24.01 billion. The situation, however, changed in the post-1979 Islamic revolution. As the narratives of 'rogue states' set in, U.S. arms imports to Iran vanished, and it started finding new partners like Russia. For the same period, Pakistan received arms supplies worth USD 0.7 bil-



GEOPOLITICALLY, TECHNICAL OVERLAPPING OF THE SAME MILITARY EQUIPMENT REACHING THE RIVALS, STRENGTHENS THE SUPPLIER'S POSITION AT THE TIME OF THE CONFLICTS. THIS CREATES VALUABLE SPACE FOR THE SUPPLIER TO MAINTAIN AN UPPER HAND IN THE MEDIATION

(The writer is an Assistant Professor at Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. The views expressed are personal.)



lion. Given Pakistan's economic health, the purchases would have been made through the economic grant assistance received from the US as a part of its Cold War Military blocks-Cento and Seato, but India's security concerns were brutally side-lined.

By 1990, China and Iran initiated various agreements related to technology transfer. From 2000 to 2021, Iran imported Chinese weapons worth \$0.78 billion. In South Asia, Chinese arms transfers are directly correlated to its OBOR policy and its own narratives of multipolarity to establish its hegemony. For instance, SIPRI's TIV for China indicates that from 2000 to 2021, South Asia has been the highest importer of Chinese weapons, with a value of \$14.61 billion (61.46 per cent) out of 23.77 billion. Pakistan was the highest importer of Chinese weapons.

The matter takes a dangerous turn with China's reverse engineering of the Russian weapons. This is where India is directly affected due to the collaborative Sino-Pak threat. For instance, in 2018, various news reports emerged that the Chinese J-20 fighter craft is a copy of the U.S. F-35 fighter jets, which Pakistan would induct in the coming few months. Russia had previously sounded an alarm over the Chinese reverse engineering tactics. For example, Shenyang J-11 fighter and HQ-9 surface-to-air missiles had technical similarities with the Russian Su27K and S-300 platforms.

As if this was no less, a new trend has emerged that the security experts need to be alert of. The US has delivered critical hardware such as engines to Pakistan to upgrade its weapons supplies pur-

chased from third countries like China and Turkey. For instance, during 2007-2010, turbofan TFE-371 (27 in number) was delivered for 27 K-8 trainer/ combat aircraft previously purchased from China. In 2020, LM-2500 gas turbine engines were delivered for 4 Mil Gem frigates imported from Turkey. Other modernisation efforts include supplying engines- Caterpillar-3516 (2017) and TF-50 (2007-08).

Thus, the proliferation of arms exporters and a loose multipolar world order dilute the sanctity of the technologies with a criss-cross of technical experimentations. Purchases for immediate usage are well understood, but getting out of this vicious trap of arms imports is equally essential. It becomes highly crucial for India to focus on the development of its capacities.

Geopolitically, technical overlapping of the same military equipment reaching the rivals, strengthens the supplier's position at the time of the conflicts. This creates valuable space for the supplier to maintain an upper hand in the mediation, while simultaneously turning the battle space into a second testing ground. For instance, the world understands the rivalry between India and Pakistan. However, a deeper dig into some finer details reveals that the suppliers have also sold some similar missiles to both the rivals. For instance, in 2005, the US sold Harpoon Block-2 anti-ship missile (AGM-84L version) to Pakistan for \$63 million. Later, the same version of the missile was purchased by India in 2012 for \$200 million. Further, common missiles between India and China that have been purchased from Russia include Kh-

31A1, R-77 beyond visual range air to air missile (BVRAAM) for Sukhoi aircrafts; 9M317 surface to air missile for Type-052B (Luyang-1) destroyers as well as Talwar Frigates; 53-65 anti-ship torpedo missile for China's Project 636 (kilo submarines) and India's Sindhughosh submarines, and finally, 48N6 missiles for S-400 missile defence system possessed by both China and India.

Finally, critical technology transfers are understandably discouraged. It is also to be recalled that Germany, Russia and France pulled out of the P-751 submarine Project that required technology transfer of the Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) system for developing submarines. They could have parted with the technology, given the strategic convergences that India individually has with them.

Thus, arms sales and foreign assistance are closely interrelated and promote a vicious cycle of sales, geopolitical narratives and generation of employment for the supplier country. If an armed conflict in South Asia involves India, who will benefit financially? Will not the kitty of arms suppliers like the U.S., Russia, etc., get heavier? Finally, if most of the weapons are re-engineered or have similarities for reasons explained above, then definitely in PM Modi, India has a leader who has strategic foresight who understands the dynamics of a war-based economy. He is correct in asserting that indigenisation and innovation hold the keys to the success of future warfare. Thus, it is high time for the nation to have a broad vision of geopolitics and support a visionary leader like PM Modi and also promote Swavlamban.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

MAMATA BANERJEE SHOULD HAVE DISMISSED THOSE, WHO ARE INSULTING HINDUISM, FROM THEIR POST OR PARTY. —MINISTER SMRITI IRANI



BRING IT ON BJP! I AM A KALI WORSHIPPER. I AM NOT AFRAID OF ANYTHING. NOT YOUR IGNORAMUSES. NOT YOUR GOONS. NOT YOUR POLICE. —TMC MP MAHUA MOITRA

Time to rethink, Western sanctions are not working

While Russia remains unscathed by the Western sanctions, the world is reeling under global inflation worsening with every passing day



ASHWANI MAHAJAN

(The author teaches at PGDAV College, University of Delhi.)

exporter of petroleum products and the second largest exporter of crude oil. The US and Europe banned Russia from their payment system SWIFT, hoping to stop Moscow selling its oil to the rest of the world. They thought that this would break Russia's financial backbone. But Russia's strategy dashed their expectations and today the U.S. and more importantly its friendly European countries are going through a major economic crisis.

Realising that due to the rising oil prices, all countries, including Europe, will take refuge in Russia in search of cheap oil, Russia started supplying its crude oil to India at discounted prices and in rupee terms. India increased her oil imports from Russia by 50 times. Besides, Russia faced no

obstacle in oil payments from European countries, as the countries from the continent have increasingly become dependent on cheaper oil from Russia. They continue to buy oil from Russia, bypassing their own sanctions. In such a situation, the impact of these sanctions on the Russian economy was minimal. After that, perturbed with the continuation of economic sanctions by European countries, Russian President Vladimir Putin decided to reduce the supply of oil to these countries.

Germany, which was still unaffected by the economic crises of the European countries for the last few decades, is now in the grip of oil shortage. This naturally had an impact on electricity generation in Germany. Not only has the cost of power generation increased



there, the supply of electricity has also come under threat. Due to rising oil prices in Germany, it has now decided to restart its closed thermal power plants. Other countries in Europe are also in trouble today due to supply constraints of gas and crude oil. While winter is nearing, it is natural for the governments of European countries to be worried. The German government is saying that this is an economic attack by Russian President

Putin on Europe and that Putin's strategy is to engineer inflation, create energy insecurity and create division amongst the countries of the European block.

Today, when the US and European countries are providing economic and security aid to Ukraine against Russia and jointly carrying out economic sanctions, Russia's action can be understood as a natural retaliation.

All projections of America and Europe have failed. It is true that the countries of the world, including India, believe that Russia should stop this war. No doubt the world's sympathies are with the people of Ukraine. When India carried out a nuclear explosion test in Pokhran in 1998, the US had imposed economic sanctions, while threatening punitive eco-

nomc measures against New Delhi on one or the other pretext. America has also imposed economic sanctions on many countries, including Iran and Venezuela. For all these reasons, the rest of the world has no sympathy with the US and Europe.

While Russia is ridiculing the western economic sanctions, the demand for their withdrawal by other countries is also gaining momentum. Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro has said that the economic sanctions against Russia are not working and his country has started buying fertilizers from Russia keeping in mind the interests of its country.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has also urged the US to withdraw their economic sanctions. She says that due to these economic sanctions, the

common man is suffering from inflation of oil and gas, food items, fertilizers and other commodities. Therefore, these economic sanctions are against human rights. While the economic sanctions are wreaking havoc all over the world, including the US, and European countries, the western block is pressurizing others to become a part of them too. But India, Brazil and other countries are not only continuing their relations with Russia, but also deepening the same, ignoring the US advice. What is needed today is that the US and European countries understand the reality and find a solution to this problem through diplomatic efforts other than economic sanctions. Deep understanding between India and Russia and their relations can also be used to end this war.

Russia says strike on Ukrainian port hit military targets



AP ■ KIV

Russian defence ministry officials on Sunday insisted that an airstrike on the port of Odesa — less than a day after Russia and Ukraine signed an agreement on resuming grain shipments from there — had hit only military targets.

“In the seaport in the city of Odesa, on the territory of a shipyard, sea-based high-precision long-range missiles destroyed a docked Ukrainian warship and a warehouse with Harpoon anti-ship missiles supplied by the US to the Kyiv regime,” ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said at a daily briefing.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his nightly televised address Saturday evening that the attack on Odesa “destroyed the very possibility” of dialogue with Russia.

The Ukrainian military said on Saturday that Moscow had attacked Odesa’s sea port with four cruise missiles, two of which had been shot down by Ukrainian air defense.

Command spokeswoman Nataliya Humenyuk said that no grain storage facilities were hit. Turkey’s defence minister, however, said he had had reports

from Ukrainian authorities that one missile struck a grain silo while another landed nearby, although neither affected loading at Odesa’s docks.

It was not immediately clear how the airstrike would affect plans to resume shipping Ukrainian grain by sea in safe corridors out of three Ukrainian Black Sea ports: Odesa, Chernomorsk and Yuzhny.

Russia and Ukraine on Friday signed identical agreements with the UN and Turkey in Istanbul aimed at clearing the way for the shipment of millions of tons of desperately needed Ukrainian grain, as well as the export of Russian grain and fertiliser. Senior UN officials voiced hopes that the deal would end a months-long standoff brought about by the war in Ukraine that threatened food security around the globe.

The agreement, obtained by The Associated Press, committed both Kyiv and Moscow to refraining from strikes on the three Black Sea ports.

Elsewhere on Sunday, Ukrainian authorities reported that Russian shelling continued to kill and injure civilians in Ukraine’s south and east.

The governor of the eastern Donetsk region, one of two

which make up Ukraine’s industrial heartland of the Donbas and a key focus of Russia’s offensive, said that two civilians had been killed and two more had been injured over the previous 24 hours.

The UK military on Sunday morning reported in its daily intelligence update that Russia was making “minimal progress” in its ongoing Donbas offensive, which it said remained small-scale and focused on the city of Bakhmut in Ukraine’s eastern Donetsk region.

The Ukrainian General Staff confirmed in its regular update that Russia was “conducting military operations to create conditions” for an assault on Bakhmut, while firing on surrounding settlements and battling Ukrainian defenders for control of a nearby thermal plant.

In Ukraine’s south, regional officials said that at least five civilians were wounded by Russian shells in the Black Sea port of Mykolaiv on Saturday night and Sunday morning.

“Also, as a result of the scattering of munitions and their fragments, fires occurred in open areas in the city,” said Vitaly Kim, governor of the Mykolaiv region.

Russia FM visits Egypt, part of Africa trip amid Ukraine war

AP ■ CAIRO

Russia’s top diplomat was in Cairo for talks Sunday with Egyptian officials as his country seeks to break the diplomatic isolation and sanctions by the West over its invasion of Ukraine.

Sergey Lavrov landed in Cairo late on Saturday, the first leg of his Africa trip that will also include stops in Ethiopia, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, according to Russia’s state-run RT television network.

On Sunday, he first held talks with President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, then his Egyptian counterpart, Sameh Shukry. Lavrov was later to meet with Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit and also address the pan-Arab organization, RT reported.

In a joint news conference with Shukry, Lavrov said he discussed Russia’s “military operation” in Ukraine with Egyptian officials who urged for “a political and diplomatic” settlement to the conflict.

Lavrov laid the blame on Ukraine for the rupture of earlier peace talks.

“We do not have any prejudices about resuming negotiations on a wider range of issues, but the matter does not depend on us,” he said. “Ukrainian authorities, from the president to his innumerable advisers, constantly say that there will be no negotiations until Ukraine defeats Russia on the battlefield.”

Following Russia’s airstrike Saturday on the port of Odesa, Ukraine, it was not immediately clear how plans to resume shipping Ukrainian grain by sea in safe corridors out of Ukrainian Black Sea ports would be affected.

Lavrov said in Cairo that Russian grain exporters are committed to fulfilling their obligations in the wake of twin U.N.-backed deals signed by Moscow and Kyiv to unblock the grain shipments from Ukrainian ports.

“We discussed the specific parameters of cooperation in this area, agreed on further contacts between the relevant ministries, and we have a common understanding of the causes of the grain crisis,” he said, without elaborating.

Russia’s war in Ukraine has had dire effects on the world economy, driving up oil and gas prices to unprecedented levels. Ukraine is one of the world’s largest exporters of wheat, corn and sunflower oil, but Russia’s invasion and



naval blockade of its ports have halted shipments.

Some Ukrainian grain is transported through Europe by rail, road and river, but with higher transportation costs. The war has also disrupted shipments of Russian products because shipping and insurance companies are reluctant to deal with Western sanctions on Russia.

African countries are among those most affected by ripples of the war. The prices of vital commodities skyrocketed and billions of dollars in aid have been directed to help those who fled the war in Europe. That has left millions of people in conflict areas in Africa and the Middle East suffering from worsening growing shortages in food and other assistance.

In an article posted on the Russian Foreign Ministry website, Lavrov rejected the West’s accusations that Russia is responsible for the global food crisis, as “another attempt to shift the blame to others.”

Seeking to rally African nations on his country’s side, he hailed what he called “an independent path” they took in refraining from joining the West in sanctioning Russia and the “undisguised attempts of the U.S. And their European satellites to gain the upper hand, and to impose a unipolar world order to the international community.”

The article was also published in four African newspapers.

At the Cairo news conference, Lavrov also said a second Russia-Africa summit will be held in mid-2023 as part of Moscow’s efforts to expand Russia’s clout in this part of the world. The first summit was held in 2019 the Black Sea resort of Sochi.

Lavrov’s visit comes less than two weeks after President Joe Biden’s Mideast trip. Biden visited Israel and also the occupied West Bank before heading to Saudi Arabia. He also attended a regional summit of Gulf Arab countries and also Egypt, Jordan and Iraq in Saudi Arabia.

Egypt, the Arab world’s most populous country, has refused to take sides on Russia’s war in Ukraine as it maintains close ties with both Moscow and the West. Egypt is also among the world’s largest importers of wheat, mainly from Russia and Ukraine.

El-Sissi completed a three-day visit to Serbia last week, the first in more than 30 years by an Egyptian president. Serbia has also abstained from joining Western sanctions against Russia and has maintained friendly relations with Moscow despite the war. The Egyptian leader also visited Germany and France last week.

Russia and Egypt have strengthened their ties considerably in recent years as el-Sissi and Russian President Vladimir Putin developed a close personal rapport, which helped increase military and economic cooperation.

Also last week, Russia’s state-owned atomic energy corporation, Rosatom, began construction of a four-reactor power plant it is building in Egypt.

Painful weekend of border delays from UK into France



AP ■ LONDON

Truck drivers and travellers seeking to cross from the UK into France faced major disruptions and long waiting times for a third day Sunday on the weekend that kicks off the summer holidays for many British families.

Huge lines have formed since Friday at both the Port of Dover for those taking car ferries across the English Channel and in nearby Folkestone on roads leading to the Eurotunnel that goes under the Channel to France.

Eurotunnel said drivers were still facing a wait of at least 90 minutes to check-in for the railway shuttle on Sunday. Still, congestion at the port had eased somewhat compared to the last two days, when it took several hours to clear a miles-long backlog of traffic as tens of thousands of people went on vacation along with a large amount of cargo trucks.

Since Britain left the European Union in 2020, UK travellers face stricter border checks when travelling to the continent. At Dover they are performed on the English side of the channel by French staff.

British officials and politicians have blamed the chaos on staffing shortages at border posts, an accusation denied by the French.

The Port of Dover said the checkpoints were “fully manned” on Sunday. Port authorities said as of Sunday morning, 72,000 passengers had been processed over the long weekend.

Mediterranean ships find 5 dead, rescue over 1,100 migrants



AP ■ MILAN

Italian vessels have recovered five bodies and rescued 674 people packed on a fishing boat adrift in the Mediterranean off the Libyan coast, the Italian Coast Guard said Sunday, while European charities reported saving more than 500 more.

Some of the survivors had to be plucked from the sea in the Italian operation Saturday that was carried out 120 miles (190 km) off the coast of Calabria by a Navy mercantile ship, three Coast Guard patrol boats and a financial police boat. All of those rescued were brought to ports in Calabria and Sicily.

The causes of death for the five dead were not immediately known.

The Coast Guard said it was just one in a series of rescues in recent days in the Italian search and rescue area of the central Mediterranean, as desperate people fleeing poverty or oppression seek a better life in Europe. In one case, a helicopter was called to evacuate a woman in need of medical treatment from a migrant boat in a precarious condition, the Coast Guard said.

In separate operations, the German charity Sea-Watch said it rescued 444 migrants trying to cross the Mediterranean on overcrowded, rickety smugglers’ boats. The Sea-Watch 3 vessel carried out the five operations over 24 hours, and said the rescued included a pregnant woman and a man who had suffered severe burns.

The charity is asking for permission to bring the rescued people to a safe port, as the rescue ship is unable to accommodate so many people.

In addition, the European charity SOS Mediterranee said its rescue ship Ocean Viking have saved 87 people, including 57 unaccompanied minors, from an overcrowded rubber boat off the Libyan coast. None had life jackets, the charity said.

Migrant arrivals in Italy are up by nearly one-quarter from 2021, with 34,013 recorded through Friday.

While still notably fewer than the 2015 peak year, the crossings remain deadly, with 1,234 people recorded dead or missing at sea by the UN refugee agency this year, 823 of those in the perilous central Mediterranean.

Japan’s Sakurajima volcano erupts, triggering evacuation

AP ■ TOKYO

A volcano on Japan’s main southern island of Kyushu erupted Sunday night, spewing ash and rocks. There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries in nearby towns but residents were advised to evacuate.

Japan’s Meteorological Agency said Sakurajima volcano erupted at around 8:05 pm, blowing off large rocks as far as 2.5 km (1.5 miles) away in the southern prefecture of Kagoshima.

Footage on Japan’s NHK public television showed orange flames flashing near the crater and dark smoke of ash billowing from the mountaintop high up into the night sky.

“We will put the people’s lives first and do our utmost to assess the situation and respond to any emergency,” Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihiko Isozaki told reporters. He called on residents



in the area to pay close attention to the latest update from the local authorities to protect their lives.

The agency said it has raised the eruption alert to the highest level of five and about 120 residents in two towns facing the volcano were advised to leave their homes.

The agency warned of falling volcanic rocks in areas

within 3 km (1.8 miles) of the crater and possible flow of lava, ash and searing gas within 2 km (1.2 miles).

Sakurajima, about 1,000 km (600 miles) southwest of Tokyo, is one of the most active volcanos in Japan and has repeatedly erupted. It used to be an island but became a peninsula following an eruption in 1914.

Man opens fire on Philippine campus, killing 3 people

AP ■ MANILA

A gunman opened fire on university campus in the Philippine capital region on Sunday, killing a former town mayor and two others in a brazen attack ahead of a graduation ceremony, police said.

The suspect was armed with two pistols and a silencer and was captured in a car he commandeered trying to escape the Ateneo de Manila University in suburban Quezon City, police said. He was blocked by witnesses and authorities outside the university gates. The sprawling university was put under lockdown and the graduation rite at the law school on campus was canceled, police said.

Investigators were trying to determine a motive for the attack, but Quezon City police chief Brig. Gen. Remus Medina said the suspect, apparently a



medical doctor, had a long-running feud with Rosita Furigay, a former mayor of Lamitan town in southern Basilan province.

She died in the attack together with her aide and a university guard. Furigay’s daughter, who was supposed to attend the graduation, was wounded and taken to a hospital, a police report said.

Video of the aftermath of the shooting showed students and officials in graduation gowns screaming and running away in panic in the lobby of the school building while others tended to the victims who were sprawled on the ground in the driveway.

Biden feeling ‘much, much better’ after Covid diagnosis

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden is feeling “much, much better” after testing positive for the coronavirus, the White House COVID-19 response coordinator said Sunday, confirming that the 79-year-old US leader was infected with a highly contagious variant spreading throughout the country.

“It is the BA.5 variant ... But thank goodness our vaccines and therapeutics work well against it, which is why I think the president’s doing well,” Dr Ashish Jha told CBS’ “Face the Nation.”

“I checked in with his team late last night. He was feeling well.

“He had a good day yesterday. He’s got ... An upper respiratory infection and he’s doing just fine. We haven’t gotten any updates this morning, but throughout the night he was feeling much, much better.”



China successfully launches first lab module for its space station

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Sunday successfully launched the first lab module for its under-construction space station, the latest step in the country’s ambitious programme to complete it by year’s end.

The giant Long March-5B Y3 carrier rocket, carrying Wentian, blasted off from the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site on the coast of the southern island province of Hainan, according to the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA). The new module will function both as a backup of the core module, Tianhe, and as a powerful scientific experiment platform in the space station currently being built by the country.

China is on the track to completing the construction of its space station as it successfully launched the first lab module, state-run People’s Daily reported.

The construction of China’s space station called Tiangong is expected to be completed this year.

It will then evolve from a single-module structure into a national space laboratory with three modules -- the core module, Tianhe, and two lab modules, Wentian and Mengtian.

The Tianhe module was launched in April 2021, and the Mengtian module is set to be launched in October this year, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

In the next couple of hours, the Wentian will rendezvous and then dock with the Tiangong station’s Tianhe core

module, the CMSA said.

After that the three-member crew mission commanders — Senior Colonel Chen Dong, Senior Colonel Liu Yang and Senior Colonel Cai Xuzhe currently building Tiangong station — will enter the lab module to check its condition and internal equipment, it said.

In the coming weeks, Wentian will be repositioned by a robotic apparatus from the forward docking port to a lateral port, where it will remain and be prepared for long-term operation, it said.

To prepare for the Wentian’s arrival, a cargo spacecraft Tianzhou 3 detached from the Tiangong station on July 17 and it will be guided by ground controllers to fall back to Earth in due course, it said.

Currently, Tiangong consists of the Tianhe module, the Tianzhou 4 cargo ship and the Shenzhou XIV spacecraft.

Wentian lab features cutting-edge technologies, strong capabilities, and sophisticated design and represents a new milestone in China’s space industry, state-run China Daily reported.

It consists of three major parts — a crew working compartment, an airlock cabin and an unpressurised service module. Once ready, China’s low-flying space station will be the only country to own a space station. The International Space Station (ISS) of Russia is a collaborative project of several countries.

China Space Station (CSS) is also expected to be a competitor to the ISS built by Russia.

Milley: China more aggressive, dangerous to US, allies

AP ■ JAKARTA

The Chinese military has become significantly more aggressive and dangerous over the past five years, the top US military officer said during a trip to the Indo-Pacific that included a stop Sunday in Indonesia.

Gen Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the number of intercepts by Chinese aircraft and ships in the Pacific region with US and other partner forces has increased significantly over that time, and the number of unsafe interactions has risen by similar proportions. "The message is the Chinese military, in the air and at sea, have become significantly more and noticeably more aggressive in this particular region," said Milley, who recently asked his staff to compile details about interactions between China and the US and others in the region.

His comments came as the US redoubles its efforts to strengthen its relationships with Pacific nations as a counterbalance to China, which is trying to expand its presence and influence in the region. The Biden administration considers China its "pacing threat" and America's primary long-term security challenge.

Milley's trip to the region is sharply focused on the China threat. He will attend a meeting of Indo-Pacific chiefs of defense this week in Sydney, Australia, where key topics will be China's escalating military growth and the need to maintain a

free, open and peaceful Pacific.

US military officials have also raised alarms about the possibility that China could invade Taiwan, the democratic, self-ruled island that Beijing views as a breakaway province. China has stepped up its military provocations against Taiwan as it looks to intimidate it into unifying with the communist mainland.

US military officials have said Beijing wants to be ready to make a move on the island by 2027. The US remains Taiwan's chief ally and supplier of defense weapons. U.S. Law requires the government to treat all threats to the island as matters of "grave concern," but remains ambiguous on whether the U.S. Military would defend Taiwan if it were attacked by China.

China's top military officer, Gen Li Zuocheng told Milley in a July 7 call that Beijing had "no room for compromise" on issues such as Taiwan. He said he told Milley that the US must "cease US-Taiwan military collusion and avoid impacting China-U.S. Ties and stability in the Taiwan Strait."

The US and others are also worried that a recent security agreement that Beijing signed in April with the Solomon Islands could lead to the establishment of a Chinese naval base in the South Pacific. The US and Australia have told the Solomon Islands that hosting a Chinese military base would not be tolerated.

"This is an area in which China is trying to do outreach for their own



purposes. And again, this is concerning because China is not doing it just for benign reasons," Milley told reporters traveling with him. "They're trying to expand their influence throughout the region. And that has potential consequences that are not necessarily favorable to our allies and partners in the region."

Milley's visit to Indonesia is the first by a US joint chiefs chairman since Adm. Mike Mullen in 2008. But US leaders have crisscrossed the Asia-Pacific in recent months, including high-profile visits by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The Biden administration has been taking steps to expand its military and security relationship with Indo-Pacific nations as part of a campaign to build a stronger network of alliances in China's backyard and counter China's growing influence.

Milley declined to provide specific numbers of unsafe Chinese interactions with US and allied aircraft and ships. But Austin, in a speech in Singapore last month, referred to an "alarming increase" in the number of unsafe intercepts by People's Liberation Army aircraft and vessels. Austin specifically pointed to a February incident where a PLA navy ship directed a laser at an Australian P-8 maritime patrol aircraft. But there have been a number of others. A surveillance aircraft controlled by Canada was recently intercepted by a Chinese fighter in international airspace. And U.S. Ships

are routinely dogged by Chinese aircraft and vessels during transits, particularly around manmade islands claimed by Beijing in the South China Sea.

Milley said there have been Chinese intercepts with Japan, Canada, Australia, Philippines and Vietnam. They all, he said, have seen a "statistically significant" increase in intercepts, and the number of unsafe incidents has increased by an "equal proportion," Milley, who will meet with Gen. Andika Perkasa, chief of the Indonesian National Defence Forces, said Pacific nations like Indonesia want the U.S. Military involved and engaged in the region.

"We want to work with them to develop interoperability and modernize our militaries collectively," Milley said, in order to ensure they can "meet whatever challenge that China poses." He said Indonesia is strategically critical to the region, and has long been a key US partner.

Earlier this year, the US approved a USD 13.9 billion sale of advanced fighter jets to Indonesia. And in Jakarta last December, Blinken signed agreements for enhanced joint naval exercises between the U.S. And Indonesia.

China has condemned US efforts to expand its outreach in the region, accusing America of trying to build an "Asian NATO." During a speech in Singapore, Austin rejected that claim. "We do not seek a new Cold War, an Asian NATO or a region split into hostile blocs," he said.

Sri Lanka protest site untouched, Prez Ranil tells diplomatic community

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's newly-elected President Ranil Wickremesinghe has reaffirmed his commitment to uphold the rights of peaceful and non-violent assembly, saying the protest site was left untouched in Friday mid-night operation to remove protesters from the Presidential Secretariat, his office said on Sunday.

Sri Lanka's security forces forcibly evicted anti-government protesters camped outside the presidential office in Colombo in a pre-dawn raid on Friday on the order of Wickremesinghe.

Protesters were camping outside the presidential office for months, demanding the resignation of former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who fled the country on July 13, and Wickremesinghe, a key Rajapaksa ally.

During a meeting with the diplomatic personnel in Colombo on Friday, President Wickremesinghe affirmed that the Government will uphold both Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 14 (1) (b) of the Constitution of Sri Lanka, which governs the right to peaceful assembly, said a statement issued by the President's office.

The statement came as US Ambassador Julie Chung had taken the Lankan government to task for the attack on the unarmed protesters.

"The President further explained that the instructions given by the American Civil



Liberties Union stated that protesters were not permitted to block government buildings and interfere with other purposes the property was designed for," the statement said.

"Addressing concerns regarding the GotaGoGama protest site, it was explained that it had not been removed by security forces, contrary to erroneous social media reports," it added.

Furthermore, the participants were also briefed by the Attorney General on the legal avenues being pursued, including producing all those arrested by the police before the Colombo Magistrate Court, it said.

The protesters blocked the secretariat gate on April 9, demanding the resignation of then President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

On July 9, they stormed the official residence of the president forcing him to flee to safety and occupied his office, the site of the continuous protest since April 9.

The removal of the protesters came on the same night as Wickremesinghe took oaths as the succeeding president for the balance under three-year term of Rajapaksa.

Protestors on Saturday stayed about 100 metres away from the Presidential Secretariat and held no protest during the day.

The protest, also known as the Aragalaya — a Sinhalese word for "struggle" — disrupted work for a prolonged period at the Presidential Secretariat, which has gone through heavy damages during the agitation and requires necessary renovations.

Year 2023 to 2033 declared as Nepal visit decade to boost tourism



PTI ■ KATHMANDU

The Nepal government on Sunday announced that 2023 to 2033 will be celebrated as the Nepal visit decade, aiming at reviving the country's tourism sector hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

Making the announcement, Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation minister Jeevan Ram Shrestha also unveiled the 73-point tourism recovery action plan.

Under the action plan, the government will offer attractive discounts to foreign film producers and artists for shooting in Nepal, the minister said.

The government will also host an international conference of tourism ministers from South Asia nations in the near future.

The action plan also includes launching night time heritage walks in Kathmandu, Kirtipur, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur within the Kathmandu valley.

Nepal's tourism sector, a vital forex earner, was hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. However, as the cases of COVID started declining this year, over 50,000 tourists per month are visiting the Himalayan nation since the beginning of the year 2022, officials said.

Rishi Sunak plugs for 'common sense' refugee system as UK PM

PTI ■ LONDON

Rishi Sunak on Sunday focussed on the sensitive issue of immigration by promising a "healthy dose of common sense" approach as part of his bid to win over Conservative Party voters in the leadership race for a new party leader to succeed Boris Johnson as Prime Minister.

The 42-year-old British Indian former Chancellor laid out a 10-point plan to secure the UK's borders if he wins in the Tory members' postal ballot, the results of which will be known on September 5.

Writing in 'The Daily Telegraph', he also promised to curb the power of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), withhold aid money if countries refuse to take back failed asylum seekers and criminals, and use cruise ships to house illegal migrants.

"The ECHR cannot inhibit our ability to properly control our borders and we shouldn't let it. We need to inject a healthy dose of common sense into the system, and that is what my plan does," he wrote. The Tory MP for Richmond (Yorks) suggested that the government has so far failed to deliver on the Vote Leave Brexit pledge to "take back control" of the country's borders, as he describes the country's asylum system as chaotic and "broken".

"Numbers [of refugees] should be determined by need. Our Parliament will be given control of the number of refugees we accept each year," he



writes in the newspaper.

Reviving his Brexit credentials as someone who campaigned for Britain to leave the European Union (EU) in the 2016 referendum, Sunak pointed out that immigration and a desire to control Britain's borders was one of the factors that motivated him towards that decision. He also referenced his own Indian immigrant roots as he set out his plan for a controlled system, a move seen as appealing to the extreme right of the Tory party which has currently put his opponent in the race, Liz Truss, in the lead.

"As my own family experienced when they came to this country over 60 years ago, Britain is a generous, ambitious and compassionate country and that is something to be proud of," he wrote. "Successive waves of immigrants have come to the UK, seeking a better life and giving so much back in return. And where we have a duty for those seeking asylum - whether it be

those fleeing war-torn countries such as Ukraine or escaping persecution as we are seeing in Hong Kong - we will fulfil it. "But basic human decency must be accompanied with hard-headed common sense. In June 2016, the people of this country sent a clear message. I heard them and as Prime Minister, I will do what was promised and take back control," he added.

On the controversial policy of deporting some illegal migrants to Rwanda, he declared that the UK cannot "waste large sums of taxpayers' money" on the policy only to fall at the first legal hurdle.

"I will make the policy work and will do whatever it takes to implement it and pursue additional similar partnerships," he declared. Truss also geared her campaign focus towards immigration on Sunday as she also pledged to ensure the scheme to deport some illegal migrants to Rwanda is fully implemented.

Israeli forces kill 2 in West Bank gun battle: Palestine

AP ■ NABLUS (WEST BANK)

Israeli troops and special forces on an arrest mission exchanged fire with Palestinians barricaded in a house in the occupied West Bank on Sunday, Israeli police said. The local rescue service said two Palestinians were killed.

Israeli police said a number of armed Palestinians were killed during the hours-long battle deep inside the city of Nablus, without specifying. Police said no Israeli forces were wounded.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said the two men were killed in clashes with the military in Nablus and identified them as Aboud Sobh, 29, and Muhammad Al-Azizi, 22.

Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid said the suspects had been wanted for a series of shootings. "We won't sit and wait for Israeli citizens to be harmed," he told a meeting of his Cabinet. "We will go out and harm the terrorists in their homes."

The military said a violent protest broke out as troops were operating in Nablus, with protesters hurling explosive devices at soldiers and opening fire at them. The soldiers fired back, the military said.

The military was continuing to operate in another area of the West Bank, where another brief exchange of fire took place.

Israeli forces have been carrying out near-daily raids in the West Bank for months, in a bid to quell a spate of attacks by Palestinians on Israelis that has since subsided. The military has faced resistance during some of those raids, which in several instances have turned deadly.

Church leaders say sorry for historical sins

AP ■ TORONTO

When Pope Francis apologises to Indigenous groups on Canadian soil this week, he will make another effort toward healing harms inflicted at church-run residential schools — and add to the Catholic Church's growing ledger of atonement for past transgressions. Like the papacy, top Protestant leaders also have gradually issued institutional mea culpas for their churches' historical wrongs. Many of the apologies on behalf of Christian denominations are for grave offenses: genocide, sex abuse, slavery, war and more.

While increasingly common, the ecclesial apology is a relatively modern phenomenon, said Jeremy Bergen, a church apology expert and professor of religious and theological studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario.

"For 1,900 years, churches didn't apologise for the bad things that they did," Bergen said.

He pinpoints the pivot to significant apologies coming in the aftermath of World War II, especially a declaration by Germany's Protestant churches that they failed to adequately oppose the Nazis. It was



among the first in a series of recognitions that Christian institutions themselves committed wrongs, Bergen said. In the 1990s, church apologies increased as more attention was paid to human rights following the Cold War, he said.

The pope flew to Canada on Sunday to apologise for abuses Indigenous people suffered in the country's state-funded residential Christian schools. From the 1800s to the 1970s, Native children were forced to attend the schools where abuse was rampant. The apology follows a similar one Francis made in April in Rome to members of Canada's First

Nations, Inuit and Metis communities.

The setting matters, said Fernie Marty, a member of the Papaschase, a Cree nation in Alberta. The 73-year-old is a survivor of a day school — part of a system that, like residential schools, aimed to assimilate Indigenous children.

He appreciated the pope's Rome apology, but "this is where all the atrocities happened," Marty said. It's "more meaningful coming on Canadian soil."

Marty, an elder at Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton, a Catholic parish in Alberta's capital oriented toward

Indigenous people and culture, said the pope's visit offers "a tremendous opportunity for my own personal healing." But George Pipestem, 79, a member of the Montana First Nation and a survivor of the Ermineskin Indian Residential School, questioned the relevance of a papal apology, just as he questioned apologies by Canadian prime ministers for the government's role in the schools.

He said the abusers should be the ones apologizing: "They're all gone, though. This apologizing, it doesn't matter to me. It's like nothing. It's only a word." It is not uncommon for a leader who was neither involved nor alive when a wrong was committed to deliver a church's apology. Some took generations to say sorry.

Graham Dodds, a political science professor at Concordia University in Montreal who researches political apologies, says institutional responsibility can extend beyond the present day or any one person's lifetime.

"It's part of being a leader to accept that connection with things past," he said.

St. John Paul II embraced that responsibility and left a legacy of papal apologies. None were more significant than his list of mea culpas issued as

the Catholic Church opened its 2000 Jubilee and entered its third millennium. John Paul apologized for Catholics' sins through the ages, including against women, Jews and other religious minorities. In his most memorable act, he tucked a prayer note into the Western Wall in Jerusalem asking God's forgiveness for those who "have caused these children of yours to suffer." He wanted "something of a clean slate," Dodds said.

The following year, when John Paul sent his first-ever email, it was an apology for colonial-era abuses of Aboriginal peoples in Australia and the Pacific, as well as for the sexual abuse of children by Catholic clergy.

His successor, Pope Benedict XVI, also apologized for clerical abuse, most significantly in a 2010 letter to Irish faithful. He said he was "truly sorry" for the hurt and blamed Irish bishops, though he was silent on Vatican responsibility.

Francis has gone further, first apologizing for his own errors in defending a Chilean bishop who covered up abuse by the country's most notorious pedophile priest. That 2018 scandal was a turning point in the pope's understanding of abuse, and he continued to apologize for it.

Biden's global promises held back by politics at home

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Soon after taking office, President Joe Biden went to State Department headquarters to tell the rest of the world that the United States could be counted on again after four years of Donald Trump's bull-in-the-china-shop foreign policy. "America is back," Biden said, in what has become a mantra.

But keeping his promises on the international stage has proved much more difficult than Biden might have expected. Domestic politics have routinely been a roadblock when it comes to taking action on climate change, taxes and pandemic relief, undermining hopes that Biden could swiftly restore the U.S. To its unquestioned role as a global leader.

The result is an administration straining to maintain its credibility abroad while Biden fights a rearguard action on Capitol Hill. It's simply more



difficult to press other countries to do more to address challenges that span borders when he's struggling to deliver on those same issues at home.

"Every new thing takes a little bit of the luster off, and contributes to a sense of a struggling president," said Michael O'Hanlon, the Brookings Institution director of research for foreign policy.

Biden has earned respect for marshaling an international response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the US has shipped more coronavirus vaccines around the world than any other country.

GOVT PROPOSES REVAMP OF TELECOM RULES TO KEEP PACE WITH MODERNISATION

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Department of Telecom has floated a consultation paper on the revamp of telecom rules mainly to keep pace with the change in technology like 5G, simplify laws and promote investments, according to an official document.

The new rules will not be applicable with retrospective effect to cause any adverse impact on the relevant entity, according to the consultation paper.

"A new law on telecommunication needs to aim at establishing an enabling future-ready framework for the development of telecommunication sector and deployment of new technologies. Such a law needs to consolidate the existing laws governing telecommunication sector, while keeping in view global best practices," the consultation paper dated July 23 said.

The government has proposed that the new framework should be drafted in a plain and simple language so that any citizen is able to understand the rules.

The proposed law is envisaged to provide adequate provisions to ensure regulatory certainty and promote investment.

"This would mean continuity of licenses and authorizations under the old regime. To minimize policy disruption, such a law needs to provide for continuation of rules, guidelines, administrative orders issued under the existing regime until superseded by new rules.

Furthermore, a new law needs to ensure that the terms and conditions will



not be modified with retrospective effect to the detriment of the relevant entity," the paper said.

The proposal has come at a time when the country is gearing up to start a spectrum auction for rolling out 5G services.

Along with existing players like Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio, and Vodafone Idea, Adani Group has applied to bid for the airwaves and enter the wireless telecom services business.

The government has proposed to come up with rules for the surrender of the spectrum that has been missing under the

existing framework and entities that have shut business or are under the process of liquidation have not been able to gain from their spectrum holding.

Under the new framework, the government plans to relax penal provisions and make them proportionate to offences.

The DoT officials at present impose the highest permissible penalty of Rs 50 crore per offence to avoid alleged biasedness in their work and save their neck from any subjective interpretation of law enforcement agencies or the auditors.

Banking stocks rally on rising rates, improving NPA scene; experts bullish on uptrend

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Helped by rising interest rates, expanding retail loan book and improved credit quality, many banking stocks have outperformed broader market indices this year and experts are hopeful of a continuing rally as long as there are no major macroeconomic headwinds.

While the BSE Bank index has risen by 5 per cent since the beginning of 2022, as against a decline of nearly 4 per cent in the BSE benchmark Sensex, some key banking stocks like Bank of Baroda have rallied by 30-40 per cent in the same period, as per the stock exchange data.

Analysts said the banking space is known as a 'mother sector' as a better performance by banks indicates better days for the economy, but the banking sector is hit hard when the economy does badly.

With the NPA (non-performing assets) scenario having improved and not many cases of major bad loans emerging after a large-scale deleveraging exercise carried out by corporate borrowers, there are few indications that the things can go bad for the sector as is being seen in quarterly results of



most banks, experts said.

Ajit Kabi, Banking Analyst at LKP Securities, said some banks have performed significantly well, factoring the rising interest rate scenario.

"ICICI Bank, Bank of Baroda and SBI have performed on expected lines. However, HDFC Bank has underperformed because of merger and margins woes," he said.

Bank of Baroda has zoomed nearly 42 per cent in 2022 so far, Federal Bank by 29 per cent and Karur Vysya Bank

has climbed 18 per cent.

"Banks have done reasonably well in 2022. But we also must understand that there has been a divergence within the banking sector. While, on one hand, banks such as Federal Bank were exceptional performers, others such as RBL Bank, have struggled to get investors' attention. So was the case with IDFC First Bank and India's most valuable bank -- HDFC Bank," said Sunil Damania, Chief Investment Officer, MarketsMojo, a stock advisory and research plat-

form. He said all these three banks (RBL Bank, IDFC First Bank and HDFC Bank) are below the level they were quoting at the end of 2021.

"So, while the Nifty Bank index has done reasonably well and outperformed the broader indices, not all banks have participated, including HDFC Bank. And hence, while some investors are happy, others have been disappointed depending on the stock they have invested in," Damania added.

Prompt grievance redressal of taxpayers top priority: CBDT chairman Nitin Gupta

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prompt redressal of taxpayers' grievances remains the top priority for the tax department, the newly appointed chairman of Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Nitin Gupta said on Sunday.

In his message on the occasion of Income Tax Day, he said the tax department has reported the highest ever tax collection of Rs 14.09 lakh crore in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2022 due to streamlining of policies and processes that eased compliance for taxpayers.

"However, we cannot rest on our laurels and need to keep working hard to maintain this momentum," he said.

"Prompt redressal of taxpayers' grievances in the true spirit of the Taxpayers' Charter shall remain a top priority area."

CBDT, the tax administration arm of the government, will continue to engage proactively with the taxpayers and other stakeholders and will use their feedback to keep improving processes.

Gupta said the last few



years have witnessed tremendous changes across sectors in the economy including increasing digitization, emergence of new categories of businesses and new asset classes.

"The taxpayers of today desire ease of compliance and prompt redressal of their issues," he said. "Alive to such changes the department has redesigned its policies and re-engineered its processes with the aim of enhancing taxpayer convenience and infusing greater transparency into its functioning."

CBDT, he said, is an enabler and service provider.

Stating that the Income Tax Department is not a monolithic entity, he said there are many areas of technical specialisation and differentiation which are being administered by committed cadres of officers and officials.

"Behind those at the front end dealing with assessments, grievance resolution and taxpayer services, there are dedicated personnel who are responsible for areas like formulation of policies, reskilling, and reorienting to the evolving needs of the stakeholders, maintaining the technical architecture etc," he said.

"They have been largely instrumental in the change management that the department has been able to successfully achieve over the last few years."

Gupta, who took over as the new head of CBDT late last month, said the tax department needs to abide by a service-oriented approach, strengthened by rights values and ethics, innovation, collaboration and resilience.

Mcap of nine of top-10 firms jumps over Rs 2.98 lakh cr; RIL, TCS lead winners



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nine of the 10 most valued firms added Rs 2.98 lakh crore to their market valuation last week amid a bullish trend in equities, with Reliance Industries and TCS emerging as lead gainers.

Last week, the 30-share BSE benchmark jumped 2,311.45 points or 4.29 per cent.

Barring Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), the top 10 firms, including HDFC Bank, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever Limited and ICICI Bank, added a total of Rs 2,98,523.01 crore to their market valuation.

The market capitalisation

(mcap) of Reliance Industries jumped Rs 68,564.65 crore to Rs 16,93,245.73 crore at close on Friday.

The valuation of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) shot up by Rs 64,929.87 crore to Rs 11,60,285.19 crore. ICICI Bank added Rs 34,028.7 crore to its valuation at Rs 5,56,526.81 crore.

The mcap of Infosys climbed Rs 31,893.77 crore to Rs 6,33,793.91 crore and that of State Bank of India by Rs 30,968.4 crore to Rs 4,58,457.30 crore.

The valuation of Bajaj Finance rose by Rs 20,636.69 crore to Rs 3,78,774.69 crore

and that of Hindustan Unilever by Rs 16,811.32 crore to Rs 6,20,362.58 crore.

HDFC Bank's valuation increased by Rs 7,73,770.09 crore and that of HDFC climbed Rs 14,579.24 crore to Rs 4,16,701.23 crore.

From the laggard, LIC's valuation declined by Rs 12,396.99 crore to Rs 4,35,760.72 crore.

In the ranking of top 10 firms, Reliance Industries emerged as the most valued company, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, LIC, HDFC and Bajaj Finance.

GST on essential items after States sought levy, aimed to check evasion: Official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

GST on pre-packaged goods/ food packets was levied after some states gave feedback of losing revenues they previously earned from levy of VAT on food items, a top government official said.

The decision to levy the tax, which came into effect from July 18, is not that of the Union government but of the GST Council. It was considered by the Fitment Committee that has officers of some states and the centre.

It was also recommended by a group of ministers (GOM) consisting of minister representatives of some states and finally by the GST council, Revenue Secretary Tarun Bajaj told PTI here.

In all, the GST Council, the new constitutional mechanism in the country for taking decisions on GST, took a consensus view on levy of the tax, he said.



The panel, which is headed by the Union Finance Minister and comprises representatives of all states and union territories, takes decisions when everyone is onboard, he said.

However, pulses, wheat, rye, oats, maize, rice, flour, suji, besan, puffed rice and curd/lassi when sold loose and not pre-packed or pre-labelled will not attract any GST.

The comments come against the backdrop of opposition parties led by the Congress stalling functioning of Parliament in the first week of the monsoon session over levying of GST on daily use items and other issues.

While states ruled by non-BJP parties were party to the decision taken on the levy of the tax at the Council's meeting in Chandigarh last month, vociferous protests against the levy came just as the monsoon session of Parliament was to start.

"Before GST came into place (on July 1, 2017) during the VAT regime, this (tax on essentials) was there in many states. States were getting revenue (from levying VAT on food items). Once in 2017, this new goods and services tax (GST) regime came, it was envisaged that this would continue but it was levied only on branded products when rules and circulars came out," Bajaj said.

Demand to rise 7-8% in Jul-Sep, no cut in 'growth' capex: JSW

PTI ■ KOLKATA

JSW Steel expects scrapping of export duty on the metal soon and foresees that the price will remain 'firm' with a revival in demand by 7-8 per cent in the second quarter of the current fiscal, a top company official said.

The industry witnessed a de-growth by 4.5 per cent in the domestic market in the April-June period of the 2022-23 fiscal, he claimed. The steel major also said that there would be no "cut" in its capital expenditure (capex) plans for the purpose of growth, but only discretionary and non-essential special projects have been cali-



brated till the market situation normalises. JSW had announced a reduction in capex by Rs 5,000 crore to Rs 15,000 crore in the current fiscal. "Steel demand in the ongoing Q2 period is expected to be 7-8 per cent higher for the industry with a revival of re-stocking activity from July. Our profitability will also improve over the Q1FY'23.

IIFT moves up one place to 24th in NIRF ranking

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The commerce ministry's Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) has moved up one place to 24th rank under management category in the NIRF ranking 2022. The ranking under the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) was released by Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan recently. In the last year's ranking, IIFT had climbed one position to the 25th spot. It was 26th in 2020 and 31st in 2019. It was at 23rd rank in 2018, 30th in 2017 and 81st in 2016.

Rupee faces risk of further decline to 82 vs USD in near term: Experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian rupee may further depreciate to 82 to a dollar in the near term due to widening of trade deficit and expected aggressive rate hike by the US Fed later this week to tame record high inflation, economists said.

There is widespread speculation that the US Fed in its July 26-27 meeting may increase the interest rate by 50-75 basis points, which could result in flight of capital from emerging nations like India.

With dollar outflow and elevated level of crude oil prices, the rupee would see further depreciation.

Last week, the rupee depreciated to a lifetime low of 80.06 a dollar.

Economists are of the opinion that the rupee after touching a life-time low may settle around 78 to a dollar by March next year with stability around crude oil prices and likely improve-



ment in geopolitical situation.

"Overall what we had assessed is that the rupee could settle somewhere around 79 to a dollar. That will be the average price for the entire year...In the current depreciating cycle, the rupee may fall to over 81/USD in the current political situation," India Ratings & Research principal economist Sunil Kumar Sinha told PTI.

Childhood friends lose jobs in lockdown, start meat venture; sell it for ₹10 cr in 2 years

PTI ■ AURANGABAD

Tragedy struck the lives of Akash Mhaske and Aditya Kirtane in mid-2020 amid the COVID-19 induced lockdown.

The childhood friends who went on to become engineers had spent the first month of the lockdown watching movies, but continuation of the restrictions led their respective employers to lay them off.

Rather than applying for jobs in this Maharashtra city blessed with some industrial activity in the vicinity, they decided to start out on their own. Reading books on successful businesses cemented the decision. But they were not

sure of what exactly to do.

A vocational training course on meat and poultry processing conducted by a local varsity was the serendipity moment. The business idea was to enter the highly unorganised meat market with a credible offering to retail consumers on demand.

The idea was seemingly odd and the budding entrepreneurs did not receive full support from their families initially.

"Our families initially thought that no one would marry us because of the nature of work we are doing. Later they stood with us," Aditya Kirtane told PTI.

Big FMCG companies enter plant-based meat segment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Big FMCG companies are entering the plant-based meat segment, targeting non-vegetarian consumers who are looking for an animal-protein replacement, besides a large section of vegetarians.

The segment which opened up two years back is estimated to touch around USD one billion by 2030 and now products in the plant-sourced meat segment are available at e-commerce platforms and large retail chains in leading metros. Besides, players are also targeting institutional clients.

Daiki Axis Japan planning to set up third unit in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Water treatment solutions provider Daiki Axis Japan plans to set up its third plant in the country in the southern region, a company official said.

The company is setting up its second plant with a capacity to produce 1,000 sewage treatment units with Japanese "JohkkaSou" technology at Palwal, Haryana, Daiki Axis India CEO Kamal Tiwari told PTI during an interaction.

"We have one plant in Vapi, Gujarat, second one is coming up in Haryana. We are planning another one somewhere in Southern India," he said.

I will take this Silver: Neeraj Chopra

PTI ■ EUGENE

I will take it," said Neeraj Chopra, who felt "something" on his strapped thigh, on way to what he termed a challenging history-scripting Silver at the World Championships javelin throw final here.

The reigning Olympic champion admitted that his comeback from outside medal position midway into the final was "challenging".

Chopra, however, also knew that a good throw was around the corner.

He was lying at fourth position after three rounds of throws, having opened with a foul before registering 82.39m and 86.37m in his next two attempts. He got his rhythm back with a big fourth round throw of 88.13m, his fourth career-best effort, to jump to second place, which he held on to till the end.

"Conditions were challenging, there was wind coming from front. It was a tough competition with very tough competitors. It was challenging for me, but I was confident that a good throw will surely come.

"I was making the effort (in the first three throws) but it (big throw) was not coming. It was challenging but good that I made a comeback," the 24-year-old Chopra said during a virtual press conference.

"I am happy to have won a Silver, the country's first medal in World Athletics Championships after 19 years, I will take it. World Championships is even tougher than Olympics, its record is higher than that of Olympics."

Chopra felt some tightness on his thigh after the fourth throw and could not do well in the last two throws which were fouls.

"I thought even the fourth throw could have gone farther. After that, I felt something on my thigh and could not do my best in next two.

"I had strapping (on thigh). I will know the status tomorrow morning because my body is still warm after the event. I hope there should not be any issue for the upcoming events, Commonwealth Games."

Defending champion Anderson Peters of Grenada won the Gold with a massive throw of 90.54m. He was a class of his own in the final as he had three massive 90m-plus throws -- in the first two rounds and the last attempt.

Olympic Silver winner Jakub Vadlejch of Czech Republic took the bronze with 88.09m.

Asked if he was feeling the pressure of being an Olympic champion heading into the World Championships finals, he said, "I never felt that kind of pressure. My focus was always to give my best,



improve upon my best.

"Of course, I was in a challenging position (after third round) but I was confident that I will have a good throw somehow. I kept trying and it came.

"An athlete cannot win a Gold every time but we have to keep trying and give our best. I have learnt a lot from the challenging situation today, and I will work for improvement.

"I have won Gold at all levels except this World Championships Silver. I will try to change the colour of medal (to Gold)

in the next World Championships in 2023 (in Budapest). The other competition I want to win Gold is the Diamond League."

He said he is having a healthy competition with Peters whom he is going to face again in the Commonwealth Games beginning in Birmingham on Thursday.

"Peters is doing well, he has thrown more than 90m quite a few times this year. It is good for the sport. I am happy with the rivalry. I have beaten him also. It is a healthy competition and a challenge for



USA win women's 4x100m relay title

AP ■ EUGENE

The United States reclaimed their women's world 4x100m relay crown in Eugene on Saturday, overpowering a star-studded Jamaica line-up to take Gold in Oregon.

The US quartet of Melissa Jefferson, Abby Steiner, Jenna Prandini and Twanisha Terry timed 41.14 seconds for a barnstorming victory at Eugene's Hayward Field.

Jamaica took Silver in 41.18sec and Germany Bronze (42.03).

A loaded Jamaican team boasted newly-crowned individual 100 and 200m world champions in the shape of Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce and Shericka Jackson, as well as four-time Olympic sprint champion Elaine Thompson-Herah, 100m Bronze medallist in Eugene, and Kembra Nelson.

But they could do nothing as the US team produced three slick handovers in front of a raucous, partisan crowd at Hayward Field.

CANADA WINS

Canada upset the United States to storm to victory in the men's 4x100m relay.

Andre De Grasse anchored the Canadian quartet home in 37.48sec at Eugene's Hayward Field after another disappointing relay performance from the US men.

Aaron Brown, Jerome Blake and Brendon Rooney put De Grasse in position to streak home for Gold as the USA took Silver in 37.55sec and Britain the Bronze in 37.83sec.

me. I have to improve myself.

"Every day is new and different. The way we may want to perform, it may not happen exactly that way. It depends on the day. I don't need to make any changes, I have my technique and I need to improve upon what I am doing."

Korir, Pichardo add world titles to Olympic crowns



AP ■ EUGENE

Kenya's Emmanuel Korir and Pedro Pichardo of Portugal added world titles to their respective Olympic crowns on Saturday, but there was injury heart-break for Canada's Damian Warner in the decathlon.

Korir produced a trademark kick from 200 metres out to win the men's 800m in 1min 43.71sec, well ahead of Algerian Djamel Sedjati with Silver and Canada's Marco Arop Bronze.

"I knew there were some guys close behind me in the last 100m," Korir said.

"I was expecting someone to come, but no one did. I never shake my end in training but I do in races. It's like magic. I have been working for this. It's been a long wait -- I failed in 2017 and 2019 and I made it now."

Pichardo was imperious in the triple jump, all but tying up competition when he went out to 17.95 metres on his first attempt.

"My mindset was focused on 18m. It did not come out today, but more importantly, I won gold. This world title was elusive to me."

In the absence of American multiple global medal winner Christian Taylor, world and Olympic Bronze medallist Hugues Fabrice Zango of Burkina Faso claimed Silver 40cm off Pichardo, while China's Zhu Yaming took Bronze.

Warner, also a winner in Tokyo, was

in full control of the decathlon after four of the first day's five events, but he pulled up injured in the 400m.

He was left lying on the track clutching his left hamstring.

Puerto Rico's Ayden Owens-Delermew is now installed as the overnight leader, with the second day of action comprising the 110m hurdles, discus throw, pole vault, javelin throw and 1500m.

There was also no mercy shown in the women's 5000m, where Ethiopia's Gudaf Tsegay surged down the home straight to win in 14:46.29 ahead of Kenya's Beatrice Chebet and another Ethiopian, Dawit Seyaum.

Olympic champion Hassan could only finish sixth, meaning she will depart Oregon not having made the podium in either the 5,000 or 10,000m.

US track legend Allyson Felix, having deferred her retirement, played her part by helping the US women's 4x400m relay qualify for Sunday's (Monday IST) final.

The US team won their heat in 3:23.38, Felix running the second leg, and will be joined in the final by Britain, Jamaica, Belgium, Canada, Italy, France and Switzerland.

Should the US team medal, Felix stands to win her 20th world medal. Her overall world tally currently stands at 19 medals (13 Gold, three Silver, three Bronze), including four individual Golds.

Jesus shines as Arsenal thrash Chelsea

AP ■ MIAMI

Gabriel Jesus continued his impressive pre-season form with another goal as Arsenal thrashed Chelsea 4-0 in a friendly in Florida on Saturday.

Jesus, who only joined Arsenal from Manchester City earlier this month, took his goal tally to four goals in three games for his new club in a clinical win for the Gunners in front of 63,811 fans at Orlando's Camping World Stadium.

It was another encouraging performance for Mikel Arteta's side, who took control of the game with two first half goals after dominating the opening 45 minutes.

Arsenal opened the scoring with the first goal in the 15th minute that came after Chelsea's Nathaniel Chalobah surrendered possession with a misplaced pass that went straight to Granit Xhaka.

The Swiss international played a superb first time ball into Jesus who coolly chipped over the advancing Mendy to make it 1-0.

Martin Odegaard made it 2-0 to the Gunners in the 36th minute with another well-worked move.

Arsenal extended their lead midway through



the second half when Saka buried a rebound from close range after Mendy parried Xhaka's long-range strike.

Arsenal continued to create chances but had to wait until injury time for their fourth goal when Albert Sambi Lokonga headed past Mendy after a superb cross from the right by Portuguese international Cedric.

France end Dutch defence

AP ■ ROTHERHAM

France will face Germany in the semi-finals of Euro 2022 after ending the Netherlands' reign as European champions thanks to Eve Perisset's penalty in a 1-0 win after extra-time on Saturday.

The scoreline did not do justice to the gulf in class between the sides as France were frustrated for 90 minutes by the brilliance of young Dutch goalkeeper Daphne van Domselaar.

However, the FC Twente stopper was finally beaten from the penalty spot 12 minutes into extra-time when Kadidiatou Diani was tripped by Dominique Janssen.

It took a VAR review for the spot-kick to be awarded and Perisset's penalty just had too much power for Van Domselaar.

Defeat rounded off a difficult tournament for the Dutch, who had been weakened by injuries to key players and coronavirus cases.



PSG agree transfer of Mukiele

AP ■ PARIS

Paris Saint-Germain and RB Leipzig have reached an agreement for the transfer of French international defender Nordi Mukiele to Paris, source close to the negotiations said on Sunday.

The two parties are committed to a full transfer and not a loan with an option to

buy, as was initially indicated.

It now remains for the 24-year-old to undergo a medical examination before signing his contract with PSG. The arrival at PSG of Mukiele, who joined Leipzig from Montpellier in 2018, will provide an alternative to Achraf Hakimi on the right side of defence.

Haaland debut goal lifts Man City



AP ■ GREEN BAY

Erling Haaland launched his Manchester City tenure with a goal as Pep Guardiola's men beat Bayern Munich 1-0 in a weather-disrupted friendly at Lambeau Field in Wisconsin on Saturday.

Two delays because of lightning in the area -- one before kickoff and one in the first half -- saw the contest shortened to 80 minutes.

It was plenty of time for City's new \$61 million striker Haaland to make an impression in his first appearance after Guardiola declared him over the injury "niggles" that kept him sidelined during City's 2-1 victory over Mexico's Club America in Houston on Wednesday.

Manchester City had threatened twice before a close-range strike by Bayern's Serge Gnabry's was disallowed by a narrow offside call in the seventh minute.

Five minutes later Haaland struck. After Riyad Mahrez's free kick was blocked Kevin De Bruyne managed to corral the ball and slip a pass through for Jack Grealish, who whipped it across to Haaland to connect from close range.

Frustratingly, another

round of electrical storms brought proceedings to a halt.

Play resumed with 27 minutes left to complete a 40-minute first half and Haaland quickly energized City fans in attendance, bursting through behind the Bayern defense.

But before he could unleash a shot a charging Dayot Upercampo booted the ball away.

Although Manchester City controlled the pace, Bayern had a golden opportunity in the 38th minute when a cross from the right found Alphonso Davies at the far post, but his pass across the goal face didn't quite make it to Gnabry.

A minute later Haaland almost made it 2-0, but his left-footed shot from inside the area was disallowed for offside.

Haaland departed after 40 minutes of action, giving way to newly signed striker Julian Alvarez who nearly doubled the score in the 43rd.

Despite a stream of substitutions in the second half, tension remained high between the Premier League and Bundesliga champions until the end of the truncated contest as Bayern -- who opened their brief tour with a 6-2 drubbing of Wayne Rooney's DC United, sought in vain for an equalizer.

Raphinha strikes again as Barca beat Real 1-0

AP ■ LAS VEGAS

Raphinha made it two goals in two matches as Barcelona defeated Real Madrid 1-0 on Saturday in their Las Vegas Clasico.

Raphinha, signed from Premier League Leeds United earlier this month for around \$60 million, followed up his debut in a 6-0 thrashing of Inter Miami with the lone goal of the high-profile clash at Allegiant Stadium, the \$1.97 billion, 65,000-seat home of the NFL's Las Vegas Raiders.

The Brazilian was perfectly placed to intercept an ill-advised pass from Real's Eder Militao along the top of the area. After one touch to settle he lashed a left-footed shot over Thibaut Courtois into the top right corner of the net to put Barcelona up 1-0 in the 27th minute.

The fourth edition of the Clasico to be played outside of Spain -- the second ever held in the United States -- featured all



the intensity of the long rivalry.

Real Madrid, playing their first pre-season friendly, nearly opened the scoring in the 18th minute but Federico Valverde was denied by the post in the 18th minute, seizing the ball after a poor clearance by Jordi Alba and blasting a volley from 25 yards out that beat Marc-

Andre Ter Stegen only for the

upright to intervene.

Two minutes later it was Barcelona who saw a chance get away when Eduardo Camavinga lost possession to Pedri in front of Real's goal. Pedri found Fati, who pulled Real keeper Thibaut Courtois off his line but put his shot just wide of the far post.

Overall it was Barcelona -- energized by the debut of Polish

striker Robert Lewandowski after his move from Bayern Munich -- who controlled the tempo in the first half against the reigning Champions League and La Liga title holders.

The first half ended on a testy note after Jordi Alba's sliding tackle on Militao that earned a yellow card.

Some jawing and shoving

escalated, with players having to step in and separate Madrid newcomer Antonio Rudiger and Barcelona's Ronald Araujo.

Lewandowski's night ended without a goal as he was departed at the half, replaced by Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang as part of a raft of changes at the midpoint.

Aubameyang had a chance just two minutes into the second

half with a header from the center of the area off a cross by Raphinha but missed it left.

A back and forth between substitute Marco Asensio and defender Lucas Vazquez gave Real Madrid a golden opportunity in the 59th minute, but after Vazquez played the ball back to Asensio in front of goal he pulled his shot wide.

MAX WINS FRENCH GP AS LECLERC CRASHES OUT



AP ■ LE CASTELLET

World champion Max Verstappen took full advantage of Charles Leclerc crashing out of the lead to extend his advantage in this year's title race with a crushing victory ahead of Lewis Hamilton in Sunday's sun-baked French Grand Prix.

The 24-year-old Dutchman drove with flawless control in the searing heat to guide his Red Bull home 10.587 seconds ahead of Mercedes' Hamilton, in his 300th race, with

George Russell, in the second Mercedes, beating Sergio Perez in the other Red Bull, for third.

It was Verstappen's seventh win this season and the 27th of his career and a blow to Leclerc's challenge in the opening race of the second half of the season.

After 12 of the 22 races, Verstappen leads Leclerc by 63 points in the drivers' standings.

"We had good pace, but it was hard to follow here with the tyres over-heating so we stayed calm," said Verstappen.

"You never know how it is going to go... It was unlucky for Charles and I'm glad he is ok."

Perez finished fourth ahead of a rampant Carlos Sainz, who drove from the back of the grid to finish fifth for Ferrari ahead of Fernando Alonso of Alpine and McLaren's Lando Norris.

Esteban Ocon was eighth in the second Alpine ahead of Daniel Ricciardo of McLaren and Lance Stroll of Aston Martin.

Hamilton was delighted to be second.

"It was a tough race as my drinks bottle didn't work so it was a great result for us, especially considering we're so far off the pace," he said. "Great reliability from the team and George did an amazing job."

On an afternoon of searing heat, with a track temperature of 52 degrees and the air 34 at the start, Leclerc made a clean start to lead into the first corner ahead of Verstappen, with Hamilton leaping clear of Perez into third.

Leclerc led by a second after the opening lap, which saw Yuki Tsunoda

spin and recover while Sainz, from the back of the grid, began his charge.

Verstappen's superior straight-line speed powered him close behind Leclerc's Ferrari at the end of the Mistral Straight, but the leader held firm, his car squirming for grip in the heat.

Having resisted Verstappen's early attacks, Leclerc held a lead of nine-tenths by lap 13.

Sainz, praised for his progress by Ferrari, reached 10th on lap 14.

At the front Leclerc increased his pace to draw 1.7 seconds clear by lap 15, when the track temperature was recorded at 55 degrees.

"We are planning Plan B," Ferrari told Leclerc, refocusing on tyre wear and strategy.

Verstappen came in on lap 17 for a stop in 2.4 seconds, rejoining seventh. As he came back, Ferrari warned Leclerc his tyres were over-heating, but he held a 10-second lead ahead of Hamilton with Perez third, three seconds adrift.

LECLERC CRASHES OUT

Verstappen passed Norris swiftly for sixth, but Leclerc stayed out and then, on lap 18 crashed at Le Beausset, going heavily into the tyre barrier.

He climbed out, apparently unhurt despite the estimated 175 kph impact.

The distressed Leclerc shouted that he had a throttle problem.

It was his third exit from the lead this season, just as he looked capable of scoring Ferrari's third consecutive victory.

A safety car was deployed, Hamilton pitted and Verstappen took the lead. Leclerc emerged later to admit the crash had been his fault.

"It was a mistake, my mistake," he said. "I was pushing too much and I lost the rear."

Ashwini is ready for another splash at CWG



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gearing up for her fourth Commonwealth Games, India's doubles exponent Ashwini Ponnappa is now a different player from the 19-year-old who claimed a historic women's doubles Gold on debut 12 years ago.

What still remain though are her thunderous smashes that continue to find their mark, an ability to read the serves and returns of her opponents, and her hunger to win.

at Gold Coast is something that holds a special place in her heart, as she played a pivotal role in taking India to its maiden mixed team Gold.

"In 2018, I and Sikki won a Bronze but it was the first time we won the team Gold which was a superb feeling. This time the challenge is different. I am playing mixed doubles, and not women's doubles, but I am up for it."

In the last three editions, Ashwini went on to win the medal in women's doubles, but this time she couldn't qualify after losing the finals in the selection trials, following an injury to her women's partner N Sikki Reddy.

She was asked if India are favourites to retain the mixed team Gold.

"We have a strong team with Srikanth, Lakshya, Sindhu and Satwik-Chirag all in good mental space," said Ashwini, who is currently training with Indonesian coach Kristiawan Dwi in Hyderabad.

"In a team event, anything can happen. In 2018, we beat the Olympic Silver medallists, while Srikanth beat Lee Chong Wei, so it is important not to take it easy, just make sure we are on track."

"A team event is different than the regular world tour events that we travel together because all are focused on individual performances. But in a team event, it is about doing a lot of things together, not having hard feelings if someone has to sit on the bench."

Karuna Jain announces retirement

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Former India women's team wicketkeeper Karuna Jain on Sunday announced her retirement from all forms of the game.

"With a lot of happy and satisfied feelings, I'm able to make this announcement of my retirement from all forms of cricket and looking forward to contribute back to the game," the 36-year-old Karuna said in a statement.

The Bengaluru-born Karuna represented India, Karnataka, Pondicherry and South Zone during her career.

She played five Test matches in which she made 195 runs with 40 as her highest score since making her debut against England at Delhi in November 2005. She last played a Test for India against England at Wormsley in August 2014.

Karuna also played 44 ODIs and scored 987 runs with a solitary hundred and nine fifties and 103 as her highest score. She made her ODI debut in 2004 against the West Indies and played her last 50-over game in 2014 against England.

She also played nine T20 games and last represented the country in the format in 2014. She had made her T20 debut against Pakistan.

Karuna effected 17 dismissals in her Test career, which remains the second best for Indian keepers after Anju Jain's 23.

In ODIs and T20s, she effected 58 and 12 dismissals respectively.

SL reach 315-6 on 1st day of 2nd Test vs Pak

AP ■ GALLE

Half-centuries by Dinesh Chandimal and Oshada Fernando helped Sri Lanka reach 315-6 at stumps on the opening day of the second Test match against Pakistan at the Galle International Stadium on Sunday.

Needing to win the game to square the series, Sri Lanka opted to bat first after winning the toss. Captain Dimuth Karunaratne and Fernando gave the team a solid start adding 92 runs for the first wicket.

Fernando was the standout performer during the stand using his feet against spin and hitting three straight sixes. The third six brought his seventh half-century in Test match cricket. He was dismissed the very next ball, caught behind off the bowling of Mohammad Nawaz. Fernando's 50 came off 70 deliveries and included four fours and three sixes.

Later in the morning session, Pakistan struck with the last ball before lunch as Kusal Mendis (3) was run out backing up too far.



Captain Karunaratne was dismissed after lunch on 40 when he played an uncharacteristic reverse sweep off Yasir Shah and was superbly caught by Naseem Shah, who had to dive to ensure the dismissal.

A 75-run stand for the fourth wicket

followed between former captains Dinesh Chandimal and Angelo Mathews taking Sri Lanka's total close to 200 runs.

Chandimal was the more dominant partner hitting two sixes and nine fours as he went on to top score with 80 runs.

JEHAN DARUVALA FINISHES SECOND

PTI ■ LE CASTELLET

Indian racer Jehan Daruvala secured his sixth podium of the season, finishing second in the French round of the Formula 2 championship here.

On Sunday, Jehan started the 'feature race' from 10th on the grid but fought his way up to the seventh spot before finishing second overall.

It was his fifth second-place finish this season.

The 23-year-old, who races for Italian team Prema, was



robbed of a potential fourth F2 victory by a post-race penalty in the last round in Austria.

Ruud battles back to beat Berrettini in Gstaad

AP ■ GSTAAD

Top seed and defending champion Casper Ruud came from a set down to beat second seed Matteo Berrettini 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 in a high quality final of the clay-court ATP event in Gstaad on Sunday.

It marked a ninth career title for Ruud - four of them coming in Switzerland - and his third of the year following successes in Geneva and Buenos Aires, also on clay.

"There is a big story here with Roger Federer, who is a reference for me and a lot of play-

ers in the world," said Ruud after the match which stretched just over two and a half hours.

"Switzerland is a country with a lot of history now in tennis, winning a lot of Grand Slams with Roger and Stan (Wawrinka) the last 18 or 19 years.

"So it's been an inspiration to everyone around the world, including myself, that they are able to come from a small country, sort of like Norway. Everything about Switzerland reminds me a little bit about Norway."

The French Open finalist



dropped the opener but battled back to take the Italian world number 15 to a tiebreak for the second set.

Ruud lost the opening point on serve but then found his forehand clicking into gear as he took the next five points, the first sign of Berrettini's service wavering. The world number five closed out the tiebreak 7-4 to level the match and take it into a decider.

The 23-year-old Norwegian then powered through the final set, breaking the 2018 champion twice to take the decider 6-2.

Directors of Cricket Scotland step down over racism report

PTI ■ EDINBURGH

Directors of the Scotland Cricket board on Sunday resigned en masse following accusations of institutional racism.

The resignations came just ahead of the release of reports on an independent investigation.

"The board has been totally committed to implementing the findings of this review in full to make the sport of cricket in Scotland a truly welcoming and inclusive place for all," the directors said in a letter written to the interim CEO of the governing body.

"We are all truly sorry and have apologised publicly to everyone who has experienced racism, or any other form of discrimination, in cricket in Scotland," the letter further read.

Following the resigna-

tions, Cricket Scotland also issued a Tweet saying, "Cricket Scotland will work in partnership with sportscotland with immediate effect to ensure appropriate governance, leadership and support is in place for the organisation and the sport in the days ahead."

"And these arrangements will be reviewed after the publication of the report into racism in cricket in Scotland and updates given accordingly," the governing body said.

The review comes after Scotland's all-time leading wicket-taker, Majid Haq, in an interview to Sky Sports last November, alleged that the cricket board was "institutionally racist".

Haq's former teammate Qasim Sheikh, who also represented Scotland, too spoke of the abuse that both had suffered during their cricketer careers.

Chances of podium finish very high in Olympiad: India A team coach

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The chances of the Indian team securing a podium finish in the upcoming 44th Chess Olympiad are very high, says Grandmaster M Shyam Sundar, who is the coach of the top-seeded women 'A' team in the tournament.

The India Women A team comprises Koneru Humpy, D Harika, R Vaishali, Tania Sachdev and Bhakti Kulkarni.

"Most of our players are experienced and have been playing at the highest level for many years. Chances for a podium finish are very high.

The preparation has been quite good. They are also in good physical shape," the 31-year old said.

He believed that being the host nation has its advantages and disadvantages both.

"I believe with the right



mindset and not being pressurised we can perform well!"

Shyam Sundar felt that in the absence of powerhouses Russia and China, the Indian teams in both sections (Open and women) have very good chances.

"Yes, the absence of these two strong teams improves our chances in both the sections.

However, we would have still been favourites for a podium finish even if they had been present!"

The Indian women's team coach said they would be playing with the same intensity irrespective of the opponents, adding that all teams would be well prepared.

"Most of the top teams

would be ones to watch out for. Everyone will be well prepared. So we will play with the same intensity irrespective of our opponents," he added.

The player-turned-coach felt that Chennai hosting the Olympiad would be a big boost not only for chess but for sports overall.

"Yes definitely! Not just chess, I believe sports in general will have a great impact and more youngsters will take the sport more seriously and consider it as a profession," Shyam Sundar added.

The legendary Viswanathan Anand is still a force to reckon with in the world of chess though he is past 50 and continues to inspire people, he said.

"Vishy has always been my inspiration. It feels great to see that he is still performing strong. I will be playing tournaments whenever I get time.

CA inks 7-yr deal with Disney Star to broadcast matches in India

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Cricket Australia (CA) on Sunday said it has signed a seven-year deal with Disney Star to broadcast the country's cricket matches in India, the sport's largest market in the world.

As part of the deal, which commences in 2023-24, Disney Star will televise all international matches as well as the KFC Big Bash League and Weber Women's Big Bash League in India.

Disney Star will take over from Sony, who have held the Australian rights since the 2017-18 season.

According to CA, the channel's reach will provide "enormous exposure" for Australian cricket and for the board's commercial partners in India.

"We are delighted to announce this new association with Disney Star from season

2023-24 onwards. Disney Star is synonymous with the game in India and we look forward to working with them to showcase the outstanding cricket played in Australia every summer," said CA CEO Nick Hockley.

"The magnitude of this association is testament to the enduring rivalry and respect that exists between Australian and Indian teams, the excitement and popularity of WBBL and BBL, and the high regard of Australian cricket in India and global markets more broadly.

"There was significant interest in our rights and we are very grateful to our current rights holder Sony for their partnership which will continue throughout this season," he added.

Disney Star also recently won the TV broadcasting rights for the Indian Premier League from 2023-27.