

OPINION 6

OF THE FRACTION
OR THE FACTION?

WORLD 9

12 KILLED IN UKRAINE AS RUSSIA
POUNDS REBEL-CLAIMED PROVINCE

MONEY 10

RBI LIBERALISES NORMS
TO BOOST FOREX INFLOWS

RANCHI, THURSDAY JULY 7, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

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DHAWAN TO
LEAD INDIA IN
WINDIES ODIs
12 SPORT



Uddhav camp MP stirs fear of fresh rebellion

Rahul Shewale
urges Thackeray
to back NDA's
Prez candidate

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a development that has triggered fears in the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena camp about a fresh rebellion within the parent party, party MP Rahul Shewale has written to the Sena chief urging him to support the candidature of BJP-led NDA's Presidential nominee Draupadi Murmu.

Currently, the Shiv Sena has 18 Lok Sabha members. Of them, four MPs have already shifted loyalty from the parent Shiv Sena to the Eknath Shinde camp. They comprise Shrikant Shinde, son of current chief minister Eknath Shinde, Bhavana Gawali, Rajan Vichare. At least half a dozen MPs have either agreed to shift to the side or are in touch with Eknath Shinde.

As the parent Sena grappled with the recent unprecedented Eknath Shinde-staged rebellion that led to the party losing power in Maharashtra, Shewale posed a fresh headache to party chief Uddhav Thackeray by urging him to



Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and disaster management officials during a meeting to review the preparedness to deal with flood situations due to heavy monsoon rain, at Thane Collector's Office on Wednesday

extend support to Draupadi Murmu, a tribal woman member of the BJP and former Governor of Jharkhand.

Murmu is taking on the joint Opposition candidate Yashwant Sinha.

Given that Shewale is a loyal party man, his formal request to the party president — made through a letter submitted on Tuesday — has come as a big shock at a time when the Sena leadership has not taken kindly to the manner in which the BJP helped Sena's rebel leader Eknath Shinde engineer a split in the parent

party and formed an alliance government in the State, dislodging the MVA Government.

Behind Shewale's move there appears to be more than what meets the eye, considering that the Sersa MP's request to his party chief coincided with an appeal by the Eknath Shinde camp spokesman Deepak Kesarkar to all legislators and MPs from across parties in Maharashtra to support Murmu in keeping with Maharashtra's tradition of recognising the women's contribution to the society.

In his letter to the Sena

president, Shewale said that Draupadi Murmu hailed from the tribal community and she had made a huge contribution to public life. Before coming to politics, Murmu was a teacher and later served as an honorary assistant professor in the Shri Aurobindo Integral Education and Research, Rairangpur. Thereafter, she worked as a junior assistant in the irrigation department of the Odisha Government. Draupadi Murmu also served in an important position of the Governor of Jharkhand.

Record 7.5L apply for IAF Agnipath

Navy to earmark
20% posts for
women Agniveers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The IAF has received 7,49,899 applications under the newly launched Agnipath scheme rolled out last month. This number of aspirants is more than the last recruitment numbers which stood at 6,31,528.

Also, more than 10,000 women candidates have so far reportedly applied in the Navy, which plans to earmark 20 per cent posts for the women candidates in various wings of the service.

The candidates, who applied through online registration for the Agnipath scheme for the IAF, will now have to clear a written examination. The successful candidates will then appear for physical fitness and medical tests. The shortlisted aspirants will be inducted into the IAF as Agniveers after a year-long training.

"The online registration process conducted by #IAF towards#AgnipathRecruitment Scheme has been completed. Compared to 6,31,528 applications in the past, which was the highest in any recruitment cycle, this time 7,49,899 applications have been received," the



IAF tweeted on Tuesday.

The IAF started the registration process on June 24 after the Agnipath termed as "transformative" was launched by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in the presence of the three Services chiefs here on June 14. The Army and the Navy registration is now on.

The scheme led to mass protests in many parts of the country with the agitators damaging public property.

Several veterans, political parties and others raised doubts about the new policy as it does not provide pension and other benefits provided to regular soldiers.

However, the Government ruled out rolling back the new policy and said it consulted various stakeholders for more than two years before firming up the

Agnipath scheme. It also said the scheme will not impact the operational preparedness of the armed forces and the regimental ethos.

After a stint of mandatory four years, 25 per cent of the Agniveers will be selected for regular service of 15 years or so with full pension benefits.

The remaining 75 per cent Agniveers will be absorbed into various State and Central Government institutions, including the Defence Ministry, which has reserved ten per cent vacancies in various departments and defence public sector undertakings.

The Home Ministry reserved ten per cent vacancies for the demobilised Agniveers in the Central paramilitary. The Government also rolled out various beneficiary schemes for demobilised Agniveers.

Kerala Minister resigns day after Constitution slur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOCHI

A day after heaping calumny on the Indian Constitution, Kerala Minister Saji Cheriyan resigned from the cabinet on Wednesday evening.

His Sunday's speech describing the Indian Constitution "as a best means to exploit and cheat the poor millions in the country" had led to widespread protests. Vociferous demands surfaced on Tuesday from several quarters, including the BJP and the Congress, for his resignation.

Governor Arif Mohammed Khan had told the media on Tuesday that he was sure the leader of the Government (Chief Minister) would take notice of the speech made by the Minister as the Constitution was an expression of national faith.

On Wednesday evening, Cheriyan had an hour-long meeting with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and later told the media that he was resigning. "My continuation as minister may come in the way of a free and fair probe and hence I am quitting. I have submitted my resignation to the Chief Minister," said Cheriyan.

Minutes before the announcement of his resignation, the Thiruvalla Magistrate had ordered the Pathanamthitta Police to file a case against Cheriyan.

Cheriyan's resignation is unlikely to bring down the public anger against him as Leader of the Opposition VD Satheeshan demanded his disqualification as member of the Legislative Assembly.

PT Usha, Ilaiyaraaja, Bahubali's maker, Heggade nominated to RS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Legendary athlete PT Usha, film composer Ilaiyaraaja, film maker V Vijayendra Prasad, and philanthropist Veerendra Heggade are four eminent personalities nominated to the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi issued congratulatory messages to all the nominated members calling them an inspiration for every Indian. Twelve members are nominated by the President to the Rajya Sabha for a term of six years. These nominees, selected on the advice of the Prime Minister, are people who have made significant achievements in the fields of arts, literature, science etc.

"The remarkable PT Usha Ji is an inspiration for every Indian. Her accomplishments in sports are widely known, but equally commendable is her work to mentor budding athletes over the last several years.



Congratulations to her on being nominated to the Rajya Sabha," Modi wrote on Twitter.

PT Usha lost a historic bronze medal in 400m hurdles at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. Popularly known as Payoli Express, she established herself as the queen of Asian track and field by winning sex medals — five gold and a bronze — at Jakarta in Indonesia a year later during the 1985 Asian championships. She was also awarded the Padma Shri in the same year she starred at the Asian

Championships.

Following her athletics career, Usha remained away from the public eye running her sports academy, Usha School of Athletics in Balussery, Kerala. She is married to Kabbadi player V Sreenivasan.

For Ilaiyaraaja, who hails from Tamil Nadu, the PM said his creative genius has enthralled people across generations. "His works beautifully reflect many emotions. What is equally inspiring is his life journey: he rose from a humble background and achieved so much. Glad that he has been nominated to the Rajya Sabha," Modi wrote in another tweet.

The PM also shared photos from his archives with the newly nominated members on the microblogging site.

Filmmaker Vijayendra from Andhra Pradesh is credited of having scripted the movie Bahubali and is a household name in southern Indian States.

Naqvi, RCP quit Modi Cabinet as RS term ends

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and RCP Singh resigned on Wednesday, a day before the end of their tenure as members of the Rajya Sabha.

One of the main Muslim faces of the BJP, Naqvi looked set for a "new assignment", and an announcement to that effect is awaited, sources said. With Naqvi's exit, there is no Muslim member in the Modi Cabinet.

Singh, a JD(U) leader, was denied a Rajya Sabha renomination by party supremo and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. His resignation is a clear signal that the BJP leadership does not want to upset Nitish Kumar at a time when the relationship between the JD(U) and the BJP is hitting a new low every day in Bihar.

Singh has made no secret of his growing closeness with

the BJP and was even warmly received by the BJP workers at Hyderabad where the ruling party held its National Executive meeting.

The JD(U) leadership is keeping a close eye on Singh. The Nitish camp suspects that he could try to do a Maharashtra in Bihar by trying to break the JD(U) or help the RJD in dislodging Nitish-led alliance Government in Bihar.

A section in the BJP feels that it was high time when Nitish was shown the door even at the cost of installing an RJD regime in Bihar. This scenario could end Nitish Kumar's bargaining power and free the BJP from his shackles, BJP leaders feel.

Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is understood to have lauded Naqvi and Singh for their contribution to the country and the people during the Cabinet meeting.

BJP demands Mahua's arrest for insult to Goddess Kali

Saffron party raps
Mamata for using
jehad for vote bank

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Opposition Leader Buvendu Adhikari on Wednesday demanded the arrest of Trinamool Congress MP from Nadia Mahua Moitra saying her remarks on Goddess Kali had hurt religious sentiments of the people and that action should be taken against her.

Moitra had made some derogatory statements while trying to justify the portrayal of the Goddess smoking a cigarette in a film. Attacking the TMC leadership for not taking any action against her, Adhikari said he was giving ten days' time to the Government to act "after which we will act."

Saying that this was the last warning to people like Moitra, he said, "This is the last time we will tolerate people using derogatory terms against



Members of BJP Mahila Morcha stage a protest demonstration in front of Bowbazar Police Station demanding immediate arrest of TMC MP Mahua Moitra for her remarks on Goddess Kali, in Kolkata on Wednesday

Hindu deities in Bengal. Next time, we will not give anyone a chance to speak against our gods and goddesses. We will not stop protesting until she holds her ears and apologises."

He added, "Already cases have been registered against her in many places, including Bengal... we want the Government to take action

against Mahua Moitra ... we will wait for another 10 days ... if they do not take action then we will move the court against her," Adhikari said.

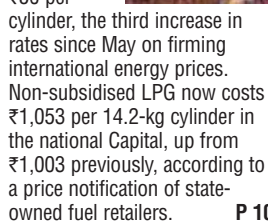
Accusing the State Government of double standards, he said, "The State police had promptly acted against Nupur Sharma. But they have not taken any action against Mahua Moitra."

CAPSULE

LPG PRICE HIKED BY ₹50;
RATES UP BY ₹244 IN 1 YR

New Delhi: Cooking gas LPG price on Wednesday was hiked by ₹50 per cylinder, the third increase in rates since May on firming international energy prices. Non-subsidised LPG now costs ₹1,053 per 14.2-kg cylinder in the national Capital, up from ₹1,003 previously, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

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6-MONTH GAP BETWEEN
2ND, PRECAUTION DOSE

New Delhi: The Union Health Ministry has reduced the gap between the second and precaution dose of Covid-19 vaccine for all beneficiaries from nine to six months following a recommendation by NTAGI.

CBI raids 16 spots in graft case flagged by J&K ex-Guv Malik

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Wednesday conducted a fresh round of searches at 16 locations across India over the alleged graft charges flagged by former Jammu & Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik in the award of ₹2,200 crore civil works contract for the Kiru hydroelectric power project in Kishtwar, Jammu & Kashmir, in 2019.

Malik, who was the J&K Governor between August 23, 2018 and October 30, 2019, had claimed he was offered ₹300 crore bribe for clearing two files.

The search operations were spread across two places in Srinagar, five each in Jammu and Delhi, three in Mumbai and one in Patna on the

premises of middlemen and associates involved in the project, officials said.

The CBI probe so far in the matter has revealed some financial transactions between the accused public servants, including then Chairman of the Chenab valley power projects (P) Ltd Navin Kumar Chaudhary and the middlemen, leading to a fresh round of searches, they said.

"During investigation, evidence was found revealing the alleged role of the middlemen, including the then chairman, and financial transactions between these middlemen and public servants, and accordingly, searches are being conducted at 16 locations," the CBI said in a statement.

DGCA notice to SpiceJet for failure to offer 'safe' flights

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued a show cause notice to SpiceJet for its failure to offer "safe, efficient and reliable" air services following eight technical malfunction incidents involving the airline's planes in the last 18 days.

The DGCA also reminded the airline that its permit to operate commercial flights in the country is valid only for one more year. In its show cause notice, the DGCA said the various incidents from April 1 this year till date have been reviewed, and it was found that "poor internal safety oversight" and "inadequate maintenance actions" have resulted in degradation of safety margins.

Taking note of the show cause notice, SpiceJet CMD Ajay Singh said the airline



would be "doubly careful" and strengthen inspection of aircraft before they leave for flights. In a press statement, Singh said, "Lot of these incidents being reported are relatively minor in nature and happen to every airline. If the aviation regulator feels that there are any gaps in SpiceJet's system, we will address them."

Reacting to the DGCA

notice, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia asserted that passenger safety is paramount. "Even the smallest error hindering safety will be thoroughly investigated and course-corrected," the Minister said in a tweet.

Meanwhile, three more incidents of technical malfunction were reported on Wednesday involving SpiceJet, Vistara and IndiGo.

Boris Johnson vows to 'keep going' amid flurry of resignations

PTI ■ LONDON

A defiant Boris Johnson vowed to "keep going" as he cited his "colossal mandate" from voters to carry on as British Prime Minister when he faced off with angry lawmakers in Parliament on Wednesday in the wake of the dramatic resignation of ally Rishi Sunak as Chancellor, followed by a string of resignations by junior ministerial and government aides.

Johnson, 58, appeared at the weekly Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) in the House of Commons just hours after the big blow of losing Sunak, and Health Secretary Sajid Javid in quick succession.

A flurry of junior minis-



British Prime Minister Boris Johnson leaves 10 Downing Street in London, on Wednesday

terial and government aide resignations, totalling around 30 and rising, continues to hit the embattled leader even as Javid made a speech in the Commons calling upon his former Cabinet colleagues to reconsider their decision to continue to back Johnson because "enough is enough."

Civic bodies tough on plastic use, impose penalty

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

To ensure a strict implementation of the single-use plastic ban, civic bodies have intensified an anti-plastic drive to make Jamshedpur single-use plastic-free. DC Vijaya Jadhav has urged residents to spread awareness about the ill effects of single-use plastic pollution on health and the environment and to promote the use of sustainable alternatives among their kin.

Under the drive, anyone found selling or using a plastic carry bag has to pay a penalty which ranges from Rs 100 to Rs 10,000 by the officials of Jamshedpur Notified Area Committee (JNAC), Mango Notified Area Committee (MNAC) and Jugsalai Municipality. Several fines were recovered during the drive on Wednesday.

The ban on single-use plastic has come as a significant step to reduce pollu-



tion. The Centre has issued guidelines to the states for banning the use of select single-use plastics effectively from July 1, 2022. The guidelines mandate a ban on manufacturing, distribution, import, sale, stocking, and use of single-use plastic items such as glasses, plates, cutlery, cups, wrapping or packaging films, and

PVC banners less than 100 micron, stirrers, and straws. "We are in support of the anti-plastic drive. But unfortunately, if we talk about the JNAC area, most of the people use plastic, they use plastics instead of paper and are not willing to provide an alternative like cloth bags," said a resident.

Ashish Mittal, resident of

Sakchi, "We never use plastic bags as they are harmful to our surroundings. It destroys the natural ecosystem, pollutes our stormwater drains and more. Not only I but also our children are discouraging the use of single-use plastic. We always carry our cloth bags to the market."

While many residents

have appreciated this drive, some have also raised their doubts. Another resident said, "Why is JNAC and police not taking any action against the single-use plastic manufacturer, distributors. Such plastics can be found in any shop and weekly bazaar. Only hard action can resolve this big issue and the impact of this activity will be very less."

Acting on instruction given by DC Vijaya Jadhav, the special officers of all the three civic bodies have set up teams for the drive across the city. "The drive is aimed at keeping the city free from polluting and hazardous plastic carry bags. The drive will continue during which we will also try to make the traders as well as the users understand that such carry bags are 100 percent banned and if found selling or using them will attract a penalty," said an official.

MoU inked between BSL and IIT (ISM) Dhanbad

PNS ■ BOKARO

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Bokaro Steel Plant and IIT (ISM) Dhanbad to identify and take forward joint research projects in the areas of steel making and digital transformation related to BSL. On behalf of BSL, Executive Director (Operations) BK Tiwari signed the MoU and CGM (Maintenance) Ved Prakash signed as Witness. On behalf of IIT (ISM) Dhanbad, Prof. Sagar Pal, Prof. Ravi Kumar Gangwar and Prof. Ejaz Ahmed were present. Speaking on the occasion BK Tiwari said that this MoU will support joint research and development project in various areas of steel plant including environment and safety and draw from our experience and knowledge and expertise of the academicians of IIT (ISM) Dhanbad from



top notch institutions. (Bokaro Steel Plant and IIT (ISM) Dhanbad) will help create synergy and create value for both.

Ved Prakash informed that the collaborative work of Bokaro Steel Plant and IIT (ISM) Dhanbad will help us in establishing best practices in the areas of Operations, Maintenance and Supply Chain using technology and Industry 4.0 technologies in our digital transformation journey. Prof. Sagar Pal expressed his happiness during the signing of the MoU and expressed hope for a good number of collaborations in the core R&D areas related to Steel Manufacturing and

Industry-4.0 and Digital Transformation. General Manager (ECD) NP Srivastava and Assistant General Manager (ECD) played a special role in making this program a success.

The programme was coordinated by CGM (C, A & Communication) Bipin Krishna Sartape and Sr. Manager (C&A) Nidhi. Senior Manager (Electronics & Telecom) RK Ravi also contributed in organizing the meeting. General Manager (Executive Director Secretariat) NK Behera, Senior Manager (Executive Director Secretariat) Anand Raj and other officers were present during the programme.

Regular checking continues on single use plastic

PNS ■ HAZARIBAG

On the order of the State Government the Hazaribag Municipal Corporation has banned the single use of plastic in the municipal areas of Hazaribag town. The corporation has been authorized by the administration to fine such shopkeepers who have disobeyed the order of the Government. A team has been formed by the corporation for regular

checking in the areas.

The town commissioner of the corporation Prerna Dixit chaired a meeting of social workers, respected persons of the society and non-governmental organisations in the seminar hall.

She has requested all members to cooperate in these movements. The use of plastic is harmful to society as well as to the animals. She further said that this ban is applicable on consumers,

shopkeepers, retailers, wholesalers, and should use the low cost jute bag in the shops.

She further said that the store of plastic plates, spoon, thermocol plate will be fined under the solid waste management act. The amount of fine has been fixed Rs 7, 000. This will continue in future also.

Dixit further said that this drive will be continued in future along with the team.

Team leader will inform the town commissioner office regarding the usage of banned plastic.

All the members in the meeting have assured the town commissioner for full cooperation in the drive in Hazaribag municipal areas. Members said that if the shopkeepers will not follow the request then members will report to the corporation with the address of the shopkeepers immediately.

Prospective mayor candidates on campaign trail

PANKAJ KUMAR ■ DHANBAD

Though elections for mayor for Dhanbad Municipal Corporation (DMC) are yet to be announced by state election commission prospective candidates have started campaigning here with a view that elections are likely to be held soon after monsoon.

As the state government has already announced this time it would be party-less elections, this has given a chance to many to stand for contest. The most surprising announcement came Tuesday evening when former chairman of BIADA Bijay Jha announced his candidature amidst media persons.

Jha, a former BJP leader,

had left the party over some issues. His wife Dr Shivani Jha, a prominent gynaecologist of Katras area, had contested first held in 2010 and was in second position then.

Talking to the media Jha said, "In view of the recent developments during the panchayat polls forced me to think and to stand for the elections."

Jha, who also is an advocate, hopes to get support from the masses in view of his social activities across the district.

It's worth mentioning that Baghmara MLA Dhullu Mahto is all set to field his wife Savitri Devi for the post. Mahto has succeeded in securing victory of district board and panchayat

representatives of his choice during the recently concluded panchayat elections.

This has given a boost to the prospect of Savitri Devi.

Besides, these prospective candidates include former mayor CS Agarwalla, BJP leaders Bhriugu Nath, Anshel Raj, Congress leaders Shamsheer Allam besides some prominent persons like AK Sahay, KP Singh are also eyeing for the post.

Some of these have launched campaign trails that are at least four months ahead of the actual elections and they can hold meetings at all 55 wards to express their views among the masses.

DVC plays a crucial role in making Jharkhand affluent: Mahato

PNS ■ BOKARO

Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) has played a crucial role in making Jharkhand affluent. The state government has pledged its continued support for DVC's aspirations to reach greater heights, said Jagannath Mahato, Education Minister Jharkhand. He was delivering a speech at the Chandrapura football ground late on Tuesday evening to mark the 75th anniversary of the DVC's foundation.

The minister appreciated the work of DVC Chairman RN Singh and Chandrapura Thermal Power Station (CTPS) Chief Engineer Project Head Ajay Kumar Dutta. Working with them, we can give a boost to the institution



as well as society, he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Dutta said that we all have to work together and unitedly to take DVC to greater heights. For this we all need to take a pledge. He wished him the best for the future.

Welcoming the Minister

Dutta and Pandey presented a shawl, memento, and flowers. The national anthem was performed by teacher Manorama Singh, a welcome song and a patriotic song were performed by Kendriya Vidyalaya students. Short plays, songs,

solo music, and youth theatre based on the tenure of DVC under the leadership of teacher Pradeep Srivastava from the beginning of the school until the present day were also performed. A Elvis-themed short film was shown at the performance, among other things. The program was conducted by the manager Anil Kumar Singh, Pradeep Srivastava and Sarvjit Singh.

Besides others, Zilla Parishad Neetu Singh, Deputy Chief Engineer NP Mandal, PC Sahu, Additional Director Dilip Kumar, Ajay Kumar Singh, Ravindra Kumar Akshay Kumar, Amarendra Kumar Dubey, Satyendra Kumar Singh, Amarendra Kumar Singh, Anil Kumar Gupta, were present there.

NCPDR seeks report on school prayer row from DC

NITYANAND DUBEY ■ GARHWA

The National Commissioner for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR) took cognizance of the matter to the forcible change of prayer in a government-run school in a Muslim-dominated village Korwadhi in Garhwa. The commission has issued notice to the Deputy Commissioner, Garhwa Ramesh Gholap and has asked him to report within seven days and also to take proper action.

"The commission is in receipt of a complaint dated 5.07.2022 from Legal Right Observatory against some Is-

lamic radicals in Garhwa District, Jharkhand. As alleged by the complainant (Legal Right Observatory), some Islamic radicals in Garhwa district are trying to impose Sharia and Islamic practices on minor school children. Through the said complaint, it has also been informed to the commission that the said radicals have forcefully changed the school age-old prayer and further are also forcing children to not join hands during prayer creating a state of animosity among school children," the letter issued on Tuesday night reads.

"In view of the allegations

stated in the complaint, it is observed that there is prima facie contravention of Article 25 of the Indian Constitution and provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015. The commission thereby requests your good offices to initiate an inquiry and take necessary action for the care and protection of these children. An action taken report may be submitted to the commission within seven days of receipt of this letter," the letter added.

Garhwa DC could not be contacted for his comments on the issue.

Master plan to be formed for eco sensitive zone management

PNS ■ HAZARIBAG

A meeting was convened under the chairmanship of North Chhotanagpur Divisional Commissioner Chandar Kishore Oraon, in which saving of wild animals in reserved areas like Hazaribag, Koderma, Laaalong, Gautam Budha, Parasnath and Topchanchi were discussed. Firstly the Divisional Forest officer (wild animals) Avnish Kumar Choudhary highlighted the need of eco-sensitiveness for the said areas. He detailed on the regulation prohibited and promoted and suggested to go to villages nearby the wild areas to safe the wild animals,

The divisional commissioner said that for proper management we should make a master plan, which is called a zonal master plan.

The commissioner has selected the different departments like agriculture, Panchayati Raj, transport, tourism, Revenue and urban development departments, he has directed all the members to discuss with the public representatives before the final shape of the master plan.

He further said that before the preparation of the master plan the members must be watchful to provide the job opportunity to the villagers, who are living nearby the sensitive zone.



was formed under the leadership of the sub-divisional police officer on the instructions of the SP.

He said that the named accused Shyam Raj Sharma, who carried out the incident by the team, has been arrested, he has accepted his involvement in this case.

SDPO Avadh Kumar Yadav

informed that Shyam Raj Sharma is a dreaded criminal around 20 criminal cases included four murders, four bank robberies, extortion, road robbery etc. registered against him in different police stations.

Raids are being conducted for the arrest of rest accused Anil Paswan alias Bhiku Paswan and others, SDPO added.

Induction programme of Karim City College Rotaract Club



PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR:

The induction ceremony for the new members by Rotaract Club of Karim City College was organised on Wednesday. New members of Rotaract Club joined at the same time all the members of the session 2022-23 were introduced to the students.

Gurpreet Kaur Bhatia, secretary, Rotary Club of Jamshedpur (West) and Guest Zone 4, Riya Singh Rajput were welcomed with plant sampling and mementos. KCC Rotaract Club joined the No Plastic campaign by giving paper bags to the guests present.

On the occasion, the students of Karim City College

became aware of the objectives and achievements of Rotary International and Rotaract Clubs. At the same time, the members of the club present, being aware of their responsibility towards the environment, took a pledge to avoid the use of plastic bags.

The programme was led by Afifa Jannat, president of Rotaract Club and Mohd Badr, director of the Club. Former president Dhananjay Singh and former vice-president Saket Sinha also attended the function and informed the students about the club. The programme was conducted by Suryam, Prerna and Samendu Mohapatra and Ujma Bano gave a dance performance.

Gangwar bags 'Best School Principal-2022' award



PNS ■ BOKARO

DPS Bokaro Principal, A. S. Gangwar has been named the Best School Principal in Central India, thus another proud occasion for the school. Floraxis Media has awarded the National Education Services Leadership Award 2022 to Gangwar in recognition of his achievements in protecting and motivating students to support traditional values, national integrity, and unity.

The honour recognises his dedication to education

based on quality, experience, qualifications, and stakeholder feedback. Only 15 principals were honoured for their services to education; Gangwar is the only Jharkhand principal to receive this honour, informed a school authority.

Expressing his happiness Gangwar, Principal DPS Bokaro said, "It is indeed an honour to be acknowledged for the efforts. It reinforces my commitment to create a better society with morally strong and resilient individuals."

CM inaugurates, lays foundation of schemes worth Rs 205.66 Cr in Godda

Distributes assets worth Rs 1316.28 lakh among beneficiaries

PNS ■ RANCHI

Chief Minister Hemant Soren today inaugurated and laid the foundation of schemes in tune of Rs 20566.64 lakh in Godda. He inaugurated a new collectorate constructed at a cost of Rs. 3835.00 lakh and also laid the foundation stone of Godda Police Line to be constructed at a cost of Rs. 5801.90 lakh. In the programme, a total of 17 schemes were inaugurated by the CM with a total cost of Rs 5168.80 lakh, while he also laid the foundation stone of 251 schemes, whose total cost is Rs15397.84 lakh. Along with this, he also distributed circumstances amounting to Rs1316.28 lakh under various public welfare schemes of the government among 1345 beneficiaries.

Addressing people during the inauguration, foundation stone laying and asset distribution programme among the beneficiaries of important schemes of the government at Godda College, Godda the CM said that the government is working to implement schemes for the welfare of every section. He said that during the Corona epidemic, there was a lot of loss in the education of children, some children studied online, but the children of government



Chief Minister Hemant Soren, Minister Alamgir Alam, MP Vijay Hansada, MLAs Pradeep Yadav, Deepika Pandey and others during a programme in Godda on Wednesday. PNS

schools had to face immense difficulties. Today our government is working to build model schools in all the districts, in which all facilities will be available like private schools. The government is preparing to take it further to the block level and panchayat level.

The CM said that the state of Jharkhand has many inaccessible areas in its geographical location, people have settled in far-flung areas. Many villages have been settled on the banks of the river, in the

forest, on the mountain, neither the government used to reach them nor any scheme used to reach them, but today our government has done the work of taking the schemes of public interest to them. It is the effort of our government that our last runners can get help, they can be connected with development, our government is trying to go to the root and is working by making plans to strengthen them.

The CM said that this year the government has procured paddy by breaking the record

of 20 years. The government is working to process it and bring rice to the people. For this, our government has given approval to the rice mill. He said that the government is working for the people of every section, every area, earlier it used to take more than 1000 days, in the restoration of any job, today our government has worked to restore the people to the job within 200 to 250 days. By ending the struggle of para teachers, work has been done to give due respect to all.



Chief Minister Hemant Soren distributing the assets during a programme in Godda on Wednesday. PNS

Soren said that how the standard of living of the poor should be improved. For this our government is continuously making efforts. Today, be it any laborer of the state, any person, wherever any kind of incident happens to him, then the government is ready to help him fully.

For this, the government is working by making laws. Our government has opened doors for jobs, has worked to give better direction to the youth, the government is working so that everyone can work safely

and fearlessly.

The CM told the Sahiya sisters that this is their government. We are there to protect their interests. Your word has come to the government. The government has taken cognizance of this. Your problems will be solved as soon as possible.

On the suggestion of MLA Podaiyaha Pradeep Yadav to set up a solar power plant in Godda and drawing attention of MLA Mahagama Deepika Pandey for the health of the people of Godda, the CM said

that the government is in the notice of our government.

Minister Alamgir Alam, MP Vijay Hansda, MLA Pradeep Yadav, MLA Deepika Pandey, Chief Secretary in-charge Arun Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Rajiv Arun Ekka, Secretary to Chief Minister Vinay Kumar Choubey, Director General of Police,

Deputy Commissioner Godda, officers of district administration, and a large number of beneficiaries and public were present.

Health Minister inaugurates genome sequencing machine at RIMS

PNS ■ RANCHI

The much awaited genome sequencing machine was inaugurated by State Health Minister Banna Gupta at Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) Ranchi. At the inauguration ceremony those who accompanied the minister included Kanke MLA Samri Lal, RIMS director Dr Kameshwar Prasad along with a large number of doctors and health workers.

Sources said that amid rising cases of new variants, the technology of genome sequencing is under the spotlight. Sources said that just like the human body is made up of DNA, viruses are also made from either DNA or RNA. The coronavirus is made of RNA, and genome sequencing is the technique by



Health Minister Banna Gupta, Kanke MLA Samri Lal, RIMS director Kameshwar Prasad inaugurates Genome Sequencing Machine, at RIMS in Ranchi on Wednesday. Pix by Vinay Mumu

which the genetic coding of this RNA is obtained.

Worth approximately Rs 5.60 crore the machine will be used to test thalassemia, sickle cell anemia, neurological tests and DNA other than different variants of the Covid-19. This machine can test 384 samples at a time. It will help know the corona variant within 72 hours.

Also with the inauguration of the genome sequencing machine, the department of Genetics and Genome also got operational under the headship of Dr Anupa Prasad.

RIMS got the machine at the time when cases of corona are rising in the State. The Ranchi district administration has sounded alert following Covid death in the district almost after

five months. The previous coronavirus fatality in the district was recorded on February 2 this year.

As per district administration, a 61-year-old man from Ormanjhi died of the coronavirus infection in Ranchi on Sunday. With the fresh death due to coronavirus infection, the toll due to Covid-19 in the district has reached 1,607.

On the increasing cases of Corona, the Health Minister said that the government is taking serious note of it. "We are keeping an eye on the circumstances. The infected patients are recovering properly," he said. On non-compliance of corona guidelines, the minister said: "Corona will not end only by applying a mask. Rather, other guidelines will also have to be followed."

Gupta after inaugurating the machine highlighted the various achievements of State Government especially during pandemic times. He said that doctors, nurses, para-medical and house-keeping people of state have worked together to save the lives of people during the Corona period. More than 110 PSA plants have been installed in Jharkhand.

"Apart from this, 15 RT-PCR machines, more than 300 True Nat machines and Cobas-6800 have also been installed," minister Gupta said. "The government is also working on curbing anaemia among women and children in the State. After the installation of the genome sequencing machine, the people of the State will be given better health service," Gupta added.

Providing drinking water through tap priority of Govt: Minister

PNS ■ RANCHI

Drinking Water and Sanitation Minister, Mithilesh Thakur, on Wednesday, said that it is the priority of the State Government to provide pure water from tap in every household under the Jal Jeevan Mission and to achieve this goal, one has to work with determination. He said that the officers of the department, field engineers and workers should work to achieve this goal with determination and try to remove the problems and obstacles coming in this direction.

He was speaking at a State-level workshop organized on Wednesday to make available "Har Ghar Nal Se Jal" under the Jal Jeevan Mission. He said that organizing such a workshop will help us a lot in this direction and we sincerely hope that we will be able to achieve this goal.



Executive engineer DW&SD Rajesh Ranjan receives citation award from Drinking Water and Sanitation Minister Mithilesh Kumar Thakur during a State Level Workshop on Jal Jeevan Mission, at a city base hotel in Ranchi on Wednesday. Secretary DWSD Prashant Kumar, Engineer-in-Chief DWSD, Raghunandan Prasad Sharma and others are also seen in the picture. Pix by Ratan Lal

Thakur said, "We have achieved the 21 per cent target of the scheme so far. But, we have achieved this goal in a very short time and in extreme circumstances, because all the work was disrupted and development work came to a halt during the COVID-19

transition. Nevertheless, we asked our officers to complete all the preparations and as soon as the infection of COVID-19 subsided, start taking this plan to the ground. Initiate the tender process expeditiously and complete the projects. It is because of this

that we have achieved this goal so far, otherwise we would have been behind even this."

The Minister said to the contractors that whatever work is allotted to them, they should be completed on time and if they do quality work before time, then they will also be encouraged by the department and they will also be given priority in the allocation of work. He stressed the direction of providing drinking water from tap in the rural areas and said that with the cooperation of the villagers, they should work towards providing pure water. Organize Village Water Sanitation Workshop in the village through UNICEF.

Secretary of the department, Prashant Kumar said that Jal Jeevan Mission is very big and it has to be completed on time. For this we all have to work in a phased manner. To accom-

plish the goal, the officers of the department, the regional engineer and the sensor should establish a dialogue among them and try to remove the problems and obstacles in the area. He said that Jharkhand is the first state where 60,000 solar water based schemes have been made. He said that work would also be taken from third party inspectors to speed up the works. He said that a problem resolution cell has been formed by the department, where problems are being resolved.

The Engineer-in-Chief, Raghunandan Prasad said that such a workshop is being organized for the first time. He highlighted through a presentation the targets achieved so far of the ongoing schemes under the Jal Jeevan Mission. Along with this, the solutions and methods were told about the ways to achieve the goal of water from the tap.

Daily vegetable consumption survey to be conducted: DC

PNS ■ RANCHI

A survey of the daily consumption of vegetables will be done in the district, said Ranchi Deputy Commissioner (DC), Chhavi Ranjan, on Wednesday, during a review meeting related to Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana and Amrit Sarovar. He said that before August 15, while marking the place, lay the foundation stone of the new Amrit Sarovar.

He gave necessary directions to the officials regarding the creation of Amrit Sarovar in the district under the Amrit Mahotsav. He took information like construction of ponds, renovation, when the plan was taken and how much work is left. He was also directed to submit a report related to this.



Ranchi DC Chhavi Ranjan holds a meeting with officials in Ranchi on Wednesday. PNS

Ranjan directed to prepare a Village Action Plan for the selected villages for the year 2022-23. At the same time, he was asked to survey how much vegetables are consumed per day. The DC also reviewed the schemes implemented under Rurban Mission. He also instructed the District Agriculture Officer to conduct a survey of the

daily consumption of vegetables in hotels. He also directed to make a plan to make arrangements for the supply of vegetables produced in the hotels under the schemes implemented under the Rurban Mission. Meanwhile, Ranchi DDC, Vishal Sagar chaired a meeting regarding Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Rural and Baba Saheb Bhimrao

Ambedkar Awas Yojana.

Sagar expressed dissatisfaction over the poor performance of Ranchi district in the pending housing completion in Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Rural. He directed all the block coordinators to pay special attention to this and complete the housing model approved by the department as per the need and with the consent of the beneficiary, to complete all the pending housing before August 2022 in a planned manner. The DDC said that action would be taken to terminate the contract of the block coordinator of the block whose performance would be unsatisfactory. In Ranchi district, Tamar, Bedo, Mander, Silli, Chanho, Budhmu and Kanke blocks with less than average

completion were asked to pay special attention.

In the meeting, the DDC directed that the ineligible beneficiaries from the PWL of Housing Plus should be eliminated by the remand module. The Deputy Development Commissioner said that Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Awas Yojana should ensure completion of the pending houses with special attention.

Sagar said that the block wise target has been allotted for the financial year 2022-23, according to the target, as soon as possible, after selecting the eligible beneficiaries according to the rules, their registration in housing soft and geo-tagged and ensured to send the proposal to the agency office for approval.

NEWS IN PIX



Girls select fashion jewellery items during ongoing annual 'Rath Yatra' festival in Ranchi on Wednesday. Pix by Vinay Mumu

Jharkhand CS Sukhdeo Singh's daughter passes away

PNS ■ RANCHI



secretary.

Jharkhand chief secretary Sukhdeo Singh suffered a tragedy after his 18-year-old daughter Simar Singh passed away in Delhi on Tuesday night after a brief illness. Sources said that she complained of a headache after which she was hospitalized. She was the youngest among two children of Sukhdeo Singh. She was pursuing graduation at the Amity University in Delhi.

A couple of days back Sukhdeo Singh left for Delhi owing to the health issue of his daughter. Arun Kumar Singh was given additional charge of the chief

The incident left the bureaucratic circle and his well-wishers saddened. "Sukhdeo Singh is such a gentleman who is God fearing. But God made him suffer today. She was very loving and academically brilliant. I can't even muster the courage to call him," said a senior bureaucrat.

ast year she suffered from Covid 19 infection

and remained under treatment in Ranchi for quite some time. Jharkhand Governor Ramesh Bais and chief minister Hemant Soren expressed their condolences on the untimely demise of this young girl. The Chief Minister is set to visit Delhi to meet Sukhdeo Singh. Many senior IAS officers are set to go to Delhi including additional chief secretary in charge Arun Kumar Singh, CM's secretary Vinay Choubey, AP Singh, Ajay Kumar Singh, Rahul Sharma, Abu Bakar Siddique, Himani Pandey, Prashant Kumar, Praveen Toppo, Sunil Kumar and others.

Health Min reduces gap for Covid booster dose to 6 mths

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Following recommendations from the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI), the Union Health Ministry on Wednesday said that it has decided to reduce the duration of the second dose of Covid-19 vaccine and precaution dose gap to 6 months from the earlier 9 months for all adults.

In a letter to the state and UT authorities, Union Health Secretary said, "It has now been decided that the precaution dose for all beneficiaries from 18-59 years will be administered after completion of 6 months or 26 weeks from the date of administration of second dose at Private Covid Vaccination Centers (CVCs)." He also added that for beneficiaries aged 60 years and above as well as the Health Care Workers (HCWs) and



Front Line Workers (FLWs), precaution dose would be administered free of charge. "Corresponding changes have been made in the CoWIN system to facilitate the new dispensation," he stated.

Currently, all those above the age of 18 who have completed nine months after the administration of the second dose are eligible for the precaution dose. The Union Government had earlier

allowed citizens and students travelling overseas to get the shot before the stipulated nine-month waiting period as required by the guidelines of the destination country. Meanwhile, the total number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in the country crossed 180.58 crore on Tuesday, according to the Union health ministry.

More than 16 lakh (16,54,073) vaccine doses were

administered yesterday, the ministry had said. India's vaccination drive was rolled out on January 16 last year with the healthcare workers (HCWs) getting inoculated in the first phase. The vaccination of the frontline workers (FLWs) started from February 2 last year.

The next phase of Covid-19 vaccination commenced from March 1 last year for people over 60 years of age and those aged 45 and above with specific co-morbid conditions. The country launched vaccination for all people aged more than 45 years from April 1 last year.

India began administering precaution doses of the vaccines to the HCWs, the FLWs, including the personnel deployed on election duty, and those aged 60 and above with comorbidities from January 10 this year amid a spike in the number of coronavirus cases, fuelled by its Omicron variant.

ED attaches ₹86.65 crore of Chinese fintech companies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached Rs 86.65 crore lying in various bank accounts and payment gateway accounts of Chinese fintech companies relating to NBFCs like Kudos Finance and Investments Private Ltd., Acemoney (India) Ltd., Rhino Finance Pvt. Ltd. and Pioneer Financial and Management Services Pvt. Ltd. under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The ED has been conducting money laundering investigations against a number of non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) which are in the business of Instant Personal Micro Loans. "It is revealed that, various fintech companies backed by Chinese funds have made agreements with these NBFC companies for providing instant personal loans of term ranging from 7 days to 30 days. Fintech Companies brought the funds to be lent to the public, did MoU with the defunct NBFCs for their lending license," the ED said in a statement.

Since, the fintech companies were unlikely to get a fresh NBFC license from the RBI, they devised the MoU route with defunct NBFCs as a via media to do large scale lending activities. It was projected that the NBFCs had hired Fintech Companies for Customer Discovery, but in reality the Fintech Companies were piggybacking on the license of the NBFCs and doing large scale lending business, it said.

Entire decisions regarding fixation of interest rate/ processing fee/ platform fee were taken by fintech companies and these companies were operating on the basis of instructions from Chinese and Hong Kong-based persons. "NBFC companies

namely Kudos, Acemoney, Rhino and Pioneer entered into MoUs with foreign backed fintech companies to carry out online lending business in India.

An amount of Rs 940,46,39,498 has been considered to be proceeds of crime as the same was gained by way of predatory lending activities in violation of RBI guidelines," the agency said.

The ED has identified bank balances of Rs 86.65 crore in 155 bank accounts and the same have been attached under the provisions of PMLA to preserve the proceeds of crime. Further fund trail investigation is going on, it said.

Earlier in this case, a provisional attachment order was issued against NBFC Kudos Finance and Investments Private Limited and its fintech partners for a value of Rs 72.32 crore. The total attachment in this case till date is INR 158.97 crore.

Justice Rohini panel gets another extension

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday decided to grant a fresh six-month extension to the Justice Rohini Commission, set up to examine the sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes and equitable distribution of benefits reserved for them. This is the 13th extension given to the commission to submit its report. The Government had constituted the commission on October 2, 2017 under Article 340 of the Constitution to examine the issues related to the sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes. The extension has been granted up to January 31, 2023.

The commission must examine inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among the castes or communities included in the OBC category with reference to such classes included in the Central List, working out the mechanism, criteria, norms and parameters in a scientific approach.

PM inaugurates Golden Jubilee celebrations of Agradoot group of papers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Stating that "well-informed, better-informed society should be the goal for all of us", Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday inaugurated the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Agradoot group of newspapers via video conferencing.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is the chief patron of Agradoot's Golden Jubilee celebration committee, was also present on the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister congratulated the "strong voice of the Northeast in the Assamese language" Dainik Agradoot for the occasion and complimented them for keeping the values of unity and harmony alive through the medium of journalism.

The Prime Minister remarked that under the guidance of Kanak Sen Deka, the Agradoot always kept the national interest paramount. Even during the Emergency, when the biggest attack on democracy took place, even then Agradoot daily and Deka ji did not compromise on journalistic values. He created a new generation of value-based journalism, he said.

The PM empathized that for the past few days, Assam is also facing great challenges and difficulties in the form of floods. Normal life has been greatly affected in many districts of Assam.

The Chief Minister and his team are working very hard day and night for relief and rescue, he said. Prime Minister assured the people of Assam, the readers of Agradoot, that the central and state governments are working together to reduce their difficulties.

He underlined the "sterling contribution" of Indian language journalism to Indian tradition, culture, freedom struggle and the development journey. Assam has played a

key role in the development of language journalism in India as the state has been a very vibrant place from the point of view of journalism. Journalism started 150 years ago in the Assamese language and kept on getting stronger with time, he added.

Modi recalled that the journey of the Dainik Agradoot in the last 50 years narrates the story of the change that has taken place in Assam. People's movements have played an important role in realizing this change.

People's movements protected the cultural heritage and Assamese pride of Assam. And now Assam is writing a new development story with the help of public participation.

He said when there is dialogue, there is a solution. "It is through dialogue that possibilities expand.

Therefore, along with the flow of knowledge in Indian democracy, the flow of information is also flowing continuously. Agradoot is part of that tradition," he said.

On the eve of 75 years of independence, the Prime Minister questioned limiting the intellectual space among a few people who know a particular language.

He further said this question is not only of emotion but also of scientific logic. This may be seen as a reason for lagging behind in research on the three industrial revolutions.

The Prime Minister said the expansion of Indian languages was stopped during the long period of slavery, and in modern epistemology, research was limited to a few languages.

Underlining the biodiversity and cultural richness of Assam and Northeast, the Prime Minister said Assam has a rich legacy of music and that it needs to reach the world at large.

He said efforts of the last 8 years with regard to physical and digital connectivity of the region will be hugely beneficial for the tribal tradition, tourism and culture of Assam.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla after paying tribute to Jana Sangh founder Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee on his birth anniversary, at the Central Hall of Parliament, in New Delhi on Wednesday PTI

Phase I of video surveillance system at railway stations to be finished by Jan 2023

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The first phase of Indian Railways' video surveillance system project at stations across country will be completed by January 2023, RailTel said in a statement on Wednesday.

RailTel is the implementing agency for the programme. The first phase of project will cover major stations of category A1, A, B and C numbering 756, and is likely to be completed by January 2023, it said, adding that remaining stations will be covered in the second phase. "In a bid to enhance security at railway stations which are major hubs of transportation, railways is in process of installing Internet

Protocol (IP) based Video Surveillance System (VSS) at stations, that is, waiting halls, reservation counters, parking areas, main entrance/exit, platforms, foot over bridges and booking offices," the statement said. The Ministry of Railways approved project under Nirbhaya funds. "We need to rapidly absorb new technology in railways, be it for rolling stock, construction, safety, cyber security, or in situations where there is a human interface," Railways Minister Ashwani Vaishnav said. CCTV cameras of stations and video feeds will be monitored at three levels to ensure enhanced safety and security at railway premises.

Lt-Gen Subramanian of the Indian Army appointed as new Force Commander of UN

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/UNITED NATIONS

United Nations (UN) Secretary General Antonio Guterres has appointed Lt General Mohan Subramanian of the Indian Army as the new Force Commander of the UN United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). He succeeds another Indian army officer Lt General Shailesh Tinaikar.

Making this announcement late Tuesday, the UN statement said the Secretary General is grateful for "his (Tinaikar) tireless dedication, invaluable service and effective leadership as UNMISS Force Commander." He served as the commander since 2019.

Giving details of the new incumbent's career profile, army said in New Delhi, Subramanian has a distinguished military career spanning over 36 years. Most recently, he served as the General Officer Commanding, Military Region (Operational and Logistic Readiness Zone)



in central India, contributing to the Army's operational and logistic preparedness.

Previously, he served as the Additional Director General for Procurement and Equipment Management at the Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence (Army) (2019-2021), General Officer Commanding a Strike Infantry Division (2018-2019), Deputy General Officer Commanding of Infantry Division (2015-2016), Commander of a Mountain Brigade (2013-2014) among other appointments within the Indian Armed Forces. He has served as India's

Defence Attache to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia (2008-2012) and as a Staff Officer with the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone in 2000. He holds two Master of Philosophy degrees in Defence and Management Studies as well as in Social Sciences.

He was commissioned into the Corps of Army Air Defence in 1986. He is an alumnus of Sainik School, Amaravatinagar, Tamil Nadu, National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakwasla and the Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehradun. As regards India's role in

UN led peace keeping missions over the years, officials said India has, so far, provided 15 Force Commanders, two Military Advisors, one Deputy Military Advisor to the Secretary General of United Nations, two Divisions Commanders and eight Deputy Force Commanders in various United Nations Missions. India is among the largest contributors of uniformed personnel to the UN peacekeeping missions.

The Indian Army continues to play a lead role in United Nations Peacekeeping with presence in eight out of 14 (current) United Nations Missions worldwide and currently has over 5,400 military personnel deployed in challenging circumstances under the United Nations flag.

The Indian Army has large presence in United Nations Missions in Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, South Sudan, Golan Heights, Syria, Western Sahara, Abyei and Cyprus. India is also deploying an infantry Battalion Group in UNISFA (Abyei).

SC to hear plea of Zee TV news anchor Rohit Ranjan today



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has agreed to hear on Thursday the plea of Zee TV news anchor Rohit Ranjan, facing several FIRs in some States for playing a doctored clip of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, seeking protection from coercive action for the alleged offence.

"List it tomorrow," a vacation Bench of justices Indira Banerjee and J K Maheswari said when senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, appearing for the TV anchor, sought an urgent hearing of the plea in view of registration of several FIRs against him in many States for telecast of the clip.

"This man was arrested yesterday by UP police at Noida and released on bail as the offence invoked was bailable," he said, adding that the anchor made an error in one of the shows and apologised for that and the news was taken back. "Now Chhattisgarh police want to arrest him. Please list this urgently since otherwise he will be in repeated custody," the senior lawyer said.

On Tuesday, a police team from Chhattisgarh reached Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad town to arrest the anchor from his home but he was instead

arrested by the Noida police who released him on bail later on Tuesday night. Congress MLA Devendra Yadav filed complaint against Rohit Ranjan for misquoting Rahul Gandhi's statement.

In his complaint, Yadav said a video, in which Rahul Gandhi described those attacking his Wayanad office as children and said he had no ill-will against them, was "mischievously" used by the TV channel on July 1 to suggest he was forgiving the killers of Udaipur tailor Kanhaiya Lal. The FIR in Raipur was lodged under

IPC sections including 153A (promoting enmity between different groups), 295A (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class), 467 (forgery), 469 (forgery to harm reputation), 504 (intentional insult).

On July 2, a day after video was aired, Ranjan had apologised for mistakenly playing Gandhi's statement out of context by linking it with Udaipur murder case. "It was a human error for which our team is apologetic. We apologise for it," he had tweeted in Hindi.

Cong files complaint with NBDSA over doctored video

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress has filed a complaint with the News Broadcasting and Digital Standards Authority against Zee News and its anchor Rohit Ranjan for airing a video clip of its former president Rahul Gandhi's comments in Kerala with a "distorted and malicious interpretation" and sought action against them.

In the letter to the Authority chairman, Congress communication department head Pawan Khara raised the matter of "illegal, unethical and malicious" broadcast by Zee News and Ranjan, during their programme titled "DNA" which was aired on July 1.

"The impugned news broadcast by Zee News had sought to falsely and maliciously suggest that former INC President Rahul Gandhi demonstrated sympathy for

the killers of Kanhaiya Lal (tailor killed in Udaipur) by calling them 'children' and saying (they) have acted in an irresponsible way," Khara said.

These comments in their original and correct context, referred to the vandalism of the Congress' office at Wayanad and were in no way connected with the horrifying murder of Kanhaiya Lal in Udaipur, the Congress leader pointed out.

It must be noted that only Zee and its anchor chose to give the clip this distorted and malicious interpretation. No other news agency, channel or newspaper made the same mistake, he said in the letter dated July 4.

Khara said it was only after numerous complaints by the party and the public at large, wherein the "distortion and falsity" of the broadcast was pointed out that impugned news broadcast was taken down.

Aadhaar needed to get compensation in human-elephant conflict cases now

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Henceforth, only those victims of human-elephant conflicts having Aadhaar number will get compensation under the Project Elephant.

The Centrally sponsored scheme of 'Project Elephant' is carried out by the State Governments with the primary goal to offer monetary and technical assist to the Elephant Range States of India for the safety of elephants, their habitats and hall, to fight the difficulty of human-animal battle and welfare of the captive elephants.

"The scheme provides for ex-gratia payment for loss of life or injury, damage to property or crop, etc., and also rewards the informers and payment of expenses on intelligence gathering respectively to the villagers, farmers, and other individuals," a senior Ministry official said..

"In case, any individual does not have Aadhaar at that point of time, he or she will need to enrol and offer proof of registra-

tion," the official stated adding that in case of individuals joining our training programmes, too would need Aadhaar card and if not, would need to enrol for it."

Human-elephant conflict caused 1,401 human and 301 elephant deaths in India from 2018-2020, Bhupendra Yadav, Union minister for environment, forest and climate had told the Rajya Sabha last August. Some 115 elephants and 457 people died in 2018-19, while 99 elephants and 585 people died in 2019-20. In 2020-21 (upto December 2020), 87 elephants and 359 people lost their lives in human-elephant conflict.

The Ministry does out monetary help as ex-gratia reduction of Rs 5 lakh in case of demise or everlasting incapacitation to a human; Rs 2 lakh for grievous damage; Rs 25,000 per particular person as price of remedy for minor damage. The compensation for lack of property / crops are paid by the states / UTs as per norms prescribed.



Arrested LeT Commander worked with J&K BJP for four years

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) commander Talib Shah, nabbed by the brave villagers of Mahore area in Reasi district on Sunday, was working with the Jammu and Kashmir Unit of the Bharatiya Janta Party since June 2018.

According to a press note issued by the office of the Bharatiya Janta Party through its press secretary Talib Shah was nominated as constituency Incharge of Darhal along with 36 others.

The press note issued on June 1, 2018 clearly stated, "BJP State Incharge IT and Social Media Department Jaidev Rajwal in consultation with BJP State President and MLA, Ravinder Raina and BJP State General Secretary (Org.) Ashok Kaul today announced Assembly Constituency Incharges of IT and Social Media Department".

Jaidev Rajwal nominated thirty seven assembly con-

stituency Incharges of Jammu Province. According to the press note, Talib Shah was nominated as constituency Incharge of Darhal.

Later in April 2020, BJP Minority Morcha President Sheikh Bashir in consultation with party's J&K President Ravinder Raina, party J&K General Secretary (Org.) Ashok Kaul and other senior leaders of the party announced new Office Bearers, Working Committee Members and District Presidents for BJP Minority Morcha.

According to the press note circulated to the media on April 23, 2020, "Talib Shah was nominated as Morcha Publicity Secretary, whereas Mushtaq Ahmed Sheikh (Kupwara) and Fayaz Ahmed Naik (Banihal) were nominated as Morcha Additional Publicity Secretaries".

Responding to the gesture, Talib Shah posted a tweet on April 25, 2020 thanking the party leadership. "I am high-

ly thankful to Bharatiya Janata party Jammu Kashmir state president Ravinder Raina ji and State or General secretary Ashok Koul ji, BJP minority morcha president Sheikh Mohamed".

Recently, on May 9, 2022, BJP's Minority Morcha President, Sheikh Bashir, had appointed him incharge of the IT and Social media department, Minority Morcha. According to Sheikh Bashir, Shah, later resigned from the post on May 27, 2022.

This correspondent also contacted State Press Secretary, BJP Dr Pardeep Mahotra and also forwarded an email to him to verify whether Talib Shah mentioned in their press notes is the same person arrested by the police or not. Till late evening Dr Mahotra, who was attending a training session in the tourist resort of Patnitop, had not responded despite repeated requests. On the other hand former BJP State Incharge IT and Social Media



Department Jaidev Rajwal when contacted clarified party Chief Ravinder Raina had addressed a press conference on this topic where he had issued a detailed clarification.

After his links surfaced

with the BJP, the Jammu and Kashmir Unit Chief Ravinder Raina immediately rushed to demand National Investigation Agency (NIA) probe into Talib Shah's terror links.

While addressing media

persons in the party headquarters on Tuesday Raina had also claimed that Talib Shah visited the BJP office pretending to be a journalist. Stating that top J&K BJP leaders and office-bearers were on Talib

Hussain's hit-list, Raina had also sought a probe by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in this matter.

"Talib Hussain did recce of my office. He sent videos of my office to his Pakistani handlers. He used to meet BJP leaders by posing as a journalist. We demand a NIA probe," he said.

Raina also said the party has issued a show cause notice to Minority Morcha President Sheikh Bashir and asked him to reply within 48 hours. "He doesn't have the authority to make any appointment. Every appointment in the party is made by the President," the BJP leader said.

When Contacted Sheikh Bashir told The Pioneer, "I will first respond to the show cause notice then only I will speak to the media about this issue".

Significantly, images accessed by this correspondent clearly revealed Talib Shah not only attended party programs along with senior

party leaders in the party headquarters but was also working in the remote areas of Rajouri and propagating schemes of the Union government headed by Narendra Modi in the company of party workers.

His images with Member Parliament from Jammu-Poonch Lok Sabha seat Jugal Kishore Sharma and others have gone viral. In these images he is seen garlanding BJP MP, attending public meetings and party programs being addressed by the former incharge of Jammu and Kashmir unit Avinash Rai Khanna, J&K BJP organisation secretary Ashok Koul, Ravinder Raina and other party leaders and workers. In some of the images Talib Shah is also seen attending training programs in the party office along with other office bearers raising doubts over the claims made by the BJP leaders while washing their hands over their association with him.

Chemist's killing: NIA conducts searches at 13 locations in Amravati

PNS/T N RAGHUNATHA ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday carried out searches at multiple locations in Amravati district of eastern Maharashtra in connection with the sensational murder of a chemist Umesh Prahladrao Kolhe over a WhatsApp message posted by him in support of suspended BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma.

In an official statement, the NIA said that it had conducted searches at 13 locations in Amravati district after it took over the investigations from the Amravati police and re-registered a case on July 2, 2022 in connection with the murder that took place on the night of June 21.

"During the searches conducted today at the premises of accused and suspects, digital devices (mobile phones, SIM cards, memory cards, DVRs), pamphlets spreading hate messages, knives and other incriminating documents and materials, have been seized," the NIA said. In

all, seven persons, including the master-mind Sheikh Irfan, have been arrested in connection with Kolhe's murder. The six other accused in the case are: Mudassar Ahmed (22), Shahrukh Pathan (25), Abdul Taufiq (24), Shoib Khan (22), Atib Rashid (22) and Yusuf Bahadur Khan. All of them are in NIA's custody now. The NIA has booked the seven accused in the case under Section 16, 18 and 20 of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and Section 34, 153 (A), 153 (B), 120 (B) and 302 IPC has been filed based on a complaint by Kolhe's son Sanket Kolhe.

The incident took place between 10 pm and 10.30 pm on June 21 when Kolhe was on his way home after closing his shop -- Amit Medical Store. Sanket (27) and his wife Vaishnavi were accompanying him on another scooter.

Two motorcycle-borne assailants waylaid Kolhe. One of them stabbed him on the left side of his neck. In his complaint, Sanket told the police: "We were moving from Prabhat Chowk and our scooters had reached the

Mahila College New High School's gate. Two men on a motorcycle suddenly came in front of my father's scooter and stopped him. One of them stabbed him on the left side of his neck with a knife.

"My father fell and was bleeding. I stopped my scooter and started shouting for help. Another man came and the three fled the spot on the motorcycle. With help from passers-by, I rushed my father to nearby Axon Hospital where he died during treatment," Sanket said.

The investigations have revealed that Kolhe had circulated on WhatsApp a post supporting BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma, Police Vikram Sali said that prima facie Umesh Kolhe's murder was an off-shoot of a social media post supporting Nupur Sharma, who had made controversial comments on the Prophet in a television debate.

Kolhe inadvertently posted the message in a whatsapp group where there are Muslims who were also his customers. One of the arrested accused reportedly said that Kolhe's post was an insult to the Prophet and hence he must die.

Govt directs edible oil manufacturers to further cut MRP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Wednesday directed the edible oil manufacturers to further cut the maximum retail price (MRP) of imported cooking oils by up to Rs 10 per litre within a week, and maintain a uniform MRP of the same brand of oil across the country following a fall in global prices.



Taking note of a further drop in global prices, Food Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey called a meeting of all edible oil associations and major manufacturers to discuss the current trend and pass on the falling global prices to consumers by reducing the MRP. "We made a detailed presentation and told them that global prices have declined by 10 per cent in last one week alone. This should be passed on to consumers. We have asked them to reduce the MRP," Pandey said after the meeting.

As India imports more than 60 per cent of its edible oil requirement, retail prices came under pressure in the last few months taking cues from the

Harijans upset over Cherian's statement on Ambedkar

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The anti-Constitution speech made by Saji Cherian, Minister for Fisheries and Culture, at Mallappalli in Pathanamthitta district on Sunday has upset the entire Harijan community in the country.

An apolitical person like Acharya M K Kunhol, a widely respected social leader in the State came out in the open lambasting Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Minister Cherian, as well as the CPI-M over the speech in which Dr B R Ambedkar and other members of the drafting committee of the Indian Constitution including the first President Dr Rajendra Prasad were humiliated and portrayed very poorly.

Saji Cherian in his speech on Sunday alleged that the persons who drafted the Constitution simply copied down what was dictated by the colonial masters and put it as the Indian Constitution, which could be described as the best means for exploitation. "If you do not know about the Constitution, it is better to keep quiet about it. Neither minister Cherian nor his party,

the CPI-M, know the sacredness and serenity of the Constitution. Even EMS Namboodirippadu, the former general secretary of the party had any respect for Dr Ambedkar or the Constitution of India," Acharya Kunhol, who had been honoured with Padma Shree by the President of India, said in a statement on Wednesday. He also pointed out that the CPI-M was not in existence when Baba Saheb Ambedkar crafted the world's best Constitution for the country.

The Acharya recounted the number of Harijan youths murdered by the CPI-M in Kerala. "The CPI-M is a party of high caste communal persons. Harijans always get a raw deal in that party," said the Acharya who pointed out the recent murder of Deepu, a Harijan youth at Kizhakkambalam by the CPI-M activists.

The CPI-M leadership remained tight-lipped over the faux pas committed by the minister even as the demand for his dismissal from the ministry grew louder on the second day. The Congress-led UDF tried in vain to raise the issue in the legislative assembly on

Wednesday. But the Punjab-born Speaker M B Rajesh adjourned the House within minutes of the sitting to deny the Opposition any room to embarrass the treasury benches.

"This is unheard of in the history of Kerala Assembly," said V D Satheshan, leader of the opposition who led the UDF MLAs in a walk out and staged a demonstration in front of Dr Ambedkar's statue. "Jai Bheem" and "Jai Ambedkar" slogans were raised in the House as well as the Secretariat premises for the first time by Opposition who wanted the dismissal of the minister for his speech.

Saji Cherian who had said on Tuesday that it was the local slang in his speech that caused the misunderstanding about his speech made yet another U-turn on Wednesday. While speaking to the reporters, he said it was a slip of the tongue and he was sorry for that. "Saji Cherian is trying to save his skin by one excuse or other. The truth is that there is no options before him other than submitting his resignation," said BJP leader and former Mizoram Governor Kummanam Rajasekharan.

Gujarat: Heavy rain disrupts normal life in Gir Somnath, Junagadh districts

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Heavy and incessant rains disrupted normal life in several parts of Gir Somnath and Junagadh districts in Gujarat, with Sutrapada taluka in Gir Somnath recording 300 mm downpour in 30 hours till Wednesday noon, officials said.

The Meteorological Centre here said monsoon is now active in Gujarat as a low pressure area was formed over Kutch region, and more downpour is likely over the next five days across the state.

Gir Somnath and Junagadh districts have been witnessing heavy rains since Tuesday, the officials said.

As per the data shared by the State Emergency Operations Centre (SEOC), Sutrapada taluka received 300 mm rainfall in the last 30 hours that ended at 12

pm of Wednesday, including 132 mm rainfall between 6 am and 12 pm.

Similarly, neighbouring Kodinar taluka of the same district received 119 mm rainfall between 6 am and 12 pm on Wednesday. Veraval taluka 106 mm, Mangrol taluka of Junagadh 82 mm, followed by Bhuj(Kutch) with 51 mm, Hansot (Bharuch) with 42 mm and Kalyanpur (Devbhumi Dwarka) with 33 mm, the SEOC said.

Normal life was affected in Mangrol, Kodinar and Veraval towns as well as several villages in Sutrapada and Kodinar talukas due to heavy downpour as low-lying areas, agricultural fields, housing societies and several roads were submerged in knee-deep water, officials said.

Gujarat Revenue Minister Rajendra Trivedi visited the SEOC in state capital

Gandhinagar to take stock of the situation and review the preparedness of the authorities as more rainfall is predicted in the next five days.

"Most parts of Gujarat are likely to receive normal rainfall in the next five days," said Manorama Mohanty, director of the Meteorological Centre in Ahmedabad.

Heavy to very heavy showers, and at some places extremely heavy rains, are likely at isolated places in Gir Somnath, Devbhumi Dwarka, Surat, Valsad and Navsari districts during the next 24 hours.

"On July 8 and 9, extremely heavy rainfall may occur at some places in Valsad, Navsari, Kutch, Devbhumi Dwarka, Jamnagar and Porbandar districts due to the low pressure area over Kutch region," Mohanty said.



Commuters waded through a waterlogged street after heavy monsoon rain in Mumbai on Wednesday.

PTI Photo

UP Cong faces worst phase in history as its lone member in Legislative Council retires

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Going through its worst phase, Indian National Congress faces yet another major setback as for the first time the oldest political outfit of the country will have no member in the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council.

Deepak Singh, the lone Congress member in the UP Legislative Council retired on Wednesday.

In the last UP Assembly elections, Congress was confined to just two seats.

Not only the Congress, the Bahujan Samaj Party will now have just one member each in both the Houses of the UP legislature as three of its members in the council completed their terms on Wednesday.

A total of 10 members retired from the UP Legislative Council on Wednesday, including Jagjivan Prasad, Balram Yadav, Dr Kamlesh Kumar Pathak, Ranvijay Singh, Ramsunder Nishad and Shatrudha Prakash of the Samajwadi Party (SP). Apart from this, the tenures of BSP MLCs Atar Singh Rao, Suresh Kumar Kashyap and Dinesh Chandra also ended on Wednesday.

The tenures of two MLCs of Bharatiya Janata Party also ended on Wednesday. However, these two BJP members have been elected to the council again. The two members are Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya and Panchayati Raj Minister Chaudhary Bhupendra Singh.

The legislative council was formed in Uttar Pradesh, then United Provinces, on January 5, 1887 and its first meeting was held on January 8, 1887 at Thornhill Memorial Hall in Allahabad. Then it used to have nine members. Under the provisions made in 1909, the number of members was increased to 46, which included 26 non-official members. Of these members, 20 were elected and six were nominated. Motilal Nehru took the membership of the legislative council on February 7, 1909. He is considered to be the first member of Congress in the legislative council. However, he resigned in 1920 under the policy of non-cooperation with the Congress government. UP was then known as the United

Provinces.

After independence, till 1989, the leader of the house in the legislative council was from Congress, with the exception of 1977 and 1979 when this post was with Janata Party.

In the last 33 years, the Congress strength has been shrinking in the UP assembly. In the assembly elections held this time, Congress reached its lowest position in terms of number of members. Only two MLAs of the Congress won and got less than 2.5 per cent votes. This was bound to have an effect on its membership in the UP Legislative Council.

In view of the current circumstances, hope of Congress representation in the upper House of UP Legislature is a distant possibility.

UP Govt task forces to enforce drive to curb GST evasion

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

To curb evasion of goods and services tax (GST), the State Government will launch an enforcement drive for which task forces will be set up in each district.

The task force will first identify and gather relevant information about the tax evaders and this will be followed by raids by the tax authorities at the premises of the evaders.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath issued this direction after a presentation on taxation was made by the Commercial Tax department before him on Wednesday. The chief minister said that revenue from the GST and value-added tax (VAT) was steadily increasing and during the last fiscal 2021-22,

the total revenue from GST and compensation was Rs 98,107 crore.

The chief minister said efforts should be made in a mission mode for increasing the annual collection from GST to Rs 1.50 lakh crore. He said the record GST collection in the first quarter of the current fiscal validated the efforts so far made for increasing revenue collection.

For increasing tax collection from GST, the chief minister said, "Since GST is an online taxation system, a huge database is available with the tax authorities and this data should be analysed using the information technology (IT) tools or data analytics. He said the tools of artificial intelligence should also be used for increasing tax collection.

Yogi Adityanath said since the revenue generation from GST was based on consumption and revenue collection was linked to gross state domestic product, planned efforts were needed for increasing the consumption of goods in UP.

He said a congenial environment prevailed in UP for increasing tax collection and with the efforts made by the tax department the number of traders registered with GST had increased to 17.44 lakh -- the highest in the country. The chief minister said efforts should be made for increasing this number to 30 lakh in next one year.

The chief minister also asked the officials about the details of deduction of TDS from the payments made to contractors by the government

agencies and said it should be deposited as per the provisions of GSTR 7.

To curb tax evasion, the chief minister asked the tax authorities to keep an eye on the e-way bills generated by traders and high value bills generated by those newly registered with the GST. He said the turnover of the non-filers of GST return should be examined and it should be ensured that they paid the outstanding tax.

He said tax as per rules should also be realised from coaching institutes, banquet halls, shopping malls who hired big commercial buildings. The chief minister pressed the need for direct communication with the field level officers and said he would himself speak to the field level officers every fortnight.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Newsman as news

The incident has brought the independence and integrity of several media houses under a cloud

The fracas between Chhattisgarh and Noida Police over detention of a news channel anchor is not a healthy development. The arrest preceded high drama at the anchor's house in Ghaziabad's Indrapuram on Tuesday morning. The Chhattisgarh Police had come to arrest him with a warrant for his alleged role in doctoring a video of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. The doctored video allegedly made it appear that Gandhi indirectly condoned the gruesome murder of the Udaipur tailor by a couple of jihadists. Around 6.15 am, the anchor reached out to the Uttar Pradesh Police and Government, including Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, through a SoS tweet, saying Chhattisgarh cops had reached his residence to arrest him without informing the local police. That brought Noida Police on the scene. Meanwhile, the news channel has distanced itself from the doctored video. It claimed in a police complaint that the *faux pas* happened "due to oversight and inadvertence". The company claimed that two employees have been dismissed. "In the given circumstances, the company has reasonable belief and suspicion that the aforesaid negligence and dereliction of duties may have been committed by (the producers) knowingly and intentionally in connivance with each other," the company said in its police complaint. Only a probe can bring out the truth, but the incident has given voice to sceptics who are increasingly questioning the independence and integrity of several media houses. There is nothing wrong in taking a political stand on issues, but with a media organisation — or some of its journalists — is seen as promoting the interests of a party, it ceases to be journalism; it becomes politicking, with all the attendant consequences. This episode should be seen as a lesson to the entire media: Nobody is outside the jurisdiction of the law of karma.

The political class should also realise that if cops are stopped or harassed when they are probing an interstate matter, the enforcement of law will be adversely affected. This happened in May in the case against BJP leader Tajinder Bagga. The Punjab Police wanted to arrest him for his "provocative statements and promoting religious enmity", but Delhi and Haryana police foiled the attempt. His tweets had targeted Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party boss Arvind Kejriwal. According to the Punjab Police, he was an offender who should be arrested, but this view was not shared by the police of Delhi and Haryana. Evidently, cops' understanding of the law did not correspond with what is written in statute books but to the interests of the politicians they report to. This is not the rule of law; this is the rule of men and women who occupy political offices. In effect, it becomes the tyranny of arbitrariness, hurting all sooner or later. When editorialists bemoan it, they are often ridiculed as dreamy moralists. But the law of karma also catches up with cynics, including journalists and politicians.

PICTALK



Farm workers plant paddy saplings at a field, in South Dinajpur

PTI

Double trouble

Peak summer conditions increase pollution levels and risk to environment, human health, economy

As the weather turns scorching and the wind speed picks up, pollution levels in the summer are supposed to be lower than in the winter. However, pollutants in the former case are more easily dispersed in the atmosphere thanks to the clear skies. The increase in dust particles brought on by building activity and vehicle traffic is the main cause of summertime pollution, experts aver. This summer, a case in point is that India not only faced increased heat but also more air pollution. A new report released on Wednesday stated that the Capital experienced increased summertime air pollution in 2022 compared to 2021, with the city's particulate matter levels significantly exceeding the normal limits. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) confirmed that the allowed levels for PM 2.5 and PM 10 in Delhi during the four summer months (March, April, May and June) this year were five times higher, according to an analysis by NCAP Tracker, a project of environmental organisations *Climate Trends and Respirer Living Sciences*. Interestingly, even abroad, in the Los Angeles region for example, the air quality significantly declined and remained dangerous after hundreds of Fourth of July fireworks displays lit up the skies there.



Due to the fireworks' high amounts of particulate matter and metal air pollutants, the South Coast Air Quality Management District issued a particle advisory for most of Southern California, from Los Angeles to the Coachella Valley. The South Coast Air Basin's fine particulate matter levels on July 4 and July 5 are routinely among the worst of the year. In addition to the fine particles already existing in the basin, mostly brought on by vehicles, fugitive dust and industrial pollutants, fireworks also contribute to smoke and combustion products. It has been well established that the summertime and a warmer environment can affect air quality in a number of ways, with a variety of negative effects on human health and economy. Extreme weather conditions, as well as both natural and man-made pollution, run the risk of worsening our air quality and having a variety of negative health effects as our planet's climate changes. Fortunately, we have some control. Environmental insights with a health focus help us see the year-round effects of invisible air pollution. With the correct knowledge, we can enable individuals to take responsibility for the air they breathe.

Of the fraction or the faction?

Till the Election Commission decides who deserves the symbol, the Shinde camp remains a faction; the Uddhav camp is nothing more than a diminishing 'fraction'

Though the mainstream media equates both the Shiv Sena groups with the same bulk of command over the splintered party, the fact remains otherwise. It is now clear that the bigger chunk has already been taken away by Eknath Shinde, and what is left over for Uddhav is a tiny and still-diminishing fraction.

Though the 'faction' has already formed the Government and passed the floor test, a deeper political crunch is still undergoing within the larger Shiv Sena Parivaar. The bone of contention and the fight for survival for both groups now concentrate on the most important question: Who will finally own the party and its symbol? This will continue till the EC takes the final call, deciding on who qualifies to be the owner of the Shiv Sena and its symbol.

Now, the saviours of either camp must be hectic in exploring all thinkable routes to conquer that technical-legal existential battle at EC by all means possible. In particular, the political legitimacy and the future course for both camps will be on tenterhooks till the EC spells the final word.

Principles for the EC: The opinion of experts shows the success of either group depends on the single available option to them — how they can successfully establish their majority before the EC. When the needle of the entire game sags to the evidence of majority, it is pretty evident that either faction must be trying hard to drag it into their favour.

The focused dynamics: The dynamics of proving the majority constitute the following parameters, and the precedents indicate that the EC will certainly examine into it. So, the EC will examine the support each faction enjoys within the party's organisation, in the legislature wing, in the top committees and decision-making bodies.

Most importantly, before deciding on these factors, the EC will certainly have to learn the Shiv Sena constitution for once. As this particular case goes, the most tangible parameter that the EC will take into account is the number of lawmakers and legis-



lators in each camp. And, in this case, the legislative wings necessarily consist of MPs, MLAs and maybe the count of MLCs if the EC wants to consider. Secondly, the EC will examine the strength of support that each faction enjoys within the party's organisational setups. Here, the EC may go a little further and ask both camps to produce the necessary evidence with documentary support.

The EC's discretion: Now, the ball is in the EC's court. When it is about a political party, the EC will certainly listen to all stakeholders, then whoever wants to be heard, and it will consider the pre- and the post- factual circumstances that led to the splintering. Here, the EC's power will be certainly at play. The Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968, gives it power to deal with the very issue. However, the EC's discretion will finally prevail and remain binding.

As far as the EC's discretion goes, it doesn't lack any restriction to decide in favour of one of the factions or neither of these. However, in this case, it can probably rule in favour of

THE SAVIOURS OF EITHER CAMP MUST BE WORKING OVERTIME TO WIN THE TECHNICAL-LEGAL EXISTENTIAL BATTLE AT EC BY ALL MEANS POSSIBLE. IN PARTICULAR, THE POLITICAL LEGITIMACY AND FUTURE COURSE FOR BOTH CAMPS HANG IN BALANCE

one of the factions based on the real majority of support it enjoys both in the organisation and in the legislative wings. Then, it can keep the party symbol reserved for that faction in majority and may ask the other faction to register itself as a new political party with a different symbol.

Who is at advantage? As a recent precedent, a lesson can be drawn from the Samajwadi Party case where the father-son duo reached the EC to claim the party's symbol. Akhilesh won against Mulayam Yadav, evidencing that he not only commanded the Government but also the party.

In this particular case, the E-faction may also be considering to take over the party even before the EC steps in. E-faction has validated its majority in the legislative wings by establishing a fresh Government in Maharashtra, followed by winning the floor test in the Assembly. Now, it is for the E-faction then to confirm its majority in party organisation, particularly by bringing the Sena office bearers into its fold.

The final battling of the U-faction: If certain people

break from the party, the anti-defection law comes into play. Under the law, whether it is one person or 100, the anti-defection law comes into application. Defection equates to the intended partition from the party and its membership; and at this very point, the U-faction will surely stick to it. Nevertheless, on the disqualification issue, the only option is to knock at the Speaker's office. But then, it is rather unlikely that the Speaker would entertain such a petition.

New surprises: The total strength of Maharashtra Assembly is 287 and the majority mark is 144. The E-faction-led Government in coalition with BJP has won the floor test with 164.

Many independent MLAs are still roaming around the negotiation camps as dark horses. With Congress as well as NCP as the focal political contenders, the ruling faction on the edge may unfurl added surprises by breaking into their camp also.

(The author is Assistant Professor of Political Science in Mody University, Rajasthan. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GOVT-TWITTER FACE-OFF

Sir — The Government and Twitter have been at loggerheads over the new IT rules since May 2021 and even earlier. The long-running confrontation over content regulation has now entered a new phase with Twitter moving the Karnataka High Court against the Government's 'blocking orders' under the IT Act. The important question to ask is, if the Government orders Twitter to take down content in the absence of sound reasons, don't undermine the notion of freedom of expression. The paramount and inviolability of freedom of expression must be upheld. Twitter has a point — it finds the Government's 'recurring removal requests' too much of an interference in the company's affairs.

Sometimes the Government asks Twitter to not just block the posts, but take down the user accounts themselves without notice to 'content originators'. It is widely known that Twitter incurred the displeasure of the Government when tweets in support of farmers' protests and tweets critical of the Government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic found space on the platform. The threat to strip the social media company of 'safe harbour immunity' is a blatant attempt to put pressure on Twitter to fall in with the ruling dispensation.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

THE VALOUR OF J&K VILLAGERS

Sir — It speaks of the valour of villagers who overpowered two hardcore terrorists who were about to create havoc. The people of Reasi village deserve to be applauded for tactfully handling the case. This is a case of unarmed and untrained people capturing armed and trained terrorists. The announcement of cash reward of ₹5 lakh by L-G Manoj Sinha and ₹2 lakh by the DGP is welcome and the taxpayers' money has been put to best use. Reasi villagers have set a good example that they can also do what security forces can.

The nabbed terrorists were responsible for many terror incidents. The erosion of

Safety audit for aviation sector



Though India has one of the better air safety indicators in the world as compared to global average, recent several flight scares bring to the fore urgency of further strengthening air safety and need for a comprehensive safety audit in the aviation sector, airworthiness of aircraft, pilots' training and ground safety. Several recent incidents of midair troubles are scary and highlight the situation that requires urgent DGCA

attention. A Delhi-Dubai flight had to make an emergency landing at the Karachi Airport after it developed a technical fault midair with the malfunctioning of the fuel indicator; then there was a fire incident in the aircraft of Delhi-bound Patna flight while flying.

All this is a really dangerous and scary thing as there was risk to 185 lives but due to the pilot's skill and ability to navigate, despite the scary situation the aircraft landed safely. Though modern passenger aircrafts are built to operate even with one operational engine, it can sometimes result in catastrophe. The DGCA must put all measures in place for a robust air safety mechanism. DGCA should conduct a thorough investigation to find out the reasons for such incidents. Also, the airlines should give more attention to regular maintenance of aircraft and upgrading the training for pilots and air controllers. For a growing nation, air safety should be top priority.

Ramesh G Jethwani | Bangalore

30-year old terrorism in the Valley by security forces has been instilling confidence among people to live a peaceful life. Yet the terrorists want to prove that they are still around to create disturbance. The tribe of terrorists has perished to a large extent after security forces were given a free hand to deal with the situation. A Russian President once said: "It is for God to forgive the terrorists. But it is our duty to send the terrorists to God." Also, courts should harness their energy in deciding the cases of captured terrorists expeditiously.

KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

NEED TO SAVE AAREY FOREST

Sir — The rescheduled fifth Test of the Pataudi Trophy turns out to be a ding-dong battle. England playing at home was formidable and the toss favoured them to put Team India to bat first. As in the four Test matches last year, early wickets went cheaply and the rearguard action saw the teams

putting up a moderate total. After putting up 400-plus, India was in the driver's seat. England folded up for 284-plus and that gave them a handsome 132-run lead and consolidated their position.

With a score of 190 for 5, India dictated terms but the sudden rush of blood saw it losing remaining wickets for just 55 runs. That collapse in one session triggered the fear of losing and England started on a bright note and amassed 100 runs before losing the first wicket. Two more wickets fell and still resolute batting from Root and Bairstow saw the pair adding 269 runs, which saw the team sailing past the 10th highest target and thereby squared the series 2-2 in a convincing way. The absence of an off-spinner was felt when the left-handers and Root thrived for long. England applied an attacking policy and won.

CKR Nathan | Ghaziabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

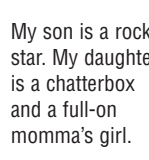
Domestic output of conventional and indigenous nano urea will totally replace the imports.



Union Fertiliser Minister —Mansukh Mandaviya



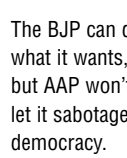
Keir Starmer —Britain's Oppn leader



Actor —Shilpa Shetty Kundra



India's stand-in captain —Jasprit Bumrah




Delhi Chief Minister —Arvind Kejriwal

FIRST COLUMN

EDUCATORS TO DISCUSS NEP IMPLEMENTATION

The policy is focused on human values of Bharatiya civilisation



RAGHAVENDRA P **TIWARI**

Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam, which will be held in Varanasi July 7-9, will be a 'Maha Kumbh of Higher Education'. The core objective is to extract Amrut (nectar) from a number of quality imperatives enshrined in the National Education Policy 2020. The event will also mark the second anniversary of NEP 2020, which is aimed at making the youth future ready, while focusing on human values, life skills and traits of Bharatiya civilisation.

The event would take stock of gains made from the learning system of India and transform it to empower youth with 'glocal' competencies. Deliberations will be focused on mapping interests, abilities and demands of the younger generation for framing enabling rules for NEP 2020 on the basis of the objectives of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. Also, the event will re-visit and re-strategise already drawn pathways for the implementation of NEP 2020. A key thrust area will be to prepare for a holistic perspective for flawless implementation of NEP 2020. Educational luminaries will look at the ways to ensure speedy and effective implementation of NEP 2020.

In knowledge driven society, the quality of education system provides for economic vitality, health and overall well-being. NEP 2020 was launched on 29th July, 2020 with a view to transform the existing learning system and to actualise the needs of the 21st century learners. The seriousness of this mammoth assembly of Directors and Vice-Chancellors of the higher educational institutions can be appreciated from the fact that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself will inaugurate and address the gathering. Education Minister Dharmendra Kumar will remain present during the course of the event.



India can become Atmanirbhar only when we make our youth competent enough to contribute meaningfully and purposefully and become instrumental in the Industrial Revolution (IR) 4.0 by making use of disruptive digital technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, Intelligent Robotics, Big Data Analytics, Cloud Computing and so on. In IR 4.0, Cyber-Physical Production System (CPPS) is utilized for industrial production. Education 4.0 envisages co-learning, co-creation and innovation; anytime, anywhere, and any type of learning. Also, it calls for the use of flipped classrooms for transforming passive to active learning at home or outside, while institutions are used for skill-development. Besides, the thrust is also on personalized and collaborative learning, as lesson plans become creative, and continuous training ensures updation of domain knowledge and skills.

In nutshell, it can be said that Education 4.0 is outcome-based. Senior academicians and officials at the event will focus on the need to formulate policies to make youth future-ready to face a highly uncertain and volatile future. The speed of changes witnessed by the education sector is outpacing the ability of the existing system to respond adequately and appropriately. Indeed, the educational system faces the risk of becoming outdated if changes are not adopted.

Threadbare deliberations will take place on the student-centric and Bharat-centric reforms, with thrust on skill-development and employability, research, innovation and entrepreneurship, capacity building of teachers. Also, ways to ensure ranking and accreditation along with digital empowerment and online education will be discussed. Indeed, equitable and inclusive education within the Indian knowledge system will also be addressed.

The Ministry of Education and the UGC are burning midnight oil in making provisions/regulations on outcome-based learning with multi-disciplinary curriculum, while offering students multiple exit-entry options. Also, academic bank of credits and education in mother tongue/regional language at least up to primary level are among top concerns of NEP 2020. Emphasis will also be on shift in pedagogy, while learners will have to evolve to think like employees and employees will need to think like learners.

(The author is Vice-Chancellor, Central University of Punjab.)

NATO faces two-front geostrategic challenges

NATO needs to reimagine its role to defend two fronts, in Europe and the Indo-Pacific region

The Chinese hegemonic intentions are visible from its deteriorating relations with the West and India, the growing tensions in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, apart from the human rights issues in Tibet and the Xinjiang region.

Financial crises in Sri Lanka and Pakistan further worsen matters. In 2020, China replaced the United States as the EU's largest trading partner. By 2021, Beijing had built 50 per cent of the total ships in the world. Through various mechanisms such as design collaboration agreements, cyber espionage, and acquisitions, China has copied advanced innovative ship designs, endangering the West's future naval productions. In a nutshell, the world is witnessing China's coercive policies in international politics and geo-economics, a deeply embedded civil-military fusion through espionage and dual-use production facilities, which raises sovereignty issues for several countries.

On the other hand, from the French President's statement in 2019 that NATO is "brain dead" to the 2022 Russia-Ukraine conflict and the completion of the accession protocols of Sweden and Finland, the alliance has been reinvigorated with its new Trans-Pacific identity through the 2022 Madrid summit. The heads of the states of NATO's Asian regional partners — Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea — attended the NATO Summit, a new development indicating the expanding horizons of Asia's militarization to counter the Chinese hegemonic designs. The message stands clear, NATO is pivoting to Asia. The NATO 2022 'Strategic Concept' minced no words to state that the "PRC's malicious hybrid and cyber operations and its confrontational rhetoric and disinformation target Allies and harm Alliance security". It strongly indicates that NATO now prioritizes the Indo-Pacific region. Before the 2022 summit, the foreign ministers of these four countries met at the North Atlantic Council (NAC) in December 2020 for the first time to push the emerging multilateral interoperability in the Indo-Pacific. This was in the backdrop of the "NATO 2030" expert reflection group that had labelled China as a "full-spectrum systemic rival, rather than a purely economic player or an only Asia-focused security actor."

However, President Barack Obama was the first leader to foresee the Chinese threat and announced the "pivot" policy in 2011, while addressing the Australian Parliament. Further, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton penned an essay titled "America's Pacific Century," where she argued for a "strategic turn to the region", which indicated relocating the US navy from West Asia to the South China Sea. The policy did not receive much attention, given the U.S. engagements in West Asia and Afghanistan. Nevertheless, today, the region's shifting sands, whereby the U.S. has



NATO HAS FINALLY WOKEN UP TO CHALLENGES BUILDING UP IN EUROPE ON ACCOUNT OF RUSSIAN AGGRESSIONS, WHILE CHINA'S EXPANSIONIST ATTEMPTS HAVE ALARMED NEIGHBOURS IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

The author is Assistant Professor, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda



snowballed the peace process through the Abraham accords and the Saudi-Turkey peace process, strongly indicate that the upcoming days in the Indo-Pacific will be highly turbulent. From another essential perspective, the militarization of the Indo-Pacific region would also provoke China and Russia to react, thereby offsetting the relative peace on Russia's Eastern and Southern borders. Over the last few decades, Russia has adopted a relatively peaceful approach in the two directions to entirely focus on its Western front. The change in NATO's strategy thus would be testing for the Sino-Russian friendship as Russia is more focused on Europe.

Nevertheless, the prelude to the new Cold War, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, has led to a consensus in Europe that it needs to view Russia as its primary geopolitical challenge. At the same summit, NATO also decided to increase its rapidly deployable troops by 300,000, apart from doubling or tripling to the brigade level in the Baltic States and five other frontline countries. Further, it plans to increase munitions and other supplies in response to Russia's aggressiveness. This overhauling of the deployments would be complete by 2023. Currently, the defence spending of its members will increase by 1.2 per cent in real terms by the end of 2022. Simultaneously, as Europe intends to reduce its energy dependencies, a pertinent question that needs to be pondered over is, at the same point of time, what would be the proportion of financial and military commitments of NATO towards first, the European Defence, and second, the containment of

China in the Indo-Pacific region? Which objective would be a priority for the European countries? Can they counter two threats at the same time? The Ukraine-Russia conflict might continue for a couple of more months, if not years.

Moreover, what if China decides to invade Taiwan during the same period or creates crises in the Indo-Pacific region? It must be recalled that during the Russia-Ukraine conflict's initial phase, France and Germany were reluctant to cut off their gas supplies. The future is hard to predict, and so are the sustenance levels of multiple military alliances. What then happens to the safety of allies in Asia is worth pondering. Thus, NATO needs to develop a genuinely transatlantic China policy in addition to the deployments in the Indo-Pacific, which might make China more reactionary and possibly provoke it to test the unity of NATO.

Three crucial issues emerge regarding South and Central Asia and the recent developments. First, attempts by Russia and China to expand their joint sphere of influence to include countries having an anti-American perspective, such as Iran and Pakistan. The emerging counter quad can present a formidable challenge to the West's allies. Second, the destruction of the agricultural fertility of Ukraine will lead to increased demand for food grains. One of the most critical inputs for good agricultural produce are phosphates, the supplies dominated by China, which can be used as an essential geopolitical tool against the West via the supplier countries, especially in South and Central Asia. Third, the impact of the conflict would be the rise in the

earth's average temperatures, particularly in the Arctic region; hence, melting the ice would be a new strategic issue. The opening of the new sea routes, especially in the arctic, would further bring the Indo-Pacific region to the centre of the gravity of the upcoming new conflicts.

India firmly believes in multipolarity and hence has its presence in China-led SCO, BRICS, and RIC apart from its strategic partnership in the Quad grouping. The multi-alignment policy of PM Narendra Modi has yielded positive results. As the militarization of Asia is imminent and there are increased chances of confrontations, the moment presents India with an opportunity to delicately balance hegemonic tendencies and democratic ideals without compromising India's security and sovereignty. For this, it becomes essential that the country adjusts its budget to soon emerge as a self-reliant defence actor to maintain the strategic autonomy, failing which it might be sandwiched between the arms trade geopolitics of the West and Russia. Even for a couple of years, some hard decisions to divert financial resources towards indigenous development and emergency procurements of cyber and space capabilities is a must. On the flip side, we also need to evolve our policies in case the hegemonic tendencies pose an imminent threat. In such a case, New Delhi's traditional ally, such as Russia, might side with China and hence would allow India to find military and tactical support from the willing partners, thereby bringing profound changes in the South Asian security architecture.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

I DON'T THINK @RRRMOVIE IS A GAY LOVE STORY BUT EVEN IF IT WAS, IS 'GAY LOVE STORY' A BAD THING? —**BAAHUBALI** PRODUCER SHOBU YARLAGADDA



THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG WITH IT. I MERELY QUOTED...THE BANTER THAT ALREADY EXISTS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN. —**OSCAR-WINNING** SOUND DESIGNER RESUL POOKUTTY

Bizarre Cuban Missile Crisis redux in Nicaragua

Nowadays, both Russia and the United States have ample weapons that they can fire at each other from their homelands

It was a piece of news so obscure and implausible that I missed it when it first surfaced last month. The news was that the Russians are going to put hypersonic nuclear missiles into Nicaragua and terrify the Americans into backing down over Ukraine. Or kill them all if they don't.

"If American missile systems can nearly reach Moscow from Ukrainian territory, it's time for Russia to roll out something powerful closer to the American 'city on a hill,'" said Olga Skabeyeva on the news show on 'Rossiya-1', the most popular Russian TV channel.

The usual crew of panelists hugged themselves with delight at the idea of American cities being blown away. "Objects like the city of New York, a good city, but it would



GWYNNE **DYER**

(The author's new book is The Shortest History of War)

be gone. Completely gone with one rocket," said one.

Then they rambled on about how the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 had brought the Americans to their senses (bet you didn't know that the US lost), and how Russian missiles in Nicaragua might bring Americans to their senses again. They will give in before they really get hurt.

As a substantial majority of the Russian television audience watches the show, that's the news ordinary Russians are getting. But if these people really represent the Russian elite's views of what is possible and necessary, then we're all in trouble. Nuclear war is at hand.

I don't really think nuclear war is at hand, but there is a lot of loose talk about it in Russia at the moment. So let's examine

the optimistic assumption in the West that some people in the Russian military and diplomatic hierarchies — hopefully quite senior people — have a better grasp of reality than the television pundits.

Are there really Russian generals and senior foreign ministry officials who think that "American missile systems can nearly reach Moscow from the Ukrainian territory"? If you mean American nuclear missiles, then of course not.

The United States has given non-nuclear battlefield missiles to Ukraine, but it has deliberately restricted the ammunition to types that cannot reach any significant distance into Russia. There are no American troops in Ukraine, and no nuclear weapons in Ukrainian hands.

The business about moving

American nuclear missiles 'closer' to Russia is complete tripe: they are just as lethal from where they are now. Russian generals and diplomats are not stupid: they know that American nuclear weapons systems have been able to reach Russia from the US homeland or any of the world's oceans since the 1960s.

Well, then, how would putting Russian nuclear missiles in Nicaragua, 'closer' to the United States, give Russia any advantage either? It wouldn't, although it would probably provoke the US government into a massive over-reaction. Like Russian nuclear missiles in Cuba in 1962, you know?

The difference between Cuba in 1962 and Nicaragua today is that 'close' still meant something in 1962, when the

United States already had intercontinental ballistic missiles that could reach the old Soviet Union, but Russia had no long-range ballistic missiles that could hit American cities yet.

The Russians sneaked some shorter-range nuclear missiles into Cuba to even things up, but the Americans spotted them, imposed a blockade, and threatened to invade Cuba. Moscow pulled its missiles out, and everybody lived grumpily ever after.

Nowadays, both Russia and the United States have ample weapons that they can fire at each other from their homelands. 'Closer' no longer confers any advantages. Besides, Nicaragua has not said it will host Russian nuclear weapons, or indeed Russian weapons of any sort.

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega published a decree last month authorising small numbers of troops from Russia, the United States or other Central American countries to deploy to his country for a limited time 'for purposes of training, law enforcement or emergency response'.

Ortega was a Marxist in the 1980s. After the Nicaraguan revolution triumphed, he got Soviet help, and US President Ronald Reagan financed a guerilla/terrorist movement in an unsuccessful attempt to bring him down, but that was long ago.

Now, Ortega is just another dictator like Putin. He rigs elections, jails the opposition, and treats the state budget as his private income. Nicaragua is broke, so Ortega is happy to take

Russian money, but he's probably not stupid enough to let the Russians bring missiles in.

Russia's much-hyped hypersonic missiles are irrelevant anyway, since 'hypersonic' missiles are only useful if a country has good anti-missile defences. In fact, nobody has good missile defences, so, they make little difference strategically. Dumb missiles with some terminal guidance work just fine.

The rational conclusion, therefore, is that this is all just propaganda blather by ignorant Russian TV pundits, but a warning. I predicted that Russia would not invade Ukraine because it would be utterly stupid to do. I am still assuming that Russian leaders are rational, but now I have some doubts.

Political instability deepens in Lanka as Aviation Min resigns

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Cabinet was on Wednesday thrown into turmoil by the resignation of Aviation Minister Nimal Siripala De Silva while another senior minister demanded that Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe should quit as the finance minister alleging that he halted all the projects that could bring in the much-needed forex to the country facing worst economic crisis.

De Silva, Minister of Ports, Shipping, and Aviation, resigned following an allegation made by main Opposition SJB leader Sajith Premadasa in Parliament on Tuesday that a Cabinet Minister had solicited a bribe from Japan's Taisei Corporation.

De Silva, in a letter addressed to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, said although he was not directly accused of demanding a bribe he was resigning in order to allow an impartial investigation as the allegation concerned his ministry.

According to media reports, the Japanese firm is involved in the expansion of the Bandaranaike International Airport here.

Meanwhile, newly-appointed minister of invest-



ment promotion, Dhammika Perera, addressing a gathering here, demanded that Wickremesinghe should resign as the minister of finance.

Perera, a former business leader, alleged that Wickremesinghe was blocking dollar inflows into the country and he had no cash flow plan to resolve the forex

crisis. Wickremesinghe ignored to respond to the Opposition when asked to react in Parliament on Perera's attack on him.

Sri Lanka is going through the worst economic crisis since its independence from Britain in 1948, and needs to obtain at least USD 4 billion to tide over the acute shortage in foreign

exchange reserves.

The country, with an acute foreign currency crisis that resulted in foreign debt default, had announced in April that it is suspending nearly USD 7 billion foreign debt repayment due for this year out of about USD 25 billion due through 2026.

Sri Lanka's total foreign debt stands at USD 51 billion.

Sri Lankan president calls Russian leader seeking fuel

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa said Wednesday that he had a telephone call with Russian leader Vladimir Putin to request credit support to import fuel for the island nation that is facing its worst economic crisis in memory. "Had a very productive telecon with the Russia President Vladimir Putin. While thanking him for all the support extended by his govt to overcome the challenges of the past, I requested an offer of credit support to import fuel to #lka in defeating the current econ challenges," Rajapaksa said in a tweet.

Western nations largely have cut off energy imports from Russia in line with sanctions over its war on Ukraine. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said earlier that the government would look for other sources first but it has not been successful.

Since Russia's invasion of

Ukraine in late February, global oil prices have skyrocketed, prompting a number of countries to seek out Russian crude, which is being offered at steep discounts.

Sri Lanka's economic crisis has led to a dire fuel shortage forcing the government to shut schools and ask employees other than those in essential services to work from home to cut down on consuming the limited stocks. The government said earlier that no entity is willing to supply oil to Sri Lanka even for cash because its petroleum corporation owes a heavy debt.

Sri Lanka's foreign currency crunch led to its suspending repayment of foreign debt in April pending outcome of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout package. However, Wickremesinghe told Parliament on Tuesday that discussions with the IMF have been complex and difficult because Sri Lanka is now a bankrupt nation.

Afghan soil won't be used to launch attacks, says Taliban leader

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Taliban supreme leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada said Wednesday that Afghan soil will not be used to launch attacks against other countries, and he asked the international community to not interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

The Taliban say they are adhering to an agreement they signed with the United States in 2020 - before retaking power - in which they promised to fight terrorists.

Since their takeover last year, they have repeatedly said Afghanistan would not be used as a launching pad for attacks against other countries.

"We assure our neighbours, the region and the world that we will not allow anyone to use our territory to threaten the security of other countries. We also want other countries not to interfere in our internal affairs," Akhundzada said in an address ahead of the Eid al-Adha holiday.

The Taliban were ousted by a US-led coalition in 2001 for harbouring Osama bin Laden, mastermind of the 9/11 attacks in the United States. The religious group captured power again in mid-August, during the chaotic last weeks of the U.S. And NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The international community has been wary of any recognition or cooperation with the Taliban, especially after they restricted the rights of women and minorities - measures that harken back to their harsh rule when they were last in power in the late 1990s.

Akhundzada, the spiritual chief of the Taliban, has remained a reclusive figure. He rose to leader of the Islamist movement in a swift transition of power after a 2016 U.S.

Drone strike killed his predecessor, Mullah Akhtar Mansour.

After taking over, Akhundzada secured the backing of al-Qaida chief Ayman al-Zawahiri, who showered the cleric with praise, calling him "the emir of the faithful." The endorsement by bin Laden's heir helped seal his jihadist credentials with the Taliban's long-time allies.

However, in his Eid message Akhundzada said: "Within the framework of mutual interaction and commitment, we want good, diplomatic, economic and political relations with the world, including the United States, and we consider this in the interest of all sides."

A three-day assembly of Islamic clerics and tribal elders in the Afghan capital that concluded Saturday included pledges of support for the Taliban and calls on the international community to recognize the country's Taliban-led government.

In a surprise development, the reclusive Akhundzada came to Kabul from his base in southern Kandahar province and addressed the gathering Friday. It was believed to be his first visit to the Afghan capital since the Taliban seized power.

In an hour-long speech at the assembly carried by state radio, Akhundzada called the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan a "victory for the Muslim world."

A powerful earthquake in June killed more than 1,000 people in eastern Afghanistan, igniting yet another crisis for the economically struggling country.

Overstretched aid groups already keeping millions of Afghans alive rushed supplies to the quake victims, but most countries responded tepidly to Taliban calls for international help.

EU lawmakers back gas, nuclear energy as sustainable

AP ■ BRUSSELS

European Union lawmakers voted Wednesday to include natural gas and nuclear in the bloc's list of sustainable activities, backing a proposal from the EU's executive arm that has been drawing fierce criticism from environment groups and will likely trigger legal challenges.

As the EU wants to set the best global standards in the fight against climate change, the decision could tarnish the bloc's image and question the region's commitment to reaching climate neutrality by 2050.

The European Commission earlier this year made the proposal as part of its plans for building a climate-friendly future, dividing member countries and drawing outcry from environmentalists over what they criticize as "greenwashing."

EU legislators from the environment and economy committees objected last month to the plan, setting up Wednesday's decisive vote in Strasbourg, France. But MEPs rejected their resolution in a 328-278 vote, with 33 lawmakers abstaining. The result was announced to a salvo of applause.



An absolute majority of 353 was needed to veto the proposal. If the European Parliament and member countries don't object to it by July 11, the so-called Taxonomy delegated act

will enter into force and apply as of next year.

Greenpeace immediately said it will submit a formal request for internal review to the European Commission, and then take legal action at the European Court of Justice if the result isn't conclusive.

"It's dirty politics and it's an outrageous outcome to label gas and nuclear as green and keep more money flowing to (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's war chest, but now we will fight this in the courts," said Ariadna Rodrigo, Greenpeace's EU sustainable finance campaigner.

European Parliament rapporteur Bas Eickhout rued "a dark day for the climate and the energy transition."

The green labeling system from the European Commission defines what qualifies as an investment in sustainable energy. Under certain conditions, gas and nuclear energy will now be part of the mix, making it easier for private investors to inject money into both.

With the EU aiming to reach climate neutrality by 2050 and to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, the commission says the classification system is crucial to direct investments into sustainable energy.

Jihadis attack jail in Nigeria's Capital, 600 inmates escape

AP ■ ABUJA

At least 600 inmates escaped in a jailbreak in Nigeria's capital city, officials said Wednesday, blaming the attack on Islamic extremist rebels.

About 300 have been recaptured, authorities said. The "very determined" rebels attacked the Kuje maximum prison in Abuja on Tuesday night with "very high-grade explosives," killing one guard on duty, according to Shuaib Belgore, permanent secretary of Nigeria's Ministry of Interior.

Explosions and gunfire were heard at about 10 p.m. In the Kuje area of Abuja when the attackers arrived and forced their way into the prison through a hole created by the explosives.

The Islamic extremist rebels who attacked the prison have waged an insurgency in the country's northeast for over a decade.

Their attack on the detention facility freed many of their members who are inmates, prison officials said.

"We understand they are Boko Haram. They came specifically for their co-conspirators," said Belgore.

"Right now, we have retrieved about 300 out of about 600 that got out of the jail."

Marcos plays balancing act in meeting with China's FM

AP ■ MANILA

New Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr met with China's top diplomat Wednesday to take up long-simmering disputes in the South China Sea, as he waded into foreign policy dilemmas that include the U.S.-China rivalry in the region.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, wearing a native Filipino formal shirt, met his counterpart for talks at the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila and later met Marcos Jr at the presidential palace.No detailed statement about the talks was immediately released by Philippine officials. Chinese officials have frowned on what they perceive as undue media focus on the territorial conflicts that put Beijing in a bad light.

In Beijing, a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement quoted Wang as telling National Security Adviser Clarita Carlos in Manila that Marcos Jr's election "has turned a new page in China-Philippines relations, and the two peoples are full of expectations for the development of bilateral relations."

The statement did not say if the territorial disputes were taken up."Our only choice is to be friendly, friendly, and



friendly again," Wang said.Wang arrived in Manila Tuesday night as part of a Southeast Asian swing that brought him earlier to Myanmar and Thailand. He will also visit Malaysia and Indonesia, where he will attend a meeting of G-20 foreign ministers in Bali.

Wang's visit ushers Marcos Jr. Early to touchy foreign diplomacy issues that often had prompted his predecessors to carry out delicate balancing acts. Marcos Jr. Was sworn into office last week after a landslide electoral victory in May. He said in a televised news conference Tuesday that he would discuss with Wang possible ways to resolve Manila's disputes with Beijing in the contested South China Sea but would also propose to broaden ties further.

Spain's famous Bull Run festival back after 2-year hiatus

AP ■ MADRID

Thousands of revelers erupted in celebration Wednesday as the traditional "chupinazo" firework was ignited to start the San Fermín bull-run festival in the Spanish city of Pamplona, ending a two-year hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Rain did nothing to dampen the atmosphere as crowds, nearly all dressed in the traditional garb of white trousers and shirt with red sash and neckerchief, crammed the tiny town hall square for the noon event.

After the firework exploded, the revellers continued spraying each other with red wine.



The highlight of the nine-day festival are the early morning "encierros," or bull runs, starting on Thursday, when thousands of thrill seekers scramble like mad to avoid six bulls as they charge along a winding, cobblestoned route to the city's bullring.

Spectators watch from balconies and the wooden barricades set up to line the course. The rest of each day is for eating, drinking, dancing and cultural entertainment.

The festival was made world famous by Ernest Hemingway's 1926 novel "The

Cairo's historic Nile River houseboats removed in Govt push

AP ■ CAIRO



With verdant gardens on one side and water on the other, they were an anomaly in a city bordered on three sides by desert.

For decades, Cairo's houseboats occupied prime waterfront real estate, offering residents a front-row seat to the passing Nile River, with its water taxis, anglers, sport rowers and occasional family of ducks. But it's coming to an end: A government push to remove the string of float-

ing homes from the city's Nile River banks has dwindled their numbers from several dozen to just a handful.

Houseboats have been a Cairo tradition dating back to the 1800s and government efforts to remove them have drawn

criticism in Egypt, where residents are mourning the loss of not just their homes but a way of life. Critics say the move is part of a series of development decisions by the government of Abdel Fattah el-Sissi that endanger the city's heritage.

"The point is that they really, really don't seem to understand that there is value - intangible values - there is value in history," said Ahdaf Soueif, a prize-winning Egyptian novelist who bought and renovated a her houseboat after moving back to Egypt from the UK 10 years ago.

OPEC secretary-general dies, just weeks shy of departure

AP ■ ABUJA

The Secretary-General of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries has died, Nigerian authorities and the oil cartel announced Wednesday. Only hours before his death, he'd met with Nigeria's president and spoken in defence of the energy industry amid increasing climate change pressure.

Mohammad Barkindo, 63, died late Tuesday in Abuja, a spokesman for Nigeria's petroleum ministry told The Associated Press. The reason for his death was not immediately known.

The Vienna-based oil cartel also confirmed his death, saying he was a "much-loved leader" of OPEC.

His death came as a surprise to industry insiders. His second term as head of OPEC was set to end in three weeks on July 31. He'd held the post for six years since 2016. Barkindo's death was first confirmed in a tweet by the managing director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company, Mele Kyari.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is for notice of the general public that a political party is proposed to be registered by the name of "Bharatiya Pravasi Janata Party". The office of The Party is Located at 407, DLF Centre Point, Main Malthura Road, Metro Piller No. 845, Sector-11, Faridabad (Delhi NCR) 121006. This Party has submitted application to the Election Commission of India, New Delhi for its registration as Political Party under Section 29A of the Representation of People Act, 1951- Name/address of the office bearers of the Party are as follows :

President/Chairman : Dr. AJAY TIWARI
General Secretary/Secretary : SAPNA TIWARI
Treasurer : SANTOSH TIWARI
Add : J-86, DLF Sector-10, Faridabad-121006

If any one has any objection to the registration of "Bharatiya Pravasi Janata Party" they may send their Objection with reasons thereof, to the Secretary (Political) Election Commission of India, Ninadran Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001 within 30 days of the publication of this notice.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Rajjo Sharma W/o. Mr. Ghanashyam Pandey who is purchasing the Plot No.5B, area measuring 30 Sq. Yds. (25.08 Sq. Mtrs.), falling under Khosra No.259, situated in Prakash Nagar, Khora Colony, Teshil and Distt. Ghaziabad (U.P.); from Mr. Phool Singh who is owner of the aforesaid property vide Notarized General Power of Attorney vide dated 10.10.2008 (in which Plot no. 5B is not mentioned) and same to be finance & mortgage by **Shubham Housing Development Finance Company Limited.** To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim / right / title / interest / creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within **7 days** from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc.

Lucem Legal LLP
269, Rama House, Ground Flr., Masjid Moth, Opp. Uday Park, South Ext.-II, New Delhi-110049
Contact # 011- 40046316

Saudi Arabia expecting 1 million in largest Hajj since virus

AP ■ MECCA

One million Muslim pilgrims were converging on Saudi Arabia's holy city of Mecca on Wednesday for the largest hajj since the coronavirus pandemic severely curtailed access to one of Islam's five pillars.

Saudi Arabia's decision to allow some 850,000 Muslims from abroad to

make the annual pilgrimage, which begins on Thursday, marks a major step toward normalcy after two years of a drastically scaled-down hajj restricted to Saudi residents.

The 1 million foreign and domestic pilgrims participating is still far less than the 2.5 million Muslims who traveled in 2019 for the pilgrimage, typically one of the world's largest gatherings.

Those performing the ritual this year must be under 65, vaccinated against the coronavirus and have tested negative for COVID-19 within 72 hours of travel. The pilgrims are chosen from millions of applicants through an online lottery system.

Saudi officials inspected the holy site on Wednesday and stressed their "readiness" to receive pilgrims with the goal of "maintaining public health."

After the coronavirus struck in 2020, Saudi authorities allowed just 1,000 pilgrims already residing in the kingdom to attend, prompting historians to compare the disruption to the site's storming by religious extremists and dramatic closure in 1979.

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12 killed in Ukraine as Russia pounds rebel-claimed province

AP ■ KRAMATORSK, UKRAINE

Russian shelling killed at least eight civilians in Ukraine over the past 24 hours and wounded 25 more, Ukrainian officials said Wednesday. Pro-Russia separatists said attacks by Ukrainian forces killed four civilians.

The Ukrainian presidential office said Russian forces targeted cities and villages in the country's southeast, with most civilian casualties occurring in Donetsk province, where Russia stepped up its offensive in recent days.

Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said in a Telegram post that two people died in the city of Avdiivka, which is located in the center of the province, and the Donetsk cities of Sloviansk, Krasnohorivka and Kurakhove each reported one civilian killed.

"Every crime will be punished," he wrote.

Kyrylenko urged the province's more than 350,000 remaining residents to flee late Tuesday, saying that evacuating Donetsk was necessary to save lives and allow the Ukrainian army to put up a better defense against the Russian advance.

Donetsk is part of the Donbas, a mostly Russian-speaking industrial area where Ukraine's most experienced soldiers are concentrated. Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday declared the complete seizure of the region's other province, Luhansk, after Ukrainian troops withdrew from the last city under their control.

Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai denied Wednesday that the Russians had completely captured the province. Heavy fighting continued in villages around Lysychansk, the city Ukrainians soldiers withdrew from and which Russian troops took on Sunday, he said.

"The Russians have paid a high price, but the Luhansk region is not fully captured by the Russian army," Haidai said. "Some settlements have been overrun by



each side several times already."

He accused Russian forces of scorched earth tactics, "burning down and destroying everything on their way."

Up to 15,000 residents remain in Lysychansk and some 8,000 in the nearby city of Sievierodonetsk, which Russian and separatist fighters seized last month, Haidai said.

Pro-Russian separatists have fought Ukrainian forces and controlled much of the Donbas for eight years. Before Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, Putin recognized the independence of the two self-proclaimed separatist republics in the region.

Separatist authorities in Donetsk said Wednesday that four civilians were killed and another 14 wounded in Ukrainian shelling over the past 24 hours. News reports said shelling hit an ammunition depot on Tuesday, triggering massive explosions.

Since Russian forces failed to make inroads in capturing Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, Moscow has concentrated its offensive

on seizing the remaining Ukrainian-held areas of the Donbas.

To the north of Donetsk, Russian forces also hit Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, with missile strikes overnight, the Kharkiv regional governor said Wednesday on Telegram.

Three districts of the city were targeted, Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said. One person was killed and three, including a toddler, sustained injuries, according to the governor. A missile struck a building where military registration takes place. A government building next door remained intact, and people just steps away glanced at the wreckage in passing.

Closer to the front line and in a more abandoned district of the city, first responders crunched through the debris of another overnight attack at the national teaching university in Kharkiv. Pages of dusty textbooks flapped in the breeze.

The attacks indicated the city, which is located close to the Russian border, is unlikely to get a reprieve as the war grinds on into its fifth month.



Putin's aide warns US against pressing for war crimes court

AP ■ MOSCOW

A top Russian official warned the U.S. Wednesday that it could face the "wrath of God" if it pursues efforts to help establish an international tribunal to investigate Russia's action in Ukraine.

Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy secretary of Russia's Security Council chaired by President Vladimir Putin, denounced the U.S. for what he described as its efforts to "spread chaos and destruction across the world for the sake of 'true democracy.'"

"The entire U.S. history since the times of subjugation of the native Indian population represents a series of bloody wars," Medvedev charged in a long diatribe on his Telegram channel, pointing out the U.S. nuclear bombing of Japan during World War II and the war in Vietnam. "Was anyone held responsible for those crimes? What tribunal condemned the sea of blood spilled by the U.S. there?"

Responding to the U.S.-backed calls for an international tribunal to prosecute the perceived war crimes by Russia in Ukraine, Medvedev rejected it as an attempt by the U.S. "to judge others while staying immune from any trial."

"It won't work with Russia, they know it well," Medvedev concluded. "That's why the rotten dogs of war are barking in such a disgusting way." "The U.S. and its useless stooges should remember the words of the Bible: Do not judge and you will not be judged ... so that the great day of His wrath doesn't come to their home one day," Medvedev said, referring to the Apocalypse.

The warning follows a series of tough statements from Putin and his officials that pointed at the Russian nuclear arsenals to warn the West against interfering with Moscow's action in Ukraine.

Medvedev, who served as Russia's president in 2008-2012 when Putin shifted into the prime minister's post due to term limits, was widely seen by the West as more liberal compared with his mentor.

Blinken sets G-20 meeting with Chinese FM; silent on Russia



AP ■ WASHINGTON

Secretary of State Antony Blinken will see his Chinese counterpart this week at a meeting of foreign ministers from the Group of 20 bloc of nations that will likely exacerbate splits over Russia's war in Ukraine.

While strained US-China ties will be the focus of Blinken's talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, the broader G-20 gathering in Indonesia of leading industrialised nations will almost certainly be overshadowed by the Ukraine conflict and its effect on global food and energy security.

And, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will be there, marking the first time that he and Blinken will be in the same room, let alone the same city, at the same time in nearly six months.

The State Department announced Tuesday that Blinken would meet with Wang in Bali, but had little to say

about the possibility of him seeing Lavrov, who the US has shunned since the Ukraine invasion in February.

US officials have accused Lavrov and other Russian diplomats of a lack of seriousness in the run-up to the Ukraine war.

The Biden administration has ruled out "business as usual" with Russia while it remains in Ukraine and US officials said there would be no formal discussions between Blinken and Lavrov in Bali. But, they could not rule out the possibility of a chance encounter, which would be their first since they last met in Geneva in January.

"The secretary intends to engage fully in the G-20. I'm not going to speak to any plans on the part of Foreign Minister Lavrov ... But I can tell you the secretary will be a full and active participant in the G-20, which we see as a valuable forum," State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters.

EU chief warns of danger of complete cut-off of Russian gas



AP ■ BRUSSELS

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said Wednesday that the 27-nation Europe Union needs to make emergency plans to prepare for a complete cut-off of Russian gas in the wake of the Kremlin's war in Ukraine.

The EU has already imposed sanctions on Russia, including on some energy supplies, and is gearing away from Kremlin-controlled deliveries, but von der Leyen said the bloc needed to be ready for shock disruptions coming from Moscow.

"We also need to prepare now for further disruption of gas supply and even a complete cut-off of Russian gas supply," von der Leyen told the EU legislature in Strasbourg, France.

Resolution seeking independent probe into Father Stan Swamy's death introduced in US Congress

PTI ■ NEW YORK

A resolution commemorating the life of Indian human rights defender Father Stan Swamy and seeking an independent investigation into the death of the Jesuit priest has been introduced in the US Congress, Congressman Juan Vargas has said.

Vargas, the Representative from the US state of California, announced that he recently introduced the resolution in Congress to commemorate Swamy "and to encourage an independent investigation" into his death.

The resolution, co-sponsored by Representatives Andre Carson and James McGovern, has been introduced in the US House of Representatives and coincides with the first anniversary of 84-year-old Swamy's death in police custody.

Vargas, a Democratic Party Congressman, spoke at a webinar titled "Persecution of Religious Minorities and their Defenders in India: Commemorating Father Stan's Death in Custody" on Tuesday.

UK MP Neale Hanvey, MEP Alviina Alametsa (EU), Senator David Shoebriidge (Australia), and UN Special Rapporteur Mary Lawlor addressed the event.



The webinar was co-organised by Front Line Defenders, Hindus for Human Rights, the Humanism Project, India Civil Watch International, and Survival International, and co-sponsored by Adivasi Lives Matter, Dalit Solidarity Forum, the Federation of Indian American Christian Organizations of North America (FIA-CONA), and the Indian American Muslim Council, a joint press release said.

The panelists noted Swamy's extensive service fighting for the rights of Adivasi people, it added.

"I am appalled by the abuse Father Stan faced while in custody. No one who fights for human rights should face such violence and neglect," said Vargas.

Russian Foreign Minister stops in Vietnam ahead of G-20

AP ■ HANOI

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Vietnam on Wednesday as part of an effort to bolster ties with a country that has not openly condemned its invasion of Ukraine.

Lavrov, on his way to the Indonesian island of Bali for a G-20 meeting, sought to strengthen ties with Vietnam, which also has a strong relationship with the United States.

Lavrov is currently on a trip to Asia to seek support amid his country's diplomatic isolation by the West and punishing sanc-



tions levelled over its invasion of Ukraine.

He had visited Mongolia a day before arriving in Vietnam's capital Hanoi.

Mongolia also retains ties

with Moscow but has burgeoning relations with Washington.

The visit comes as the two countries marked 10 years since expanding their relationship to a strategic partnership.

The Soviet Union was a close backer of Hanoi's Communist government during the Vietnam War against the capitalist south and its American and other Western allies.

Lavrov is scheduled to depart Vietnam on Wednesday afternoon and travel to Indonesia to attend a meeting of foreign ministers from the Group of 20 leading rich and developing countries.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Public at large is hereby informed that Late Balbir Singh Bakshi S/O Harbans Singh R/o H-65, Ground Floor South Extension Part 1, New Delhi-110049 was having residential property in joint ownership along with his son Manee Singh, in our project Vatika Lifestyle homes flat no. S5-005 Ground floor addressing 747 sq.ft. which his legal heir Manee Singh requested the company to transfer to entirely on his Name. Any person having any objection on this please may contact the company office details as under within 15 days after which No Claim would be accepted.

Vatika Limited,
A-002, Ground Floor, Block A, Vatika INXT City Centre, Sec- 83, Gurugram, (Hr), India -122012

PUBLIC NOTICE

To, be known to all that my client, **SHRI SURESH CHAND GAUTAM S/O LATE GAUR SHANKAR GAUTAM R/O C-232A, Gali No. 4, 2ND FLOOR, SOHA VIHAR, DELHI-110041**, is the **mutual owner of PROPERTY BEARING INDUSTRIAL PLOT NO.17, BLOCK-B, AREA MEASURING 1625 SQ. YDS.**, IN THE LAYOUT PLAN OF LAWRENCE ROAD INDUSTRIAL AREA, DELHI, have applied for Conversion of leasedhold from freehold of the aforesaid property in IDA. The original documents i.e. Original PERPETUAL LEASE DEED, and D FORMS, SANCTION PLAN, DEMAND LETTER, POSSESSION LETTER and OTHER RELATED DOCUMENTS of the above said property have been lost or misplaced by my client and is not traceable inspite of his best efforts. An F.I.R./NCR to this effect has been lodged in the Police Station, Crime Branch, Delhi (LR No.55084/2022 dated 04.07.2022. Any persons) claiming any rights, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above Address/Phone No. 9710146782 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to this property, can personally inform or write to Deputy Director (Industrial), Vias Sadan, New Delhi.

Naveen Agarwal (Advocate)
C/o No. M-7, Near SBI, Western Wing, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi-54

PUBLIC NOTICE

Reg: Plot No. 209, Phase-I, Sector-6, IMT Manesar, Plot No. 209, Phase-I, Sector-6, IMT Manesar measuring 1012.50 sq. meter was allotted by the Corporation to Sh. Chaman Lal Chauhan, Prop. M/s. Champion Engg. Works vide Regular Letter of Allotment dated 09.03.2001. The Corporation has been informed that the original allottee Sh. Chaman Lal Chauhan S/o. Sh. late Sh. Dhanpat Rai had expired on 22.01.2018. The only legal heir of the deceased allottee, Sh. Manoj Chauhan S/o. late Sh. Chaman Lal Chauhan R/o. D-9, Naraina Vihar, Delhi-28 has approached the Corporation for transfer of the plot in question in his favour.

The Corporation is in process of considering their request & transferring the said plot in the name of Sh. Manoj Chauhan S/o. late Sh. Chaman Lal Chauhan. Through this public notice it is hereby informed that in case, any of the legal heirs of late Sh. Chaman Lal Chauhan or any other person having reservation/ objection to the said transfer may file his/ her objection in writing before the undersigned or/ HoD (Estate), HSIIDC Limited, C-13-14, Sector-6, Panchkula, Haryana along with an affidavit within a period of 30-days from the date of publication of this notice. In case no response is received within the aforesaid period, it will be presumed that no one has any objection to transfer of the said plot in the name of Sh. Manoj Chauhan S/o. late Sh. Chaman Lal Chauhan and the Corporation shall go ahead with transfer of plot in his favour.

Estate Manager
For and behalf of
Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Dev. Corp. Ltd.
HSIIDC, IMT Manesar, District - Gurugram

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all concerned that: My client namely Raniya Jeremiah have gifted the her share of ground floor of B143 C.R.Park, New Delhi to her son and their legal heirs (specifically mentioned in two separate gift deeds) and have also gifted her share of second floor to her daughter and their legal heirs (specifically mentioned in her gift deed). Further my client have also made a registered will of her share of terrace of B-143, C. R. Park in the name of Kaushik Rai Chaudhary @ Kaushik Roy Chaudhary, her nephew. The same attains finality and are irrevocable, if anyone have any objection may object by filing a written claim to undersigned within 3 days of publication of notice. Further it is made clear that in the will wherever Kaushik Rai Chaudhary name comes will be read as Kaushik Roy Chaudhary.

Sajal Dhamija (Advocate),
S-265, L.G.F., Greater Kailash-I, New Delhi-110018

E-TENDER NOTICE
GUJARAT MARITIME BOARD
"Sagar Bhavan", Sector 10/A, Chh/ Road, Opp. Air Force, Gandhinagar 382 010
Phone 079-2323 8346/47/48/51

Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB) invites E-tenders from the NABET accredited consultants for the following works.

Name of Work	
"Obtaining amendment in existing Environmental and CRZ clearance for Modernization of Navlakhi Port, District-Morbi, Gujarat"	
Details	
Bids downloading commencement Date	07-07-2022 from 15:00 hrs
Last Date for On-line submission of Bids through www.nprocure.com	18-08-2022 up to 18:10 hrs

Detailed terms and conditions and other related information is given in bid documents. For bid documents and more details, please visit website www.nprocure.com or www.gmbports.org or contact Deputy General Manager (Env), Environment Cell, Gujarat Maritime Board, Gandhinagar.

No/INF/VPN/2022/G/798

UJVNL LTD.
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephones: 0135- 2763508, 2763808. Fax: 0135-2763507
CIN No. U40101UR2007SGC025866, Website-www.ujvnl.com

RO No.: 403
e-Tender Notice Date: 06-07-2022
Office of Executive Engineer (Maint.), Ramganga Power Station, UJVNL Limited, Kalagarh, Dist. Pauri Garhwal invites online tender from interested parties. Detail of tender are given below.

e-Tender No. 10/EE(M)/RPSK/2022-23
Name of work/supply/ services etc.-: Major overhauling of Unit-1
Estimated cost : Rs. 3,75,27,277.00 plus GST Extra
Date of availability of bid document on website :06/07/2022
Last date for submission of tender : 28/07/2022 up to 16.00 Hrs.
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "http://uktenders.gov.in"

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (M)
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

French Government plans to nationalise electricity giant EDF

AP ■ PARIS

French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne said Wednesday that the government plans to nationalize French electricity giant EDF amid an energy crisis aggravated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The French state now holds an 84% stake in the company, one of the world's biggest electricity producers.

"We must have full control over our electricity production and performance," Borne said in her first major speech to France's parliament. "We must ensure our sovereignty in the face of the consequences of the war (in Ukraine) and the colossal challenges to come. ... That's why I confirm to you the state's intention to own 100% of EDF's capital."



Judges keeping Capitol riot trials in DC amid bias claims

AP ■ WASHINGTON

For some of the Washington, D.C., residents who reported for jury duty last month, a pro-Trump mob's assault on the U.S. Capitol felt like a personal attack.

Ahead of a trial for a Michigan man charged in the riot, one prospective juror said a police officer injured during the melee is a close friend. Another has friends who are congressional staffers or journalists who worked at the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. A woman whose boyfriend lived near the Capitol recalled the terror she felt that day.

None of them served on the federal jury that swiftly convicted Anthony Robert Williams of storming the Capitol to obstruct Congress from certifying Joe Biden's 2020 presidential electoral victory.

But their personal connections to the riot highlight the challenge facing judges and attorneys in choosing impartial jurors in Washington to decide the hundreds of criminal cases stemming from the insurrection - especially as lawmakers hold high-profile public hearings on the insurrection less than a mile from the courthouse.

One of the most serious cases brought by the Justice Department in the Capitol attack has already been delayed after defense attorneys argued that their clients couldn't get a fair trial



in the midst of televised hearings by the House committee investigating the riot.

And a growing number of defendants are pushing to have their trials moved out of Washington, saying the outcome of the first trials proves that the odds are unfairly stacked against Jan. 6 defendants in the nation's capital. "D.C. is a city that, as a whole, feels that it has been the victim of a crime," attorneys in two cases against members and associates of the far-right Oath Keepers extremist group wrote in court papers seeking to have their trials moved to Virginia.

Prosecutors and judges see no evidence that Capitol rioters can't get a fair trial in the district and believe the process of weeding out biased jurors is working. Judges presiding over Jan. 6 cases have consistently rejected requests to move trials, saying the capital has plenty of residents who can serve as fair jurors.

RBI liberalises norms to boost forex inflows



Mumbai: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday further liberalised norms to boost inflows of foreign exchange, including doubling the borrowing limit under the ECB route, amid the rupee falling against the US dollar.

In a statement, the central bank said it has been closely and continuously monitoring the liquidity conditions in the forex market and has stepped in as needed in all its segments to alleviate dollar tightness with the objective of ensuring orderly market functioning.

The measures taken by the central bank comes in the backdrop of rupee depreciating by 4.1 per cent against the US dollar during the current finan-

cial year so far (up to July 5) amid the ongoing geopolitical tensions.

“In order to further diversify and expand the sources of forex funding so as to mitigate volatility and dampen global spillovers”, the central bank said it has decided to undertake five measures to enhance forex inflows while ensuring overall macroeconomic and financial stability.

The measures include easing norms for FPI investment in debt market, and increasing the External Commercial Borrowing (ECB) limit under the automatic route from USD 750 million or its equivalent per financial year to USD 1.5 billion.

PTI

Govt notifies procedural changes in GST rules



New Delhi: The Government has notified certain procedural changes in the GST rules, including those related to threshold, for filing annual returns for the 2021-22 fiscal, a move that will help ease the compliance burden on small players.

The changes were vetted by the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council at its meeting last week.

With the amendments notified by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), businesses have also been allowed to make tax payments on the GSTN portal by using IMPS and UPI payment modes.

Businesses with aggregate annual turnover of up to Rs 2 crore in the fiscal ended March 31, 2022 are exempt from filing annual returns for 2021-22, as per the amended rules.

KPMG in India Partner (Indirect Tax) Abhishek Jain said these changes will help the small players in undertaking compliances, and will lighten the burden for taxpayers with less than Rs 2 crore turnover to the extent of filing of annual returns under GST.

AMRG & Associates

Senior Partner Rajat Mohan said other important changes include extension of time-limit specified under Section 73 (determination of tax) under the GST Act for issuance of an order for FY 2017-18 to September 30, 2023.

However, no extensions have been provided for any other financial year.

“In relation to the delayed filing of refund applications during the COVID period (March 1, 2020 to February 28, 2022), suitable extension has been granted that will enable numerous exporters to encash the refunds stuck in litigation,” Mohan said.

Jain said that considering the COVID scenario of the last two years for India, the government has extended the limitation period under GST for

issuance of notice to taxpayers who have not paid/ short paid the tax due. Similarly, relaxation in limitation is granted for filing refunds.

“While the intention of the government is to curb revenue leakage, this change keeps the businesses exposed to departmental audits and assessments for some additional time. This being said, this change also ensures that genuine taxpayers are not denied their refund claims,” Jain added.

According to Mohan, the manner of calculation of interest on delayed payment of tax has been notified and that would help taxpayers in making precise calculation of the tax dues.

As per the amended rules, every invoice issued by an MSME supplier will have a standard declaration printed on invoice regarding non-applicability of e-invoice.

Also, cash ledger balance can be transferred from one GST registered entity to another under the same PAN.

The changes were approved by the GST Council, comprising finance ministers of Centre and state, at its June 28-29 meeting.

PTI

Sensex, Nifty rebound over 1% as financials, FMCG shares gain



Mumbai: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded over 1 per cent on Wednesday following buying in FMCG, financials and auto stocks amid softening crude oil prices and foreign funds turning net buyers of domestic equities after a long gap.

The 30-share BSE barometer climbed 616.62 points or 1.16 per cent to settle at 53,750.97 as 25 of its shares ended in the green. During the day, it rallied 684.96 points or 1.28 per cent to 53,819.31.

The NSE Nifty shot up 178.95 points or 1.13 per cent to 15,989.80 with 40 constituents posting gains.

Among Sensex shares, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever, Asian Paints, Titan, Maruti Suzuki India, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Nestle were the major gainers.

Power Grid, NTPC, Reliance Industries, Larsen & Toubro and Tata Steel were the laggards.

Softening crude oil prices, FIIs repositioning to net buyers and strong business data from lenders boosted domestic equities, Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Crude prices fell sharply by 10 per cent on Tuesday which “boosted the appetite for consumption, chemicals, logistics and OMCs as it will reduce the cost burden of these sectors”, Nair said.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.76 per cent and smallcap index climbed 0.94 per cent.

Among the BSE sectoral indices, auto jumped 2.73 per cent, followed by consumer discretionary goods & services (2.47 per cent), FMCG (2.45 per cent), consumer durables (2.42 per cent) and realty (2.39 per cent).

Energy and metal were the only laggards.

“According to preliminary data made public on the NSE, FIIs became net purchasers on July 5 for the first time since May 30, purchasing shares worth Rs 1,295.84 crore,” Mohit Nigam, Head - PMS at Hem Securities, said.

Elsewhere in Asia, markets in Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul ended lower on Wednesday.

European markets were trading higher in mid-session deals.

The US markets ended mostly higher on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 2.43 per cent to USD 105.3 per barrel.

PTI

LPG price hiked by ₹50; rates up by ₹244 in one yr

New Delhi: Cooking gas LPG price on Wednesday was hiked by ₹50 per cylinder, the third increase in rates since May on firming international energy prices.

Non-subsidised LPG now costs ₹1,053 per 14.2-kg cylinder in the national capital, up from ₹1,003 previously, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

Common households pay non-subsidised rates for the cooking gas they buy, after the government restricted subsidy to just poor beneficiaries who got connections under the Ujjwala scheme.

This is the third increase in the LPG rate since May and the fourth this year. The price was hiked by ₹50 per cylinder on March 22 and again by the same quantum on May 7. Rates went up by ₹3.50 per cylinder on May 19.

Prices have gone up by ₹244 per cylinder since June 2021. Of this, ₹153.50 increase happened since March 2022.

Petrol and diesel prices, however, continue to be on



freeze for the third straight month. The pause followed rates being hiked by a record ₹10 per litre in a matter of 16 days beginning March 22.

In May, the government cut excise duty on petrol by ₹8 per litre and diesel by ₹6 per litre to cool soaring inflation.

At that time, the government also stated that ₹200 per cylinder subsidy on cooking gas will be limited to only 9 crore poor women and other beneficiaries who got free connections under the Ujjwala scheme and the remaining

users including households will pay the market price (also known as non-subsidised rate).

Originally, non-subsidised cooking gas was the one that consumers used to buy after exhausting their quota of 12 cylinders at subsidised or below-market rates. However, the government stopped paying subsidy on LPG to households in mid-2020. Non-subsidised LPG costs ₹1,052.50 per 14.2-kg cylinder in Mumbai, while it is priced at ₹1,079 a bottle in Chennai and Rs 1,068.50 in Kolkata.

PTI

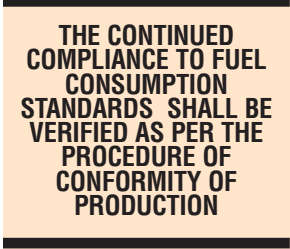
Govt proposes implementation of fuel consumption standards for all vehicles from April next year

New Delhi: With an aim to reduce pollution and introduce more fuel-efficient vehicles, the Government has proposed to make it mandatory for light, medium and heavy duty motor vehicles of various categories to comply with fuel consumption standards from April 2023, according to an official statement.

The statement said the continued compliance to fuel consumption standards shall be verified as per the procedure of conformity of production, outlined in the Automotive Industry Standard 149.

“The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has issued a notification dated 1st July 2022, amending Rule 115 G of the Central Motor Vehicle Rules (CMVR) 1989, to include compliance with Fuel Consumption Standards (FCS), for light, medium and heavy duty motor vehicles of various categories, manufactured in, or imported by, India,” it said.

Prior to this notification, the statement said, compli-



ance with annual fuel consumption standard was applicable to vehicles of M1 category (motor vehicle used for carriage of passengers, comprising not more than 8 seats, in addition to the driver's seat) with Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) up to 3.5 tonnes.

The MoRTH in a statement said the aim of this notification is to expand the ambit of vehicles for compliance with FCS, and hence introduce more fuel efficient vehicles.

The statement further said the date of applicability of this notification is April 1, 2023 and comments have been invited from all stakeholders within 30 days from the date of the notification.

PTI

Gold falls ₹760; silver tumbles ₹1,276

New Delhi: Gold prices in the national capital on Wednesday fell by ₹760 to ₹51,304 per 10 grams, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the yellow metal settled at ₹52,064 per 10 grams.

Silver also tumbled by ₹1,276 to ₹56,930 per kg from ₹58,206 per kg in the previous trade.

In the international market, gold was trading higher at USD 1,770 per ounce while silver was flat at USD 19.94 per ounce.

“Gold prices traded firm with spot gold prices at COMEX trading 0.35 per cent up at USD 1,770 per ounce,” said Tapan Patel, Senior Analyst (Commodities) at HDFC Securities.

PTI

Rupee rises 3 paise to close at 79.30 against US dollar

Mumbai, Jul 6 (PTI) The rupee recovered from its all-time low to close 3 paise higher at 79.30 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday after a sharp fall in crude oil and foreign fund inflows.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 79.29 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 79.24 and a low of 79.37. It finally settled at 79.30, a rise of 3 paise over its previous close. In the previous session, the rupee had closed at an all-time low of 79.33 against the US dollar.

“The Indian rupee recovered on Wednesday from lower levels on positive domestic equities and sharp decline in crude oil prices. FII inflows also supported Rupee,” Anuj Choudhary Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas said, adding that firm Dollar capped sharp gains.

A firm tone in the US Dollar and deteriorating global risk sentiments weighed on the investor sentiment.

“Any further foreign



inflows may support the Rupee. Crude oil prices slipped below USD 100/barrel yesterday. If crude sustains below USD 100 mark, it may support Rupee at lower levels,” Choudhary said.

Traders would be looking at Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) minutes too for clues to the Fed's possible rate hike paths, Choudhary said, adding that rupee may trade in the range of 78.50-80 in the next couple of sessions.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 616.62 points or 1.16 per cent higher at 53,750.97, while the broader NSE Nifty advanced 178.95 points or 1.13 per cent to 15,989.80.

PTI

City Union Bank to raise up to ₹500cr via QIP

New Delhi: City Union Bank on Wednesday said it will raise ₹500 crore from qualified institutional players.

The board of directors at a meeting approved raising of further capital through the QIP route to the tune of ₹500 crore, City Union Bank said in a regulatory filing.

The private sector lender said that its annual general meeting (AGM) is scheduled to be held on August 18, 2022, and it will seek shareholders approval for the capital raise plan. The lender said that last year also it obtained shareholders' approval for raising capital through QIP but it didn't utilised the same.

Shares of CUB closed at ₹141.55 apiece on BSE, up by 1.11 per cent from previous close.

PTI

SBI renews MoU with Air Force for defence salary package

Mumbai: State Bank of India (SBI) on Wednesday said it has renewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Air Force for the Defence Salary Package (DSP) scheme.

Under this scheme, it will offer various benefits and features to all serving and retired Air Force personnel and their families. The lender offers extensive benefits to the Air Force personnel such as complimentary personal accidental insurance, air accidental insurance, and additional cover in case of on-duty death (during action), a release said.

Insurance cover for permanent total disability / partial disability is also available.

“At SBI, we endeavor to support the undying efforts of the Air Force personnel in securing the safety of our nation and its citizens. We will continue to provide tailor-made solutions to defence personnel under our flagship defence salary scheme,” the bank's Chairman Dinesh Khara said in the release.

The bank said in case of death of the Air Force personnel, the family of the deceased is provided with add-on covers for child education and marriage of girl child.

Additionally, the retired personnel will be eligible for complimentary personal accidental insurance, irrespective of their age.

PTI

PTC India records all-time high trade volume of 87,515 MU in 2021-22

New Delhi: Power trading solutions provider PTC India traded all-time high volume of 87,515 million units during 2021-22, registering a growth of 9 per cent as compared to the previous fiscal, according to a company statement.

In the March quarter, the trade volume increased by 6 per cent to 17,329 MUs from 16,279 MUs in the same period a year ago.

Earnings per share (EPS) stood at ₹14.35 per share for 2021-22 on a standalone basis.

Its consulting income for the March quarter has grown by 24 per cent to ₹11.25 crore vis-a-vis ₹9.05 crore in the corresponding quarter of FY21.

Rajib K Mishra, CMD in-charge and Director (M&BD) at PTC India, said, “The company has exceeded the bench-



mark of all-time high traded volumes set last year. PTC has traded over 87 billion units for the financial year 2021-22. While the seasonality in a particular quarter is a function of

post Covid-led disruptions. The growth has been primarily driven by short term trades and the exchange traded segments, he added.

“As always, PTC continues to trade in every segment of the market. The availability of coal, sustainable power from renewable sources and weather driven electricity demand patterns are new challenges of the sector which also present opportunities for bespoke solutions,” he said.

The company is developing its technology solutions and service offering for the evolving market, he added.

“Our consultancy business continues to make deeper inroads with a 24 per cent increase in consultancy income and winning orders in newer and complex segments.

ICRA appoints Anand Iyer as Group Chief Technology Officer

New Delhi: Ratings agency ICRA on Wednesday announced the appointment of Anand Iyer as its Group Chief Technology Officer.

Iyer will be responsible for driving the digital strategy for ICRA Limited at group level and its subsidiaries to strengthen company's technological capabilities, thought leadership, and contribute to the growth of the group.

“Establishing a Group CTO role within ICRA is critical as we continue the journey of our digital initiatives to support its strategic growth plans,” Ramnath Krishnan, MD and Group CEO at ICRA Ltd, said.

Iyer comes with 24 years of experience in the financial services sector.

PTI

Lamborghini launches new model Aventador Ultimae Coupé in India

Mumbai: Italian supercar maker Automobili Lamborghini on Wednesday launched the Aventador Ultimae Coupé in India, weeks after it showcased the limited edition Aventador LP 780-4 Ultimae Roadster in the domestic market.

The company said it will make only 350 units of the Ultimae Coupe and 250 of the Roadster globally.

Lamborghini, however, did not disclose the prices of the Aventador Ultimae Coupé.

“We are delighted to unveil the first Aventador LP 780-4 Ultimae Coupé in the country. Limited to 350 units of Coupé version worldwide, the Ultimae has the highest-performing naturally aspirated V12 engine in Lamborghini history as well as sophisticated technical solutions and unrivalled styling,” said Sharad Agarwal, head of Lamborghini India.

It is the most powerful Aventador ever built,



and “we are thrilled to introduce it to our Lamborghini clients and enthusiasts in India,” he said.

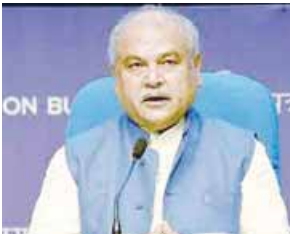
The Aventador LP 780-4 Ultimae Coupé comes in a single-tone, purple configuration, with lines and details such as the front splitter's outline and ‘teeth’ picked out in purple, among others, the company said.

PTI

Govt taking steps to fix post-production challenges in agriculture sector: Tomar

New Delhi: Post-production in the agriculture sector is definitely a challenge and the government has taken many steps to build necessary infrastructure to address this issue by setting up of eNAM and other facilities, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said on Wednesday.

To address the post-production challenges, Tomar said the government has connected about 1,000 regulated wholesale mandis with electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) so far, sanctioned Rs 9,500 crore for 13,000 projects under the Agri-Infra Fund,



and encouraging setting up of farmer producer organisations (FPOs) besides promoting technologies like drones.

“Not production, but post production is definitely a problem today,” Tomar said addressing a conference on ‘Getting Agriculture Markets right’

organised jointly by National Stock Exchange and ICRIER.

Tomar also mentioned that efforts to address the post-production issues were made from time to time in the past but desired results could not be achieved.

However, in the last eight years, several steps have been taken to fix the post-production issues so that farmers get better prices and their income improves, he said.

He also said that there is a good market for organic products as their exports have risen.

PTI

‘Need MSP till mrkts get competitive, but should not be given through procurement’

New Delhi: The minimum support price on agri crops should continue as long as markets become competitive and efficient, but it should be given through means other than procurement, government think-tank Niti Aayog member Ramesh Chand said on Wednesday.

Chand -- while addressing a conference on ‘Getting agriculture markets right’ -- organised jointly by National Stock Exchange and ICRIER -- said: “Deficiency Pricing Payment (DPP)” is one such means of giving MSP (Minimum Support Price) to farmers, but cautioned that DPP cannot be

stopped once implemented.

Under DPP, the difference between the open market price and MSP is given to farmers, he said, adding that it has been implemented in some states like Madhya Pradesh.

MSP is a minimum price at which the government undertakes procurement. MSP is fixed for 22-23 crops. Rice and wheat are largely procured crops by the government.

“In some cases, MSP is justified in times of volatility in prices and glut. I feel what matters is how we give MSP to farmers. ...MSP has to be there as long as markets are not competitive and efficient.

PTI

HALEP VS RYBAKINA IN WIMBLEDON SEMIS

AP ■ LONDON

Former champion Simona Halep said she is playing her "best tennis" as she set up a Wimbledon semi-final clash with Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina on Wednesday.

Halep, the 2019 winner, comfortably reached her third semi-final at the All England Club with a 6-2, 6-4 victory over Amanda Anisimova of the United States.

Russian-born Rybakina became the first player representing Kazakhstan to reach a Grand Slam semi-final when she defeated Ajla Tomljanovic of Australia, 4-6, 6-2, 6-3.

"Definitely this is my best tennis," said Halep, who missed last year's Wimbledon with a calf injury. "I am trying to build my confidence back, and it's good."

The Romanian 16th seed, who was also French Open champion in 2018, broke Anisimova's serve four times in the match, wrapping up victory in just over an hour.

"It's great to be back in the semi-finals," said the former world number one. "I'm very emotional right now. It means a lot."

The 30-year-old took charge early in the match on Centre Court, racing into a 5-1 lead and taking the set 6-2.

It was a similar story in the second set, with Halep again dominating and going 5-1 up with a double break.

Anisimova dug deep, earning her own break of serve when Halep served for the match but the Romanian stayed calm to serve out for the win.

"I had to stay strong on my legs -- they helped me today," said Halep, who has not dropped a set at



Wimbledon this year.

"I also needed my serve -- everything was good, and it finished well."

RYBAKINA FIGHT BACK

Rybakina came from behind to reach her first Grand Slam semi-final, firing 15 aces past Tomljanovic,

who had also made the last-eight in 2021.

"It is amazing. I am really happy to be into the semi-final. It was a really tough match," said the 23-year-old Moscow-born player.

"I started a bit slow, I didn't serve that well.

"Maybe I was nervous. She

played really well and was defending really good but I just tried to focus on my serve and try to find my way and in the end I found it."

Rybakina switched nationality in 2018. This year Russian and Belarusian players are banned from Wimbledon following the invasion of Ukraine.

Rybakina fired five aces in the first set but her 10 winners were cancelled out by her 10 unforced errors.

The steadier Tomljanovic did not concede a break point while a single break in the third game was enough to hand her the opener.

Back came Moscow-born

Kyrgios in last 4



AP ■ LONDON

Nick Kyrgios advanced to the semifinals at a Grand Slam tournament for the first time by beating Cristian Garin 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (5) on Centre Court at Wimbledon.

Kyrgios reached the quarterfinals at the All England Club when he made his debut at the grass-court major in 2014 but this year was his first time getting back to that stage.

The Australian is the lowest ranked and first unseeded men's semifinalist since 2008. He is currently ranked 40th.

Kyrgios will face either two-time champion Rafael Nadal or Taylor Fritz in the semifinals on Friday.

Coco Gauff and Jack Sock have been eliminated from the mixed doubles tournament at Wimbledon.

The American pair lost to Australian duo Sam Stosur and Matthew Ebden in the semifinals 6-3, 5-7, 7-5 on No. 3 Court.

Both Gauff and Sock reached the third round in the singles tournaments. Stosur and Ebden will face either Sania Mirza and Mate Pavic or Desirae Krawczyk and Neal Skupski in the final.

DE JONG ISN'T FOR SALE, SAYS BARCA PRESIDENT

AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona president Joan Laporta said Wednesday that Dutch midfielder Frenkie de Jong is not for sale despite rumours of a departure to the Premier League.

De Jong "is a Barca player and unless we have a need or interest in selling him, we don't want to sell him," Laporta said as the club unveiled new signing Franck Kessie.

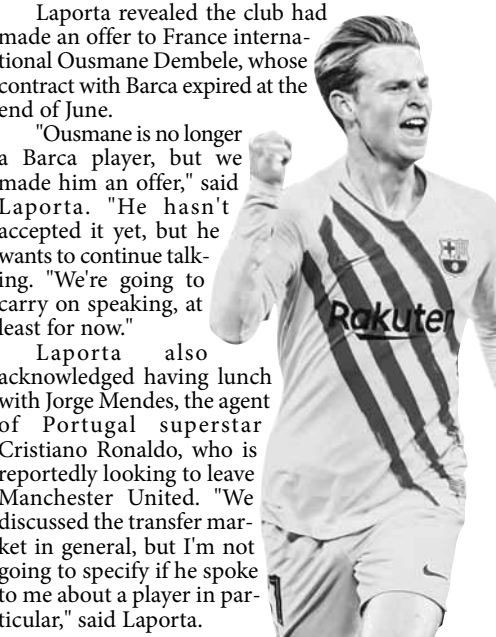
"We know he has offers. If at some moment we were interested, we would consider it, but right now, we're not selling the player," Laporta insisted.

De Jong, 25, has been heavily linked with a move to Manchester United and a reunion with former Ajax boss Erik ten Hag, who is preparing for his first season at Old Trafford.

Laporta revealed the club had made an offer to France international Ousmane Dembele, whose contract with Barca expired at the end of June.

"Ousmane is no longer a Barca player, but we made him an offer," said Laporta. "He hasn't accepted it yet, but he wants to continue talking. "We're going to carry on speaking, at least for now."

Laporta also acknowledged having lunch with Jorge Mendes, the agent of Portugal superstar Cristiano Ronaldo, who is reportedly looking to leave Manchester United. "We discussed the transfer market in general, but I'm not going to specify if he spoke to me about a player in particular," said Laporta.



Sindhu, Prannoy in 2nd round; Saina knocked out

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu had to toil before emerging victorious in the opening round of the Malaysia Masters while compatriot Saina Nehwal made a second consecutive first-round exit here on Wednesday.

The seventh-seeded Sindhu took close to an hour to knock out China's He Bing Jiao 21-13, 17-21, 21-15 and move to the second round.

With this win, world number seven Sindhu exacted revenge for her first-round exit from the Indonesia Open Super 1000 last month, when Bing Jiao had defeated her in straight games. The Chinese though still leads the head to head 10-9.

London Olympics Bronze medallist Saina, on the other hand, squandered a one-game lead to go down 21-16, 17-21, 14-21 to Kim Ga Eun of South Korea.

The world number 24 Indian had also made a first-round exit from the Malaysia Open Super 750 tournament last week.

In the men's singles, HS Prannoy sailed into the second round after he claimed a comfortable 21-19, 21-14 victory over Frenchman Brice Leverdez.

In the other men's singles events, B Sai Praneeth and Parupalli Kashyap also moved to the second



WITH THIS WIN, WORLD NUMBER SEVEN SINDHU EXACTED REVENGE FOR HER FIRST-ROUND EXIT FROM THE INDONESIA OPEN SUPER 1000 LAST MONTH, WHEN BING JIAO HAD DEFEATED HER IN STRAIGHT GAMES

round, but with contrasting wins.

While Praneeth hardly broke a sweat against Kevin Cordon, registering an easy 21-8, 21-9 win over the Guatemalan in less than half an hour, Kashyap came back from a one-game deficit to beat local favourite Tommy Sugiarto 16-21, 21-16, 21-16.

Praneeth will take on Li Shi Feng in the pre-quarterfinals.

However, it was the end of the road for Sameer Verma, who went down fighting to fourth seed Chinese Taipei shuttler Chou Tien Chen 21-10, 12-21, 14-21.

The women's doubles pair of N Sikki Reddy and Ashwini Ponnappa lost 19-21, 21-18, 16-21 to the Indonesian duo of Fabriana Kusuma and Amalia Pratiwi.

Diksha Dagar to lead Indian contingent

PTI ■ SITGES

Deaflympics gold medallist golfer Diksha Dagar will be leading a six-member Indian contingent in the Estrella Damn Ladies Open, to be held here from this week.

Diksha, who has been performing consistently for over a month, including in the Amundi German Masters, will set her sights at a top-10 finish while also hoping to win the Ladies European Tour for the second time in her career.

In 2019, Diksha became only the second Indian female golfer after Aditi Ashok to win the Ladies European Tour.

The 21-year-old golfer won the gold at the Deaflympics in Brazil this year.

Joining her in the contingent will be Tvesa Malik, who was India's best golfer on the LET Order of Merit last year.

The 26-year-old is currently struggling to find the kind of form that earned her a bunch of top-10s, including a runner-up finish last year.

The other Indians who are part of the six-woman contingent are Amandeep Drall, Vani Kapoor, Ridhima Dilawari and Neha Tripathi.

While Diksha has had only moderate success this season with five cuts in nine



starts and a best of tied 16th finish, Tvesa, on the other hand, has made six cuts in 12 events, while Drall has made five cuts in 11 starts.

The Indians will be facing a strong home challenge with Carlota Ciganda leading it.

Ciganda won the tournament in 2019 and was also part of the play-off for the title two years earlier in 2017.

Ciganda is also the reigning Ladies European Tour winner.

Besides Ciganda, the tournament will feature some of the best names, including the likes of Ana Peláez, Nuria Iturriz, María Hernández, and Carmen Alonso.

Allyson Felix gets mixed relay nod, heading to 10th worlds

AP ■ INDIANAPOLIS

Allyson Felix was named to her 10th world championship team, where she will have a chance to run in the mixed relay event and add to her record medal collection.

Felix, whose 18 medals are the most in world-championship history, has announced that this will be her final season in track. At last month's US Championships, she finished sixth in the 400 meters and did not qualify for any individual events. But the 36-year-old was named to the mixed relay pool Tuesday when USA Track and Field released its 151-person roster for worlds.

The world championships run July 15-24 in Eugene, Oregon.

Missing from the roster was Sha'Carri Richardson, who failed to qualify for the finals of either the 100 or 200 meters at nationals. Richardson won the women's 100 at Olympic trials last year but was banned from the games after testing positive for a substance found in marijuana. Among those named to the women's 4x100 relay pool was Gabby Thomas, the 200-meter champion in 2021 who has been dealing with a hamstring injury this season.

Ballon d'Or winner Putellas to miss Euro 2022 with knee injury



AP ■ LONDON

Spain's Alexia Putellas, the reigning Ballon d'Or winner, has been ruled out of Euro 2022 after tearing the anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee on the eve of the tournament.

"Tests carried out on the Spain international this afternoon ... have confirmed the national team captain suffered a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament," the Spanish football federation said.

Putellas, 28, was expected to be one of the stars of the tour-

Inaki Williams to play for Ghana

AP ■ MADRID

Athletic Bilbao forward Inaki Williams on Tuesday announced that he will switch his allegiance from Spain to Ghana with the hope of representing the country at the 2022 World Cup.

Born in Bilbao to Ghanaian parents, the 28-year-old Williams, whose younger brother Nico also plays for Athletic, was capped once by Spain in a 2016 friendly.

"I feel the moment has come for me to find my origins within myself and with Africa and Ghana which means so much to me and

name that begins in England on Wednesday.

Spain had already lost their all-time top goalscorer Jennifer Hermoso to injury.

Hermoso, who recently signed for Mexican club Pachuca from Barcelona, sustained a knee injury last month shortly

my family," Williams said on social media.

"I want to return a small part of everything it has given to us because Ghana has played a significant part of becoming who I am as a person, as a son and as a brother.

"Today a new challenge begins. From now on, I will defend Ghana's T-shirt with all my will whilst I give my best. I'm one of the Black Stars," he added.

His availability for Ghana comes as a huge boost ahead of this year's World Cup in Qatar, where the 2010 quarter-finalists will face Portugal, Uruguay and South Korea in Group H.

after joining up with the Spain squad.

Spain were considered one of the favourites as they bid for a first major women's tournament success.

Spain open their campaign against Finland on July 8 in Milton Keynes.

High jumper Tejaswin Shankar to be part of Indian contingent for Birmingham CWG 2022

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) on Wednesday told the Delhi High Court that it will include the name of Tejaswin Shankar, a high jumper, in the list of players who are part of the Indian contingent for the upcoming 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games.

Justice Yashwant Varma, who was hearing a petition by the sportsman against his exclusion from the team of selected players for the sporting event, directed the AFI to forthwith transmit his name to the Indian Olympics Association (IOA) for further action and said that the court expected both AFI and IOA to proceed further while keeping in mind the prescribed timelines.

The AFI lawyer informed the court that there was a vacancy as one of the athletes, who were part of the Indian contingent for the relay event, was disqualified and therefore the petitioner's name shall now be forwarded in his place.

The Commonwealth

Games (CWG) is scheduled to be held in Birmingham from July 28 to August 8.

"Mr (Hrishikesh) Baruah, learned counsel appearing for AFI, has, on instructions, apprised the court that Arokia Rajiv, an athlete who was part of the four by four hundred relay team, has come to be disqualified in trials which were held," the court recorded in the order.

"He accordingly submits that in view of the resultant vacancy which has occurred, the petitioner's name shall be included and forwarded forthwith amongst the list of athletes part of the Indian contingent for the upcoming CWG," it further noted.

"The statement so made is recorded and accepted. Let AFI consequently and forthwith transmit all particulars to IOA which may take further consequential steps," it said.

The court further said that it would keep the petition pending to examine the issues raised in it so that "this national embarrassment does not happen again".

Indian shooters eye glory at ISSF WC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A 49-member strong Indian shooting contingent will be eyeing glory when it takes part in the ISSF World Cup in Changwon, Korea from July 9-21.

The tournament assumes significance as the World Championships are also scheduled to be held this year.

The World Cup will be the first major assignment for the five new foreign coaches who have been roped in by the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) recently.

The foreign coaches who have joined the Indian team and will be working closely with the chief coaches are Munkhbayar Dorjsuren (Pistol), Russel Mark (Shotgun), Lauryn Mark (High Performance Manager), Juan Giha (Skeet) and Thomas Farnik (Rifle).

Dorjsuren, Mark, Giha and Farnik are Olympic medallists and represented their countries at the Olympic Games multiple times.

Athletes representing in the 10m rifle and pistol events, along with the trap shooters in three batches, were the first to arrive in Korea on Wednesday, with the rest of the contingent



reaching a day later.

RAHI PULLS OUT

While star shooters including the likes of Anish Bhanwala, Mairaj Ahmad Khan, Prithviraj Tondaiman, Sanjeev Rajput, Chain Singh, Anjum Moudgil, Manu Bhaker and Aishwary Tomar will be in action, reigning Asian Games champion Rahi Sarnobat has pulled out of the tournament due to medical reasons.

"The team is well prepared after rigorous training in the National camp conducted before the tournament. This is a very important tournament considering the World

Championships are next in line. We wish the team all the very best," said K. Sultan Singh, secretary-general of NRAI.

More than 432 athletes from 44 countries will take part in the tournament in Changwon.

In the previous combined World Cup stage in Baku, Azerbaijan, India had stood fifth with two gold and three silver medals, despite the pistol team choosing to opt out of the tournament.

India had initially planned to skip the Changwon World Cup but the postponement of the Asian Games in China led to an alteration of plans.

INDIA BEGIN PREPS TO PICK BEST WT20 ELEVEN

PTI ■ SOUTHAMPTON

Experimentation will go out of the window as India will get down to finalising their best eleven for the World Cup during the three-match T20 series against an ultra-aggressive England, beginning here on Thursday.

Skipper Rohit Sharma, who missed the fifth Test in Birmingham after contracting COVID-19, will be travelling to the port city on Wednesday and is expected to feature in the series-opener.

Test players including Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, Ravindra Jadeja, Shreyas Iyer and Rishabh Pant will join the T20 squad from the second game onwards.

Their absence would give fringe players like Ruturaj Gaikwad and Sanju Samson one more game to make a statement though they seem to have fallen in the pecking order in India's list of probables for the World Cup in Australia.

A nigggle meant Gaikwad could not open alongside Ishan Kishan in the two games in Ireland and if Rohit is back, he will have to warm the bench once again.

Kishan has done reasonably well in the chances that he has got and he will look to strengthen his position in the team as a reserve opener with a substantial knock against the mighty England.

With Kohli expected to be back at number three from game two, Deepak Hooda will be aiming for another match-winning effort to keep himself in the mix.

With a century and 47 not out against Ireland, Hooda has certainly made it tougher for the team management to keep him out of the eleven.

The uncapped duo of Rahul Tripathi and Arshdeep Singh have not been included for second and third T20 and it is unlikely they will get a look in on Thursday.



Suryakumar Yadav, who made a comeback from injury against Ireland, could not get going in the games in Malahide and will be backing himself to get back to his innovative best. He and Hooda were amongst the runs in the warm-up against Derbyshire last week.

In the bowling department, pacer Umran Malik will be brimming with confidence after defending 17 runs in the last over of a high-scoring second T20 against Ireland. However, he remains a work in progress and needs to improve on his accuracy.

The pacers including the seasoned Bhuvneshwar Kumar and wily Harshal

England vs India
Live from 10:30pm IST
SONY SIX, TEN 3

Patel were stunned by the Irish attack and against a tougher opposition, they will have to be at their best.

Yuzvendra Chahal will be expected to replace Ravi Bishnoi in the playing eleven.

India have about 15 T20 games to play before the T20 World Cup in Australia in October -- three against England in the current series, five against the West Indies (July 29-August 7), about 5 in Asia Cup (August-

September) and three against Australia (September).

The England series will mark the beginning of the process to identify its best XI for the marquee event.

For England, the series marks the beginning of the Jos Buttler era following the retirement of Eoin Morgan.

Ben Stokes and star of the fifth Test against India, Jonny Bairstow, have been rested from the series.

However, there is enough firepower in the England batting to rattle the opposition.

Both Buttler and Liam Livingstone showed devastating form in the IPL and would be looking to build on that.

SQUAD

England: Jos Buttler (Captain), Moeen Ali, Harry Brook, Sam Curran, Richard Gleeson, Chris Jordan, Liam Livingstone, Dawid Malan, Tymal Mills, Matthew Parkinson, Jason Roy, Phil Salt, Reece Topley and David Willey.

India: Rohit Sharma (Captain), Ishan Kishan, Ruturaj Gaekwad, Sanju Samson, Suryakumar Yadav, Deepak Hooda, Rahul Tripathi, Dinesh Karthik (wk), Hardik Pandya, Venkatesh Iyer, Yuzvendra Chahal, Axar Patel, Ravi Bishnoi, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Harshal Patel, Avesh Khan, Arshdeep Singh, Umran Malik.



Pant surges to career-best No. 5

PTI ■ DUBAI

India's star wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant blazed his way into a career-best fifth position in the latest ICC Test rankings announced on Wednesday, even as the out-of-form Virat Kohli dropped out of top-10 for the first time in six years.

Pant's meteoric rise in the rankings comes after his heroics in the recently-held COVID-delayed fifth Test between India and England in which he scored 146 and 57 across two innings.

It is worth mentioning that Pant scored two tons and three half centuries in his last six Test innings.

However, former India skipper Kohli dropped four places to 13th in the batting rankings, thanks to a prolonged lean run.

Interestingly, it is for the first time in six years that Kohli has found himself out of top 10 in the Test rankings.

Current Indian captain Rohit Sharma, who missed the Edgbaston Test after testing positive for COVID-19, also dropped one place in the rankings.

England batter Joe Root, who reigned supreme at Edbagston with a sublime 142 in England's second innings, consolidated his position at the top of the rankings with 923 points, with Australians Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith taking the second and third positions respectively.

Jonny Bairstow, who is in the form of his life and played a pivotal role in guiding England to a historic victory with his unbeaten 114, climbed 11 places to 10th in the rankings.

Bairstow has so far scored 1218 runs at an average of 55.36 with six centuries in the current ICC World Test Championship cycle.

India aim to whitewash Sri Lanka Dhawan to lead India in WI ODIs

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

A confident India will look to complete the formalities and assert their supremacy by completing a whitewash of Sri Lanka in the third and final women's ODI here on Thursday.

Playing ODI cricket for the first time since the talismanic Mithali Raj retired from the game, the Indian team won the opening two games in contrasting fashion to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

The visitors had bagged the preceding T20I series 2-1.

Chasing similar targets, India looked much more confident in the second ODI as they galloped to 10-wicket win on Monday.

India controlled all aspects of the game. It was the kind of dominant display expected out of Harmanpreet Kaur and her troops through out the tour of the island nation.

After an underwhelming tour by their standards, star openers Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma finally joined the party with unbeaten half centuries.

The duo, that had struggled to build a decent partnership and provide electrifying starts in the first ODI and the T20 series, would be keen for an encore in the final game.

New full-time skipper Harmanpreet has been India's most consistent player this series. The all-rounder has shone with the bat, her innings often turning out to be the difference between the two sides.

While, Indian spinners were ruling the roost on the slow tracks in the T20s,



Sri Lanka vs India
Live from 10:00 am IST
FANCODE

Have made a conscious effort to improve strike rotation: Shafali

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

Young Indian opener Shafali Verma, who is known for her big-hitting prowess, says she is making a conscious effort to improve her strike rotation to become a better cricketer.

The 18-year-old slammed a run-a-ball 71 not out, her career-best score in ODIs, in an unbroken 174-run partnership with Smriti Mandhana (94 not out) as India decimated the hosts by 10 wick-

ets here on Monday to take a unassailable 2-0 lead in the three match series.

The 18-year-old has not been able to maintain consistency in her performances, especially in the 50-over format.

"Having seen my past matches, I thought I lacked in taking singles, so I've worked on it. I'm trying to be better as I feel taking singles is very important to build your innings in ODIs," Shafali said on the eve of the third and final ODI of the series.

the ODI series has belonged to pacer Renuka Singh, who has picked seven wickets in the two 50-over matches, including a career best 4/28.

In the absence of veteran Jhulan Goswami, who has often been the side's best pacer, Renuka's performance shows that that young and relatively inexperienced Indian pace unit has potential.

A 3-0 series win will also boost the visitors' confidence for their next assignment — the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

Sri Lanka will, once again, be keen to pick up a conciliatory win like they did in the T20 series.

Let down by its batters this series, the Chamari Athapaththu-led side would hope it can navigate the Indian bowling attack better in the dead rubber.

On the bowling front, the spin duo of Inoka Ranaweera and Oshadi Ranasinghe have been the stand-out players, doing most of the heavy lifting.



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shikhar Dhawan was on Wednesday named India captain for the three ODIs against the West Indies in the absence of regular skipper Rohit Sharma, while Virat Kohli and Rishabh Pant were among those who have been rested for the series beginning on July 22 in Port of Spain, Trinidad.

Two other senior players, Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammad Shami have also been rested. Hardik Pandya, who recently made his India

comeback following a successful IPL, is also not a part of the side.

Deepak Hooda, Sanju Samson, Ruturaj Gaikwad and Avesh Khan, who are not part of ODI squad for the series in England beginning July 12, have been included in the 16-member team for the West Indies tour.

Shubman Gill, who last played an ODI in December 2020, has also got the selectors' nod.

Ravindra Jadeja has been named Dhawan's deputy for the series.

Dhawan, who only plays ODI, had first captained the side during the tour of Sri Lanka last year when the Test specialists were in England.

There has been criticism from some quarters regarding the appointment of too many captains of the Indian team over the past one year with Bumrah, Pant, Rahul, Hardik, Dhawan leading the side due to scheduling and injury issues, and as part of workload management.

All the three games will be played in Port of Spain.

The games in the West Indies are the only ODIs India will play before the T20 World Cup in Australia and therefore, senior players being rested doesn't come entirely as a surprise.

After the ODIs, India will play five T20Is against the West Indies in the Caribbean and the United States, the squad for which is yet to be announced.

Considering every T20I game is important before the World Cup in Australia, the senior players are likely to return for the five-match series to be played from July 29 to August 7. The T20I matches will be played in Trinidad, St Kitts and Lauderhill in Florida.

ODI Squad: Shikhar Dhawan (captain), Ravindra Jadeja (vice-captain), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Shubman Gill, Deepak Hooda, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer, Ishan Kishan (wk), Sanju Samson (wk), Shardul Thakur, Yuzvendra Chahal, Axar Patel, Avesh Khan, Prasidh Krishna, Mohd Siraj, Arshdeep Singh.

Smith unfazed by ‘Bazball’

AP ■ GALLE

Australia's Steve Smith said Wednesday he found England's new attacking "Bazball" approach entertaining to watch, but questioned whether it was sustainable.

England have won all four Tests under new coach Brendon "Baz" McCullum and skipper Ben Stokes with a fearless new mentality, including thrashing India on Tuesday.

"I've watched a little bit of it, it's certainly been entertaining, they're coming out playing their shots," Smith said ahead of Australia's second Test against Sri Lanka starting on Friday.

"Even someone like Alex Lees started to come down the wicket when he was on nothing really to play the way he played (against India)," he told reporters.

Having tongue-in-cheek shouted "Bazball" before whacking a shot in an earlier net session, Smith said he was "intrigued to see how long it lasts, if it's sustainable."

"If you come on a wicket that's got some grass and Josh Hazlewood, (Pat) Cummins and (Mitchell) Starc are rolling



in at you. Is it going to be the same? We'll see what happens."

England's Joe Root now has more centuries to his name than Smith, but the Australian was quick to point out that his rival has played 35 more Tests.

"He's a quality player and looks like he's pretty tough to get out at the moment," Smith said of the prolific run-getter.

The touring Australian team have themselves played attacking cricket on turning pitches to go one-up in the two-Test series with a hammering

of the hosts in the opener.

Spinner Nathan Lyon led the bowling charge with nine wickets in the match and the batsmen took control of the opposition spinners with Cameron Green scoring 77 as he used the sweep shot to good effect.

"We went at a good pace in the first Test. If you were sitting there not playing your shots or looking to score, you were probably going to get out eventually. So it was get them before they get us," Smith said.

India eye win against NZ to stay in hunt

PTI ■ AMSTELVEEN

A lacklustre Indian women's hockey team need to tick all boxes against New Zealand in its final Pool B match to seal a direct quarterfinal place in the FIH World Cup, here on Thursday.

The Indians, who achieved a historic fourth place finish in last year's Olympics, drew 1-1 against Tokyo bronze medallist England and China in their first two pool matches.

The Savita-led side is currently placed third in Pool B with two points below China and leaders New Zealand, who defeated England 3-1 on Tuesday.

"New Zealand will be a tough team to play. They are very dangerous in their counter-attack and we will have to be ready for that, on the ball we have to play to our strengths," chief coach Janneke Schopman said.

According to the tournament format, the 16 teams are divided in four pools of four teams each. The top four sides from each pool will directly qualify for the quarterfinals, while the second and third



India vs New Zealand
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STAR SPORTS 1

placed teams will feature in the crossovers.

The winner of the cross over matches will grab the remaining four quarterfinal spots. So, India would look for an outright win against New Zealand and hope for a Chinese draw or a loss against England to top Pool B.

But going by the way they played in the first two matches, it would be easier said than done.

While the Indian defence

has impressed in both the matches, denying England a single penalty corner in the first game, it is the performance of the forwardline and midfield which was found wanting.

Barring Vandana Katariya, who scored India's two goals, no other striker could live upto expectations so far with the likes of Lalremisiami, Sharmila Devi and Navneet Kaur cutting a sorry figure.

It is not that the Indians didn't create chances, but they

failed to grab those opportunities.

The midfield too needs to raise their game as it looked rusty against China.

Penalty corner conversion is also an area of concern for Schopman as India made use of just two out of the 12 earned in two games, and that too both the goals coming through indirectly from the sticks of Vandana.

While against England, Vandana scored from a rebound, against China she got a beauti-

ful deflection to Gurjit's flick to draw India level.

"I thought we started well against a tight Chinese defense. We were unlucky to not score early on and one moment of not paying attention defensively resulted in us conceding a goal," Schopman said.

"After that we struggled for a bit but when we found the space, we were able to play some good combinations."

"The PC goal was great but felt like we forgot to push through after that with China being more aggressive in the end phase."

"We are where we are but obviously, we would have liked to have more points. Our pool is incredibly tough and small things will make the difference," she added.

Gurjit Kaur too needs to polish her skills and raise her conversion rate if India have to progress far in the tournament.

The Black Sticks women, however, would be brimming with confidence after the win over England.

Both the sides would have a fair idea about the equations they need as China and England play earlier on Thursday.