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NEED TO PROTECT  
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BORIS' FUTURE AS PM HANGS  
IN BALANCE OVER 'PARTYGATE'

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ANOTHER RATE HIKE ON CARDS, SAY  
EXPERTS AHEAD OF RBI'S MPC MEETING

NEW DELHI, MONDAY JUNE 6, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



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NADAL WINS  
14TH FRENCH  
OPEN TITLE  
11 SPORT

## BJP defuses loose cannons after outrage in Gulf, Pak

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Amid growing demand in the Gulf countries to boycott Indian goods, with Qatar and Kuwait even summoning India's Ambassadors and Pakistan adding its voice to the condemnation by Muslim nations over the controversial remarks of a BJP leader against Prophet Mohammed, the Saffron outfit on Sunday suspended its spokesperson Nupur Sharma and expelled the head of its Delhi media unit Naveen Kumar Jindal from the party. The BJP also issued a statement saying that it "strongly denounces insult of any religious personalities".

The crackdown on "hate-mongers" came after the alleged insulting remark made by Nupur Sharma against the Prophet triggered the widespread protest. The Kanpur communal violence is the outcome of Nupur Sharma's sacreligious comment against the prophet.

Besides protests across Indian cities, Nupur Sharma's comment has evoked outrage among Muslim nations with reports of a call for the boycott of Indian goods in the Gulf region.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also took to Twitter to condemn recent

remarks made by BJP leaders on the Prophet.

"I condemn in the strongest possible words hurtful comments of India's BJP leader about our beloved Prophet (PBUH). Have said it repeatedly India under Modi is trampling religious freedoms & persecuting Muslims. World should take note & severely reprimand India. Our love for the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is supreme. All Muslims can sacrifice their life for the Love & Respect of their Holy Prophet (PBUH)," he wrote.

The BJP suspended Sharma from the party and relieved her of all responsibilities with immediate effect "pending an inquiry" for expressing positions contrary to those held by the BJP on various issues and in violation of rule 10 (a) of its constitution, according to communication to her from the party.

Suspended from the BJP following her alleged derogatory remark against Prophet Muhammad, Nupur Sharma on Sunday unconditionally withdrew the controversial statement made in a TV debate and said it was never her intention to hurt anyone's religious feelings.

Expelling its Delhi media head Naveen Kumar Jindal from the party, the BJP said his views

## SIT to probe Kanpur riot; seven more arrested

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar Commissioner of Police Vijay Singh Meena set up a Special Investigation Team (SIT) on Sunday for a detailed probe into the violence which erupted in the Parade area on Friday. "A SIT has been formed to destroy the network of the accused and check their mobile phone call details. Besides, one more team has been formed. The formation of these teams will decide the progress of the investigation into this case," Vijay Singh Meena said. Meanwhile, the police arrested seven more accused involved in the Kanpur Nagar violence.

With this, 29 rioters have been arrested so far in the city.

A heavy police force remained deployed in the sensitive localities on Sunday also. Only a few shops opened in the markets and people desisted from going out of their houses. Sources in the police said that during the investigation, it was observed that efforts were made to tamper with and erase footage from the DVRs of



Police personnel mounted on horses patrol a locality, a day after clashes broke out between two groups over a market shutdown, in Kanpur on Sunday

PTI

CCTVs in the area.

"We will not spare anyone, even those who destroyed the evidence," Meena said. A senior police official said those involved in stone-pelting had been identified and their posters would be issued on Sunday itself.

"Posters with images of stone-pelting will be put up in different localities with an appeal to the people of the area to help police in getting the stone-pelters identified and arrested," the official said and

Suspends Nupur Sharma, expels NK Jindal; says party respects all religions

## 25 pilgrims killed in Yamunotri bus mishap

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW  
TEHRI

Twenty-five pilgrims from Madhya Pradesh died and three were critically injured on Sunday evening when the bus in which they were travelling fell into a deep gorge en route to the Yamunotri temple in Uttarkashi district. The accident took place near Rikhavu khadd on the way to the Himalayan shrine around two kilometres from Danta on NH-94, Uttarkashi District Disaster Management Officer Devendra Patwal said.

Along with the driver and an attendant, the bus was carrying 28 people from Panna district of Madhya Pradesh.

It met with the accident near Danta in Uttarkashi district. According to local officials, till the time of this report being filed, 18 bodies had been recovered and identified while the search was on for the rest of the victims.

Expressing grief at the mishap, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced an ex-gratia of ₹ 2 lakh each from PMNRF for the next of kin of those who lost their lives in the accident. The injured would be given ₹ 50,000 each.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah expressed grief at the mishap and called Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami to take stock of the situation. Shortly afterwards, the Chief Minister reached the disaster



Rescue operation underway after a bus carrying pilgrims fell into a deep gorge, in Uttarkashi district on Sunday

PTI

management control room in Dehradun to assess the situation and check the rescue and recovery efforts.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan also phoned Dhami to enquire about the situation.

Earlier, soon after the accident caused reportedly by the driver losing control of the vehicle, the police and State Disaster Response Force teams reached the site to undertake rescue and relief operations. Later, at the

disaster management control room CM Dhami said that the district administration had been directed to respond swiftly after the accident. Officials concerned have also been directed to conduct a probe into the accident.

It should be mentioned here that more than 15 lakh people have visited Uttarakhand for the Char Dham Yatra which began on May 3. About half a dozen road accidents have also occurred on the Yatra circuit so far.

## India's efforts to protect environment are multi-dimensional, says PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said policies introduced by his Government over the last eight years "carry an insistence on environmental, biodiversity and wildlife protection."

At the function organised by Isha Foundation founder Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev at Vigyan Bhawan, the Prime Minister said that India's efforts to protect the environment have been multifaceted.

Attending the programme 'Save Soil Movement' on World Environment Day, Modi said India has achieved the target of 10 per cent ethanol blending, five months ahead of schedule.

Elaborating on the achievement, Modi said that in 2014 ethanol blending was at 1.5 per cent. "The 10 per cent ethanol blending has led to a reduction of 27 lakh tonnes of carbon



emission," he said.

"India's role in climate change is negligible but India is working on a long-term vision in collaboration with the international community on protecting the environment", he said while addressing the function.

"Be it the Swachh Bharat Mission or programs related to waste-to-wealth, construction of modern sewage treatment plants in cities under AMRUT

mission, or the campaign to get rid of single use plastic or the Ganga cleanliness campaign under Namami Gange, India's efforts to protect the environment have been multifaceted," he said.

"India is making this effort when its role in climate change is negligible. Large modern countries of the world are not only exploiting more and more resources of the Earth, but maximum carbon emission goes to their account", he said.

The Prime Minister said that the average carbon footprint of the world is about 4 ton per person per annum compared to just about 0.5 ton per person per annum in India.

Modi said India is working with the international community and established organisations like Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and the International Solar Alliance.

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Rag pickers look for recyclable materials as greater Adjutant Storks perch at the Boragaon garbage dumping site, in Guwahati on World Environment Day

PTI

## J&K admin reaches out to spooked Kashmiri Pandits

Officers directly intimating staff about new postings

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Union Territory (UT) administration in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has launched a massive exercise to reach out to the disgruntled Kashmiri Pandit migrant employees after their transfer list was leaked on various social media platforms. To calm their nerves, the administration is now directly getting in touch with the employees and intimating them about their new place of posting.

Meanwhile, the UT administration is working overtime to

relocate Kashmiri migrant employees to safer zones where they will be provided adequate security cover.

Several migrant employees posted in other district headquarters confirmed they have been informed about their new place of posting on telephone by the officers concerned.

The exercise was initiated after serious security concerns were raised over the leaked transfer list of 177 teachers from Srinagar district.

The employees who are still camping in the Kashmir Valley find themselves at the receiving end. The authorities have directed them to report to their new places of posting after receiving the relieving orders. Their colleagues, living in rented accommodations, have returned to Jammu not to return soon.

Continued on Page 2

### CAPSULE

#### CHINA LAUNCHES MISSION TO BECOME SPACE POWER

**Beijing/Jiuzhaun:** China on Sunday successfully launched three astronauts on a six-month mission to complete the construction of its strategically significant space station this year to further its dream to emerge as a major space power.

#### RS POLLS: GEHLOT HITS UDAIPUR WITH SIX MLAS

**Jaipur:** Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot along with six Congress MLAs who had expressed resentment over some issues reached Udaipur, where the party legislators are putting up at a hotel ahead of the Rajya Sabha polls amid fears of horse-trading. The ruling Congress in the State also submitted a complaint to the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Sunday, alleging poaching attempts by the Opposition BJP.

#### SALMAN KHAN, FATHER RECEIVE DEATH THREAT

**Mumbai:** Bollywood actor Salman Khan and his father Salim Khan on Sunday received an anonymous letter threatening to kill them, following which an FIR was registered by Mumbai Police, an official said.

## Over 4K cases with daily positivity rate above 1% spark Covid 4th wave fear

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

India logged 4,270 new coronavirus infections on Sunday with a daily positivity rate of above one per cent after 34 days, sparking concerns of another wave just as the country started returning to some level of normalcy.

At the same time, at least 12 cases of Omicron variants BA4 and BA5 were detected from the samples collected in Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu State Minister Subramanian said on Sunday 12 samples of the 150 samples taken were sent to the lab in Hyderabad which confirmed the presence of the new variants, marking the emergence of new coronavirus variants in the State.

"As many as four people have been detected with the BA4 variant while eight people have been diagnosed with the BA5 variant. All of them are isolated. We are closely monitoring these 12 people. They are all doing fine," he said.

This comes amid concerns that about a fifth of the above-12-year-old population is yet to be fully vaccinated while the delivery of boosters is proceeding slowly.

Dr Jugal Kishore, Director Professor and Head of Community Medicine Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi, said, "This up and down in the Covid cases will continue for quite some time. This is all about the immunity among the population and their social activities."

"There is not much to worry about as the cases are mild and hospitalisation is not required. However, one should not lower guard when in the crowd and ensure maintaining hygiene and social distancing. Initially, it was thought that the behaviour of the virus is related to temperature and in winter it will be more active."

Continued on Page 2

## CSE: Rising water spread, coastal erosion paint grim picture for India

Report says 7 States, 2 UTs under threat; by 2050 entire forest cover likely to become climate hotspot

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Twenty-five glacial lakes and water bodies in India, China and Nepal have recorded over 40 per cent rise in their water spread areas since 2009, posing a grave threat to five Indian States and two Union Territories (UTs), a new report stated. According to the report by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), the seven States and UTs which are under threat are Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), and Ladakh.

However, it is not just the rise in water spread that is concerning. The data published in the report titled 'State of India's Environment 2022: In Figures' tell a worrying tale. The report

said that over a third of India's coastline witnessed some degree of erosion between 1990 and 2018. West Bengal is the worst hit with over 60 per cent of its shoreline under erosion.

An increase in the frequency of cyclones and rise in the sea level, and anthropogenic activities such as the construction of harbours, beach mining and building of dams are some of the reasons for coastal erosion, it said.

Citing Government data, the report said three out of every four river-monitoring stations in India have recorded alarming levels of heavy toxic metals -- lead, iron, nickel, cadmium, arsenic, chromium and copper. In one-fourth of the monitoring stations, spread across 117 rivers and tributaries, high levels of two or more toxic metals have been reported. Of the 33 monitoring stations in the Ganga River, contaminant levels in 10 are high.

The report said 45 to 64 per cent of India's forest cover



is likely to become climate hotspots by 2030. By 2050, almost the entire forest cover of the country is likely to become a climate hotspot. "The severity, in terms of damage due to climate change, is set to

increase in 2085," the CSE report stated. A climate hotspot refers to an area that is likely to face severe impacts of climate change. The report revealed that India recycled 12 per cent and burnt 20 per cent of the 3.5

million tonnes of plastic waste it generated in 2019-20. There is no information on the remaining 68 per cent of plastic waste, which most likely would have ended up in dumpsites and landfills, it stated.



# 2 shooters among five held in Kabaddi player’s murder case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHANDIGARH/JALANDHAR

The Punjab police have arrested five more persons, including two shooters, in connection with the high-profile murder case of International Kabaddi Player Sandeep Nangal Ambia, taking the total arrests to nine so far.

Jalandhar-Rural Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Swapan Sharma, on Sunday said those arrested in the murder of Kabaddi player have been identified as Harwinder Singh alias Fauji of Bulandshahr (Uttar Pradesh), Vikas Malhe of Gurgaon (Haryana), Sachin Dhaulia of Alwar (Rajasthan), Manjot Kaur of Sangrur (Punjab) and Yadwinder Singh of Pilibhit (UP).

The police have also recovered seven pistols including five foreign-made .30 bore, two .315 country-made pistols and

three vehicles including Mahindra XUV, Toyota Etios and Hyundai Verna from their possession.

Notably, a prominent Kabaddi player Sandeep Singh alias Sandeep Nangal Ambia was shot dead by five unidentified assailants during an ongoing Kabaddi match in Mallian village in Jalandhar at around 6 pm on March 14, 2022.

“Harwinder alias Fauji who was nabbed from a village near Bulandshahr in UP is the main accused in the killing, who also provided logistics support including weapons, vehicles, hideouts, training in weapon handling, financial support, and did recce for executing the crime,” said the SSP said that Fauji, who was the main coordinator of Kaushal-Dagger gang and is active in Delhi, Haryana, and Western UP, was retired in February this year from the 6

Jat Battalion after putting 18 years in armed service.

Being a history-sheeter, he is facing at least 21 criminal cases pertaining to murder, armed dacoity, and extortion in various districts of Western UP and Haryana. He has also been declared a proclaimed offender in several cases registered against him.

SSP Swapan Sharma said that another accused Vikas Malhe, who was nabbed from Faridabad, along with the main shooter was tasked to find out and train the shooters, and later, he also accompanied Fauji to commit the targeted killing of Sandeep. Malhe has nine criminal cases pertaining to murder and extortion registered against him in Haryana.

“During the investigation, Vikas Malhe also revealed his role in the other two murder cases in Punjab which earlier were not known to the Police,” added the SSP.

“In June 2021, Sukhmeet Singh, a transporter, was shot dead in Jalandhar city by unidentified persons. It has now come to light that Vikas along with others executed this killing,” he said.

SSP added, “In January 2022 also, two persons - Manpreet Challa and Manpreet Vicki, both associates of a slain gangster Kulvir Naruana - were shot dead in Bathinda by unidentified persons. Malhe’s questioning revealed that these two killings were also planned and executed by him to avenge the arrest of Fateh Nagri - another jailed gangster of Sangrur. Manpreet Challa had allegedly informed the police about the role of Fateh Nagri in Kulvir Naruana murder case,”

Divulging more details, SSP said that Sachin Dhaulia and Manjot Kaur were arrested for harbouring members of Kaushal-Daggar gang and providing them safe passage.

# UP: Man tortured in police custody, FIR lodged

PTI ■ BUDAUN (UP)

Five police personnel and two unidentified people have been booked here for allegedly torturing a man in custody. Rehan (20) was held by police on suspicion of theft when he was returning home from work. He was given electric shocks and the accused inserted a wooden stick in his genitals, a complaint lodged by the man’s family members alleged. The accused took Rs 5,000 as bribe for letting the man go, they alleged. The incident took place at the Kakrala police outpost of the Alahapur police station area. The family members alleged that Rehan’s health began deteriorating after the incident. The family is getting him treated at a private doctor of Bulandshahr.

On Wednesday, when his condition worsened, the family members complained about

the matter to top officials.

The FIR was lodged on Friday on the directions of the SSP following investigation against seven people, including the then police outpost in-charge, four policemen and two unidentified persons.

In the complaint sent to the SSP, Rehan’s relatives alleged that he was assaulted by the then outpost incharge Satyapal Singh, constables Narendra, Shekhar Jawla, Sonu and Vipin inside the police outpost. Singh was shifted from the police outpost earlier while the remaining police personnel were sent to the police lines following the FIR.

After the matter came to the notice, SSP O P Singh handed over the investigation to Dataganj CO Prem Kumar Thapa. SP (City) Praveen Singh Chauhan said on Saturday that after registering a case against the accused, orders were given for a departmental inquiry.

# Pieces of dome’s finial lying on Jama Masjid terrace brought down using skylift

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The pieces of the iconic finial of the main dome of the Mughal-era Jama Masjid here, which had fallen off on its terrace below in a storm, have been brought down using a skylift and safely stored.

A scientist who was involved in the process also said on Sunday that trials have been conducted and assessments made and there will be attempts on Tuesday or Wednesday to dismount the heavy pieces precariously hanging from the dome.

"On Saturday, using a skylift brought from the fire department, the pieces of the finial that had got dislodged and fallen off on the terrace below the dome were brought down and safely stored," scientist and innovator Mirza M Arif told PTI.

Arif has been engaged by the Jama Masjid, along with heritage experts from the

Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), to plan the removal of the dangling part of the finial of the main dome of the 17th-century mosque, which was damaged in a fierce thunderstorm recently.

Jama Masjid Shahi Imam Syed Ahmed Bukhari had earlier said as part of the plan, aerial photographs of the mosque, with closer shots of the main dome, were taken to aid the experts. The finial originally stood about 12-15 feet from the top of the dome and the dangling part would weigh around 350 kg, he had said.

"We first carried out a preliminary assessment as to how the pieces can be dismounted safely and on Saturday, I was able to get close to the pieces dangling on the top of the dome and take pictures and even safely touch it, riding in a skylift.

# Water supply in parts of Delhi to be disrupted due to maintenance work

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid heat wave, the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) on Sunday issued an advisory stating that the water supply in the parts of the national capital will be affected due to the maintenance work.

According to the advisory issued by the DJB, due to the interconnection water line to the online booster at Sewa Dham Road Mandoli opposite Bank of Baroda, the water supply to the following areas will be available at low pressure in the evening of 06.06.2022. However, water supply shall be available at normal pressure in the morning of 07.06.2022.

While informing about the areas where water supply will be affected, it stated, "the areas

likely to be affected due to shut down of New Tahirpur main: Nand Nagri, Seemapuri, Sunder Nagri, Kheda Village, Tahirpur Village, Mandoli, Saboli, G.T.B. Enclave, Leprosy Complex (Tahirpur), Harsh Vihar, Dilshad Garden, Dilshad Colony, Jagatpuri Extn, Nathu Colony School Block & Jhilmil Industrial Area & its adjoining area, Bhajanpura, Yamuna Vihar, Maujpur, Brijpuri, Bhagirathi Vihar, Indra Vihar, Sonia Vihar, Karawal Nagar, Khajoori, Shiv Vihar, and Mustafabad, Dayalpur it adjoining area," it stated.

The DJB also advised the public to make the judicious use of water to avoid any inconvenience and water tankers will be available on-demand in case of emergency.

# Prez, PM, leaders of all parties greet Yogi on his 50th birthday

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, and leaders cutting across party lines wished Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on the occasion of his 50th birthday on Sunday.

Even though the chief minister was at his workplace in Gorakhpur on Sunday, since morning he was getting greetings through internet media as well as other social platforms.

President Ram Nath

Kovind congratulated Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on his birthday. The president tweeted, "During his stay in Gorakhpur, the President today extended his greetings and best wishes to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on his birthday."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also greeted Yogi Adityanath on his birthday. Modi tweeted, "Happy Birthday to the dynamic Chief Minister of UP. The state has touched new heights of progress under his able leadership. He has ensured people-friendly governance for the people of the state. Praying for a long and healthy life in the service of the people."

# Follow preaching of Sant Kabir, says Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Sunday, stressed to follow the preaching of Sant Kabir Das and claimed that the country and society would only progress if one did not leave the work for tomorrow and started it immediately.

"We have to understand our responsibility. Kabir Das ji had warned about duty and said - 'Kal kare so aaj kar, aaj kare so ab'. Do not make a habit of postponing work. Whatever you have to do tomorrow, do it today and what you have to do today, start now. Many people watch muhurta, it is a habit to avoid work. Avoidance does not solve the problem. Only by following the path of karma, we can progress our society, our country," Yogi Adityanath said while stressing to follow the paths shown by Sant Kabir Das.

Addressing a gathering in

the presence of President Ram Nath Kovind, Yogi Adityanath said that Sant Kabir Das always opposed orthodoxy. "He had raised a voice against it and that is why he came to Maghar. At that time it was said that on coming to Maghar one gets hell. Kabir Das ji came here against it and made it heaven. Today many works of tourism development are being done here," he said.

The chief minister said that the inauguration of three big projects was being completed in Maghar on Sunday with the arrival of President Kovind. These include the construction of Sant Kabir Academy and Research Institute at a cost of Rs 31.49 crore, through which research work will be done on Sant Kabir Das' folk literature, his sakhi, bijak, shabad, his accomplishment. Besides, construction of Interpretation Centre at a cost of Rs 17.61 crore and beautification of

Kabir Nirvana Sthali in Maghar at a cost of Rs 37.66 lakh is also included under Swadesh Darshan Yojana.

The chief minister said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had asked for setting goals for the next 25 years of the Amrit period to connect everyone in the year of Amrit Mahotsav. "When every citizen joins with this resolve, then we can achieve this goal," he said.

The chief minister thanked the Tourism and Culture Department of UP and the Culture Ministry of the Government of India for taking forward this programme to make the vision of Sant Kabir Das alive in front of the coming generation according to the feelings and vision of the prime minister.

He said that this entire area would touch new heights of development and achieve success in attracting many devotees.

The chief minister said that

the foundation stones of the projects inaugurated in Maghar on Sunday were laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He said under the leadership of the prime minister, many programs were being run to beautify and recognise many places in the country. He said the Swadesh Darshan Yojana was an ambitious scheme of the Government of India to connect people ideologically, to provide a new direction to society and to develop tourism of the country's traditional pilgrimage places.

The chief minister said that many programmes of Ramayana circuit, Krishna circuit, spiritual circuit, Buddhist circuit were being run at different places in the country. He said under this, work was being done to further the possibilities of tourism development, as well as to provide better basic facilities for devotees and citizens besides employment.

# Prez Kovind to address joint sitting of UP legislature today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

President Ram Nath Kovind will address the joint sitting of the UP legislature on Monday.

The Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha has invited President Kovind to mark the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav — 75th year of independence of the country from British rule.

The UP Assembly had unanimously passed a resolution in this regard during the budget session which adjourned sine die on May 31. The assembly is yet to be prorogued.

During the budget session, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna had tabled a special resolution to invite President Kovind to address the House and guide members on June 6.

Speaker Satish Mahana, after seeking the views of the members, had passed the resolution.

Besides President Ram Nath Kovind, UP Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Speaker Satish Mahana, UP Legislative Council Chairman Manvendra Singh and leader of opposition Akhilesh Yadav will be present on the dais.

President Kovind is on a tour of Uttar Pradesh from June 3 and it will conclude on June 6.

This will be the second address to the joint sitting of UP legislature by a president. In January 2013, the then President Pranab Mukherjee had addressed the UP legislature on the occasion of 125 years of UP Legislature. A postage stamp was also issued to commemorate the occasion.

# BJP defuses loose cannons after....

From Page 1

on social media vitiated communal harmony and were in violation of its fundamental beliefs. Nupur Sharma allegedly made derogatory comments against the Prophet in a television debate though she denied it later, saying her comments were distorted by a so-called fact-checker. She has also said that she has been receiving threatening death and rape calls from unknown persons.

Without naming her the BJP strongly denounces insult of any religious personalities of any religion."

"The Bharatiya Janata Party is also strongly against any ideology which insults or demeans any sect or religion. The BJP does not promote such people or philosophy," it said. "India's Constitution gives the right to every citizen to practice any religion of his/her choice and to honour and respect every religion," the party further said.

"As India celebrates the 75th year of its Independence,

we are committed to making India a great country where all are equal and everyone lives with dignity, where all are committed to India's unity and integrity, where all enjoy the fruits of growth and development," said the statement signed by BJP general secretary and headquarters-in-charge Arun Singh. At least 40 people, including 20 police personnel, were injured during the clashes after two groups clashed on Friday in Kanpur over a call to shut down markets following the controversial remarks. The police have arrested 36 people and filed cases against 1,500.

Meanwhile, the Qatar Ministry of foreign affairs on Sunday summoned Indian envoy Deepak Mittal to register its protest. He was handed an official note expressing "disappointment" and "total rejection and condemnation" of the remarks. Clarifying his country's position, Mittal said the tweets do not reflect the views of the Government of India.

These are views of fringe elements, he said.

The Qatar Ministry said, "HE Mr. Soltan bin Saad Al-Muraikhi, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the State, handed this note to the Ambassador of the Republic of India.

The State of Qatar welcomed the statement issued by the ruling party in India in which it announced the suspension of the party's official from practicing his activities in the party due to his remarks that angered all Muslims around the world."

The note indicated that more than two billion Muslims across the world follow the guidance of Prophet Mohammed, whose message came as a message of peace, understanding and tolerance, and a beacon of light that Muslims all over the world follow. In a statement, Al-Muraikhi pointed out that allowing such "Islamophobic remarks" to continue without punishment, constitutes a "grave danger" to the protection of human rights and may lead to further "prejudice and marginalization", which will create a cycle of violence and hate.

"The State of Qatar reaffirmed its full support for the values of tolerance, coexistence, and respect for all religions and nationalities, where such values distinguish Qatar's global friendships and its relentless work to contribute to the establishment of international peace and security," Qatar's Foreign Ministry said.

The Indian Embassy in an official statement said: "The Ambassador had a meeting in the Foreign Office in which concerns were raised with regard to some offensive tweets by individuals in India denigrating the religious personality. "The Ambassador conveyed that the tweets do not, in any manner, reflect the views of the Government of India. These are the views of fringe elements," it said.

In line with our civilizational heritage and strong cultural traditions of unity in diversity, the Government of India accords the highest respect to all religions.

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# India’s efforts to...

From Page 1

The Prime Minister informed that to save soil, India has focused on five main things.

"First, how to make the soil chemical-free, second, how to save the organisms that live in the soil, which are called Soil Organic Matter in technical language, third, how to maintain soil moisture and increase the availability of water till it? Fourth, how to remove the damage that is happening to the soil due to less groundwater and fifth, how to stop the continuous erosion of soil due to the reduction of forests," he said.

The Prime Minister pointed out that efforts were being undertaken in the agriculture sector to alleviate the problem of soil issues.

Modi said earlier, the farmers of our country lacked information about the type of soil, deficiency in soil, how much water is there. To overcome this problem, a huge campaign was

launched to give soil health cards to them.

Modi informed that the Government is connecting the people of the country with water conservation through campaigns like catch the rain.

In March this year itself, a campaign to conserve 13 big rivers has also started in the country, he said.

In this, along with reducing pollution in water, work is also being done to plant forests on the banks of rivers. Estimates are that this will add a forest cover of 7,400 sq km which will add to the increase of 20 thousand sq km forest cover in India that has been added in the last 8 years, Modi said.

The Prime Minister noted that the "policies related to Biodiversity and Wildlife that India is following today have also led to a record increase in the numbers of wildlife."

"Today whether it is tiger, lion, leopard or elephant, the number of all is increasing in the country," he said.

MAHINDRA RURAL HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED					Possession Notice
Corporate Office:- Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Ltd., Sadhana House, 2nd Floor, 570, P.B.Marg Worli, Mumbai 400 018 India,Tel:- +91 22 66523500 Fax:- +91 22 24972741					
Branch Office:- LDA Colony,B2/B70 Kanpur Road, Near Phoneix Mall, Lucknow.					
(For Immovable Property) (Under Rule 8 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002)					
Whereas the undersigned being the authorized officer of M/S Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as "MRHFL"), Having its registered office at Lucknow and Branch office at Moradabad, Meerut under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002), and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notice under Section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon you being the borrowers (names and addresses mentioned below)to repay the amount mentioned in the said notice being within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.					
The borrower mentioned herein above having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers mentioned herein above and to the public in general that undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on me under sub section (4) of section 13 of the Act read with the Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this 7 day.					
The borrowers mentioned herein above in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the said property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the Charge of M/S Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Ltd. for an amount and interest thereon.					
The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.					
S.N.	Name of the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Description of Secured Asset (Immovable Property)	Demand Notice Date and Amount	Date of Possession	
1.	(LC No. 994122/ MURADABAD Branch) PRITI SHARMA (Borrower) MANISH KUMAR SHARMA (Co Borrower) ANKISH CHAUDHARY (Gurantor)	KHASRA NO. 144 ,WAKE GRAM DIDORA, MORADABAD East:- MAKAAN RAKKUMAR West:- PLOT DIGAR SHAKHS South:- AARAZI PRATHAM North:- RASTA 14 '	13-08-2021 Rs.6,56,838/-	03-06-2022 Symbolic Possession	
2.	(LC No. 722482/ MEERUT Branch) SANTOSH (Borrower) RAMESH (Co Borrower)	KHASRA NO. 1319'A JASWANT SUGAR MILL COLONY,REVENUE VILL-MALIYANA ' PARGANA & TEHSIL & DISTT. MEERUT PIN-250002 East:- HOUSE OF RAJWATI West:- HOUSE OF DEEP CHAND South:-RASTA 18FT WIDE North:- HOUSE OF PRAKASH CHAND	04-12-2020 Rs.9,72,553/-	01-06-2022 Physical Possession	
Place :- Moradabad, Meerut Date:-06.06.2022 Sd/- Authorised Officer Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Limited					

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# Kejriwal slams Modi Govt over exodus of Pandits from Valley

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday slammed the Modi Government over Kashmiri Pandits exodus from the valley after the targeted killings of minorities and demanded the Centre to “get over with the meetings” and “take action on the ground” in the Kashmir Valley. The Chief Minister further said this shows the BJP cannot handle Kashmir and only knows how to do dirty politics.

Addressing the AAP’s ‘Jan Akrosh Rally’ at Jantar Mantar in the national Capital in solidarity with Kashmiri Pandits, Kejriwal also hit out at Pakistan, accusing it of supporting terror activities in Kashmir.

Once again, hundreds of Kashmiri Pandits are being forced to leave their homeland. It happened in 1990 and is happening again in 2022. What is the BJP Government doing? How many meetings will you do in the name of an action plan?

“What is the plan? Kashmir wants an action plan. Yesterday (Saturday), I saw that a three-hour-long high-level meeting was held. There have been too

many meetings. This shows the BJP cannot handle Kashmir and it only knows how to do dirty politics. Please do not do politics over Kashmir,” said Kejriwal. “Please take some action on the ground. People are dying,” he added.

Braving the heat, hundreds of protesters, including women and children, gathered at the Jantar Mantar to protest against the killings of Kashmiri Pandits in the valley. Carrying placards that read “India will not tolerate the killings of Kashmiri Pandits”, the protesters raised “Bharat Mata Ki Jai” slogans and demanded justice for the Kashmiri Pandits who are being targeted and killed by terrorists. The protesters also maintained a two-minute silence to pay tributes to those who lost their lives due to the targeted killings in the valley. Several AAP leaders, including Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, Environment Minister Gopal Rai, Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh and party MLAs, attended the “Jan Akrosh Rally” and raised anti-BJP slogans.

The Delhi CM further said that he will seek time from Union Home Minister Amit Shah to discuss the issue and know the Centre’s plan to stop



the killings in Kashmir.

Kejriwal also alleged that the BJP government had forcefully signed a bond with around 4,000 Kashmiri Pandits, according to which they could not move out of Kashmir and work in other cities. “The BJP government should immediately cancel the bond and allow people to work and live wherever they want,” he said.

“I request the BJP and its leaders to not do politics in the name of Kashmir and Kashmiri pandits. Rather than playing dirty politics, they should fulfill the demands of Kashmiri pandits, provide security to them and tell them about the action plan you made for them to tackle the ongoing situation in the valley,” he said.

Kejriwal also hits out at Pakistan accusing it of sup-

porting terror activities in Kashmir. “I want to tell Pakistan to stop its petty tactics. Kashmir was ours and will always be a part of India... If India decides, then Pakistan will not exist,” he said at the rally held against the targeted killings in Kashmir. The AAP national convener demanded the Centre make public its plan to deal with the situation in the Valley.

“The bond was that you (Kashmiri Pandits) will be sacked if you ask to be transferred out of Kashmir. You will have to work in Kashmir,” he alleged. “Kashmiri Pandits are demanding that this bond be cancelled... The entire nation wants this bond to be cancelled. Kashmiri Pandits are not bonded labourers, they are free to work wherever they want,” he said.

# Mercury soars to 47 degrees in parts of city

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Parts of Delhi sizzled under intense heatwave sending the mercury soaring to 47.3 degrees Celsius on Sunday which is seven notches warmer than the normal temperature for this time of the year, at Mungeshpur observatory.

According to the data released by the weather station, the observatories at Ridge, Ayanagar, Safdarjung, Najafgarh, Pitampura, Palam, and Lodhi Road recorded maximum temperatures of 45.7 degrees Celsius, 44 degrees Celsius, 44.2 degrees Celsius, 46.3 degrees Celsius, 46.2 degrees Celsius, 44.5 degrees Celsius and 43.9 degrees Celsius respectively.

The minimum temperature in the capital city settled at 27.4 degrees Celsius, which is normal for this season, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The relative humidity in Delhi on Sunday at 8:30 in the morning was 23 per cent and 16 per cent at 5:30 in the evening, recorded at Safdarjung observatory.

The IMD said that the Capital city witnessed partly clouded sky with the maximum temperature touching up to 44 degrees Celsius.

“On Sunday, heatwave to severe heat wave conditions prevailed over some parts of the capital city,” it said.

“Heat wave conditions prevailed over some parts of Vidarbha and over isolated pockets of Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, West Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh,” IMD said.

The weather station predicted no respite for the delhites this week, as the strong winds will surface Delhi on 6th-10th June with the maximum temperature of 42-43 degree Celsius and the minimum temperature will shoot upto 27-28 degree Celsius.

On 11th June, the city will witness a partly cloudy sky with the possibility of rain or thunderstorm with a maximum temperature of 41 degrees



Celsius and the minimum temperature of 29 degrees Celsius, predicted the weather department.

# Maintenance work to affect water supply in parts of city: DJB advisory

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid heat wave, the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) on Sunday issued an advisory stating that the water supply in the parts of the national capital will be affected due to the maintenance work.

According to the advisory issued by the DJB, due to the interconnection water line to the online booster at Sewa Dham Road Mandoli opposite

Bank of Baroda, the water supply to the following areas will be available at low pressure in the evening of 06.06.2022. However, water supply shall be available at normal pressure in the morning of 07.06.2022.

While informing about the areas where water supply will be affected, it stated, “the areas likely to be affected due to shut down of New Tahirpur main: Nand Nagri, Seemapuri, Sunder Nagri, Kheda Village,

Tahirpur Village, Mandoli, Saboli, G.T.B. Enclave, Leprosy Complex (Tahirpur) Harsh Vihar, Dilshad Garden, Dilshad Colony, Jagatpuri Extn, Nathu Colony School Block & Jhilmil Industrial Area & its adjoining area, Bhajanpura, Yamuna Vihar, Maujpur, Brijpuri, Bhagirathi Vihar, Indra Vihar, Sonia Vihar, Karawal Nagar, Khajoori, Shiv Vihar, and Mustafabad, Dayalpur it adjoining area,” it stated.

# LG interfering in city Govt work, says AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP has accused Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena of interfering in the Delhi Government’s work and forgetting his remit. In its latest dig at Lieutenant Governor, the AAP on Sunday said it appeared that the Centre had sent him to meddle with the Arvind Kejriwal Government’s work and stay away from law and order. This is the third attack on Lieutenant Governor since he assumed the office at Raj Niwas

Addressing a press conference, Aam Aadmi Party MLA Atishi alleged that Saxena did not act pro-actively on some heinous crimes that took place in the city since he assumed office a few days ago, but he had been “interfering” in the Delhi Government’s business. “After taking oath, he had said that he is not a person to sit in air-conditioned offices and he will be on the ground. In the last 10 days, several heinous crimes have taken place in the national capital,” she said.

“On May 27, an auto-rickshaw driver was stabbed to death in Sangam Vihar. Did he



visit the Sangam Vihar police station,” she asked. Atishi also referred to the alleged sexual harassment of a woman in Jor Bagh and a police officer’s alleged brawl with a woman, and asked why the LG did not act stern in these cases.

“Did the LG investigate the Jor Bagh Metro Station Incident where a woman was sexually harassed; did he go to the metro station with Delhi Police,” she said. The AAP leader further said: “Has the LG issued even a single order to the Delhi Police since assuming office?”

“Does he even know the horror women have had to face in the last few days? Delhi Police’s DCP-Dwarka assaulted

a woman in front of everyone at a restaurant in Kailash colony; but the LG did not call a single meeting or take any action. It seems that he has been asked by the Centre to stay away from the issue of law and order and has been given a mandate to meddle in the affairs of the Kejriwal-led Delhi government,” she said.

The tussle between the AAP and the LG started last Wednesday when some AAP MLAs accused him of intruding in the Delhi government’s work. The AAP then had said that since Saxena was a newcomer, perhaps he was not aware of the constitutional provisions for governing the NCT of Delhi.

On Saturday, the AAP had again accused Saxena of interference and in “conspiring” to derail democracy as he visited two Delhi Jal Board facilities and a sewage treatment plant, a measure the Kejriwal-led party said was beyond his jurisdiction. The allegation comes a day after Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal met Saxena and announced he will meet him every Friday for better coordination to address the city’s issues.

# LG visits Yamuna Biodiversity Park on World Environment Day

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena on Sunday visited the Yamuna Biodiversity Park on the occasion of World Environment Day and interacted with Delhi University (DU) students.

“Visited the Yamuna Biodiversity Park and celebrated #WorldEnvironmentDay with students of Delhi University. Exhorted the young minds to own up their city and participate as equal stakeholders in the efforts to clean Delhi and rejuvenate its ecology and environment,” Saxena said in a tweet. Earlier in the day, he said there should be concern about waste and sewer management, e-waste, and water conservation.

According to the statement released, the LG walked along the trail passing through various functional eco systems created and nurtured in the park and took keen interest in the existing flora and fauna. He visited the medicinal garden, herbal park, butterfly park and the wet lands and water bodies developed in the park.

The LG started his



address to the students by reading out a couplet, (Roz giraate hain pattay merey, phir bhi hawaon se badaltey nahin rishtey merey).

Attributing this as a statement from a tree that suffers all kinds of violence from man kind and nature, and yet continues to provide fruits, food, shade, wood and life supporting Oxygen, he urged the young minds to learn from the tree and resolve to respect it. This he said will be the best tribute to the environment, of which a tree was the strongest symbol.

Interacting further with the First and Second year students of Botany, Zoology and Life Sciences from Shiva Ji College of Delhi University, the LG recalled his planting special

varieties of bamboo from Assam along the landscape of Narmada Canal in Gujarat and arid zone near Udaipur in Rajasthan at the behest of the Prime Minister. This he narrated as an example of positive attitude and resolve to achieve, to the students.

“While appreciating the dedicated efforts of the Scientists, Officers, and their team for having rejuvenated the heritage of River Yamuna and creating an exemplary model of Urban Forestry in the midst of concrete jungles, the LG emphasized that the time had come to take the Yamuna Biodiversity Park, as indeed the other parks being developed in Delhi to the next level by innovating, upscaling and reinventing,” the statement said.

# BJP’s Rajinder Nagar candidate running three illegal hotels, alleges Bhardwaj

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday slammed Delhi BJP over the anti-encroachment drive conducted by the erstwhile Municipal Corporation of Delhi. They (AAP) also alleged that the BJP’s Rajinder Nagar candidate Rajesh Bhatia is running three illegal hotels in Delhi.

Addressing the media, AAP chief spokesperson and legislator Saurabh Bhardwaj said why the party hasn’t demolished Rajesh Bhatia’s hotels despite having been recorded as illegal by the MCD.



“BJP’s Rajinder Nagar by-poll candidate is running three unauthorised hotels himself; why hasn’t he faced bulldozer

action yet? BJP and Adesh Gupta were celebrating when bulldozers demolished homes and shops of the poor all over Delhi; they must tell the public when their candidate’s hotels will be demolished,” Bhardwaj said.

“BJP Rajinder Nagar Candidate Rajesh Bhatia is running three illegal hotels in the area; his properties have been booked by the MCD too. BJP’s Delhi Unit single-handedly earned the record of spreading terror in Delhi and leaving lakhs of people jobless and hopeless,” he said.

“The BJP recklessly ran their bulldozers over the homes

of the poor and oppressed, ended their businesses and livelihoods in the blink of an eye. Within a matter of two weeks, they ignited such horrifying levels of terror claiming that the BJP is against all kinds of encroachments and illegal construction. It is ironic that the very candidate that the BJP fielded for the Rajinder Nagar by-polls, himself owns three illegally constructed hotels along with his family. I would like to know from BJP State President Adesh Gupta himself – when will he take these bulldozers to demolish Rajesh Bhatia’s buildings?” Bhardwaj concluded.

# Rajinder Nagar bypoll: BJP candidate will win as people with us, says Adesh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta on Sunday inaugurated the election office of the Rajinder Nagar and said that the saffron party has come out to win and will surely win because the people of Rajendra Nagar are with us.

Addressing the media, Gupta said that the Rajesh Bhatia has spent his entire life in serving the people of Rajendra Nagar, while Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal did not find any sooner daughter or young woman

or anyone from Rajendra Nagar, so has brought a defeated candidate from Karawal Nagar to contest from here.

Gupta said that this is the time to teach a lesson to Kejriwal. As soon as the BJP declared its candidate, Durgesh Pathak had fainted.

“After looting the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), Kejriwal sent Raghav Chadha to Punjab. Where did the Rs 57000 crore of jal board and Rs 300 crore spent in the name of water in Rajendra Nagar go, is not known? People are yearning for water. He said that Kejriwal used to say that neither he will



take a car nor any security, but today he is investing crores of rupees in his residence. Also, his ministers are buying 500 bighas of land. Now the people

of Rajendra Nagar will not be lured in by Kejriwal’s big talk, so they have made their mind to ensure Durgesh loses his security deposits,” Gupta said.

# After nearly a month, Karol Bagh gets it’s missing heart back

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly a month after a ‘heart’ sign in a decorative display on a street in Karol Bagh in Delhi was allegedly stolen, the city on Sunday got its ‘heart’ back after a new LED signage in a heart-shape has been installed in its missing position.

The incident was reported early May and the the

image of the missing ‘heart’ in the ‘I Love Delhi’ signage at a public place in Karol Bagh had gone viral, drawing amusing comments from netizens, with some saying they were “hearbroken” to see “Delhi’s heart gone missing” while others had shared memes using lyrics from various Bollywood songs.

“After the incident, many ordinary people started taking interest in the signage, and

apparently some passers-by had added a makeshift ‘dil’ to fill the gap. And, then a private radio station also did a kind of a competition to design a ‘heart’. But, today we have filled the missing space with a new LED heart-shaped red signage. Delhi has got its ‘heart’ back,” a senior official said.

However, weeks after this incident, the three municipal corporations were merged

into a new single entity, which came into being on May 22.

However, the signage still carries the old nomenclature -- ‘Karol Bagh, North Delhi Municipal Corporation’.

Days after the ‘heart’ sign was allegedly stolen, the then NDMC had poetically appealed to people to “steal hearts” of others and “not ‘heart’ signs from public places”.

Also, to mark the World

Environment Day, the Karol Bagh zone of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi partnered with Delhi Street Art and Plogman of India, along with an MCD-run school’s students to clean up streets of Rajinder Nagar.

The children exercised and picked up garbage and pledged to keep their city clean.

Also, the MCD official Twitter handle shared tweets

on multiple events hosted on the occasion of World Environment Day.

“Central Zone enthalls Delhi with ‘I LOVE DELHI’ structure created from scrap to planting one Harshingar tree (known for medicinal utility) in all 28 dispensaries in the zone, Wall painting & Island Beautification on #WorldEnvironmentDay #MCD Cares,” it said.

“School kids of Shahadra

South Zone stroked their creativity brush to paint their green world & also planted fruit bearing trees like Jamun, Mango, etc in schools on #WorldEnvironmentDay. 850 trees & 1250 shrubs planted,” the MCD tweeted.

Children don the mantle of ‘Swachhta Doot’ in their colonies in West Zone on #WorldEnvironmentDay. Awareness rally and distribution of educational kits to

children of Safai Sainiks and ragpickers in Raghuraj Nagar, the civic body wrote on Twitter.

“City-SP Zone undertook cleanliness cum sanitation drives in the Zone & planted 110 trees on #WorldEnvironmentDay. Citizens were made aware of source segregation of waste & dangers of plastic use through Nukkad Natak,” it said in another tweet.



# Cong appoints Kharge, Baghel as observers ahead of RS polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Seeking to ensure that its candidates win the Rajya Sabha elections in Haryana, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, Congress president Sonia Gandhi has appointed senior party leaders, including Mallikarjun Kharge and Bhupesh Baghel, as observers to the States. The BJP has put its weight behind independent candidates in Haryana and Rajasthan.

The BJP has already appointed its Cabinet Ministers as observers in all the polling states. While some of the states have already sent 41 members to the Upper House, the remaining present a battle of prestige for the ruling BJP and opposition Congress.

Of the 57 vacancies in Rajya Sabha, 41 candidates in 11 states have so far been elected unopposed. The elections will be held for 16 seats in four states of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Haryana and Karnataka.

While Kharge has been made the observer for Maharashtra, Baghel and Rajeev Shukla have been made observers for Haryana, and Pawan Kumar Bansal and TS Singh Deo for Rajasthan. Shukla has already got a RS berth from Chhattisgarh last week. For the four Rajya Sabha seats in Rajasthan, the Congress has fielded three candidates — Randeep Surjewala, Mukul Wasnik and Pramod Tiwari.

While the Congress is sure to get two seats, it needs 15 more votes to win the third

seat of Tiwari. The BJP has fielded its former Minister Ghanshyam Tiwari, and backed media baron Subhash Chandra as an independent for the second seat.

Nearly 70 Congress MLAs from Rajasthan are camping at a hotel in Udaipur amid fears of horse trading by the BJP. After winning the two seats, the party will have 26 surplus votes, 15 short of the required 41 to win the third seat. On the other hand, the BJP has 71 MLAs in the State Assembly and is set to win one seat after which it will be left with 30 surplus votes.

Congress has also shifted its MLAs in Haryana to a resort in Raipur in Congress-ruled Chhattisgarh.

Former Union Minister and party general secretary Ajay Maken is the Congress

candidate from Haryana. The Congress and the BJP are likely to get one seat each, but the BJP has backed independent candidate Kartikeya Sharma for the second seat.

Sharma is the son of Venod Sharma and son-in-law of former Haryana Speaker Kuldeep Sharma. Both are considered close to former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda.

Congress needs 31 votes to win the seat and has as many MLAs while BJP is banking on cross-voting.

In Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena and the BJP will battle it out for the sixth seat of Rajya Sabha as none of the seven candidates in the fray — four of the ruling MVA and three of BJP — withdrew their nominations on Friday.

# India, Vietnam to boost ties in Defence industry, technology during Rajnath's visit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Vietnam will review the entire spectrum of their bilateral Defence and strategic ties during Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's talks with his counterpart in Vietnam.

Giving a boost to the strong relations between the two nations, Rajnath will also hand over 12 India-made high-speed guard boats.

Giving details of his three-day visit starting June 8, Defence Ministry officials said here on Sunday the boats are part of India's 100 million dollars defence line of credit to Vietnam.

"This project is significant in the context of the growing defence industry cooperation with Vietnam and exemplifies Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of



'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Make in India, Make for the World'," they said.

Rajnath will hold wide-ranging talks with his Vietnamese counterpart General Phan Van Giang. He is also scheduled to call on President of Vietnam Nguyen

Xuan Phuc and Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh.

At the Hong Ha Shipyard in Hai Phong, the Defence Minister will preside over the handing over ceremony of 12 high speed guard boats.

He will also visit the training institutions of Vietnam at Nha Trang, including the Telecommunication University where an Army Software Park is being established with the USD five million grant from India.

Officials described the visit as historic as it comes on the occasion of 50 years of establishment of India-Vietnam Diplomatic relations and 75 years of India's Independence. They said the visit will further consolidate the bilateral defence cooperation and the comprehensive strategic partnership.

Rajnath will commence his visit by paying respects to

Late President Ho Chi Minh at his Mausoleum in Hanoi. He will also attend a community event organised by the Embassy of India, Hanoi and interact with the Indian diaspora in Vietnam.

India and Vietnam share a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership since 2016 and defence cooperation is a key pillar of this partnership. Vietnam is an important partner in India's Act East policy and the Indo-Pacific vision.

Bilateral defence engagements have expanded over a period of time to include wide-ranging contacts between the two countries, including defence policy dialogues, military-to-military exchanges, high-level visits, capacity building and training programmes, cooperation in UN Peace Keeping, ship visits and bilateral exercises

# Cong leaders start planning for 'Bharat Jodo Yatra'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leaders on Sunday started planning for the "Bharat Jodo Yatra" announced by the party at its Udaipur "Nav Sankalp Shivir".

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi was also present at the first meeting of the party's central planning group for the "yatra".

The "Bharat Jodo Yatra" will begin from Kanyakumari on October 2, coinciding with Gandhi Jayanti, and conclude in Kashmir.

"The first meeting of the Central Planning Group for Bharat Jodo Yatra took place today. The Kanyakumari to Kashmir yatra will start on October 2nd and planning for it began in right earnest. Rahul Gandhi also attended the meet-



ing," senior party leader Digvijaya Singh wrote on Twitter.

Singh is the convenor of the group set up by Congress president Sonia Gandhi for the planning of the "yatra".

The "Bharat Jodo Yatra" is to help unite India, which the Congress alleges is being divided with increased polarisation in the country.

Others present at the meet-

ing included Jairam Ramesh, Shashi Tharoor, Jothi Mani, Indian Youth Congress chief B V Srinivas, Mahila Congress chief Netta D'souza and National Students' Union of India (NSUI) president Neeraj Kundan.

The Congress president, in her concluding remarks at the Udaipur "shivir", had announced that the party will launch the Kanyakumari-to-Kashmir "Bharat Jodo Yatra" on Gandhi Jayanti, in which she would also participate.

"The yatra is to strengthen the bonds of social harmony that are under stress, to preserve the foundational values of our Constitution that are under assault and to highlight the day-to-day concerns of crores of our people," Sonia Gandhi had said in her remarks.

# Jaishankar meets Czech members of European Parliament

PTI ■ PRAGUE

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday held a meeting with a delegation of Czech Members of European Parliament and they had a "good discussion" on India's ties with the EU and the Czech Republic, the Indo-Pacific, food and energy security and digital cooperation.

Jaishankar is here on the last leg of his two-nation tour to Slovakia and the Czech Republic to impart further momentum in ties with the two central European countries.

The Czech Republic will be taking over the European Union presidency from July 1.

He arrived in Prague on Saturday from the Slovakian capital Bratislava.

In Prague, he began his engagements by meeting a delegation of Czech Members of European Parliament (MEPs) Jan Zahradil, Tomáš



Zdechovský, Mikuláš Peksa and Veronika Vreclonová.

"Began my engagements in Prague by meeting a delegation of Czech MEPs. A good discussion on India's ties with EU and the Czech Republic, the Indo-Pacific, food and energy security and digital cooperation," Jaishankar said on Twitter.

India, the US and several other world powers have been talking about the need to

ensure a free, open and thriving Indo-Pacific in the backdrop of China's aggressive military manoeuvring in the region.

China also claims nearly all of the disputed South China Sea, though Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam all claim parts of it. Beijing has built artificial islands and military installations in the South China Sea.

Jaishankar, after his meet-

ing with the delegation of Czech MEPs, thanked them for taking time out on a Sunday.

"Thank @ZahradilJan, @TomasZdechovsky, @vonpecka and @vrecionova for taking time out on a Sunday," he said in another tweet.

The External Affairs Minister's visit comes at a time Europe is grappling with the implications of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The issue is likely to figure in his talks in

# BSF jawan kills smuggler in encounter in Murshidabad

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Acting in self defence following receipt of reliable inputs from the G Branch of the Border Security Force which gathers intelligence for the paramilitary, they said. At about 3 am, the troops observed the movement of about 10-15 suspected smugglers in the area and informed the patrolling party.

Soon after this, the smugglers attacked the jawans of the patrol party with stones and dah (an edged weapon). This led the jawans to retaliate in self defence.

Initially, the BSF personnel tried to shoo away the smugglers with a non-lethal weapon, but when it had no effect, the jawan was compelled to use his personal service weapon in

cious activity following receipt of reliable inputs from the G Branch of the Border Security Force which gathers intelligence for the paramilitary, they said. At about 3 am, the troops observed the movement of about 10-15 suspected smugglers in the area and informed the patrolling party.

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Initially, the BSF personnel tried to shoo away the smugglers with a non-lethal weapon, but when it had no effect, the jawan was compelled to use his personal service weapon in



self-defence, they further said, adding shots were fired and a smuggler was killed.

The other smugglers fled under the cover of darkness, leaving their injured accomplice behind. The injured smuggler subsequently succumbed to the bullet injury.

During the searches after the incident, the paramilitary personnel recovered 532 bottles of Phensedyl (cough syrup) left behind by the fleeing smugglers. The dead smuggler has been identified as Indian national Rohil Mandal, a resident of Murshidabad.

# WHO outlines five preventive measures to stop the spread of monkeypox

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Expressing concern over rising cases of monkeypox--with over 780 monkeypox incidents being detected in 27 countries — the World Health Organization (WHO) has enlisted five actions that need to be taken on priority so that the spread of the virus can be stopped.

WHO official Maria Van Kerkhove on Sunday said, "We have to raise awareness of what monkeypox is, and what it isn't. And we have to increase surveillance. We need to raise awareness and testing regimen; stop human to human transmission; protect frontline workers; utilise countermeasures and accelerate research."

We want to stop human-to-human transmission. We can do this in non-endemic countries. And this is very critical as we are in a situation where we can use public health tools for early identification; isolation of cases, supported isolation cases, talking with communities and listening to communities, and engaging with communities to be a part of the solution, she said.

This transmission has "likely been ongoing for several weeks, if not months," she added.

A zoonosis disease, which is transmitted from animals to humans, monkeypox is an orthopoxvirus that causes a disease with symptoms similar, but less severe, to smallpox.

According to the WHO,



while smallpox was eradicated in 1980, monkeypox continues to occur in countries of Central and West Africa.

Maria Van Kerkhove also added, we also want to protect frontline workers. Anyone who is out there taking samples for testing or to take care of individuals want to ensure that they have the right information and that they have the right personal protection equipment

and we want to utilize all the countermeasures that are in place.

As per the WHO, cases are often found "close to tropical rainforests where there are animals that carry the virus". Evidence of monkeypox virus infection has been found in animals including squirrels, Gambian poached rats, dormice, different species of monkeys and others.

# 49 packets of drugs worth ₹250 cr seized



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Border Security Force (BSF) on Sunday said its Bhuj unit launched a joint search operation with Jakhau Marine Police near Jakhau port area and seized 49 packets of drugs (suspected heroin) from Sayali creek worth Rs 250 crore.

The BSF said the packaging of the drugs is marked with "Café Gourmet" and "Blue Sapphire 555". On the intervening night of

May 30 and 31, the Coast Guard and Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) Gujarat Police seized a Pakistani boat near IMBL between Sir Creek and Jakhau Port, and detained all seven Pakistani nationals aboard the boat. During this operation, the boat's crew dumped the drugs in the sea.

"Assessing the situation, BSF Bhuj had foreseen that the drugs thrown into the sea by the Pakistani boat could enter the Indian side by the sea waves coming from the Pakistani side. Soon after this incident, BSF Bhuj was on high alert and launched continuous search operations. As a result, BSF Bhuj successfully recovered 49 drug packets today," the Public Relations Officer of the BSF Gujarat Frontier said in a statement.

# Focus on giving Covid boosters to 4.7cr elderly under Har Ghar Dastak 2.0

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government plans to focus on administering precaution dose of Covid vaccine to 4.7 crore 60-plus population, due for it by July 31, under its ongoing door-to-door Har Ghar Dastak 2.0 campaign, officials said on Sunday.

Of the estimated 13.75 crore senior citizens in the country, 11.91 crore have been administered both the doses of Covid vaccine till June 3. Of the 6.67 crore beneficiaries in the age group due for the booster dose till July 31, 1.94 crore have taken the shot.

Besides, 1.04 crore of the total estimated senior citizens are yet to take the first dose of the Covid vaccine.

In 27 states, the coverage of precaution dose among 60 years and above is below the national average of 42 per cent. These states include Nagaland (13 per cent), Meghalaya (15 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh (16 per cent), Manipur (19 per cent),



Jharkhand (27 per cent), Punjab (24 per cent), Maharashtra (31 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (31 per cent) and Assam (29 per cent).

The second round of the door-to-door campaign to accelerate the pace and coverage of the COVID-19 vaccination commenced on June 1. It is a two-month-long programme.

The Union Health Ministry has asked states and Union Territories to focus on vaccinating all those due for the second dose and those aged 60 and above eligible for precaution shot through the door-to-door activity.

States have also been advised to organise school-based campaigns for focussed coverage of the population in the 12 to 18 years age group.

According to official data, of the estimated 7.40 crore adolescents in the age group of 15-18 years, 80 per cent have been administered the first dose of Covid vaccine and 62 per cent are fully vaccinated till June 3. Besides, 73 per cent of the estimated 4.71 crore children aged 12 to 14 years have received the first dose and 50 per cent the second dose.

Overall, 95 per cent of the population aged 12 years and above have been administered the first dose of the Covid vaccine and 84 per cent are fully vaccinated. The countrywide vaccination drive was rolled out on January 16 last year with healthcare workers getting inoculated in the first phase.

Vaccination of frontline workers started from February 2 last year.

The next phase of COVID-19 vaccination commenced on

March 1 last year for people over 60 years of age and those aged 45 and above with specified comorbid conditions.

Vaccination for all people aged more than 45 years began on April 1 last year. The government then decided to expand the ambit of the vaccination drive by allowing everyone above 18 years to be inoculated against Covid from May 1 last year. Inoculation of adolescents in the age group of 15-18 years commenced on January 3. India began administering precaution doses of vaccines to healthcare and frontline workers and those aged 60 and above with comorbidities from January 10.

The country began inoculating children aged 12-14 from March 16 and also removed the comorbidity clause making all people aged above 60 eligible for the precaution dose of Covid vaccine.

India on April 10 began administering precaution doses of COVID-19 vaccines to all aged above 18 years.

# 'NRF on fast track to bolster research'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's plan to further strengthen India's research capabilities in the form of the National Research Foundation (NRF) has been put on fast track and will complement the existing funding initiatives in the field of science, technology and innovation, a top official has said.

The NRF was announced by president Ram Nath Kovind in his address to the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament in June 2019 and aims to support research projects in State universities, colleges and other institutions.

"The NRF was first mooted by the Prime Minister in his address to the Indian Science Congress in January 2019. We have now put it on a fast track. It will have a comprehensive way of dealing with funding, even large scale funding, because extra funds are coming in," Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government Ajay Kumar Sood told PTI.

He said the NRF funding will be in addition to the existing funding agencies such as the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Department of Biotechnology (DBT).

"The funds provided by these agencies will remain. There is clarity about it. Some part of their funding can be spent in consultation with the NRF. Some part, maybe 10-15 per cent, that is being discussed," Sood said.

He said the NRF initiative, led by the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor (PSA), will be a comprehensive way of dealing with funding and also coordinate with national missions.

Besides NRF, the Office of the PSA is also working on promoting deep technology entrepreneurship and National Open Access Strategy to provide better access to research journals.



# TMC protests, seeks State’s dues from Centre

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Days after Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for not paying Bengal its dues the Trinamool Congress on Sunday hit the streets demanding early release of funds and threatened intensified stir in days to come.

Thousands of TMC workers on Sunday took out rallies led by senior leaders in Kolkata and districts including Howrah demanding early clearance of the State’s dues.

“We are not begging for funds ... we are demanding what it rightfully hours,” said State TMC general secretary Kunal Ghosh adding “the Centre takes away taxes from the State and refuses to return to us our share ... if they do not release the funds, then how the people will get their money back,” he said leading a huge rally in Kolkata.

Another senior leader and minister Arup Roy led a massive rally in Howrah where he attacked the Centre for its vendetta politics. “As the BJP failed to win Bengal ... as they



suffered a humiliating defeat in the hands of Mamata Banerjee single-handedly defeated her in the 2021 Assembly elections they are not taking out on the people of the State by holding back their money and making them starve,” said the TMC leader.

Bengal Minister Firhad Hakim alleged that the Centre had held back funds to the tune of Rs 1 lakh crore. “Having failed to take Bengal politically they are now trying to starve the people of this State ... but they must know that we are self-respecting people and will never surrender to them.”

With panchayat elections

less than a year away and under pressure from the village party units to clear dues piled up against 100-days’ work done by the villagers the Chief Minister had earlier alleged that the Centre was not clearing funds against the works done under national rural employment guarantee scheme.

“The Centre is playing dirty politics with us ... after failing to win Bengal in the Assembly elections ... They have held back the funds to the tune of Rs 6,000 crore due under the 100-days work scheme for the past five months ... this has made it extremely difficult for the poor people

employed through 100-day work scheme to get their payments, Banerjee said adding the Centre was not doing any favours to the State by giving that money. “It belongs to us as it is the part of the tax they take from the people of Bengal.”

She said that the her party men including the “members of our students’ wing, women’s unit and the tribal arm will hold protests on June 5 and 6 in various blocks of the state, seeking an explanation from the Narendra Modi government for this discrimination showed against Bengal.”

She also alleged that the Centre was not releasing our

dues under Bangla Awaz Yojana. Incidentally, the BJP has always alleged that the State Government had been changing the name of central schemes as in the case of Prime Minister Awaz Yojna which had been rechristened as Bangla Awaz Yojana.

Meanwhile, the Opposition BJP hit back at the State Government for making Bengal a hub of cut money and syndicate. In an apparent explanation for the alleged central deprivation BJP national vice president Dilip Ghosh said that “most money that goes to the State went to the syndicates or spent in khelas or melas ... funds are diverted for populist schemes and cut money extracted from there ... this is why the State is now running short of funds ... and to save its face it is blaming the Centre.”

Another BJP leader said that a huge amount of money was being diverted to wasteful schemes like Laxmir Bhandar etc which were why the State had no funds to appoint school teachers a reason why most schools were running without permanent faculty.

# Ahead of Amarnath Yatra, security forces concerned over ‘sticky bombs’, rework SOP

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

With the Amarnath Yatra around the corner, security forces in Jammu and Kashmir are concerned over terrorist groups possessing “sticky bombs” — explosives that can be attached to vehicles and detonated remotely — and are reshaping their standard operating procedure for the pilgrimage, officials said on Sunday.

According to them, interrogation of arrested terrorists and their sympathisers and other evidence suggest that while some “sticky bombs” have been recovered by security forces, many of them may have found their way into terror groups in Kashmir Valley.

Recently a drone flying in from Pakistan developed a technical snag and was spotted by people in Kathua. Later, the police recovered arms and ammunition, including seven magnetic bombs or “sticky bombs”, from the place.

Concerned over the development, the security agencies reworked their strategy, especially keeping in mind the Amarnath Yatra beginning June 30.

About three lakh pilgrims are likely to take part in the pilgrimage to the cave shrine located in the upper reaches of south Kashmir. It is expected to end on August 11.

It has been decided that vehicles of pilgrims as well as of security forces will be secluded during their movement, the officials said.

Instructions have also been issued to the security forces as well as those managing the pilgrimage not to leave vehicles unattended.

When contacted, Inspector General of Police (Kashmir range) Vijay Kumar said the security forces are dealing with the menace. “We have taken adequate precautions,” he told PTI.

The “sticky bombs” emerged on the terror scene in Kashmir in February last year

when these were recovered from Samba of Jammu region, indicating initiation of a new phase of terrorism in the union territory.

It was the first such recovery of “sticky bombs”, used largely in Afghanistan and Iraq. In India, it was used by suspected Iranian terrorists who targeted the vehicle of an Israeli diplomat in February 2012, resulting in injury to his wife.

Sticky bombs, which were also used by the British forces during the World War II, can be put on any vehicle and detonated through a remote control or an in-built timer, the officials said.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is currently probing a mysterious blast on a passenger bus in Katra in Jammu last month that left four people dead. Though police had downplayed the incident but a little known terror group released a video claiming it to be their handiwork.

# Close all hotels, restaurants inside Buxa Tiger Reserve, WB Govt told

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The National Green Tribunal has directed the West Bengal Government to close all hotels and restaurants or camping stations inside the Buxa Tiger Reserve in the northern part of the State within two months, stating that the conversion of forest villages to revenue ones cannot be allowed to permit commercial activities in such areas. The NGT’s eastern bench also directed that a facility run by the state tourism department be closed down and turned into an interpretation centre, which if not done within two months will have to be demolished.

In its order on May 30, the tribunal mentioned that the stand of the state government is hotels, restaurants/camping stations are not permissible in the forest area.

The NGT directed that establishments operated by pri-

vate persons “may accordingly be closed within two months following due process, which will be the responsibility of the state PCB (Pollution Control Board), field director, Buxa Tiger Reserve and district magistrate”.

The state informed the tribunal that establishments run by it have been closed while proceedings have been initiated against the facilities operated by private players.

The tribunal had noted that there are 69 establishments under private ownership in Buxa Tiger Reserve and 20 facilities are owned by the state, of which some are in the core area of the sanctuary and some on the banks of river Jayanti.

The forest department had earlier informed the NGT that the activities of these lodges are confined to areas which were once ‘forest villages’ and designated as ‘revenue villages’ in 2014.

It also said all the 69 tourist

lodges, hotels and restaurants operated by private owners are “confined to enclave revenue villages which were earlier forest villages”.

The department stated that there are 37 such revenue villages inside the forest areas of Buxa Tiger Reserve.

An affidavit filed by the state in February this year had mentioned that conversion of the forest villages to revenue ones was made in terms of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, which “does not require approval of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980”.

The eastern bench of the NGT said in its order that while protection of forest rights under the law of 2006 may not require following of procedure under the conservation Act of 1980, “the same cannot be held to permit commercial activity in such area”.

# ‘Lipstick’ plant rediscovered in Arunachal after 100 years

PTI ■ ITANAGAR

Researchers at the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) have rediscovered a rare plant, which is sometimes called the ‘Indian lipstick plant’, from remote Anjaw district in Arunachal Pradesh after more than a century.

The plant (Aeschynanthus monetaria Dunn) was first identified by British botanist Stephen Troyte Dunn in 1912, based on the plant samples gathered from Arunachal Pradesh by another English botanist, Isaac Henry Burkill.

“Due to the appearance of tubular red corolla, some of the species under the genus Aeschynanthus are called lipstick plants,” BSI scientist Krishna Chowlu said in an article on the discovery published in Current Science journal.

During floristic studies in Arunachal Pradesh, Chowlu collected a few specimens of

Aeschynanthus from Hyuliang and Chipru of Anjaw district in December 2021.

A review of the relevant documents as well as a critical study of the fresh specimens confirmed that the specimens were Aeschynanthus monetaria, which had never been obtained from India since Burkill in 1912.

As per the article co-authored by Gopal Krishna, the genus name Aeschynanthus is derived from the Greek aischyne or aischyn, which means shame or to feel embarrassed respectively, and anthos, which means flower.

Aeschynanthus monetaria Dunn is morphologically unique and distinct among all the Aeschynanthus species known from India by its fleshy orbicular leaves with a greenish upper surface and purplish-green lower surface. The specific epithet ‘monetaria’ means ‘mint-like’, alluding to

the appearance of its leaves.

The plant grows in moist and evergreen forests, at elevations ranging from 543 to 1134 m. The flowering and fruiting time is between October and January.

The species has been provisionally assessed here as ‘endangered’, following the guidelines of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.

“Landslides are frequent in Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh. Developmental activities such as broadening of roads, construction of schools, new settlements and markets, and jhum cultivation are some of the major threats to this species in Arunachal Pradesh,”

Chowlu said in the abstract of the Current Science report.

# BJP’s denouncement of insult of any religious personality aimed at international audience: Omar

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

NC vice-president Omar Abdullah on Sunday said the BJP “suddenly waking up” to denounce the insult of any religious personality has nothing to do with having “offended” the sentiments of Muslims in the country but is aimed at an international audience.

The National Conference leader’s remarks came after the BJP, seeking to defuse a row over allegedly controversial remarks made by its spokesperson Nupur Sharma against Prophet Mohammed, said it respects all religions and strongly denounces insult of any religious personality.

There is a context to the BJP suddenly waking up to denounce “insult to any religious personalities of any religion” and it has nothing to do with having offended the sentiments of lakhs of Muslims in India. This apology of a statement is aimed at an interna-



tional audience,” Abdullah said in a tweet.

In a statement, BJP general secretary Arun Singh said the party is strongly against any ideology which insults or demeans any sect or religion.

The statement, however, made no direct mention of any incident or comment.

Later, the BJP suspended Nupur Sharma from the party. A communication to her from the party’s disciplinary committee said she has expressed views contrary to the party’s position on various matters, which is in clear violation of its constitution.

# Slain J&K cop’s daughter’s last trip to tuition leaves her scarred for life

PTI ■ SRINAGAR/NEW DELHI

The shell-shocked nine-year-old daughter of police constable Saifullah Qadiri often breaks down as she remembers her father and is overcome with regret for asking him to accompany her for tuition classes on May 24, the day he was gunned down by terrorists.

A student of class 3, Syed Safa Qadiri’s world came crashing down as she witnessed terrorists pumping bullets into her father.

With a bandaged hand, Safa, who also received gunshot wounds, is unable to come out of the nightmarish experience and is often seen gazing at the ceiling of her room with questions like “mere papa jannat mein gaye honge na (My father must have gone to heaven),” says her mother

Rabia.

“She (Safa) often breaks down regretting why she insisted her father to accompany her for tuition classes on that fateful day,” Rabia said. Qadiri, a constable with the Jammu and Kashmir Police, was shot dead by terrorists outside his home in the Anchor area on the outskirts of Srinagar.

“I was in the kitchen when some neighbours brought Safa from outside with her clothes drenched in blood. We rushed her to a hospital where I saw my husband being rushed on another stretcher, pulling the rug from under my feet. Concerned with Safa’s condition, I did not realise then that the target was my husband,” Rabia said as she broke down in tears.

# Maha sees 1,494 Covid cases

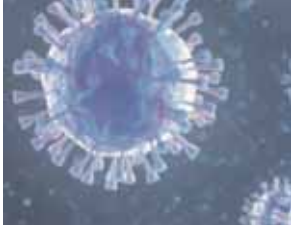
Former CM Fadnavis tests Covid positive

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

With no let up in the fresh spurt in the Covid-19 infections in Maharashtra, the daily cases shot up to 1,494 on Sunday, even as former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis tested positive for the Coronavirus and isolated himself at his home.

As the state recorded more than 1,000 daily Covid-19 cases for the fifth consecutive day since February this year, former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis tweeted: “I have tested #COVID19 positive and in home isolation. Taking medication & treatment as per the doctor’s advice. Those who have come in contact with me are advised to get Covid tests done. Take care everyone”.

With 1,494 fresh Covid-19



cases reported on Sunday, the total number of Covid-19 cases rose from 78,91,703 to 78,91,703.

Similarly with one fresh Covid-19 death reported during the day, the total number of deaths registered in the state since the outbreak of Covid-19 in the state in March 2020 rose from 1,47,865 to 1,47,865.

Of the total 1,494 fresh cases reported in the state, Mumbai accounted for 961 positive cases, taking the total number of cases reported in the metropolis since outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020 from 10,68,897 to 10,69,858.

The metropolis recorded one Covid-19 death taking the total number of deaths in the metropolis so far to 19,569.

As 614 Covid-19 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March 2020 increased from 77,37,950 to 77,38,564. The recovery rate in the state dropped from 98.05 per cent to 98.04 per cent.

The number of “active cases” in the state rose from 5,888 to 6,767. The fatality rate in the state stood static at 1.87 per cent.

The active cases in Mumbai rose from 4,294 to 4,880.

The active cases in Pune increased from 447 to 501. The active cases in Thane rose from 769 to 960, while the active cases in Raigad district went up from 135 to 167.

# Assam college runs tea garden, helps poor students earn money

PTI ■ TEZPUR (ASSAM)

A Government college in Assam’s Sonitpur district has engaged its poor students to work in a tea garden on the campus during free time, helping them earn money and pay for their education.

Spread over 33 acres of land at Karchantola in Nanduar area near Jamugurihat town, Tyagbir Hem Baruah College is endowed with a tea garden, besides a fishery, banana groves and lemon plants.

“Mainly poor students from nearby areas work in the tea garden during off periods and earn around Rs 35-40 per hour by plucking leaves. This is part of a skill development initiative but we haven’t taken any government aid for it,” college principal Ajit Hazarika told PTI.



Tea cultivation on the college premises was started in 2015 on around 14 bighas (4.63 acres) and expanded to another 8 bighas (2.64 acres) in 2019. The college sells green leaves from the tea garden to nearby factories and earns around Rs 1.85 lakh a year, he said. “We want our students to

be doubly benefited in the college – study and also earn using their skills,” Hazarika said.

The college has produced green tea for the first time and launched the product in nearby local markets on June 1. It is being produced on four bighas (1.32 acres) in the tea garden.

# TMC MP comes out in support of cops amid crowd mismanagement claims at KK’s concert

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Actor-turned-TMC MP Deepak Adhikari, better known as Dev, on Sunday stood by the police and the administration, amid Opposition’s allegations of crowd mismanagement at singer KK’s concert, stating that such instances are witnessed at political rallies too.

Singer KK died of cardiac arrest on May 31 shortly after his power-packed performance at the Nazrul Manch concert here.

The TMC MP said that it is “out of love for the artiste” that people come to attend his or her programme in large numbers.

“If the police has to count the number of attendees every time, they will have to stop all rallies too, and not just the musical soirees,” Dev told reporters on the sidelines of a



programme here.

He also pointed out that COVID-19 restrictions on people count were not adhered to at political events even when the pandemic was at its peak.

“Whether it was ours or of others, we have seen lakhs of people attending rallies,” he said, adding that “if that is right then calling out this programme alone is uncalled for.”

# BJP busy promoting films amid targeted killings in Kashmir, claims Raut

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut on Sunday criticised the ruling BJP at the Centre, claiming the party was busy promoting some movies amid the “targeted killings of Kashmiri Pandits and Muslim security personnel” in Jammu and Kashmir.

Talking to reporters here, Raut claimed the BJP was neglecting the Kashmir Valley’s security.

“Did the atrocities against the Kashmiri Pandits stop with surgical strikes (conducted by the BJP-led central government across the Line of Control). They have increased,” Raut claimed.

“There have been targeted killings of Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits as well as Muslim security personnel because they are serving the country. The BJP is busy promoting movies, like ‘The

Kashmir Files and ‘Samrat Prithiviraj’,” the Shiv Sena’s chief spokesperson said.

From Srinagar to Pulwama (in Kashmir), at least 20 Muslim security personnel have been killed, the Rajya Sabha member claimed without specifying the details.

The BJP leaders are not speaking about this. They are busy trying to find ‘Shivling’ in the Taj Mahal (Agra) and the Gyanvapi mosque (in Varanasi),” he said.

Raut also hit out at the BJP for celebrating its eight years in power at the Centre when the situation in Kashmir was “not good”.

In the 1990s, when the first exodus (of Kashmiri Pandits) happened, the BJP was in power (at the Centre), he said, apparently referring the then V P Singh-led dispensation which was in power with the BJP’s support.

# Prez: Kabir showed path of equality, harmony

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday said Sant Kabir Das showed the path of equality and harmony to society and inspired it to do away with the evils, pomp and discrimination.

Kovind, who reached Maghar in Sant Kabir Nagar district on Sunday morning from Gorakhpur, planted saplings along with Governor Anandiben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on World Environment Day and after that he inaugurated several projects, including Sant Kabir Academy and Research Institute.

President Kovind was also presented a telegraphic angavastram written by Kabir Das by the chief minister and a memento of the One District One Product scheme. A short film related to tourism was also shown during the programme.

Addressing the programme, President Kovind said that the place of Nirvana of Sant Kabir Das was a wonder-

ful example of communal unity.

“Here the mausoleum and the tomb are built together. Even after 700 years have passed, his teachings and speech are popular from the common man to the intelligentsia,” he said.

President Kovind said that the earth becomes pure with the arrival of saints.

“Sant Kabir lived in Maghar for about three years. This land, which was considered barren and cursed, blossomed with his arrival. On the invitation of Kabir Das ji, the Siddha Purush of Nath Peeth also came here. Due to his influence, the pond here was filled with water. Kabir Das ji was a true Pir.

He understood the suffering of the people and used to take measures to remove that suffering,” he said.

President Kovind said that the whole life of Kabir Das ji was the best example of human religion. “Kabir Das ji did fine



spinning of social interaction to bring harmony in the divided society of that time. Painted beautifully with the colours of knowledge, created a strong fabric of unity and coordination and wove the sheet of building a harmonious society. He covered this sheet very carefully and never allowed it to become dirty,” he said.

President Kovind said that Kabir was born in a poor and deprived family, but he never considered that deprivation as his weakness, but made it his strength. He said Kabir Das

always emphasised that humanity cannot be protected without having sympathy for the weakest section of society.

“Our society accepted his speech and education wholeheartedly. This is the reason that the names of many big civilizations of the world have been erased, even then our country is standing firmly on its feet with its inexhaustible heritage,” he said.

President Kovind said that Kabir Das always tried to remove superstitions, evils, pomp and discrimination and this was the reason that he left Kashi at the last moment and went to Maghar.

“He was a simple saint. He believed that God was not an external entity. God pervades every particle. Kabir Das ji also lived the household life like a saint. His sacred speech influenced everything from Srimant Shankar Dev in the Far East to Sant Tukaram in the West and Guru Nanak in the North to Guru Ghasidas in Chhattisgarh,” he said.




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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Welcome step

The BJP walks into Bhagwat's footsteps, slams religious hate-mongers

The BJP's statement denouncing "insult to any religious personalities" has come in the wake of violence in Kanpur and other parts of Uttar Pradesh over the controversial comment of the spokesperson of the saffron outfit against Prophet Mohammad. The UP Government may have found links to PFI behind the violence, but there is a need to also book the person who triggered it. The BJP has rightly pointed out that India has been a melting pot of many religions and the Indian Constitution gives the right to every citizen to practise any religion of his/her choice. With States reporting cases of communal tension at frequent intervals, the ruling party of the Centre must take convincing steps to dispel the impressions that its cadres stoked such communal flames because religious polarisation electorally helped the BJP. At a time when the global opinion-makers have started raising fingers at the rising trend of communal violence in India, the BJP has tried to silence them by stating: "As India celebrates the 75th year of its Independence, we are committed to making India a great country where all are equal and everyone lives with dignity, where all are committed to India's unity and integrity, where all enjoy the fruits of growth and development." The BJP's firm stand on this sensitive issue of religious hate-mongering will soothe many nerves at a time when a lunatic fringe in the society has taken it upon itself to define the culture, civilisation and history of the nation.



The statement will encourage the law enforcement authorities to act against such religious zealots irrespective of the colour of their attire — saffron or green. Remember, six years at the height of the lynching spree across the country, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi came out against these so-called *gau rakshaks* and said: "I get so angry at those who are into the *gau rakshak* business. A *gau bhakt* is different, *gau seva* is different. I have seen that some people are into crimes all night and wear the garb of *gau rakshaks* in the day." The PM's denouncement of such elements did check the frenzy in a big way. The BJP's strong criticism of such elements has come days after RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's targeted attack on those who were trying to rewrite the history of the nation by seeking to reclaim all temple lands where mosques were built by the Muslim invaders. Bhagwat's statement has triggered a big debate. It has been welcomed by a large section of the society which feels that rather than fighting over temples and mosques, India should spend its energy in setting right its economy and executing its developmental plans. Now that the RSS and BJP have taken the lead, it is important for other political parties not to blindly support every person from the minority community even if he were a hardcore criminal, a dreaded terrorist or a religious bigot.

### PICTALK



Devotees cover the Yamuna river across with sarees during 'Chunar Manorathi', in Mathura

PTI

## Sleeping giant?

The Congress' landslide in Kerala bypoll shows it can do, if it wants to

The landslide victory scripted by the Congress in the Thrikakkara byelection last Friday should serve as an eye-opener to the party's high command. The bypoll was necessitated by the demise of PT Thomas, who had been representing the constituency since 2011. Within days of the Election Commission announcing the bypoll schedule, the Congress announced the candidature of Uma Thomas, the spouse of late Thomas. Uma was no stranger to the constituency because she had been a companion to her late husband throughout his political career. The election itself had no other significance because the CPI(M)-led LDF with 99 members was in a commanding position in the legislature, which had an effective strength of 140. But Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who led the CPI(M) campaign through three weeks, declared that he wanted the LDF to score a 'century' by wresting the seat. The CPI(M), known for its virulent hatred for Hinduism, chose to play the Christian card in the election by fielding a hitherto unheard comrade, Dr Jo Joseph, a cardiologist working with the Lissy Hospital, owned by the Ernakulam Archdiocese. The name of the candidate was announced in the presence of senior priests.



The high-pitched campaign saw the entire CPI(M) machinery turning into 'mission mode' as each household in the constituency was visited by the comrades at least 15 times. What was the need for such a high-voltage campaign spearheaded by Vijayan in a constituency which always had been a Congress stronghold? The result shows that Vijayan and the CPI(M) have lost a good portion of public support which had catapulted the LDF to a massive win in the 2021 Assembly election. The arrogance of power and its intransigent attitude in not trying to understand the fallacy of the Semi-High Speed K-Rail have cost the Marxists a lot of public sympathy. On the other side, the new Congress State leadership, led by K Sudhakaran and Leader of the Opposition VD Satheeshan, succeeded in mobilising the party for the great showdown. The prompt selection of the candidate and the message the duo gave to outdated politicians that their time was up boosted the morale of the 'grand old party'. The moral of the story is that the Congress alone can offer a viable alternative to the BJP, provided the former realises its own power.

# Need to protect civil liberties

Certain laws under the Indian Penal Code, such as the sedition law and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, are draconian and must be removed

The Supreme Court's recent decision to keep the sedition law in abeyance on the face of the ruling BJP Government's willingness to reconsider the repeal of the colonial law has, once again, brought this issue to the forefront. The law of sedition was inserted into the Indian Penal Code (IPC) in 1870, soon after the British Government took over direct control over India and 10 years after the IPC was enforced in 1860. It was covered under Sections 121 to 124 in Chapter VI entitled "Of offences against the State" dealing with the offence of waging war against the Queen. The colonial masters were apprehensive of Indians after the declaration of the 1857 War of Independence.

Consequently, Section 124-A was carefully worded to cover bringing or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or attempt to "incite disaffection towards the Government" established by law for punishment with transformation of life. The scope was broadened by including into its ambit "disloyalty" and "feeling of enmity" against the Government and also comments expressing disapprobation of the measures of the Government to obtain alteration by lawful means if accompanied by excitement or attempt to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection. The British Government's objective was to keep the Indians subjugated and to maintain and expand their rule of exploitation. These penal provisions facilitated in crushing people's movement to deprive them of their civil rights and keep them subjected and subdued.

After attaining Independence, the scenario experienced a sea change. India adopted a Constitution with strong democratic traditions ensuring civil liberties by providing fundamental rights to its citizens. Now, people had the right to criticise the Government, put forth their views and get them accepted through democratic means. The workers, farmers and other sections of society could freely raise their voice, oppose adverse decisions and



seek policy changes. Opposition parties representing different shades of public opinion were formed to articulate their views. The institution of free media emerged as a powerful tool to critically appraise Government policies and actions.

Earlier, the British Government needed Section 124-A to sustain its colonisation but now, in a free country, it was no longer required. The scope of free speech and right to expression in Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution further strengthened the democratic rights of the citizens and restricted the validity of Section 124-A. Although there are enough provisions to deal with communal and defamatory acts and speeches which incite violence but, over the years, the ruling Governments have lodged a series of cases under the sedition law against crusaders on flimsy grounds to serve their purpose of curbing dissent.

Indians have spent nearly 3 million hours in prison on charges of sedition since 2010. The accused spend up to 50 days in trial courts and 200 days in High Courts in prisons until courts grant bail. The data generated by Article 14 duly corroborated by NCRB reveals that more than 13,000 Indians



AFTER INDEPENDENCE, THE SCENARIO EXPERIENCED A SEA CHANGE. INDIA ADOPTED A CONSTITUTION WITH STRONG DEMOCRATIC TRADITIONS ENSURING CIVIL LIBERTIES BY PROVIDING FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS TO ITS CITIZENS. NOW, PEOPLE HAD THE RIGHT TO CRITICISE THE GOVERNMENT

are trapped in prisons. During the last seven years, 2,862 citizens were charged with sedition during the anti-CAA protests; 133 farmers during the farm protest of 2021; 42 persons after the Pulwama attack and 59 journalists were charged with sedition for reportage on the farm Bills, COVID-19, Hathras gang rape for being critical of the Government. Each year, there has been a 28 per cent increase in the number of sedition cases. It is an alarming situation and makes one suspicious of the Government's intentions.

Besides the law of sedition, another draconian law has more stringent and far-reaching implications. The Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) was passed in free India with the purpose of providing more teeth to law-enforcement agencies to act against anti-national elements, terrorists and communal forces. In the past, the UAPA has been used along with sedition law to curb the voices of dissent. In case of sedition law, the accused are entitled to certain safeguards and constitutional remedies like easy bail, provision of anticipatory bail and the police have to file a charge sheet within 90 days, failing which the accused arrested is entitled to bail



BRIJENDER SINGH PANWAR

whereas UAPA permits detention without any charge sheet for 180 days, creates a presumption of guilt, places the burden of proof on the accused and creates a strong presumption against bail. Although the arrest rate under sedition law is on the rise, the conviction rate is low at 2.25 per cent. During 2014-20, of the 399 cases, only nine were convicted. As per the NCRB data, UAPA is better placed in terms of conviction rate. During 2014-2020, 27.5 per cent of the cases saw conviction.

Both these draconian laws are not desirable in an evolving democracy like India. As retired Justice Manmohan Singh says: "UAPA contains many aspects of the sedition law with far-reaching consequences." The removal of sedition law would not serve the purpose until and unless the UAPA provisions are not diluted. We already have sufficient provisions in our judicial system to take care of offences of all nature. What is required is honest and effective implementation and total freedom for our law-enforcement agencies to discharge their duty.

(The writer is a senior journalist and Chairman, Panwar Group of Institutions, Solan, Himachal Pradesh. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### THE US SHOULDN'T PREACH TO INDIA

Sir — Like an annual ritual, this year also the United States' State Department in its annual report to the Congress on international religious freedom has alleged that in India in 2021, attacks on members of the minority communities, including killings, assaults, and intimidation, occurred. People wonder whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi's week back at the Tokyo Summit was truly a "partnership of trust"? As usual, India rejected the criticism, saying it is unfortunate that "vote bank politics is being practised in international relations". But the question is, is the US exceptional? No, the US has racial violence, gun violence and incidents of hate crime. Just like in India.

The crucial difference is that, in the US, these acts don't have the blessings of the ruling party. Where is the "culture" of this great country, which the top brass of the country brags of? Even with all this drawback, one tries to understand that India has its problems just as the US has of its own. We will solve them in the best way we can, but what about the US gun violence even in schools, Black Lives Matter, Drug N Pharma mafias, where eight murders, six rapes and a robbery are committed every 20 minutes.

Bidyut K Chatterjee | Faridabad

### GET ON WITH CASTE CENSUS

Sir — It's only a matter of time before caste census becomes a reality. Caste counting is necessary; it is beneficial to the overwhelming majority of the population as well. The findings of the caste census can be used as inputs into formulating policies and implementing programmes for the emergence of a more equal and egalitarian society. No one can have any view against advancing the cause of social justice. The lower castes certainly stand to gain from a caste census. It need not make anyone squirm to discover the truth about castes, their numerical strength and their socio-economic conditions.

True, knowledge of backwardness

## Punish misleading advertisers



The Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry has directed Twitter and YouTube to remove the advertisement videos of a perfume brand that triggered outrage for "promoting the gang rape culture" as these advertisements show toxic masculinity in its worst form. False or misleading advertisements are on the rise as a result of businesses seeking to compete for customers. Misleading advertisement tend to provide overtly more positive information than necessary that results in negative experiences for customers. They prompt children to mimic stunts and make them believe in the exaggerated product out-

comes. Also, the advertisements create stereotypes that fair skin is beautiful, a slim body is healthy, people with a big height are desirable and using their product will make you attractive.

All of this results in impulsive buying, increase in violence and aggressive thoughts, personality change, buying expensive things without any particular use, just for showing off in their respective groups. Today, people buy products by watching advertisements but not by reading the ingredients of a product. Hence, all the social media platforms and television companies should ensure that there must not be even a single negative or misleading information in the advertisement of a product before uploading these. When someone demands a certain product after watching an advertisement, one should explain the ill effects of advertising and how it affects the consumers. Remember, it is important for a healthy environment.

Swati Pandey | Ujjain

among lower castes will reveal caste inequalities. But then, it is not something to be overlooked, but to be addressed in earnest. Caste data are needed to achieve the goal of 'proportional representation' in education, employment and elected bodies for those in the lower rungs of the caste ladder. A comprehensive caste census will yield economic data and details of the correlation between caste and class. BJP is not quite enthusiastic about a caste census; it sets great store by the overarching appeal of Hindutva. But the annihilation of casteism is not unachievable.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

### IGA SWIATEK SCRIPTS HISTORY

Sir — Iga Swiatek cruised to her second French Open title by dominating teenager Coco Gauff in the finals on Saturday, as the world number one claimed her 35th successive victory. The 21-year-old Polish star stormed to a 6-1, 6-3 win in only 68

minutes on Court Philippe Chatrier, equalling Venus Williams' record for the longest winning run by a woman in the 21st century. Swiatek celebrated her sixth straight title this year in the players' box with her friends and family in a fitting way.

Swiatek, only the 10th woman to win multiple French Opens in the Open era, lost just one set in the tournament — against China's Zheng Qinwen in the fourth round. She has now won all three of her career meetings with Gauff, who was playing her first major final. Swiatek improved her remarkable record in finals, having won the last nine on WTA Tour. Swiatek expressed her support for Ukraine during the trophy presentation, despite saying before the final that she does not feel ready to speak about off-court issues.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## SOUND BITE

Political parties caught in the rut of dynastic culture should free themselves of this malaise.



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



US President — Joe Biden

Now, I am married to my job and I would like to stay focused.



Actor — Kartik Aaryan



Spanish tennis player — Rafael Nadal

Besides fighting the pandemic, our Govt worked to invest in various sectors.



UP Chief Minister — Yogi Adityanath



FIRST COLUMN

GUJARAT TO HELP INDIA ACHIEVE \$5-TR DREAM

Gujarat plays a key role in boosting the Indian economy



NILESH SHUKLA

The Government of Gujarat had set up a Task Force Committee in the month of February 2022 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Hasmukh Adhia, former Union finance secretary for working out the strategy for government of Gujarat for making India a \$5-trillion economy as per the vision of Prime Minister of India. The Task Force Committee has already submitted its Final Report to Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel. India intends to achieve the GDP target of \$5 trillion by 2026-27 in nominal terms. In 2021-22, India became a \$3.09-trillion economy in nominal terms. Average annual nominal growth for the last 10 years (2012-13 to 2021-22) is nearly 10.5 per cent.

Therefore, if the past growth rate is sustained, India would be a \$5-trillion economy by 2026-27. Let us see what the Report says. The target of a \$5 trillion economy by 2026-27 is contingent on growth at the state level. Five states—Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Karnataka—constitute approximately 49 percent of the nominal GDP of the country.

All five states grew at an average annual nominal growth of nearly 10 per cent or more during the pre-COVID period (2012-13 to 2019-20); they have the potential to continue to grow at a rapid pace in the coming years, if everything goes well. The contribution in the economy of big states like Bihar is also important but,

Table 1: Forecasts of real GDP growth (%): selected countries

Country	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
US	-3.4	6.0	5.2	2.2	1.7	1.7	1.7
UK	-9.8	6.8	5.0	1.9	1.6	1.5	1.5
Japan	-4.6	2.4	3.2	1.4	0.8	0.6	0.5
Brazil	-4.1	5.2	1.5	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.1
Russia	-3.0	4.7	2.9	2.0	1.8	1.7	1.6
India*	-7.3	9.5	8.5	6.6	6.3	6.2	6.1
China	-2.3	8.0	5.6	5.3	5.2	5.1	4.9
World	-3.1	5.9	4.9	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.3

Source: IMF

\*Data pertains to fiscal year

Note: India and China have been highlighted for the purpose of comparison of growth rates between them and also with other major economies of the world.

Unfortunately, it is not doing well in industry. There is a big scope in the packaging and food industry in Bihar but somehow this state is not focusing on this sector even though production of vegetables and other agri products is higher than in other States.

The Reserve Bank of India, major multilateral institutions, and rating agencies released their latest FY22 real GDP growth forecasts for India. As per these forecasts, GDP growth ranges from 8.3 per cent (World Bank) to 10 per cent (ADB). These exceptionally high levels of growth do partly reflect a base effect since India's GDP had contracted by 7.3 per cent in FY21.

The FY23 growth forecasts, therefore, indicate a more normal level of growth in the narrower range of 7.5 per cent to 7.9 per cent. Taking a longer-term view, as per the October 2021 issue of IMF's World Economic Outlook, the Indian economy is poised to become the global growth leader FY22 onwards. Not only does it overtake China amongst major economies in FY22, it is projected to retain this position for the next five years. India is a big economy in the world after the US, Russia, and China.

Gujarat plays a key role in boosting the Indian economy. PM Narendra Modi rightly says that Gujarat ka Vikas Desh ka vikas—Gujarat's development for Nation's development. Gujarat is a national leader in automobiles and auto-parts, pharma and medical devices, chemicals and petro-chemical, sanitary/ceramics goods, textiles, garments, apparels, etc.

Gujarat is also the world's largest petroleum hub, global leader in diamond processing (Surat), and Asia's largest dairy (Amul). Gujarat contributions in all these sectors will help boost the Indian economy.

The country has to depend on Gujarat's economic growth to achieve the target of a \$5-trillion economy besides Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, UP, and Karnataka. In the next financial year, the picture will be clearer whether the nation will be able to achieve this target or not.

*(The writer is Joint Director, Gujarat Bhawan. The views expressed are personal)*

# Sri Aurobindo could have stopped Partition



LN JHUNJHUNWALA

Sri Aurobindo, who was from Pondicherry, was confident that India would definitely be united, and would include Afghanistan, Myanmar and Ceylon

The Second World War was in full swing in 1941-42. Hitler was marching unopposed in Western Europe; Britain was being bombed continuously. Britain sent the Cripps Mission to India to negotiate a compromise with Indian leaders and ask for their cooperation in the war.

Sri Aurobindo from Pondicherry advised all support to the allies and recommended negotiating with the Cripps Mission. But Gandhiji, Nehru, Patel, and Azad rejected the Cripps mission offer; Rajgopalachari's support was ignored. Gandhiji's decisions those days were often unilateral; he was brutal to Subhas who found his way bravely to Europe and Japan and whose death is still a mystery.

Cripps, who had a soft corner for India, also had a good relationship with Nehru during his early days. Cripps had developed a liking for Sudhir Bose, a young man who was also Gandhiji's favourite, and told him in confidence that Congress president Maulana Azad had made up his mind in favour of the partition of India and had given a letter confidentially to that effect. Gandhiji was disturbed upon hearing this, and asked Sudhir to bring the letter and assure Cripps that he would not use that letter to create an embarrassing situation for him.

The atmosphere of pre-Independence India was very tense. Azad denied his position on partition outright, while Nehru was angry about Sudhir's meeting with Cripps. Gandhiji and Patel didn't have the same opinion on Azad.

Unfortunately, Gandhiji was often single-minded in his decisions. Let's consider an instance of Swami Ashokanand (1893-1969), a brilliant student who had a gold medal in English Literature while at City College. He joined the Ramakrishna Mission in 1920 and was initiated into Sanyasa by the then president Swami Sivanand. He served as editor of Prabuddha Bharat (an English monthly journal of Ramakrishna mission started by Swami Vivekanand in 1896 published continuously for more than 125 years). Swami Ashokananda was its editor from 1926 to December 1930, a time where he had lengthy correspondence with Gandhiji on non-violence and industrialisation.

Shankari Prasad Basu, a great Bengali intellectual who had written about 2,000 pages on India of the days of Swami Vivekanand, says, "Going through all the articles of Ashokanand and replies of Gandhiji we have to admit that Gandhiji's replies were no comparison to Ashokanand's sturdy and comprehensive intellect."

It was during this period that the question of Bengal partition arose. Sri Aurobindo, an important member of the Indian National Congress, led the revolution against the partition of Bengal. Before we understand Sri Aurobindo's politics, let's look at his history.



GANDHIJI'S CONGRESS, WHILE REFUSING CRIPPS' PROPOSAL, IGNORED SRI AUROBINDO'S ADVICE. THEY WERE ALL AWARE OF THE SUBLIME STATE OF SRI AUROBINDO'S MIND. HAD HE NOT BEEN IGNORED, INDIA POSSIBLY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PARTITIONED

The author is a Founder of the LNJ Bhilwara Group and author. The views expressed are personal.



Sri Aurobindo started organising revolutionaries to oppose Lord Curzon's plan to bifurcate Bengal. These activities landed him in trouble with the British authorities, and he was soon arrested for his suspected involvement in the Alipore Bomb Case.

On Friday, May 1, 1908, Sri Aurobindo was awakened from his sleep at about 5.00 am. Under instructions from Superintendent Cregan, Sri Aurobindo was handcuffed and arrested.

The weekend passed in the lock-up. There was no bath till the fourth day at 11.30 a.m. He was still wearing the same clothes for four days in which he had come from home.

From time to time the police would make the prisoners line up in a long row, mixing up with those accused of theft, murder, and other charges along with political prisoners.

During the period of solitary confinement, Dr. Daly and the Assistant Superintendent would come to his cell almost every day and have a chat. Sri Aurobindo spoke very little. In order to get him to speak, the Assistant Superintendent said that he had been able to get the big boss to agree to a walk outside of the cell, morning and evening.

Sri Aurobindo would walk reciting the ageless, powerful mantras of the Upanishads and walk for a long time.

He has been quoted as saying, "I tried to realise the basic truths of God in every form, in the trees, bushes, walls, men, animals, birds, metals in the earth with the recitation of the mantra Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma. The prison ceased to appear like a prison. The white wall, the green leafed tree shining in sunlight, looked vibrating with a universal consciousness. It seemed as if God himself was standing under the tree playing his flute delightfully. Sri Aurobindo was arrested on May 1, 1908, and was released on May 6, 1909.

He inspired his 27 year old disciple, whom he named Navjat, to start a journal to highlight India's culture. The journal was named Mother India in 1949. Sri Aurobindo approved the ideas and Aurobindo called it "my paper." He was confident that India would definitely be united, and would include Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Ceylon. He had a dream of a united India--an India that is partitioned will not be free from communalism or civil strife. These ideas went as far as Swami Vivekananda. Will these ideas come true?

Gandhiji's Congress, while refusing Cripps' proposal, ignored Sri Aurobindo's advice. They were all aware of the sublime state of Sri Aurobindo's mind. Had he not been ignored, India possibly would not have been divided.

POINT COUNTERPOINT



WE WILL HOLD WEEKLY MEETINGS WITH THE L-G. WE HAVE GOOD COORDINATION AND THERE IS NO PROBLEM.  
— DELHI CHIEF MINISTER  
ARVIND KEJRIWAL



WE INFORMED THE L-G... WE HAVE MADE SEVERAL COMPLAINTS BUT THE GOVT HAS TAKEN NO ACTION SO FAR.  
— LEADER OF OPPOSITION IN DELHI ASSEMBLY  
RAMVIR SINGH BIDHURI

# Modi's 8 years in power: India story back on track

## The turnaround has come at the back of an honest, hardworking and grounded leadership

Eight years ago, the India story seemed on the verge of being written off. Large-scale corruption, frequent terror attacks, and a fragile economy clouded the future of a billion people. India's global rankings were in a free fall. It was a time when Indian citizens were losing their trust in Government and institutions.

At that critical juncture, Narendra Modi took over the reins and reignited the nation's collective spirit. Since then India has gone through unprecedented challenges, and each time it has risen above them, setting new gold standards in good governance for the world to follow. Be it managing a global pandemic, fighting terrorism, or rescuing citizens from the most hostile situations on foreign soil, the Modi Government has



VIJENDER GUPTA

*(The author is an MLA and former president of BJP, Delhi. The expressed are personal)*

been leading from the front.

In fact, an overarching view of the past eight years would tell us how agile and sensitive the government has been towards the people, especially during a crisis situation. During the global pandemic, when multiple lockdowns were causing disruptions in people's lives, especially the poor, the Modi Government ensured that no one goes hungry.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, announced in March 2020, more than 80 crore people were provided with 5 kilograms of food-grains per month for free. The additional free grain is over and above the quota provided under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) at a highly subsidised rate of Rs 2-3 per kg. As per an IMF working

paper, it was found that PMGKAY helped keep the percentage of extreme poverty at the lowest level, i.e. less than 1 per cent, in the pandemic year 2020-21. Even though the pandemic was a sudden occurrence, the government's response to it was anything but arbitrary. At every level, the Modi government was picking up from the ground-work it had already done in the years preceding the pandemic. For instance, the digital push provided by JAM trinity proved to be a potent tool in delivering services to the person at

the last mile.

India's vaccination drive was systematic, transparent, and fast-paced. In a matter of a few months, all of the adult population received a double dose of Covid vaccinations, free of cost, hastening the pace of establishing normalcy. Its resounding success can be attributed to the technology-driven governance that has been the mainstay of the Modi era.

Just when the pandemic was subsiding, the world was confronted with the Russia-Ukraine war. Thousands of Indian students found themselves stuck in the middle of a war situation. The Modi government, without any delay, mobilised all resources and leveraged India's relations with, both Russia and Ukraine, to carry out one of the trickiest and

largest rescue operations. PM Modi sent Central Government ministers to the borders of Ukraine to ensure that the rescue operation is fast-tracked, as the war was looking to escalate.

It is because of the prompt response of the Government that 22,500 Indian students could return to safety and reunite with their families. In the last 8 years, several such large-scale evacuations, including the Vande Bharat mission, Operation Rahat, have taken place and each time the Indian Government has stood by its citizens like a rock, no matter how grave the circumstances were. Despite back-to-back disruptions, first caused by the pandemic and then by the Russian-Ukraine war, India has maintained its position as the most attractive investment destination.

In 2021-22, foreign direct investment inflows surged to a record high of \$83.57 billion, with the manufacturing sector registering the highest foreign equity inflows. There is a 23 per cent growth in the FDI inflows post-Covid, showing enhanced global confidence in India's growth story. Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, India continues to be the world's fastest-growing economy.

The turnaround from being among the fragile five to being among the most attractive investment destinations, in the last eight years, has come at the back of an honest, hardworking and grounded leadership that has been working with the motto of 'Nation First'. It is a sentiment which is reflected in PM Modi's foreign policy as well. India, under him, is increasing-

ly being seen as a voice of reason, stability and strength that has always stood for global good, without compromising on the well-being of its people.

From Jan Dhan to Ayushman Bharat, from PM Kisan to PM Awas, from Swachh Bharat to Jal Jeevan, the philosophy of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Prayaas' as propounded by PM Modi remains the underlying force driving India's transformation. If there is one emotion that could encapsulate the last eight years of the Modi Government, it would be the "spirit of seva", or complete devotion to the welfare of the people. Most importantly, it is the restoration of trust that people now have in the Government and the power of Indian democracy that has been the biggest win since 2014.



# 43 killed in fire at Bangladesh chemical container depot

PTI ■ DHAKA

At least 43 people were killed and over 450 injured in a massive fire caused by an explosion that swept through a private chemical container depot in southeastern Bangladesh, officials said on Sunday.

On Saturday night, the fire broke out at BM Container Depot in the Kadamrasul area in Sitakunda Upazila in Chittagong.

"So far 43 dead bodies have been brought to the morgue," Sitakunda Shahadat Hossain, a senior government official, was quoted as saying by the Dhaka Tribune.

"Over 450 people have been injured in this incident of which, at least 350 are at state-run Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH)," Istakul Islam, chief of the Health & Service Department at Red Crescent Youth Chittagong was quoted as saying by the Dhaka Tribune.

"The death toll could be more at other hospitals," Islam said. Meanwhile, Chattogram Divisional Commissioner (DC) Ashraf Uddin further said that families of the deceased are being given USD 560 (Taka 50,000) by the DC office. Meanwhile, USD 224 (Taka 20,000) is being given to the families of the injured, the Daily



Star reported. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina mourned the death of people and ordered the mobilisation of all facilities for the salvage campaign. Officials formed a high-powered investigation committee demanding it to submit a report in the next three days.

A Fire broke out at the container depot around 9 pm on Saturday, Sub-Inspector Nurul Alam stationed at CMCH said.

As Fire Service units worked to put it out, there was an explosion and then the fire spread. Nurul added that initially it was being suspected that the container depot caught fire due to chemicals, the report added.

Around 11:45 pm, there was a massive explosion and the



fire spread from one container to another due to the presence of chemicals in one of the containers. "The depot was largely empty, the firefighters, policemen and other rescuers rushed to the scene after the fire initially broke out and the explosion of containers after containers filled with chemicals killed them," a witness told PTI over the phone. The explosion shook the neighbourhood and shattered glasses of windows of nearby houses, the report added.

Media reports, including TV footage, showed the blast shattered the windows of sever-

al buildings nearby and was felt from areas as far as 4 km away, creating panic.

Chittagong Fire Service and Civil Defence Assistant Director Md Faruk Hossain Sikdar said: "Around 19 firefighting units are working to douse the blaze and six ambulances are also available on the spot."

"Several types of chemicals like hydrogen peroxide were stored in containers at the depot and the chemicals have visibly sparked the fire," fire service chief Brigadier General Mohammad Mainuddin told newsmen at the scene in the Sitakunda area on the outskirts of the port city.

The state-run Chattagram Medical College Hospital accommodated most of the fire wounded patients while several others including scores of firefighters were being treated at a military hospital and some private facilities. In a statement, Mujibur Rahman, director of the BM Container Depot, said it was not clear what caused the fire. "But I think the fire started from the container."

"Arrangements are being made to ensure that the injured get the best treatment. We will bear the entire cost of the treatment. Those who were injured in the accident will be given the maximum compensation," Rahman was quoted as saying.

# Boris' future as UK PM hangs in balance over partygate

PTI ■ LONDON

Boris Johnson still faces a precarious future as the British Prime Minister over the fallout of the partygate scandal as a latest opinion poll on Sunday forecast a bruising for his Conservative Party in a by-election scheduled later this month.

More than 40 of his Tory MPs have publicly called for Johnson's resignation as the party leader over the scandal of COVID law-breaking parties under his premiership at Downing Street, an issue which remains in the spotlight since the scathing findings of leadership failures in an inquiry by top civil servant Sue Gray.

A survey of voters in Wakefield, who go to the polls for a by-election on June 23 to elect a new MP, suggests the Tories could lose by as much as 20 points.

The polling by J.L. Partners for 'The Sunday Times' puts the Opposition Labour Party on 48 points compared with 28 points for the Conservatives, a 19-point drop on the winning Tory performance two-and-a-half years ago.

Such a result is bound to intensify calls for Johnson's resignation as Wakefield is part of the so-called "Red Wall" - traditionally Labour-supporting areas in the north of England, the Midlands, and Wales which had switched their support to



the Tories under Johnson in the December 2019 general election. The byelection later this month follows former Pakistani-origin Tory MP Imran Ahmad Khan's resignation in the wake of his conviction over sexual assault. A by-election at Tiverton and Honiton in southern England, on the same day as Wakefield, is also being seen as a referendum of Johnson's leadership.

According to 'The Sunday Times', Sir Graham Brady, the chairman of the powerful 1922 Committee of Tory backbenchers, will count the letters of no-confidence submitted by email and WhatsApp when Parliament returns on Monday morning.

Under Tory party rules, 54 letters are required to trigger a secret ballot and whips and rebel MPs reportedly believe they are on the verge of that threshold. Johnson, who is keen to move on from the partygate scandal and has repeatedly

tried to shift focus on other pressing government matters such as the cost-of-living crisis, would have been shaken on Friday when he along with wife Carrie were booed as they arrived at St. Paul's Cathedral for the thanksgiving service to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

The Sue Gray report, released after a Scotland Yard probe which saw Johnson and wife Carrie being fined for a lockdown-breaching birthday party in the Cabinet Room of Downing Street in June 2020, laid bare illegal gatherings and questionable staff behaviour within government offices during the 2020-2021 lockdowns to control the spread of coronavirus. Johnson reiterated a previous apology in the House of Commons last month, saying he took full responsibility for what went on under his watch and that steps have been taken to ensure mistakes aren't repeated.

# China threatened plane over South China Sea: Australia

AP ■ BEIJING

Australia on Sunday said a Chinese fighter jet carried out dangerous maneuvers threatening the safety of one of its maritime surveillance planes over the South China Sea.

The May 26 incident in international airspace saw a Chinese Air Force J-16 intercept a P-8A Poseidon maritime surveillance aircraft on routine patrol, the Defense Ministry said in a statement on its website.

The intercept resulted in a "dangerous" maneuver that "posed a safety threat to the P-8 aircraft and its crew," the ministry said. The Australian government has raised its concerns about the incident with the Chinese government, it added.

There was no official response Sunday from Beijing over the reported incident.

Such incidents are not unprecedented. A collision between a U.S. EP-3 surveillance plane and a Chinese naval air force jet in April 2001 resulted in the death of the Chinese pilot and the 10-day detention of the U.S. Air crew by China. Relations between Australia and China have been poor for years after Beijing imposed trade barriers and refused high-level exchanges in response to Canberra enacting rules targeting foreign interference in its domestic politics.

# China's spacecraft carrying 3 astronauts successfully docks with space station module

PTI ■ BEIJING/JIUQUAN

China on Sunday successfully launched three astronauts on a six-month mission to complete the construction of its strategically significant space station this year to further its dream to emerge as a major space power.

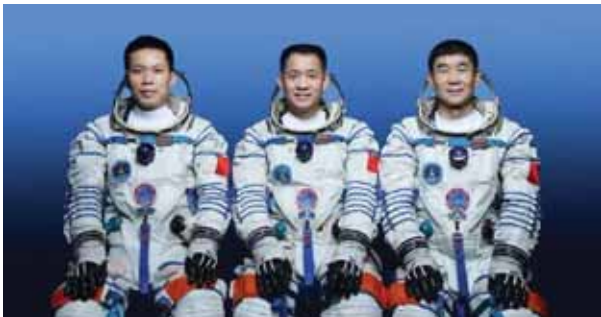
Hours after reaching the designated orbit, the Shenzhou-14 spacecraft carrying three astronauts, Chen Dong, Liu Yang and Cai Xuzhe, successfully docked with the orbiting core module of the space station called Tianhe and cargo crafts attached to it, the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) said.

The spacecraft lifted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China.

Minutes later, the official at the ground control declared the mission a "great success", saying the spacecraft has reached its designated orbit.

The crew members of the Shenzhou-14 are in good shape and the launch is a complete success, the CMSA declared.

The trio will cooperate with the ground team to complete the assembly and construction of the Tiangong space station, developing it from a single-module structure into a national space laboratory with three modules -- the core module, Tianhe and two lab modules -- Wentian and Mengtian.



The launch was telecast live all over the country.

Once ready, China will be the only country to own a space station. The International Space Station (ISS) of Russia is a collaborative project of several countries.

The China Space Station (CSS) is also expected to be a competitor to the ISS built by Russia. Observers say that the CSS may become the sole space station to remain in orbit once the ISS retires in the coming years. In February, China unveiled an ambitious plan for its burgeoning space industry which included over 50 space launches and six manned space flights to complete the building of its space station.

The China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC) said that China will carry out more than 50 space launches in 2022, sending over 140 spacecraft into space. Chen, who will be the commander of the new

mission, participated in the Shenzhou-11 crewed space-flight mission.

Liu was part of the Shenzhou-9 mission and Cai is a newcomer to space, Lin Xiqiang, deputy director of the CMSA, said at the press conference at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre.

The trio will stay in orbit for six months, Lin said.

During their stay in orbit, the Shenzhou-14 crew will witness the two lab modules, Tianzhou-5 cargo craft and Shenzhou-15 crewed space-shuttle dock with the core module Tianhe.

They will rotate with the Shenzhou-15 crew in orbit, and return to the Dongfeng landing site in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in December, Lin said.

China began constructing its three-module space station in April 2021 with the launch of Tianhe - the first and biggest of the station's three modules.

# Min: Lanka's 21st Amendment to Constitution to be submitted to Cabinet for approval on Monday

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The 21st Amendment to the Constitution to empower the Sri Lankan Parliament over the executive president will be submitted to the Cabinet for approval on Monday, Justice Minister Wijeyadasa Rajapakse said on Sunday.

The 21st Amendment is expected to annul the 20A to the Constitution, which gives unfettered powers to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa after abolishing the 19th Amendment that will strengthen Parliament.

Rajapakse said that a special discussion on the matter was held with the backing of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa last week. He along with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and Foreign minister G.L. Peiris participated in the discussion, Lanka First, an online news portal reported.

Rajapakse said that the 21st Amendment to the Constitution, including proposals submitted by political parties and various other parties, will be submitted to the Cabinet for approval on Monday, the portal reported.

He said that the draft of the amendment will be gazetted after receiving the approval of the Cabinet. Rajapakse said that he expects to make a statement in Parliament on the 21st Amendment to the Constitution next week. Prime Minister Wickremesinghe last week batted for the 21st Amendment to the Constitution, saying it will curb the president's unlimited pow-

ers while enhancing the role of Parliament in governing the debt-ridden country which is also facing an unprecedented political turmoil.

The powerful Rajapaksa family tightened their grip on power after their massive victory in the general elections in August 2020, which allowed them to amend the Constitution to restore presidential powers and install close family members in key positions.

The constitutional reform was a major plank of the agreement between Wickremesinghe and Rajapaksa when he took over the job of prime minister on May 12.

Sri Lanka has been grappling with unprecedented economic turmoil since its independence from Britain in 1948.

Sri Lanka's economic crisis has created political unrest with protesters demanding the President's resignation. Under the 21A, the President will be held accountable to the Parliament.

The Cabinet of Ministers is also accountable to Parliament. The National Council is also accountable to Parliament. Fifteen Committees and Oversight Committees are accountable to Parliament.

Sri Lanka in mid-April declared that it was unable to meet its foreign debt payments and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) classified Sri Lanka's debt as unsustainable. Therefore debt restructuring was key for an IMF programme.

# North Korea test-fires salvo of 8 short-range missiles

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea test-fired a salvo of eight short-range ballistic missiles toward the sea on Sunday, South Korea's military said, extending a provocative streak in weapons demonstrations this year that U.S. and South Korean officials say may culminate with a nuclear test explosion.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the missiles were fired in succession over 35 minutes from the Sunan area near the capital, Pyongyang.

It didn't immediately say how far the missiles flew but noted the South Korean military has heightened its monitoring in case the North fires more missiles.

The launch came a day after the U.S. Aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan concluded a three-day naval drill with South Korea in the Philippine Sea, apparently their first joint drill involving a carrier since November 2017, as the countries move to upgrade their defense exercises in the face of growing North Korean threats.

The launch was North Korea's 18th round of missile tests in 2022 alone - a streak that has included the country's first demonstrations of intercontinental ballistic missiles in nearly five years - as it continues to exploit a favourable environment to push forward weapons development with the U.N. Security Council divided over Russia's war on Ukraine.

Experts say North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's



brinkmanship is aimed at forcing the United States to accept the idea of the North as a nuclear power and negotiating economic and security concessions from a position of strength.

South Korean and U.S. Officials say there are signs that North Korea is also pressing ahead with preparations at its nuclear testing ground in the northeastern town of Punggye-ri. The North's next nuclear test would be its seventh since 2006 and the first since September 2017, when it claimed to have detonated a thermonuclear bomb to fit on its ICBMs.

On Friday, U.S. President Joe Biden's special envoy for North Korea, Sung Kim, said Washington is 'preparing for all contingencies' in close coordination with its Asian allies as he participated in a trilateral meeting in Seoul with his South Korean and Japanese counterparts over the nuclear standoff with North Korea.

The United States has vowed to push for additional international sanctions if North Korea conducts a new nuclear test, but the prospects for further U.N. Security Council measures appear dim.

Russia and China vetoed a U.S.-sponsored resolution that would have imposed additional sanctions on North Korea over its latest ballistic tests on May 25, which South Korea's military said involved an ICBM flown on a medium-range trajectory and two short-range weapons.

Those tests came as Biden wrapped up his trip to South Korea and Japan, where he reaffirmed the U.S. Commitment to defend both allies in the face of the North's nuclear threat.

North Korea in March launched an ICBM almost straight up at full-range capacity and saw it fly higher and for longer than any weapon it had ever tested, demonstrating the potential to reach the entirety of the U.S. Mainland.

# 3 dead, at least 11 wounded in shooting in Philadelphia

AP ■ PHILADELPHIA (US)

Three people have died and at least 11 other people were wounded in a shooting late Saturday night in Philadelphia, authorities said.

Police officers were patrolling the area on South Street in downtown Philadelphia when they heard multiple gunshots and witnessed several suspects firing into a large crowd just before midnight, Police Inspector D. F. Pace said during a news conference.

An officer shot at one of the suspects from about 30 feet (9 meters) away, but it is unclear if the suspect was hit, Pace said.

"You can imagine there were hundreds of individuals just enjoying South Street, as they do every single weekend, when this shooting broke out," Pace said.



were among those killed in the shooting, he said. Their names were not made public by authorities. The conditions of those who were wounded by gunfire remains unknown.

Two handguns were recovered, including one with an extended magazine, police said. No arrests have been made.

The department said on Twitter to avoid the area. South Street is known for its entertainment venues and night life with multiple bars, restaurants and businesses.

# Pak's ruling alliance questions PM Sharif's decision to empower ISI to conduct verification of civil servants

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's ruling alliance have questioned Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's decision to empower the spy agency - Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) - to conduct verification of all government officers before their induction, appointments and postings, as well as promotions.

The Sharif government issued a notification on Friday to give the status of a Special Vetting Agency (SVA) to the ISI. The decision angered not just the allies but also his own Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

The ISI is Pakistan's powerful spy agency. In 1950, it was officially given the task of safeguarding Pakistani interests and national security, inside and outside the country.

Some members belonging to allied parties even criticised

Prime Minister Sharif for not taking the coalition partners and parliament into confidence, vowing to take the matter to the court, The Express Tribune newspaper has reported.

They quipped that the premier should also consider including politicians in the notification as "most of the traitors" were there.

"This has been done behind the back of coalition partners and parliament," Pakistan People's Party (PPP) General-Secretary Farhatullah Babar said, asking why the decision was taken as it is not a single-party government.

In a tweet, Babar said that the decision must be unacceptable to many coalition partners, and they must protest to reverse it, adding that unilateral alteration in civil service rules must be challenged.

Babar noted that the agency that "failed to detect Osama bin

Laden hiding in Abbottabad" has been tasked with reporting on the competence and professionalism of civil servants. He urged everyone to say no to the decision as it was "unacceptable".

PML-N former information minister Pervaiz Rashid also questioned the move in a tweet, saying if the task of investigating civilian officers was included in ISI's responsibilities, then the spy agency should also be placed under civilian control and be accountable to the parliament.

PPP Senator Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar chided the premier on tasking the intelligence agency to vet government officers by "requesting" that Sharif include all public office holders in the notification at once. "Why discriminate against politicians?" Khokhar asked, adding that "after all, traitors are more common in our ranks".

# US naval officer in Japan faces prison over deadly crash

AP ■ WASHINGTON

For Ridge Alkonis, a U.S. Navy lieutenant living in Japan, a springtime trip with his wife and three children to Mount Fuji was intended as fun and leisurely family time before an expected deployment.

What happened next, and why, is a matter of dispute. But it gave rise to a three-year prison sentence.

In the telling by Alkonis' family and supporters, the naval officer abruptly lost consciousness in the car, causing him to slump over behind the wheel after suffering acute mountain sickness.

Japanese prosecutors and the judge who sentenced him contend he fell asleep while driving, shirking a duty to pull over immediately.

No matter the cause,

Alkonis' car veered into parked cars and pedestrians in a parking lot, striking an elderly woman and her son-in-law, both of whom later died. With a Japanese court set to hear an appeal Wednesday of Alkonis' prison sentence, his parents are pleading for leniency for an act they say was nothing more than a terrible accident but that prosecutors view as deadly negligence. He is home in Japan pending the appeal.

"The word that comes to our mind is fairness. We want him to be treated fairly for an accident," said Alkonis' father, Derek Alkonis, of Dana Point, California. "We don't feel like it's been that way."

We know it hasn't been that way. And it concerns us that our son has been given a three-year prison sentence for an accident."

# 1 dead as lightning, hail, floods lash France

AP ■ PARIS

Fierce thunderstorms and hailstorms around France left one woman dead and 14 people injured, ravaged vineyards and delayed flights.

Lightning hit the Eiffel Tower, without causing damage, and set roofs on fire east of Paris, according to local authorities. Residents of southwest France posted photos online of hail the size of tennis balls, and drivers in the Paris region shared images of flooded highways and daytime skies blackened by thunder clouds.

Thousands of households remained without power Sunday after the storms struck across France on Sat, according to utility Enedis. Flights out of Paris' Orly Airport were temporarily suspended Sat, and there were delays at Charles de Gaulle Airport.



# Russia hits Kyiv with missiles; Putin warns West on arms

AP ■ KYIV

Russia took aim at Western military supplies for Ukraine's government with early Sunday airstrikes in Kyiv that it said destroyed tanks donated from abroad, a claim denied by a Ukrainian official.

Russian President Vladimir Putin warned that any Western deliveries of long-range rocket systems to Ukraine would prompt Moscow to hit "objects that we haven't yet struck."

The cryptic threat of a military escalation from the Russian leader didn't specify what the new targets might be, but it comes days after the United States announced plans to deliver USD 700 million of security assistance for Ukraine.

Those weapons include four precision-guided, medium-range rocket systems, helicopters, Javelin anti-tank weapon systems, radars, tactical vehicles and more.

Military analysts say Russia is hoping to overrun

Ukraine's the embattled eastern industrial Donbas region, where Russia-backed separatists have fought the Ukrainian government since 2014, before any US weapons that might turn the tide arrive.

The Pentagon said last week it will take at least three weeks to get the precision US weapons onto the battlefield.

Ukraine's General Staff said Russian forces fired five X-22 cruise missiles from the Caspian Sea toward Kyiv, and one was destroyed by air defenses.

Four others missiles hit "infrastructure facilities," but Ukraine said there were no casualties.

Nuclear plant operator Energoatom said one cruise missile buzzed close to the Pivdennoukrainsk nuclear plant, 350 kilometers (220 miles) to the south, and warned of the catastrophic dangers if such a near miss turned into a direct hit.

In a posting on the Telegram app, the Russian Defense Ministry said high-precision, long-range air-launched missiles were



used. It said the strikes on the outskirts of Kyiv destroyed T-72 tanks supplied by Eastern European countries and other armored vehicles located in buildings of a train car repair business.

But the head of Ukraine's railway system rejected the claim that tanks were inside.

Oleksandr Kamyshin said four missiles hit the Darnytsia car repair plant, but no military equipment has been stored there. He

said the site was used to repair gondolas and grain carriers for exporting products.

"Russia has once again lied," he wrote on Telegram. "Their (Russia's) real goal is the economy and the civilian population. They want to block our ability to export Ukrainian products."

In a television interview that aired Sunday, Putin lashed out at Western deliveries of weapons to Ukraine, saying they aim to pro-

long the conflict.

"All this fuss around additional deliveries of weapons, in my opinion, has only one goal: To drag out the armed conflict as much as possible," Putin said. He insisted such supplies were unlikely to change the military situation much for Ukraine's government, which he said was merely making up for losses of similar rockets that they already had.

If Kyiv gets longer-range rockets, he added, Moscow will "draw appropriate conclusions and use our means of destruction, which we have plenty of, in order to strike at those objects that we haven't yet struck."

The US has stopped short of offering Ukraine longer-range weapons that could fire deep into Russia. The four medium-range High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems included in the security package include launchers on wheels that allow troops to strike a target and then quickly move away - which could be useful against Russian artillery on the battlefield.

# Russian agent Kovtun, accused in spy poisoning, dead at 57

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian agent Dmitry Kovtun, who was accused by the UK authorities in the poisoning death of former spy Alexander Litvinenko in London in 2006, has died at 57.

Russian lawmaker Andrei Lugovoi, who also was accused by the UK in the spy's killing, announced Kovtun's death on his messaging app channel. Lugovoi said that Kovtun died Saturday of a COVID-19-induced illness. Russian news reports said he died at a hospital in Moscow.

A British inquiry concluded that Kovtun and Lugovoi had killed Litvinenko and that Russian President Vladimir Putin had "probably approved" the operation. The European Court of Human Rights backed the British conclusion.

The Kremlin has fiercely denied any involvement.

Kovtun and Lugovoi also denied playing any role in Litvinenko's death.

A former agent for the KGB and its post-Soviet successor agency FSB, Litvinenko defected from Russia in 2000 and fled to London. He became



involved in exposing corruption and links to organised crime in the Russian intelligence service.

He fell violently ill in November 2006 after drinking tea with two Russian men in a London hotel and died three weeks later. His tea was found to have been laced with radioactive polonium-210.

# Cambodians get new opposition choice in local elections

AP ■ PHNOM PENH

Cambodians vote on Sunday in local elections that are their first chance to go to the polls since the ruling party of long-serving Prime Minister Hun Sen swept a 2018 general election that was widely criticised as unfair. Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party is certain to sail to easy victory again following what the UN Human Rights Office charged Thursday was a pattern of "threats, intimidation and obstruction targeting opposition candidates."

"Candidates have faced numerous restrictions and reprisals that have hindered their activities, with imprisonment of a number of candidates that appears designed to curb political campaigning," the agency said. It added that at least six opposition candidates and activists were in detention four days before the polls, awaiting trial, while others summonsed on politically



motivated charges had gone into hiding. Cambodia's delegation at the UN Geneva offices said in a statement that the criticism was "erroneous, politicised and selective."

"It said "all political parties, including opposition ones, have fully exercised their rights in line with the laws and registered schedules without any threats and obstruction." Hun Sen, an authoritarian

ruler in a nominally democratic state, has held power for 37 years. He has said he intends to stay in office until 2028 and has endorsed one of his sons to succeed him.

His party is the only one to field candidates nationwide in all 1,652 communes. Its only serious rival, the Candlelight Party, has candidates in 1,632 communes, and the royalist FUNCINPEC Party has challengers in 688 communes.

There are a total of 82,786 candidates from 17 political parties with 9.2 million registered voters. The local elections are held a year ahead of the general election, and are regarded as a test of the parties' strength.

In the last communal elections in 2017, the main opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party made an unexpectedly strong showing, which led Hun Sen's government to crack down on it as well as independent media. The party was dissolved by the Supreme Court on a charge of treason, widely seen as politically motivated, and the free press was driven out of business or cowed into submission.

Without the Cambodian National Rescue Party on the ballot, Hun Sen's party was assured of victory in the general election the following year.

Several Western nations imposed sanctions on the government after con-

cluding the 2018 election was neither free nor fair. The harshest measure came from the European Union, which withdrew some preferential trading privileges.

The dissolved Cambodia National Rescue Party, whose sitting members were also ousted from their political posts, remains banned, with most of its top leaders in exile. The Candlelight Party is now seeking to challenge the ruling party by rallying its former supporters, though its activities have remained severely curtailed. The original Candlelight Party was founded in 1995 by Sam Rainsy, the main political rival of Hun Sen, and later folded into the Cambodia National Rescue Party. Sam Rainsy, faced with legal harassment, went into self-exile in France, and the co-founder of the Cambodia National Rescue Party, Kem Sokha, is currently being tried on a thinly supported treason charge.

# Trump's Ukraine impeachment shadows war, risks GOP response

AP ■ WASHINGTON

When President Donald Trump was impeached in late 2019 after pressuring Ukraine's leader for "a favour", all while withholding USD 400 million in military aid to help confront Russian-backed separatists, even the staunchest defense hawks in the Republican Party stood virtually united by Trump's side.

But as Russian President Vladimir Putin's military marched toward Kyiv this February, threatening not only Ukraine but the rest of Europe, Republicans and Democrats in Congress cast aside impeachment politics, rallied to Ukraine's side and swiftly shipped billions to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's defense.

The question ahead, as Ukrainians battle Russia's grinding invasion now past its 100th day, is whether the rare bipartisanship on Capitol Hill

is resilient enough to withstand Trump's isolationist influences on his party or whether Republicans who yielded to Trump's "America First" approach will do so again, putting military and humanitarian support for Ukraine at risk.

"Maybe there is a recognition on both Republican side and Democratic side that this security assistance is very important," said Bill Taylor, a former ambassador to Ukraine, said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. "And maybe neither side is eager to crack that coalition."

The fraught party politics comes at a pivotal moment as the Russian invasion drags on and the United States gets deeper into the conflict before the November elections, when lawmakers face voters with control of the Congress is at stake.

New polling from The Associated Press shows public

support in the U.S. For punishing Russia over the war is wavering if it comes at the expense of the economy.

While Congress mustered rare and robust bipartisan support to approve a \$40 billion Ukraine package, bringing total U.S. Support to a staggering \$53 billion since the start of the war, opposition on the latest round of aid came solely from the Republican side, including from Trump.

That is a warning sign over the sturdiness of the bipartisan coalition that the top Republican in Congress, Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, tried to shore up when he led a delegation of GOP senators to stand by Zelenskyy's side in a surprise trip to Kyiv last month.

"There is some isolationist sentiment in my party that I think is wrongheaded, and I wanted to push back against it," McConnell told a Kentucky audience this past week, explaining his Ukraine visit.

# Biden evacuated after plane entered airspace near beach home



AP ■ REHOBOTH BEACH (US)

A small private airplane mistakenly entered restricted airspace near President Joe Biden's Delaware vacation home Saturday, prompting the brief evacuation of the president and first lady, the White House and the Secret Service said.

The White House said there was no threat to Biden or his family and that precautionary measures were taken.

After the situation was assessed, Biden and his wife, Jill, returned to their Rehoboth Beach home.

The Secret Service said in a statement that the plane was immediately escorted from the restricted airspace after "mistakenly entering a secured area." The agency said it would interview the pilot who, according to a preliminary investigation, was not on the proper radio channel and was not following published flight guidance.

As is standard practice for presidential trips outside Washington, the Federal

Aviation Administration published flight restrictions earlier this week before Biden's beach town visit.

The restrictions include a 10-mile radius no-fly zone contained with a 30-mile restricted zone.

A CBS News reporter said on Twitter that he saw Biden motorcading to a Rehoboth Beach fire station.

The group of reporters that travels with the president was not part of the motorcade.

Federal regulations require pilots to check for flight restrictions along their route before taking off.

Still, accidental airspace breaches, particularly around temporary restricted zones, are common.

U.S. Military jets and Coast Guard helicopters are often used to intercept any planes that violate the flight restrictions around the president.

Intercepted planes are diverted to a nearby airfield where aircrews are interviewed by law enforcement and face potential criminal or civil penalties.

# As Ukraine loses troops, how long can it keep up the fight?

AP ■ KYIV

As soon as they had finished burying a veteran colonel killed by Russian shelling, the cemetery workers readied the next hole. Inevitably, given how quickly death is felling Ukrainian troops on the front lines, the empty grave won't stay that way for long.

Col. Oleksandr Makhachek left behind a widow, Elena, and their daughters Olena and Myroslava-Oleksandra.

In the first 100 days of war, his grave was the 40th dug in the military cemetery in Zhytomyr, 140 kilometres west of the capital, Kyiv.

He was killed May 30 in the Luhansk region of eastern Ukraine where the fighting is raging. Nearby, the burial notice on the also freshly dug grave of Viacheslav Dvornitskiy says he died May 27.

Other graves also showed soldiers killed within days of each other - on May 10, 9th, 7th and 5th. And this is just one cemetery, in just one of Ukraine's cities, towns and villages laying soldiers to rest.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said this week that Ukraine is now losing 60 to 100 soldiers each day in combat.

By way of comparison, just short of 50 American soldiers died per day on average in 1968 during the Vietnam War's deadliest year for U.S. Forces.

Among the comrades-in-arms who paid respects to the 49-year-old Makhachek at his funeral on Friday was Gen. Viktor Muzhenko, the Ukrainian Armed Forces' chief of general staff until 2019. He warned that losses could worsen.

"This is one of the critical moments in the war, but it is not the peak," Muzhenko told The Associated Press.

"This is the most significant conflict in Europe since World War II. That explains why the losses are so great. In order to reduce losses, Ukraine now needs powerful weapons that match or even surpass Russian weaponry. This would enable Ukraine to respond in kind."

Concentrations of Russian artillery are causing many of the casualties in the eastern regions that Moscow has focused on since its initial invasion launched Feb. 24 failed to take Kyiv.

Retired Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, the former commanding general of U.S. Army forces in Europe, described the Russian strategy as a "medieval attrition approach" and said that until



Ukraine gets promised deliveries of U.S., British and other weapons to destroy and disrupt Russian batteries, "these kinds of casualties are going to continue."

"This battlefield is so much more lethal than what we all became accustomed to over the 20 years of Iraq and Afghanistan, where we didn't have numbers like this," he said in an AP phone interview.

"That level of attrition would include leaders, sergeants," he added. "They are a lot of the brunt of casualties because they are the more exposed, constantly moving around trying to do things."

Makhachek, a military engineer, led a detachment that laid minefields and other defenses, said Col. Ruslan Shutov, who attended the funeral of his friend of more than 30 years.

"Once the shelling began, he and a group hid in a shelter. There were four people in his group, and he told them to hide in the dugout. He hid in another. Unfortunately, an artillery shell hit the dugout where he was hiding."

Ukraine had about 250,000 men and women in uniform before the war and was in the process of adding another 100,000.

The government hasn't said how many have died in more than 14 weeks of fighting.

Nobody really knows the number of Ukrainian civilians who have been killed or how many combatants have died on either side. Claims of casualties by government officials - who may sometimes exaggerate or lowball their figures for public relations reasons - are all but impossible to verify.

Western analysts estimate far higher Russian military casualties, in the many thousands. Still, as Ukraine's losses mount, the grim mathematics of war require that it find replacements. With a population of 43 million, it has manpower. "The problem is recruiting, training and getting them on the front line," said retired U.S. Marine Col. Mark Cancian, a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (JAL SHAKTI DEPARTMENT)**  
**PHE DIVISION BARAMULLA**  
Fax: 01952234575, (Tel): 01952234244, E-mail ID: kmrphblea@gmail.com

**ADDENDUM**

**Name of work: Laying fitting of pipes, constt of chain link fencing, pre settling tank and slow sand filtration plant for WSS Khadniyar under JJM.**

**Ref: This office work No. 03 of eNIT No. 28 of 06/2022 issued vide No. 2108-18 dated 03.06.2022**

**Please read exact location of site as Branwari Khadniyar Baramulla**

**No. DIPK-3381/22**  
**Dated: 04-06-2022**

**Sd/- Executive Engineer**  
**Jal Shakti Department PHE Division Baramulla**

**GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR (UT)**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**  
Mechanical Division Srinagar, Mechanical Engineering Department, Kashmir.  
Fax No. :- 0194-2497093, Email :- xenmds@gmail.com, website :- www.medkashmir.org

**CORRIGENDUM NO -01**  
**FOR DATE EXTENSION OF GLOBAL TENDER**

**Name of work: Supply of Variable Snow Ploughs fitted with 24 Volt electro- hydraulic system and Control Box compatible with the carrier vehicles available with M.E.D Kashmir.**

**References: This office NIT No:MDS/TS /2022-23/19/e-tenderingDated:- 17.05.2022 (TenderId: 2022\_PWBJK\_169554\_I)**

**In view of representation received from the bidder through email, the critical dates of the above referred eNIT are extended as under:**

	Existing dates	Extended Dates
<b>Last date of uploading of bids</b>	<b>03.06.2022 (upto 18.55 Hrs)</b>	<b>09.06.2022 (Upto 12.00 Noon)</b>
<b>Date of opening of Bids online</b>	<b>04.06.2022 (At 15.00 Hrs)</b>	<b>09.06.2022 (at 15.00 Hrs)</b>

**Note:** All other terms, conditions and technical specifications of the NIT shall remain same.

**Sd/- (Er. Jahan Ara)**  
**Executive Engineer**  
**Mechanical Division, Srinagar**

**No. DIP/K-3402/22**  
**Dated:- 04.06.2022**

**DISTRICT POLICE HEADQUARTERS KATHUA**  
E- mail: sspkathua@jpolice.gov.in Fax/Phone No.: 01922-234010

**LOOK OUT NOTICE**

**On 30.05.2022, one Mohd Sadiq S/O Lal Hussain R/O Bera Mora Gorkhdi Tehsil Mahanpur and District Kathua lodged a written report at P/S Basohli stating therein that on 07.05.2022 at about 0800 hours, his wife namely Shakeena Begum and daughter namely Saira Begum age 04 years went to the house of sister of the complainant situated at Kharote Morh Kathua Tehsil Kathua and in the evening he came to know that they didn't reached there. The complainant searched them everywhere but no any clue could be struck out. On this, missing report vide DDR No. 04 dated 30.05.2022 has been entered at P/S Basohli.**

**During the course of investigation, best efforts were made to locate missing individuals, but both are still un-traced.**

**As such Description Roll/Photograph of said missing individuals is being shared with the appeal that anybody having clue/information about her whereabouts may inform us accordingly. The informer will be rewarded suitably:**

**Description Roll:-**

- Name: Shakeena Begum
- Husband: Mohd Sadiq
- Permanent Address: Village Bera Morha Gorkhdi
- Present Address: Village Bera Morha Gorkhdi
- Tehsil: Mahanpur
- Police Station: Basohli
- Age: 35 years
- Height: 05 Feet
- Complexion: Fair
- Built: Average
- Eyes: Black
- Languages known: Dogri/Hindi.

**Any information related to the whereabouts of the subject may be communicated on following Contacts:-**  
**1. DPO Kathua- 01922-234010 (Phone/Fax)**  
**2. dpokathua@jpolice.gov.in (Mail ID)**  
**3. PCR Kathua- 01922-234311(Phone/Fax)**  
**4. Police Station Rajbagh: 9419156719**

**PHOTOGRAPH**

**No. DIP/J-2596/22**  
**Dated: 04.06.2022**

**Sd/- Sr. Superintendent of Police Kathua**



# Another rate hike on cards, suggest experts ahead of RBI's MPC meeting

**Mumbai:** With inflation showing no signs of abatement, the Reserve Bank is likely to increase the benchmark lending rate in quick succession in its forthcoming monetary policy review on Wednesday, a hint for which has already been given by Governor Shaktikanta Das, opined experts.

There are speculations that the central bank may go for at least 35 basis points (bps) hike over and above the 40 bps hike effected last month after an off-cycle Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting. Experts are expecting more hikes in repo rate in the coming months.

Governor Das-headed MPC will meet for three day beginning Monday. The decision taken during the meeting will be announced by the governor on Wednesday.

The retail inflation, which RBI factors in while arriving at its monetary policy, galloped

for a seventh straight month to touch an 8-year high of 7.79 per cent in April, mainly on account of surging commodity prices, including fuel, due to ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

The wholesale price-based inflation has remained in double digits for 13 months and touched a record high of 15.08 per cent in April. **PTI**



## RBI policy to be key driver for markets this week: Analysts

**New Delhi:** The RBI's policy decision would be the major event driving trading sentiment in the equity market this

week, while global cues, foreign funds movement and crude oil prices will be the other key factors to watch out for, analysts said. Markets have been witnessing a rebound recently. However, the move lacks decisiveness amid lingering challenges like global policy tightening due to soaring inflation and geopolitical tensions, they added.

"RBI policy, global macro numbers and crude oil prices will set the trend for this week. Outcome of RBI policy will be announced on 8th of June and it will be important to listen to RBI commentary as a rate hike is imminent. IIP data will be released on 10th June after market hours.

"On the global front, US

jobless claim on Thursday and CPI numbers on Friday will be important for the direction of global markets," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd.

Crude oil is continuing its northward journey and if it does not cool off, then it may hurt sentiment of markets. FIIs are still in selling mode, though the momentum has slowed down a bit. However, there is a risk of further selling if the rupee weakens due to a rally in crude oil prices, he added.

Last week, the BSE Sensex advanced 884.57 points or 1.61 per cent. "With earnings season behind us, focus would be on the upcoming MPC's monetary policy review meet, which is scheduled during June 6-8. **PTI**

# India turns 10% of its petrol green; targets a fifth by 2025

**New Delhi:** India has achieved the target of supplying 10 per cent ethanol-blended petrol five months ahead of schedule and is aiming to double the blend by 2025-26 in order to cut oil import dependence and address environmental issues.

The original target for doping 10 per cent ethanol, extracted from sugarcane and other agri commodities, in petrol originally was November 2022 but this has been achieved in June thanks to tremendous effort by state-owned fuel retailers Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL).

"Due to the coordinated efforts of the public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs), the target of 10 per cent blending has been achieved much ahead of the targeted timelines of November, 2022 with OMCs attaining an average 10 per cent ethanol blending in petrol (10 per cent ethanol, 90 per cent



petrol) across the country," an official statement said.

This, it added, translates into a forex impact of over Rs 41,500 crore, reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of 27 lakh tonnes and has also led to the expeditious payment of over Rs 40,600 crore to farmers. India is the world's fifth largest producer of ethanol after the US, Brazil, EU and China. Ethanol worldwide is largely used for consumption

but nations like Brazil and India also dope it in petrol.

"The Government of India, with the aim to enhance India's energy security, reduce import dependency on fuel, save foreign exchange, address environmental issues and give a boost to the domestic agriculture sector, has been promoting the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme," the statement said. **PTI**

## Coal supply by CIL to CPPs, cement sector drops in May

**New Delhi:** The coal dispatch by state-owned CIL to captive power plants and sectors like cement registered a decline in May as compared to the year-ago month.

While the fuel supply by Coal India Ltd (CIL) to captive power plants dropped 39.74 per cent in May 2022 over the year-ago period, dispatch to the cement sector declined 16.74 per cent, according to latest government data.

The coal supply by the PSU to the sponge sector also dropped 8.74 per cent year-on-year in May.

However, supply to the steel sector went up by 67.83 per cent and to the power sector increased by 19.48 per cent last month, over May 2021.

In the wake of the short supply of coal to the non-regulated sector, industry bodies had earlier sought Prime

Minister Narendra Modi's intervention in the matter, stating that industries are compelled to purchase power from exchanges at higher rates due to increased demand.

Reeling under the crisis on account of continued coal shortage, a major segment of the manufacturing sector, MSMEs and captive power plant-based industry had jointly submitted a representation to the prime minister through a group of 10 industry associations.

According to the representation, dispatches of coal to sectors like captive power plants (CPPs), steel, cement and sponge iron have been reduced by up to 32 per cent in current fiscal year.

The situation has aggravated to a level that may compel many industries to cut production or force closure. **PTI**

## Tata Motors looks to strengthen R&D capabilities with aggressive hiring

**New Delhi:** Tata Motors is gearing up to strengthen its R&D with fresh hiring as well as upskilling of the current employees this fiscal year in order to scale up capabilities across various business verticals, including the electric vehicle segment, as per a top company official.

In the EV space, the company is looking to enhance its expertise in the area of battery packs and vehicle architecture, among others.

"As far as hiring in R&D is concerned we are going for major hiring, especially this year, but there is also another area which we have looked into very deeply and that is upskilling the current engineers within R&D," Tata Motors President Passenger Vehicle and Electric Vehicles Shailesh Chandra said in an analyst call.

It is going to be a big component of how the company is planning to really expand its



R&D base, he added.

The Mumbai-based auto major, in line with its growth aspirations and business plans for the next few years, is hiring across various verticals like advanced engineering, product development, supply chain, operations and commercial functions at different levels.

Chandra noted that there would be enhanced collaborations with other group entities, including JLR going ahead to

enhance capabilities.

"There is a lot of collaboration which will happen with various Tata companies, including JLR. So capabilities will not be only... Limited to within Tata Motors, but also seeing the opportunities of synergies with JLR as well as other Tata companies, which have a lot of capability in the area of softwares. So, these are the areas where we are focusing on," Chandra stated. **PTI**

## Daiki Axis Japan setting up second unit in India at ₹200-cr investment

**New Delhi:** Water treatment solutions provider Daiki Axis Japan is setting up its second plant in India at Haryana with an investment of Rs 200 crore, a company official said.

The plant with a capacity to produce 1,000 sewage treatment units with Japanese "Johkasou" technology is coming up in Palwal, Kamal Tiwari, CEO of Daiki Axis India, told PTI during an interaction.

Daiki Axis India is a subsidiary of Japan-based Daiki Axis Japan.

The facility will be operational by September 2023, he said adding a unit is already functional in Vapi, Gujarat.

The Gujarat unit, which has a capacity to produce over 800 sewage treatment plants, was commissioned in 2019, Tiwari said.

The company is eyeing an increase in its customer base with setting up of the new unit. The product can be used in

both industrial, commercial and residential segments. The company has a team to assist customers in installation of the units, he said adding the technology is already in use in various states, including Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi.

The CEO further said India and Japan recently signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) for waste water management through Johkasou technology.

He said "clean water and sanitation is the key to the survival of people and the building up of a healthy nation. Government is taking several initiatives to achieve this goal. The MoC will be a game-changer in the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission and Sustainable Development Goals and provide waste water treatment to remote areas."

Explaining the technology,

he said its system is regulated by Johkasou Act of Japan, in which technical standards for manufacturing, installation, and operation and maintenance including desludging are stipulated.

The Act also stipulates a qualification system for Johkasou related technicians. In short, Johkasou is to treat domestic waste water locally and reuse it, which is very appropriate for India in current circumstances, Tiwari said.

Speaking on the importance of waste water treatment, the industry expert said "It's a matter of concern that 600 million people in India face high to extreme water stress. About 3/4th of the households in the country do not have drinking water at their premises. With nearly 70 per cent of water being contaminated, India is placed at 120th amongst 122 countries in the Water Quality Index." **PTI**

## Govt not to impose countervailing duty on certain aluminium products from Malaysia

**New Delhi:** The Government has decided not to impose countervailing duty on certain aluminium products being imported from Malaysia, as the finance ministry has not accepted the recommendations of the directorate general of trade remedies (DGTR).

The commerce ministry's investigation arm DGTR had conducted a probe into alleged exports subsidisation by Malaysia on 'aluminium primary foundry alloy ingot in different forms' following a complaint by the domestic industry and on January 31 this year recommended imposition of the duty.

"The central government, after considering the...final findings of the designated authority (DGTR), has decided not to accept the...recommendations," an office memorandum of Department of

Revenue said.

In an application to the directorate, domestic firms had alleged that subsidised imports from Malaysia are causing material injury to them and had requested the imposition of countervailing duties on the imports.

While the DGTR recommends the duty, the finance ministry takes the final call on the imposition.

Countervailing duty is a country-specific duty imposed to safeguard the domestic industry against unfair trade subsidies provided by local governments of exporting nations.

Under the global trade rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO), a member country is allowed to impose anti-subsidy or countervailing duty if a product is subsidised by the government of its trading partner. **PTI**

## Four of top-10 firms add ₹2 L cr in m-cap; Reliance lead gainer

**New Delhi:** Four of the 10 most valued domestic firms together added a whopping ₹2,31,320.37 crore in market valuation last week, with market heavyweight Reliance Industries contributing the most to the overall gains.

Last week, the Sensex jumped 884.57 points or 1.61 per cent.

While TCS, Infosys and ICICI Bank were the other gainers from the top-10 pack, HDFC Bank, HUL, LIC, SBI, HDFC and Bharti Airtel faced erosion from their market valuation. Their cumulative losses stood at ₹68,140.72 crore.

The valuation of Reliance Industries jumped ₹1,38,222.46 crore to reach ₹18,80,350.47 crore. The market capitalisation (m-cap) of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) rallied by ₹64,618.85 crore to ₹12,58,274.59 crore and that of



Infosys zoomed ₹25,728.52 crore to ₹6,40,373.02 crore.

ICICI Bank added ₹2,750.54 crore, taking its valuation to ₹5,17,049.46 crore.

In contrast, the m-cap of Bharti Airtel tanked ₹25,955.25 crore to ₹3,76,972.75 crore. The valuation of Life

Insurance Corporation (LIC) tumbled ₹13,472.25 crore to ₹5,06,157.94 crore.

HDFC's valuation plunged ₹9,355.02 crore to ₹4,13,299.36 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever (HUL) dived ₹8,963.69 crore to ₹5,38,561.56 crore. **PTI**

## Coal India arm's ex-CMD gets award from IMMA

**New Delhi:** Indian Mine Managers' Association has given the lifetime achievement award to Prabhat Kumar Sinha, senior advisor with NTPC.

The award was conferred on Sinha during a two-day 'International Conference on Sustainable Mining Options: The Way Ahead' organised in Nagpur on June 3 and 4, Indian Mine Managers' Association (IMMA) said in a statement.

The conference was inaugurated by road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari. After serving four years as CMD of Coal India arm Northern Coalfields Ltd (NCL), Sinha superannuated in December last year. **PTI**

## ONGC's nominee director appointment on HPCL Board stuck in paperwork

**New Delhi:** It spent Rs 36,915 crore to acquire a majority equity stake in the company. But to get its sole nominee director appointed on the board of HPCL, ONGC has to toil through paperwork.

For over five months now, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has had no representative on the board of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd - a company in which it owns a 51.11 per cent stake since January 2018. HPCL, under its new chairman Pushp Kumar Joshi, is however trying to resolve the situation, top officials said.

HPCL for over one-and-a-half years - between January 2018 and August 2019 - did not recognise ONGC as its promoter despite the government selling its entire 51.11 per cent

stake in the company to the oil explorer. It relented only after a rap from market regulator SEBI. ONGC got the right to appoint one director who HPCL called 'Government Nominee Director' (Representative of ONGC). Officials said since then ONGC appointed one of its directors as the nominee director. Its last nominee director was Alka Mittal, Director (HR) who was appointed to the HPCL board in April 2021.

In January this year, Mittal was given additional charge of chairman and managing director of ONGC after the retirement of the incumbent.

And following the past practice of the company that chairman could only sit on the board of a subsidiary in the capacity as chairman and not

as a director, Mittal resigned from the board of HPCL and another director was nominated.

HPCL promptly took note of it. In a stock exchange filing on January 6, 2022, HPCL said: "Alka Mittal has tendered resignation from the position of the Government Nominee Director (Representative of ONGC) of the company effective January 05, 2022."

Officials said as per rules, Mittal also sent her resignation from the HPCL board to the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas - the parent ministry of ONGC and HPCL.

The ministry however rejected the resignation and asked Mittal to continue on the HPCL board for "strategic reasons", they said. **PTI**

## Sun Pharma to expand field force in India by 10% this fiscal

To drive geographical expansion, brand focus objectives, says official

**New Delhi:** Drug major Sun Pharma plans to increase its field force in the domestic market by 10 per cent in the current fiscal in order to drive twin objectives of brand focus and geographical expansion, according to a senior company official.

The Mumbai-based drug major, which is the fourth largest specialty generic drug maker in the world, currently employs around 11,000 Medical Representatives (MRs) and related staff in the country. "The field force expansion

done in FY21 has met with good success and considering the current market conditions, we will be undertaking a further expansion of about 10 per cent for our field force in FY23, driven by the twin objectives of brand focus and geographical expansion," Sun Pharmaceutical Industries CEO (India Business) Kirti Ganorkar said in an analyst call.

The company's India formulations sales for the full year FY22 stood at Rs 12,759 crore recording a strong 23 per cent growth over 2020-21 fiscal.

For the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2022, formulation revenues in India stood at Rs 3,096 crore, about 16 per cent higher over the January-March quarter of FY21. **PTI**

## Nepal starts exporting additional 144 MW electricity to India

**Kathmandu:** Nepal has started exporting an additional 144 MW of electricity generated by its Kaligandaki hydropower plant to India through its power exchange market.

Buoyed by continuous rainfall this year, the Himalayan nation is exporting surplus electricity to India through its power exchange market for the second consecutive year, according to the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), the state-owned power utility body.

The average rate of selling electricity was around Rs 7, according to Pradeep Thike, Deputy Chief of the Nepal Electricity Authority. The NEA started exporting the additional electricity generated by

its Kaligandaki hydropower plant to India from Saturday midnight.

The electricity is being exported to India under the Nepal-India power exchange agreement, Thike said.

The NEA earlier started selling 37.7 MW electricity generated by its 24 MW Trishuli and 15 MW Devighat power plants from Wednesday midnight after the Himalayan nation's power plants started generating surplus energy.

"After the addition of electricity generated from 144 MW Kaligandaki Hydropower Project, Nepal will be selling a total of 178 MW electricity to India through India Energy Exchange Limited (IEX)," said Thike. **PTI**



# KING OF FRANCE

AP ■ PARIS

Rafael Nadal won a 14th French Open and record-extending 22nd Grand Slam title on Sunday with a straight-sets rout of Casper Ruud to become the oldest male champion at Roland Garros and he vowed to "keep fighting".

In a disappointing final, 36-year-old Nadal won 6-3, 6-3, 6-0 with victory coming 17 years to the day since he claimed his first French Open as a 19-year-old in 2005.

Nadal won the last 11 games of the final and is now two Slams ahead of old rivals Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer with Sunday's victory coming against all the odds.

Nadal, the oldest winner in Paris since a 34-year-old Andre Gimeno in 1972, had not been certain of taking part after a chronic left foot injury, which has plagued him throughout his career, flared up again.

He also needed the best part of a gruelling 12 hours to see off Felix Auger-Aliassime, Novak Djokovic and Alexander Zverev in the previous three rounds.

"I don't know what I would do in terms of injuries if it wasn't for the team, my family and everyone around me," said Nadal.

"I would've already retired much before if it wasn't for you.

"I never believed, that I'd be here at 36, being competitive again. Being here, means a lot to me on the most important court in my career. It helps me to keep going.

"For me, it's incredible to play here. It's an incredible feeling. I don't know what can happen in the future, but I'm going to keep fighting to try to keep going."

His two-hour 18-minute



win on Sunday took his record at the tournament to 112 wins against just three losses and also put him halfway to a rare calendar men's Grand Slam last achieved by Rod Laver in 1969.

"The most important thing is to congratulate Rafa," said Ruud.

## 'TRUE CHAMPION'

"You are a true champion. This is the first time I have faced you so now I know what it's like to be the victim! There will be many others.

"You have taken me into your academy with open arms and you are a true inspiration to

## Gauff runner-up at French Open for 2nd time

AP ■ PARIS

Coco Gauff suffered a second heartbreaking French Open final defeat when she and American partner Jessica Pegula were beaten by Caroline Garcia and Kristina Mladenovic in the women's doubles final on Sunday.

The French pair won 2-6, 6-3, 6-2 to add the 2022 title to their 2016 Roland Garros triumph. On Saturday, 18-year-old Gauff had lost the singles final in straight sets to Iga



me. We all hope you continue for some more time."

Nadal, unbeaten in 13 previous finals in Paris and playing in his 30th Grand Slam decider, got off to a flying start against Ruud, the first Norwegian man to feature in a championship match at the majors.

The Spaniard wrapped up the opener in 49 minutes against his 23-year-old opponent who has trained at his academy in Manacor since 2018.

World number eight Ruud, the in-form player on clay since the start of 2020 with 66 wins on the surface, was under siege again in the second set, having to fight off three break points in the opening game.

Ruud saved three set points in the ninth game but his first double fault of the final handed Nadal a two-set lead.

Without needing to hit top gear, he was in complete control against Ruud, racing away to the title with three breaks in a third set which was over in 30 minutes.

Nadal sealed the win with a backhand down the line, his 37th winner of the final.



## Stay strong Ukraine: Poland's Swiatek in emotional peace plea

AP ■ PARIS

Iga Swiatek received a standing ovation at Roland Garros on Saturday with an emotional "stay strong Ukraine" peace plea after winning her second French Open title.

The 21-year-old Pole was speaking after a 6-1, 6-3 win over Coco Gauff in only 68 minutes on Court Philippe Chatrier, equalling Venus Williams' record for the longest winning run by a woman in the 21st century.

"I wanted to say something to Ukraine, to stay strong, because the war is still there," said Swiatek who has worn a ribbon in the colours of the Ukrainian flag on her cap throughout the tournament.

"Since I made my speech in Doha (after winning the tournament in February) it had started and I was hoping when I do the next tournament speech the situation will be better but I will still have hope."

Moments later, she told broadcaster NBC: "The war is still there and people are suffering." "Many players have

taken off the (Ukraine) ribbons and there is huge discussion about next tournaments and points. It's not about that but the whole situation there and I want people to be aware."

Swiatek consoled 18-year-old Gauff, the youngest woman in a Slam final since Maria Sharapova at Wimbledon in 2004.

The American sobbed as she sat courtside at the end of the final and again on the trophy podium.

"First I want to congratulate Coco because you are doing an amazing job. You are progressing all the time. You will find it and you will be there I am pretty sure of that," said the Pole.

"When I was your age, I was in my first year on tour and I didn't know what I was doing.

"I want to thank my team, you guys, I mean, oh my god, without you I wouldn't be here, I'm sure of that. I'm glad every piece has come together and we can do this. We deserve to be here. Thanks for your full support all the time no matter what."

## Brazil don't need Neymar magic to win, says Tite



AP ■ TOKYO

Brazil no longer rely on superstar Neymar to win games, manager Tite said on Sunday, with an Olympic Gold medal-winning generation looking to step up at the World Cup.

Neymar underlined his importance to Tite's side by netting the 72nd and 73rd goals of his Brazil career in a 5-1 friendly thrashing of South Korea in Seoul last week.

That took him within striking distance of the legendary Pele's record of 77 goals for the five-time World Cup winners.

Tite played down Brazil's dependence on

Neymar as his team prepared to face Japan in a friendly in Tokyo on Monday, saying a new generation of players are ready to share the load.

"I have been in charge of the national team for a long time, and in that time I have made lots of mistakes and also made some good decisions," he said. "We have a new generation coming through and one good thing I have done is to try out a lot of players. Now we are not so dependent on one attacking player."

Brazil won Gold at the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Olympics last year, beating Spain 2-1 in the final after extra time.

Olympians like Richarlison and Bruno Guimaraes have broken into Tite's senior squad, and assistant coach Cesar Sampaio said it was a "happy problem" to have.

"The players with experience and the players who won the Olympic Gold here in Japan are now coming together," said the former midfielder.

"We have players with a lot of speed and creativity, especially in attack."

Brazil will be looking to round off their two-game trip to Asia with a win against Japan at Tokyo's Olympic stadium on Monday.

Japan, who will be playing at the venue for the first time since it was rebuilt to host the Games, warmed up with a convincing 4-1 win over Paraguay last week.

Manager Hajime Moriyasu said his players will have to be "brave and aggressive" to beat Brazil -- something Japan have never achieved in a full international.

"We want to make our mark at the World Cup and the game against Paraguay was a start towards that," said Moriyasu. "We need to go further than we've gone before and try to overcome our limits. I want the players to do that tomorrow."

## Hat-trick hero Mane hints at leaving Liverpool

AP ■ JOHANNESBURG

Sadio Mane scored a hat-trick as Senegal overcame Benin 3-1 on Saturday in the first match of their Africa Cup of Nations title defence, and hinted that he will not be at Liverpool next season.

Speaking to the media before the Group L clash, Mane said: "I will do what they (the Senegalese people) want.

"Like everyone else, I am on social media and see the comments. Is it not between 60 and 70 percent of Senegalese want me to leave Liverpool?"

Mane, who forms a deadly strike partnership with two-time African Footballer of the Year Mohamed Salah from Egypt, has been linked to German giants Bayern Munich.

He had said he would reveal his future plans after Liverpool lost to Real Madrid in the Champions League final last weekend, but did not do so.

"We will see soon," he told the media conference in Senegal. "Do not be in hurry because we will see this together."

The 30-year-old reigning African Footballer of the Year converted a 12th-minute penalty at the national stadium in Diarmniadio near Dakar.

Mane struck

again on 23 minutes, bursting into the box and scoring at the second attempt after goalkeeper Saturnin Allagbe blocked his initial shot.

Benin had Sessi D'Almeida sent off early in the second half of the 2023 qualifier and Mane completed his hat-trick on the hour from another penalty before Junior Olaitan reduced arrears.

Next up for Senegal is a trip to Rwanda on Tuesday, and it is hard to imagine any result other than another victory for the Teranga Lions.



## 'Salt lake atmosphere will be a big boost'

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Playing the AFC Asian Cup final round qualifiers at a packed Salt Lake Stadium will be a "big boost" for the Indian football team, feel Pritam Kotal and Subhasish Bose, the Blue Tigers' two local players.

India have matches scheduled on June 8, 11, and 14.

"Kolkata is the mecca of Indian football. The fans here are great. So many clubs have dedicated fans here, and the great thing is that they all come together to cheer for India when we play as a nation in this city," said Bose.

"I hope there is a lot of noise from the stands. That will boost all of us. From our end, we need to pay them back with a qualification for the AFC Asian Cup."

The last time the Blue Tigers played here was in 2019, and Kotal said the team can once again feel the home advantage.

"It's a big advantage for us to play in front of our fans. Especially because we have not been able to play in front of our own fans for a long time due to COVID. So, I would like to encourage all the fans to come ahead and support us



in these three games. We will try to give our best -- together we can," said Kotal.

Both the Blue Tigers defenders are focused on the job ahead, as they prepare to face Cambodia, Afghanistan and Hong Kong.

"It's absolutely crucial for us as a nation to qualify for the AFC Asian Cup, and all of us in the team are completely focused on that. We will try our best and hopefully will make it to the tournament proper."

"We need to take it match by match, and we must do well in all the three games ahead of us," said Kotal.

"All the teams are quite capable of defeating each other in this group, and it will be a

very tight contest. We need to make sure that we do all the positive things both on and off the ground, and come out with the results," he added.

Bose recalled the last edition of the AFC Asian Cup in 2019, when the Blue Tigers had played in front of packed stands in the UAE.

"It was an amazing feeling in the UAE. So many Indian fans had come to the ground there, it was great. We tried our best back then, but we could not make it to the knockout rounds. 'Of course, we would love to go one better in the next edition -- but first, we need to qualify -- and for that, we need to do well in these three upcoming matches," Bose said.

## England beaten in Hungary, Italy hold Germany

AP ■ PARIS

A tired England side went down to a surprise 1-0 defeat in Hungary in the UEFA Nations League on Saturday, while Germany had to come from behind to draw 1-1 with an inexperienced Italy team.

RB Leipzig star Dominik Szoboszlai scored the only goal of the game from the penalty spot in the second half in Budapest as Hungary beat England for the first time since 1962.

Defeat on penalties to Italy in the European Championship final last year was the only time Gareth Southgate's side had been beaten in their previous 22 games.

"We proved at Euro 2020 what we're capable of doing against the best, and we've shown this again. The tough thing will be to repeat this," Hungary captain Adam Szalai told broadcaster M4 Sport.

England's line-up featured debuts for Leicester City full-back James Justin and West Ham United forward Jarrod Bowen, but the visitors failed to trouble the hosts, who were roared on by a 30,000 crowd largely consisting of school children.

"They are bitterly disappointed because we want to keep winning matches. If we want to be a team right at the top tier of football, we need to come here and win," said England manager Gareth Southgate, before conceding that fatigue played a role.

"It has been a long season. The heat was a factor and took a lot out of the players."

Hungary were forced to play the game behind closed doors due to the behaviour of fans during their home matches at Euro 2020.

However, UEFA guidelines allow children under the age of 14 to be given free tickets



under such circumstances and the Hungarian Football Federation took full advantage.

The goal came in the 66th minute, with Szoboszlai beating Jordan Pickford from the spot after England substitute

Reece James was adjudged to have fouled Zsolt Nagy.

Southgate's men will next face Germany and Italy, who played out an entertaining stalemate in Bologna in Saturday's other League A, Group 3 game.

## IRELAND LOSE

Roma captain Lorenzo Pellegrini gave a much-changed Italy team the lead 20 minutes from time when he turned in a superb cross from teenage debutant Wilfried Gnonto.

Gnonto, 18, had just been sent on after impressing in FC Zurich's run to this season's Swiss Super League title.

However, Germany needed just three minutes to draw level as the home defence failed to clear Jonas Hofmann's ball into the middle and Joshua Kimmich fired in.

Germany play England in Munich on Tuesday while European champions Italy -- looking to move on following their failure to qualify for the World Cup -- host Hungary before travelling to face Southgate's side in Wolverhampton next weekend. Elsewhere the Republic of Ireland slumped to a first defeat

in nine games as they suffered a surprise 1-0 loss away in Armenia. Eduard Spertsysan scored the only goal in the second half in Yerevan in the League B, Group 1 opener.

Armenia now travel to play Scotland on Wednesday while Ireland host Ukraine the same night before facing Scotland in Dublin next weekend.

There were also Nations League wins on Saturday for Montenegro, Luxembourg and Turkey while Finland were held 1-1 at home by Bosnia and Herzegovina after taking the lead through a Teemu Pukki penalty.

The winners of each of the four groups in League A will go through to the final stages in June next year with promotion and relegation between the other leagues and the chance to earn places in Euro 2024 qualifying play-offs for teams who fail to qualify via the usual route.



# Mumbai start favourites against U'khand

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Mumbai will strive to be the Mumbai of yore in their Ranji Trophy quarterfinal against Uttarakhand, beginning here from Monday.

By the time the hilly state — looking to scale new heights with a new generation of players — came into existence nearly 22 years ago, the heavy-weights had won the country's premier domestic tournament an unprecedented 34 times.

From 2000 to 2022, Mumbai had placed another seven humongous title-winning cups in their envious trophy cabinet.

In the context of Ranji Trophy, using the word strive and Mumbai in the same breadth is ironical, for winning this title came naturally to the Mumbai outfits of the halcyon days, when they were superior, stubborn, and maybe a bit snobbish at times.

Of course, their game was also punctuated by their well-documented never-say-die attitude and hate-to-lose approach, something the once-upon-a-time cradle of Indian cricket is trying to rediscover.

Mumbai's entry into the quarterfinals of this edition was far from smooth as they just about made it after Saurashtra failed to win with a bonus point in their last group match against Goa.

Nevertheless, the 41-time winners are the firm favourites heading into their latest challenge.

Mumbai will bank on their skipper Prithvi Shaw to lead from the front as the diminutive right-handed batter has the ability to take the inexperienced Uttarakhand attack to the task at the Alur Cricket Stadium II.

A marauding Shaw is always a threat to the opposition in any format, and Uttarakhand will aim to get him early.

Mumbai have a set of relatively new batters, including



Arman Jaffer, Bhupen Lalwani and Hardik Tamore, who will need to play their roles well.

However, the two players who can make a big impact are young opener Yashasvi Jaiswal and Sarfaraz Khan.

With his younger brother Musheer picked in the squad, Sarfaraz will be more than keen to put up a good show and show.

Sarfaraz, who did well for Delhi Capitals in the IPL-15, has pulled Mumbai out of trouble on many occasions and will again look to anchor the innings.

Ditto for Jaiswal, in whom the team management and coach Amol Mazumdar have reposed faith time and again. The two have all the necessary shots in the book and can pummel the opposition attack to submission.

Experienced batter-keep-

er Aditya Tare will need to shoulder more responsibility along with left-arm spinning all-rounder Shams Mulani.

Mulani had grabbed 11 wickets in the team's last league game against Goa and will look to spin his web around the opposition batter, again.

He also forged a match-winning partnership with Tanush Kotian in the match against Goa.

With Mulani a certainty in the playing XI, off-spinner Kotian could be preferred over senior pro Shashank Attarde, given his ability with the bat.

Mumbai have a decent pace attack, led by the seasoned Dhawal Kulkarni, who will have company in Tushar Deshpande.

The tussle for the third pacer could be between Mohit Awasthi and Royston Dias.

Karnataka **VS** UP  
Live from 9:30am IST  
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

While the Muzumdar-coached side will be aiming to move a step closer to its 42nd title, Uttarakhand would look to spring a surprise.

## FOCUS ON GILL

Meanwhile, after his successful outing with Gujarat Titans in the Indian Premier League, the focus will be on opener Shubman Gill, when his side Punjab take on Madhya Pradesh in another quarterfinal match.

The elegant right-handed batter will be up against a varied MP attack comprising left-arm spinner Kumar Kartikeya Singh, who also recently made his IPL debut.

The game is also a battle

between veteran coaches Chandrakant Pandit and Surendra Bhawe, two of the shrewdest minds in the domestic arena and it will be interesting to see how they come up against each other.

## KARNATAKA VS UP

A star-studded Karnataka batting line-up comprising Devdutt Padikkal, Karun Nair, Manish Pandey and till recently India's opener Mayank Agarwal gives the team a menacing look but they will be up against a quality seam attack from Uttar Pradesh that has stars Mohsin Khan and Yash Dayal in its ranks.

If Karnataka's batting has a scary look, the bowling is a bit thin on quality compared to the days when R Vinay Kumar, Srinath Aravind and Abhimanyu Mithun would run through opposition sides.

# Saha-less Bengal hold pole position against Jharkhand

Bengal **vs** Jharkhand  
Live from 9:30am IST  
HOTSTAR

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Their most decorated player, Wriddhiman Saha, may have left the team in the lurch owing to his personal grudge against the establishment, but the Abhimanyu Easwaran-led Bengal will still start as favourites against Jharkhand with their pace troika ready to let it rip in their Ranji Trophy quarter-final, starting from Monday.

The trio of Mukesh Kumar (15 wickets), Ishan Porel (14 wickets) and Akash Deep (10 wickets) has been the most prolific pace attack in the country and with a cumulative count of 39 wickets among the 58 that Bengal got this season, they will come all guns blazing at the Jharkhand line-up, which has shown firepower during the league stages.

However, the likes of Kumar Deobrat, Kumar Kushagra, Virat Singh will like to forget their overwhelming near 900-run innings score against Nagaland, which was their pre-quarter-final at the Eden Gardens.

It will be a very different fight against one of the best domestic bowling attacks in the country along with the gutsy spin-bowling all-rounder Shahbaz Ahmed (8 wickets) for company.

Out of the Indian Test team as the new management doesn't want a 37-year-old second keeper, an upset Wriddhiman had cited "personal reasons" for not playing in the league stages, where the team found a new star in 19-year-old Abhishek Porel. However, after doing a star turn for Gujarat Titans in



the IPL, the India discard demanded a public apology from state body office-bearer Debabrata Das for allegedly insulting him.

Subsequently, he decided to not play one of the most important matches of the season for the state team, which made him the cricketer that he is today.

In this backdrop, the Bengal side, without arguably its No. 1 player with 40-Test experience, is sure to feel let down but will be determined to prove a point that it has long back adapted to life without an India "star".

With the Just Cricket Academy ground producing a proper "five-day" wicket, Bengal coach Saurasish Lahiri pointed out that a couple of slots are up for grabs.

For the No. 3 spot, it will be a toss-up between two stodgy

left-handers with good defensive game — the diminutive Abhishek Raman and the lanky Sudip Chatterjee.

"It's a tough call as both are quality players," Lahiri said.

The other position up for grab is the all-rounder's slot where Sayan Sekhar Mondal, with his hard-hitting batting and good seam-up stuff at close to 130 clicks, is considered a better bet than Wriddick Chatterjee, who bowls off-spin and also have a double hundred in first-class cricket.

For Bengal, the key will be to counter the two left-arm spinners Shahbaz Nadeem and Anukul Roy, who are seasoned performers. The pace duo of Rahul Shukla and Varun Aaron might not be a big threat, especially with the latter not having played any red-ball games in recent times.

Often the reserve pacer in that line-up, Ronit More is now the leader of the attack

and it will be interesting as to how he counters the likes of Rinku Singh, Akshdeep Nath

and Priyam Garg. The match will be played at Alur (1) ground.

# Root scripts Poms win in Lord's Test



AP ■ LONDON

Former captain Joe Root gave his successor Ben Stokes the perfect start to his reign at Lord's, carrying England to victory with a match-winning century to seal the first Test against New Zealand on Sunday.

Root walked away as skipper in April after five years and a record 64 games in charge but remains the team's most reliable performer and produced a knock of 115 not out to set up a five-wicket victory.

In a decisive partnership with Ben Foakes, who made an unbeaten 32 in a stand of 120, Root shepherded the home side to a stiff chase of 277 with his first fourth-innings hundred.

By doing so Root became just the second Englishman to reach 10,000 Test runs — following in the footsteps of his own predecessor as captain, Alastair Cook. The symmetry of their achievements does not end there, with both men exactly 31 years and 157 days old when they crossed the threshold.

It was Root's 26th century, the same as West Indian great Sir Garfield Sobers, but he will be even more satisfied by its importance to the team.

England were marginal favourites as they resumed on 216 for five, with 61 runs still

needed and five wickets in hand, but the task still looked a taxing one.

With thick, grey clouds overhead and the floodlights glaring from the first ball, conditions were far from ideal for batting. A fragile tail, featuring at least three natural number 11s, also cranked up the responsibility on the overnight pairing of Root and Foakes.

But a game that has seen-sawed back and forth with a series of twists along the way was put to bed in unusually serene fashion.

Root was the key man and he was reliably measured as he converted an unbeaten 77 in understated fashion. However, Foakes deserves huge credit for the way he held up his end.

Having successfully shut out the Kiwi attack on the third evening, soaking up 48 balls for his nine runs, the Surrey wicketkeeper expanded his repertoire.

With boundaries at a premium he helped himself to two in the space of three deliveries from the dangerous Kyle Jamieson, punching him off the back foot towards third man before crunching an on-drive. Later, with the target dipping below 30, he rocked onto his heels and pulled Tim Southee between two fielders for four more.

Root moved into the 90s by

## Joe first Englishman to complete 17K int'l runs

England batter Joe Root on Sunday became the first English player to complete 17,000 runs in International cricket.

Root achieved this feat during the Test match against New Zealand, scoring a brilliant century to power his team to take a 1-0 lead over the visitors. Root scored 115\* runs in 170 balls. Earlier, Joe Root completed 10,000 runs in Test cricket on Sunday, becoming the second English player and 14th overall player to reach the landmark.

Former England captain Alastair Cook is the other English player who has scored 10,000 runs or more. He has scored 12,472 in 161 Tests at an average of 45.35. He also scored 33 centuries and 57 half-centuries in the longest format of the game.

drilling Jamieson back down the ground and then had a slice of luck when an under edge evaded both his stumps and Tom Blundell's dive on its way to the ropes.

New Zealand had hoped to hang in and needed the second new ball to work some magic for them. However, they could not halt England's scoring. Root started the 77th over on 98 runs in the innings and 9,998 in his career and pinged Southee to mid-wicket for a couple to bring up a proud double.

He punched the air in joy and pointed to the pavilion as the crowd showed their appreciation, with the winning line now just a few shots away. Root finished the job in a blaze of glory, taking Southee for three boundaries in an over as he wrapped things up with a merry swing through mid-wicket.

# Punia claims Bronze in Almaty, Aman wins international Gold at senior level

PTI ■ ALMATY

Bajrang Punia got his act together to claim a Bronze medal after ultra-defensive tactics resulted in his opening-round defeat even as Aman claimed his first Gold medal at the senior level with a commanding show in the 57kg competition at the Bolat Turlykhanov Cup, here Sunday.

Bajrang, the Tokyo Games Bronze winner, struggled in his opening bout against Uzbekistan's Abbos Rakhmonov, losing 3-5 but competed much better in the Bronze-play off where he played smartly to score on counter-attacks against Kazakhstan's Rifat Saibotalov, winning 7-0.

Bajrang foiled a right leg attack from Saibotalov and then scored two points on counter attack after his rival went for his right leg.

The 28-year-old converted a left-leg attack into points and foiled another valiant effort from the home-favourite.

Bajrang was quick with his movements that was key in his mix of defence and attack in the crucial bout.

Earlier, the overtly defensive tactics that Bajrang has been adopting, of late, continued against Rakhmonov and paid the price.

Bajrang got the first two points when his rival was cautioned twice for foul play. He hard-ly made a move but the Uzbekistan wrestler converted a left-leg attack into a take-down move for two points to level the score.

The celebrated wrestler later got one more point on the passivity of Rakhmonov and was leading but dropped guard when

# Indian men's team enters final in FIH Hockey 5s

PTI ■ LAUSANNE

The Indian men's team stormed into the final of the inaugural FIH Hockey 5s tournament with an unbeaten record after dominating wins over Malaysia and Poland here on Sunday.

India first outplayed Malaysia 7-3, pumping in four goals in the second half in a stunning show before beating Poland 6-2 in the second match of the day.

The Graham Reid-coached side topped the five-team standings after the

round-robin league stage with 10 points from three wins and one draw. India had beaten hosts Switzerland 4-3 and drawn with arch-rivals Pakistan 2-2 on Saturday.

India will face Poland — who finished second with six points — again in the final later in the day. Pakistan would have qualified for the final and faced India had they won against Malaysia in their final league match but the match ended 5-5 draw. Pakistan finished third with five points.

The Indian women's team, however, failed to make it to

the final after drawing 4-4 with South Africa in the second match after beating hosts Switzerland 4-3 earlier in the day. The Indian women would have entered the final had they beaten South Africa by a margin of two goals. They finished fourth in the five-team standings with four points from one win, one draw and two losses.

In the men's match, Raheel Mohammed continued his goal-scoring spree as he fired in three goals against Malaysia and then struck twice against Poland to play a pivotal

role in India booking a summit clash berth.

He had also found the target thrice on Saturday — twice against Switzerland and once against Pakistan. He has accumulated eight goals from four matches to lead the tournament's goal-scoring chart.

Besides Raheel's three strikes in the 8th, 14th and 18th minutes, Gursahibjit Singh (1st and 17th) and Sanjay (10th and 12th) were the other Indian scorers against Malaysia who scored through Rosdi Firadus (4th and 13th) and captain Noor

Nabil (9th).

The Indians led 3-2 at the half time in the 20-minute match.

India completely dominated the match against Poland, surging to a 5-0 lead at half time through goals from Sanjay (2nd), Raheel (4th and 9th), Gursahibjit Singh (7th) and Mandeep Mor (10th).

Moirangthem Rabichandra (15th) added one goal for India in the second session while Arzynski Gracjan (13th) and captain Kurowski Jacek (16th) reduced the margin for Poland.

# Head unsure about playing in Aus-SL ODIs



AGENCIES ■ MELBOURNE

Australian batter Travis Head said that he is unsure about being in the playing XI in the upcoming ODI series against Sri Lanka.

Australia will play against the host's Sri Lanka in five-match ODI series starting on June 14. Head is included in both the ODI squad that departed for Colombo and Australia A squad that will be playing a number of one-day and first-class matches in Sri Lanka. "It means I probably won't start (in the ODI series)," said Head as per cricket.com.au.

"I'm realistic in that Davey (Warner) and Finchy are back together at the top of the order, and then you've got a middle-order that's so set in that side it's a hard one to get into," he added. The 28-year-old further talked about his plan, "I think the plan is to see the lay of the land for the first couple of ODIs and, if the opportunity isn't quite there and a spot doesn't open up, then there's a chance for me to play in the second Australia A (four-day) game and turn my focus to the Test series."