

## OPINION 6

DIVISIVENESS MUST  
BE CONFRONTED

## MONEY 8

'POWER DEMAND JUMPED BY  
RECORD 45K MW IN A YEAR'

## WORLD 9

UKRAINE'S PRESIDENT SAYS HIS  
TROOPS KEEP DEFYING PREDICTIONS

NEW DELHI, MONDAY JUNE 13, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

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# Govt delivers bulldozer blow in Prayagraj

House of Atala violence mastermind demolished; over 400 held after Friday's trouble in several States, Bengal stir spreads with attacks on trains

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
PRAYAGRAJ/KOLKATA

Over 400 people have been arrested so far in a clampdown on those involved in the violent protests on Friday in several States against the controversial remarks on Prophet Mohammad by two now-sacked BJP functionaries, with authorities in Uttar Pradesh (UP) razing "illegal" houses of the accused for the second day. The Prayagraj administration on Sunday demolished the house of the Atala arson and stone-pelting mastermind, Javed Ahmed alias Javed Pump, in the old area amid tight security.

Top officials of the district administration and the police-led Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) and Rapid Action Force (RAF) jawans, and officers of the Prayagraj Development Authority (PDA) were present for the demolition. Many items, including cleavers and some documents, were recovered from the house. The demolition of the house with the aid of a PDA bulldozer started on Sunday afternoon. The Prayagraj administra-



A bulldozer demolishes the residence of Javed Ahmed, a local leader who was allegedly the key conspirator behind the violent protests over now-suspended BJP leaders' remarks on Prophet Muhammad, in Prayagraj on Sunday

PTI

tion had on Saturday arrested 68 out of the 70 identified trouble-makers, including the alleged mastermind Javed Ahmad popularly known as Pump owing to his pump business, in connection with the violence in the Atala area of the

district last Friday. The police have also detained about 20 suspects and they are being interrogated but they have not been arrested so far.

Elsewhere, there were a few sporadic incidents of violence and protests, with a group

of people attacking and damaging a local train at Bethuadahari railway station in West Bengal's Nadia district on Sunday evening.

Among those arrested, 304 were held in eight districts in UP

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## Sonia in hosp with Covid complications; wishes pour in

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi was admitted to Ganga Ram Hospital due to Covid-related complications on Sunday. Congress Party and hospital sources said she is reportedly stable and will be kept at the hospital for observation as the party high command had tested positive for Covid early this month.

She was asked to appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on June 8 but had sought a different date, following which she was asked to appear on June 23. The ED has registered an FIR in a money laundering case pertaining to the National Herald-AJL case and former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, will appear on Monday in the same matter.

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## Prez polls: Nadda, Rajnath to talk with parties to build consensus on choice

### Cong, TMC rivalry may mar Opp bid to give common name

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

In a customary outreach to develop a consensus on the choice for the post of President of India, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday authorised its president JP Nadda and Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to hold talks with leaders of different political parties, including those in the Opposition.

The presidential polls will be held on July 18.

In a statement, the BJP said the two senior leaders will talk to both ruling NDA and

Opposition UPA constituents, besides other political parties as well as Independent members.

Such an exercise on the part of the ruling party at the Centre is part of the Indian democratic tradition, but it has rarely yielded any positive results in the past.

Opposition parties had accused the BJP during the last presidential polls in 2017 of reaching out to them at the last moment after it had already finalised the name of Ram Nath Kovind, who went on to become the President of the country.

The Opposition had forced a contest by backing Meira Kumar, who lost to Kovind.

The Opposition parties are engaged in their own exercise to pick a consensus candidate, but the rivalry between the TMC and the Congress threatens to spoil the initiative.

Continued on Page 2

## India to show holy relics of Lord Buddha in Mongolia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Four holy relics of Lord Buddha also known as

"Kapilvatu relics" have been flown from India to Mongolia for display for 11 days at the Batsagaan temple in Gandan Monastery of Ulaanbataar exposition as part of celebrations of the neighbouring country's Buddha Purnima falling on June 14.

The move follows a special request from the Mongolian Government and as a special gesture by India towards its "Third neighbour" in the East.

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# IPL media rights auction per match value crosses ₹100 cr-mark

Cumulative valuation may hit ₹50 K cr as bidding to continue today

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Premier League's (IPL's) media rights auction witnessed a robust bidding for TV and Digital rights of the Indian sub-continent with the valuation per match of the cash-rich league being earmarked at more than a whopping ₹100 crore. With the bidding going into the second day, the cumulative valuation of the media rights could well touch the staggering ₹50,000-crore mark, which will be one of the biggest in terms of global rights across any sport.

Four out of the seven players in the fray — Viacom18, Disney-Star, Sony and Zee were involved in a near seven hour slugfest that remained



inconclusive with Package A (India TV Rights) and Package B (India Digital Rights) cumulatively fetching upwards of ₹42,000 crore (\$5.37 billion approximately) and still counting. The final result might not be out late on Monday or Tuesday as the battle for Packages A and B will continue on Monday.

Once it is over, the winner of package B can challenge for

Package C which has 18 non-exclusive digital rights game for ₹16 crore per game and subsequently Package D (Overseas TV and Digital combined rights at ₹3 crore per game) will come up for bidding.

As of now after 5.30 P.M., the bid for TV has gone up to ₹57 crore per game from its base price of ₹49 crore and India digital rights have seen an unbelievable growth from ₹33

crore to ₹48 crore per game," a senior BCCI functionary said on condition of anonymity. "So from per game combined valuation of ₹54.5 crore from the last five-year-cycle, it has already surpassed the ₹100 crore mark (₹105 crore plus). It is unbelievable. It will again start tomorrow."

While it is not known which parts were the most aggressive among the four bidders, it is expected that the Viacom18-Uday Shankar consortium is locked in an intense bidding war with current rights holder Disney (Star).

"We were expecting fantastic digital bids and with the fight for group A and B still on, the magic figure of ₹50,000 crore could well be touched. For Package C and D, one can have a rough estimate that another ₹5500 crore would be added if these first two packages stop at ₹45,000 crore," another BCCI official, present in Mumbai, said.

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## India logs over 8K new Covid cases for 2nd day

4 deaths take toll to 5,24,761; new variants, complacency to blame

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Increased travel, social gatherings, and opening up of economic activities besides complacency towards Covid-appropriate behaviour have started reflecting on the daily Covid tally, with India reporting 8,582 new infections on Sunday. This is the second day in a row that the cases have crossed the 8,000 mark. In contrast, just a few days ago, i.e. till mid-May, the cases were on a decline.

However, experts have observed that such fluctuations in the Covid wave pattern are likely to remain in the near future as people have become complacent towards basic Covid-appropriate behaviour and have increased travelling and attending social gatherings sans masks.

They also attributed the rise in Coronavirus cases to the emergence of the new variants, BA.4 and BA.5, in addition to BA.2, which have a slightly higher transmissibility as compared to the other Omicron sub-lineages. "But these are not as deadly as Omicron which swept the country last year," they said while ruling out the emergence of the fourth wave.



An official from the Union Health Ministry pointed out that there has been at least a 100 per cent increase in new Covid infections so far this month, with the test positivity rate (TPR) — a vital marker in assessing the spread of an outbreak — touching 2.26 recently. The country's case count has moved up to touch 4,32,22,017, said the Health Ministry.

Besides, with four virus-related deaths also being reported on Sunday till 8 A.M., the Covid death count stood at 5,24,761. The four new fatalities include three from Kerala and one from Maharashtra which is witnessing a sharp surge in cases with Mumbai

alone sharing a major caseload.

Seventeen districts in India, including seven from Kerala and five from Mizoram, are reporting a weekly positivity rate of more than 10 per cent. In 24 districts, including seven from Kerala and four each from Maharashtra and Mizoram, the weekly positivity is between 5 to 10 per cent, the official said.

AIIMS chief Dr. Randeep Guleria cited poor turnout for booster doses and non-adherence of Covid-appropriate behaviour as the top reasons behind the spike.

"People were being unenthusiastic about getting the booster dose against the Coronavirus and it was one of the key reasons behind the latest rise in cases. Complacency has set in among people towards following Covid-appropriate behavior," he said.

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## CAPSULE

### COPS DENY PERMISSION TO CONG RALLY TO ED HQ

**New Delhi:** Amrutha Guguloth, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), New Delhi district in a letter to the All-India Congress Committee (AICC) stated that based on inputs, it has come to its notice through various sources, that the AICC is planning to organise a rally from its headquarters i.e. 24 Akbar Road to the Enforcement Directorate's Office at Dr APJ Abdul Kalam road in Delhi. "Keeping in view the present communal situation in Delhi and heavy law and order/VIP movements in the jurisdiction of New Delhi district..... the said rally could not be permitted in the jurisdiction of New Delhi district," stated the letter.

Earlier report on P4

### J&K TOPS NATIONAL E-GOVERNANCE UT LIST

**New Delhi:** Jammu and Kashmir, assessed for the first time, ranked the highest among Union Territories with an over all compliance of nearly 90 per cent for national e-governance service delivery assessment (NeSDA), according to an official report on Sunday.

### ELIZABETH 2ND-LONGEST RULING MONARCH

**London:** Britain's Queen Elizabeth II on Sunday overtook Thailand's King to become the world's second-longest reigning monarch in history, after France's Louis XIV. The UK has been celebrating the 96-year-old Queen's Platinum Jubilee to mark 70 years of service to the nation with grand events taking place last weekend.

### Almost 80% of Indians suffer from deficiency of Vitamin D and B12

Deficiency of Vitamin D can cause diseases like arthritis, constant tiredness, depression & cancer and deficiency of Vitamin B12 can cause anemia and brain & bones related problems.

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- Aids brain function
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# Northwest India faces severe heatwave

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 22 towns and cities in northwest India have reported maximum temperatures above 44 degrees Celsius on Sunday. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said the heat wave spell in isolated areas of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand will continue for up to two more days and abatement thereafter.

The IMD issued a yellow alert warning of a heatwave in parts of Delhi on Monday. Of the 703 districts across India, 578 have received deficient rainfall or no rainfall so far.

Weather experts have attributed the heat wave spell to the lack of strong western disturbances and incessant hot and dry westerly winds. The IMD said moisture-laden easterly winds will provide significant relief from the searing heat from June 16 onwards.

Northwest and central India is reeling under a heatwave spell since June 2 due to an onslaught of hot and dry westerly winds. Senior IMD scientist R K Jenamani said



People take a stroll at Mall road on a hot summer day, in Shimla, Saturday 2022 PTI Photo

maximum temperatures in Delhi-NCR and other parts of

northwest India will come down by a few notches over the weekend but no major relief is likely till June 15.

As per the IMD, the minimum temperature of the national capital on Sunday settled at 32.8 degrees Celsius, which is five notches above normal for this time of year. The Safdarjung Observatory recorded a maximum temperature of 43.9 degrees Celsius, four notches above normal.

The maximum temperature settled at 46.7 degrees Celsius at the Sports Complex automatic weather station near the Akshardham temple, making it the hottest place in the city.

The IMD predicted maximum temperatures to dip by two to three degrees Celsius in northwest India starting Tuesday. Between June 16 and June 22, the maximum temperatures are likely to remain 'below-normal to near-normal', it said in an extended range forecast.

"No significant heatwave likely over any part of the country during the week (June 16-June 22)," it said. On the monsoon front, the IMD said an increase in rainfall activity in several states including

Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Gangetic West Bengal with thunderstorm/lightning/gusty winds between June 14 and 16.

As per IMD, the conditions are favorable for further advance of monsoon into some parts of the north Arabian Sea, remaining parts of Konkan, some parts of Gujarat state, most parts of Madhya Maharashtra, entire Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, some parts of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Westcentral & northwest Bay of Bengal during the next 24 hours.

Similarly, conditions would continue to become favourable for further advance of monsoon into some more parts of north Arabian Sea, Gujarat state, some parts of Marathwada, some more parts of Telangana,

Andhra Pradesh, most parts of Bay of Bengal, entire Sub-Himalayan West Bengal & Sikkim, some parts of Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal, Jharkhand and Bihar during subsequent three days.

"Fall in maximum temperatures by 2-3 degree Celsius is very likely over central India during next three days and no significant change thereafter. No significant change in maximum

temperatures very likely over East India during next three days and gradual fall by 2-3 degree Celsius thereafter," it said.

The Skymet weather said that India recorded 43 per cent deficient rainfall since the onset of the southwest monsoon 29May 29, 2022. Monsoon rains have skipped Kerala this season.

All 14 districts of the state have witnessed extremely poor rainfall between 01st - 10th June 2022. On the basis of geography, the state's districts have been grouped in to 3 parts : North Kerala - Kasaragode, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode : Central Kerala - Idukki, Ernakulam, Kottayam, Malappuram, Palakkad : South Kerala - Alappuzha, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Thiruvananthapuram.

The central district of Kerala has observed 60 per cent rainfall deficiency, Kasaragode, Wayanad and Palakkad have witnessed over 80 per cent deficient rainfall so far. Between 01-10 June, the state of Kerala has recoded 71.5mm of rainfall against the normal of 182.2mm. The state is categorized as 'large deficit' with a shortfall of 61% during this period.

## Russia deeply cherishes equal and respectful relations with India: Envoy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Russia deeply cherishes the equal and respectful relations with India and the multidimensional cooperation between the two strategic partners is one of the world's "most elaborate" ones, Russian Ambassador Denis Alipov has said.

The envoy has also said that the positions of the two countries on "core issues remain similar or coinciding".

Alipov made the comments in the Russia Digest magazine on the occasion of the 75th year of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

He also said the delivery of S-400 air defence missile systems to India is proceeding well in accordance with the schedule.

"Russia deeply cherishes equal and respectful relations with India. Our cooperation plays the role of a defining factor for global peace, stability and sustainable development," Alipov said.

"We are confident in the future of our bilateral ties and are ready to move forward in utilising their potential and exploring new horizons for the benefit of the people of our two friendly nations," he added.

Alipov's comments came in the midst of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. India is yet to condemn the Russian action and has pressed for the resolution of the crisis through dialogue.

Referring to 75 years of the India-Russia ties, Alipov said both countries succeeded in building a "true friendship and mutual trust" in these years.

"Today's Russia-India multidimensional cooperation is one of the world's most elaborate ones with regular meetings of the two intergovernmental commissions, sector-wise ministerial, security advisors' and senior officials' dialogue, foreign office consultations and coordination in the global arena," he said.

He said Russia and India were among the first countries in the world to establish the practice of annual bilateral



summits. "Our positions on core issues remain similar or coinciding, stressing the need to uphold the central role of the United Nations towards just and equal multipolarity and opposing unilateral and confrontational approaches," Alipov said.

"We continue close coordination on the agenda of BRICS as well as the G20 and the SCO, which India will chair in 2022-2023," he added.

The envoy said Russia and India continue to successfully implement flagship initiatives, which make the cooperation "unparalleled".

Among those, he said, are the Kudankulam nuclear power plant project, the AK-203 rifles manufacturing programme, cooperation in combat aviation, manufacturing of main battle tanks as well as construction of frigates, submarines, Brahmos and other missiles projects.

"With the increased volumes of bilateral trade by more than 45 per cent in 2021, this positive trend is supplemented in 2022 by intensified cooperation in energy and fertilisers," Alipov said.

He said priority is being given to the implementation of the North-South transport corridor project and an early conclusion of the free trade pact between the Eurasian Economic Union and India. "Along with ongoing projects in connectivity, diamond processing, healthcare, tourism, railways, metallurgy, civil aviation, shipbuilding, oil refinery and petrochemicals, there are plenty of new opportunities

for the Indian business in the Russian market, especially against the backdrop of withdrawal of many western companies," Alipov said.

## Detained man handed over to Bangladeshi guards by BSF

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after detaining a Bangladeshi youth on the Indo-Bangladesh Border, the Border Security Force (BSF) on Sunday handed him over to its counterpart Border Guard Bangladesh on humanitarian ground and as a goodwill gesture.

On Saturday, the vigilant troops of Border Out Post Madhupur, 68 Battalion detained a Bangladeshi youth while crossing the International Boundary illegally at 3 PM.

The BSF said the youth has been identified as Nizamuddin Bepri, 50, of Naobanga Dasurchar village under Shoripur police station of Bangladesh, the BSF said in a statement.

"During questioning, he revealed that he wanted to

work as a painter in India and therefore crossed the International Boundary. He was detained by BSF troops while crossing the International Boundary (IB)," the BSF said, "the detained youth has been handed over by BSF to Border Guard Bangladesh on humanitarian ground and as a goodwill gesture." Commanding Officer of the 68 Battalion, Yogendra said the Border Security Force is taking strict measures to prevent infiltration along the Indo-Bangladesh Border, due to which some people are being caught.

Due to the mutual cooperation and goodwill of the Border Guarding Forces of both the countries, innocent civilians are being handed over to the Border Guard Bangladesh, it added.

## Women SHGs to run 150 hi-tech nurseries in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

To serve dual purpose of boosting horticulture and improving rural livelihoods, Uttar Pradesh government has decided to establish 150 hi-tech nurseries, to be based on Israeli technology, under schemes of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

These hi-tech nurseries will be run by women of self-help groups formed under Uttar Pradesh State Rural Livelihood Mission. Under the scheme, two hi-tech nurseries are being developed in each district to grow fruits like plum, pomegranate, jackfruit, lemon, mango, guava, moringa, dragon-fruit etc. and several vegetables as per demands based on local geographical conditions and surrounding areas.

## India logs over 8K new Covid...

From Page1

No new variant of concern has been found so far, and the rise so far is limited to a few districts, said Dr NK Arora, chairman of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI). "First of all, we have not found any new variant of concern. India now has BA.4 and BA.5, in addition to BA.2, which have slightly higher transmissibility as compared to the other Omicron sub-lineages," Dr Arora said.

In the meantime, as per reports, Soumya Swaminathan, WHO chief scientist said that the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron sub-variants are making their presence felt across various areas in the country with the daily Covid tally now showing a rise in the country. She said that it could be the start of a mini-wave. "The sub-variants that are emerging are more transmissible than the original

Omicron BA.1 and there is a likelihood of waning immunity. It is a possibility that there could be mini waves every four-six months or so and hence, apart from all Covid-appropriate precautionary measures that need to be taken, it is important to track the variant also," Dr Swaminathan said.

Dr Guleria echoed similar views as he said that although there is a rise in the number of cases, there is no associated increase in hospitalisation and deaths have been low as most of the reported cases are believed to be mild.

Dr. Rahul Bhargava, from Fortis Hospital in Gurugram, Haryana, too, felt that these wave patterns will continue in the coming days. "We need to bring masking and social distancing back in our lifestyle quickly as cases rise. At the same time, we need to have robust genome surveillance to

keep a watch on the rise of new variants. Research needs to clearly guide us on the frequency of Covid vaccination in the frontline and high-risk group," he suggested. Dr Jugal Kishore, Head of the Community Medicine Department from Safdarjung Hospital echoed similar views as he said that the fluctuation in the Covid cases is going to become a norm, depending on the people's social activities, immunity, and nature of the virus.

However, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned not to take virus lightly as pandemic is not yet over. He noted that 18 months after the first mass Coronavirus immunisation programs began in rich countries, 68 countries have yet to protect 40 per cent of their populations. While enough vaccines are now available, demand has fallen, he said.

## IPL media...

From Page1

Among the company bigwigs, one of the biggest names in the TV industry, who knows IPL media rights bidding like back of his hand, said: "The BCCI will laugh it's way to the bank but if the media rights value goes beyond ₹50,000 crore, then it will have its own set of consequences for

that kind of aggressive bidding." The market watchers are saying that Zee could come hard for Package D as it has already got an overseas dedicated viewership base with its Zee TV serials and now they also have their ZEE5 app. "With ₹3 crore as base price, Zee could up their game in that category," the source added.

## India to show holy relics of Lord Buddha to Mongolia

From Page1

The sacred "Kapilvastu relics" were flown to Mongolia in two special bullet-proof caskets on board an Indian Air Force aircraft on Sunday, along with a 25-member Indian delegation led by Union Law and Justice Minister Kiren Rijju.

The relics, believed to contain Gautam Buddha's remains, are part of the collection on display at the National Museum and were last part of a multicity display in Sri Lanka in 2012. They were accorded the "AA" category status by the Archaeological Survey of India on account of their rarity and delicate nature and it was also decided that they will not be sent out of the country.

"However, an exception was made for Mongolia following a special request from the Mongolian Government and considering India's long-standing diplomatic ties with its "Third neighbour" in the East," said an official from the Union Culture Ministry.

Incidentally, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the first Indian premier to visit Mongolia in 2015. He had visited the Gandan Monastery, where the relics will now be displayed, presented a Bodhi Tree sapling to Hamba Lama, and defined India and Mongolia as spiritual neighbours during his address to the Mongolian Parliament.

In a statement here, the Union Minister said, "The relics are being taken for an 11-day exposition as a special gift for people of Mongolia who enjoy a very special respect in their hearts for the sacred relics."

Briefing the media virtually, Union Minister for Culture, Tourism, and DoNER, G Kishan Reddy said Lord Buddha is revered not only in India but all over the world. "The Government is also working on several projects to develop Buddhist sites, locations and Buddhist centres in India. The inauguration of Kushinagar airport recently is one such example," he said.

## Sonia in hosp...

From Page1

Several Chief Ministers including West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee wished a speedy recovery to Sonia, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi had already tweeted wishes for her good health when Sonia was first reported to have Covid on June 1.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala tweeted that she would be kept under observation in the hospital.

"Congress president Sonia Gandhi was admitted to Ganga Ram Hospital today owing to Covid-related issues. She is stable and will be kept at the hospital for observation. We thank all the Congressmen & women and well-wishers for their concern and good wishes," Surjewala said on Twitter. Banerjee also took to Twitter,

to wish a speedy recovery to Sonia and sent prayers. "All of us pray for her early recovery and return to public life soon. May God bless you, Soniji," she wrote.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, too, expressed concern regarding Sonia's health. He said, "Concerned about the health of Congress president Sonia Gandhi as she has been admitted to Ganga Ram Hospital today owing to Covid-related issues. I wish her speedy recovery and pray for her good health."

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, Congress social media department chairman Rohan Gupta, former Uttar Pradesh PCC chief Ajay Kumar Lallu and Telangana PCC chief Revanth Reddy also wished Sonia a speedy recovery.

## Prez polls: Nadda, Rajnath to talk with parties to build consensus on choice

From Page1

After the Congress president reached out to Opposition leaders including NCP chief Sharad Pawar, the TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee, and several other Opposition leaders, the West Bengal Chief Minister invited leaders of 19 political parties to a meeting in Delhi next Wednesday to produce a "confluence of Opposition voices" for the presidential poll.

Congress leaders are unhappy at the TMC's move and feel it is yet another attempt by Mamata to project herself as

the leader of the entire Opposition. On the choice of the President, the Congress has come out with a statement, saying, "The Congress Party is of the opinion that the nation needs a person as President who can protect the Constitution, our institutions and citizenry from the ongoing onslaught by the ruling party.

This is the need of the hour. While the Congress Party has not suggested a particular name, we owe it to our people to elect a President who can apply a healing touch to its fractured social fabric and defend our Constitution."

From Page1

and 100 in Howrah and Murshidabad districts in West Bengal, while the Ranchi police registered 25 FIRs against "thousands" of people for the clashes that left two dead and scores of others injured in the Jharkhand capital, and stepped up security in other parts of the State also.

Political parties, including the Samajwadi Party and activists have accused authorities of high-handedness in the aftermath of the protests. Senior Congress leader and former Home Minister P Chidambaram said the Prime Minister should have spoken and acted immediately after the offensive utterances.

Former Chief Minister and Samajwadi party president Akhilesh Yadav has condemned the demolition of the house of Javed Ahmed in Prayagraj.

"What kind of justice is this? The leader who is behind all the trouble and vitiated the atmosphere and brought a bad name to the country at the global level is comfortable under tight security while the peaceful protestors are being bulldozed and penalized without the due process of law. Indian Constitution, culture and religion forbids this kind of action by the government," Akhilesh Yadav said in a tweet on Sunday.

He added, "The people staging peaceful protest demonstrations are being penalized and their houses are being bulldozed without any inquiry and investigation into the charges against them."

Akhilesh Yadav also shared a video along with the tweet in which the riot accused is being beaten with lathis by policemen

in the police station. "If this kind of justice is dispensed at Havlat (police lockup) then law and justice will lose credibility. UP is number one in custodial deaths, human rights violations, and atrocities against Dalits," the SP chief said.

In Delhi, students of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) undertook a protest in support of activist Afreen Fatima, the daughter of Mohammad Javed whose house was demolished on Sunday in Prayagraj.

On June 11, Afreen Fatima put out an appeal on social media and wrote to the National Commission of Women expressing fear for the safety of her father.

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur, however, said that law and order is a State subject and they should take strict possible action against the rioters.

On Saturday, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's media advisor Mrityunjay Kumar had posted a veiled message with a warning, "Remember every Friday is followed by a Saturday."

He posted the message with a photo of a bulldozer. The cryptic tweet implied stern action against people indulging in clashes.

Meanwhile, even as Bengal violence continued to spread like wildfire fire engulfing Murshidabad and Nadia districts bordering Bangladesh, a suburban train was on Sunday attacked by a large crowd protesting against BJP leader Nupur Sharma's anti-Prophet remarks.

Several passengers traveling in the Krishnagar-Lalgola local were injured in the attack, Eastern Railway

sources said without confirming the number of victims of the attack. The local administration, however, said that some of them had been shifted to various local health centers for treatment.

The incident took place at Bethuadahari station in Nadia district when people coming out of a large crowd suddenly entered the station premises and started pelting stones at a stationary local-train breaking its glass panes and injuring a number of passengers.

Two other trains, Hazarduari Express and Dhanadhanya Express, too, were halted at nearby Dhubulia station while the crowds blocked the railway tracks.

The Railway Protection Force personnel had cordoned off the trains, Eastern Railway Chief Public Relations Officer Ekalabya Chakrabarty said adding the Railways as a "national carrier will only run these stranded trains after the situation has subsided."

As protests intensified post sundown the agitators blocked the nearby NH 34 and many other State highways burnt tyres and torched shops. Some houses were also identified and attacked in the area adjoining Beldanga bordering the Murshidabad district.

Sunday's violence followed a distinct pattern with thousands of people blocking the highways and charging at Government properties vandalising them much the way things took place in Howrah district in the past preceding days when shops and establishments were attacked and traffic on the NH-6 was jammed for hours on end on two consecutive days prompting Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to appeal to

the protesters "with folded hands to end the unrest and... take the movement to Delhi from where the alleged anti-Prophet remarks originated."

Sunday's Nadia and Murshidabad violence also followed the pattern seen in 2019 when similar crowds protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act torched trains at Baishnab Nagar in Murshidabaddistrict.

Meanwhile, even as Howrah limped back to normalcy amid an uneasy calm in a new development a Trinamool Congress block-level leader on Sunday filed an FIR against Nupur Sharma in Tamluk, in East Midnapore district

Meanwhile, Ajay Kumar, the Senior Superintendent of Police, Prayagraj, said, "We have found a 12 bore illegal pistol and a 315 bore pistol and cartridges and some documents that show objectionable comments against the honourable court."

Bulldozers were used in Saharanpur on Saturday, where the homes of two accused were razed. Demolitions were also carried out in Kanpur, where violent clashes and stone-throwing took place on June 3 over the same issue.

Sanjay Khatri, the District Magistrate of Prayagraj, claimed the demolition was part of a "normal process". "The administration acts regularly against illegal constructions... There is a set procedure including giving notice and in this matter of Mohd Javed too we followed the procedure," Khatri said.

A group of lawyers has written to the Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court, claiming demolition of Javed Mohammed's house was illegal.



# Ink attack at Kalindi Kunj on girl who accused Raj Min’ son of rape

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

A 23-year-old woman, who was allegedly raped by Rajasthan Minister Mahesh Joshi's son Rohit Joshi in Delhi and Rajasthan last year, was attacked with ink in Kalindi Kunj Road, Shaheen Bagh in southeast Delhi on Saturday.

The incident took place when the woman and her mother came to Delhi from Jaipur for some work. In a related development, a team of 15-20 Delhi police personnel, headed by an ACP rank officer, reached Joshi's

residence in Jaipur, but they found that the house was demolished. They later searched another house in the Civil Lines area, but Rohit was not there.

The victim gave a statement, saying she was walking with her mother near Kalindi Kunj Road on Saturday when two people in an auto-rickshaw threw something at her and fled.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South-east) Esha Pandey said a PCR call was received on Saturday evening after some miscreants threw a liquid on a woman and ran away.

Preliminary inquiry revealed it was a blue liquid and looked like ink. An FIR has been registered in the matter.

"The blue liquid looks like ink. We have registered a case under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 323 (causing hurt), 506 (criminal intimidation) and 195 A (threatening person to give false evidence)," The woman was thoroughly examined at the AIIMS Trauma Centre, said Pandey.

The DCP added that police are looking for CCTV footage from the area to identify the culprits and ascertain

the sequence of events.

BJP's Amit Malviya questioned the Congress party over the incident.

"The girl, who had filed a rape case against the son of Ashok Gehlot Government Minister Mahesh Joshi, was attacked in Delhi last night, a chemical was thrown on her face.

"There is pressure to withdraw the case. The Minister's son is absconding, and the girl is at the trauma center in AIIMS. Where are Rahul and Priyanka?" he tweeted.

Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat also called

for impartial probe into the matter. "Whatever incident has happened, it is very unfortunate.

"The Government should work with a lot of sensitivity in such a high-profile case. Delhi Police should be completely impartial in this matter.

"The investigation should be done because there is a matter related to the reputation of a girl. The way she is being intimidated, then definitely there should be stern action against the culprits in this regard," Shekhawat said.

Taking to Twitter on Sunday, Delhi Commission

for Women chairperson Swati Maliwal said she would be issuing a notice to the Delhi Police to file an FIR for the attack on the woman and accused Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot of saving his minister's son.

"The girl who accused Rohit Joshi, son of Rajasthan Minister Mahesh Joshi of rape was thrown some substance in Delhi.....@ashokgehot51 sir, instead of saving your minister's son, arrest him.

"I am issuing notice to Delhi Police for FIR on this attack (sic)," she tweeted.

In a notice issued to the

Delhi Police later, the DCW sought a copy of the FIR registered in the matter, details of the accused arrested, steps taken to ensure the safety and security of the victim, and an action-taken report.

The Delhi Police on Friday questioned Rohit Joshi in connection with the rape case registered against him. This was a day after a Delhi court granted him anticipatory bail in the case.

Following the woman's allegation that Rohit Joshi raped her on multiple occasions over a year, a case was registered against him under sections 376 (rape), 328 (caus-

ing hurt by means of poison, etc., with intent to commit an offence), 312 (causing mis-carriage), 366 (kidnapping, abducting or inducing woman to compel her mar-riage, etc), 377 (unnatural offences) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code.

"When I called him, he said he is the son of a minister and nobody can harm him....

"He brags about his money and power and in the end, says people won't even know where I have disappeared. The Bhanwari Devi case will be repeated," the woman stated in the FIR.

# 39 fire tenders douse fire at Karol Bagh shoe market

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

A massive fire broke out at many shops in a shoe market also known as Rani Jhansi market in central Delhi's Karol Bagh area early Sunday morning, which was doused in around five hours.

"A fire call was received from a shoe market in Gaffar, Karol Bagh, at 4.16 am and 39 fire tenders were rushed to the site," said Atul Garg, the director, Delhi Fire Service (DFS).

"The blaze was extinguished around 9 am while the cooling operations continued. Nobody was trapped or received any injuries," said Garg adding the cause of the fire is not known yet. The Director of DFS said none of the shops which caught fire had No Objection Certificate from the fire department.

The fire department said buildings in the shoe market usually has their shops on ground floors while the owners either store, repair or sale in their godowns which are upstairs.

Elaborating on the chal-



lenges faced by the fire-fighters during the operation, Garg said the area where the fire incident took place was a narrow congested lane.

"Lots of hanging wires were present at market area which is dangerous and causes inconvenience too. There was shortage of water resources used for dousing fire. The construction of the building is weak, so the structures have already devel-

oped cracks," he added.

A fire official present at the spot said that the fire had started in building number 2347 in street number 14. "Later, it spread to the front of the building and then to the building at back side of the street. Around 10 shops were gutted, but the exact number will be confirmed soon," he said.

"Fire tenders from several stations, including Moti Nagar,

Connaught Place, Naraina, Prasad Nagar, Shankar Road were rushed here to douse the blaze. We broke the shutter of couple of shops to access shops under fire. One fireman was injured in hand during the operation," he said.

No other civilian was trapped or received any injuries, the official said, adding that the cause of the fire is yet to be known.

# Traders: Fire could have been controlled sooner

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

Traders with shops at Rani Jhansi market, which saw many shops gutted in an early Sunday morning fire, claimed that the blaze could have been controlled much faster if it had broken out during the day.

Dharampal Arora, the president of Rani Jhansi market, claimed that all shopkeepers in the area stock fire extinguishing equipment, but the fire broke out in the early morning when it was close, and that made all the difference. The fire was first spotted by a security guard at the market, who informed the traders' association president about the incident.

"Our guard, Kamal Dev, saw the fire first and informed us about it around 4.15 am. We called the fire department and the police and immediately reached the market at 4.30 am," Arora said.

"The fire had spread wide when we reached here, but the fire officials brought it under control. I also have a footwear

shop here and, luckily, it is safe," he said. Arora said that all shopkeepers in his market keep the fire fighting equipment and they had a chance to use them recently when they were faced with a minor fire.

"Recently, a minor fire broke out in the electricity metre which was controlled by the shopkeepers as everyone has fire fighting equipment," he said.

Satnam Singh, whose uncle runs a shop at the market, said that they lost everything inside the shop. "My uncle lives in Mahendra Park. He has a shop in the market which is around 20 to 25 years old. He got the information about the incident through WhatsApp group of the market association. The shop has three floors and everything that was inside it was gutted," said Satnam, a resident of Model Town area.

Dilip Kumar, another shopkeeper, said the firemen broke the lock of his shop to spray water at a shop on the other side of the street where the fire had originated. Dilip too got to know about the fire



through the association's WhatsApp group. "My shop is located near the building where the fire broke out. I reached here around 5.30 am and before that the firemen had broken the lock of my shop's shutter," he said.

"They went upstairs and sprayed water on the shop in front of my shop, where the fire had first broken out. This helped them control the fire. I commend the work of fire fighters," he said, and added, he would have done the same.

Ghaffar Market general secretary Satinder Singh was swamped with calls of concern, as many initially thought the

fire had broken out in Ghaffar market — one of the busiest shopping streets of the city.

"We have been receiving calls since the fire broke out. We have been clarifying to everyone that the fire was in Rani Jhansi market in Beadonpura and not in Ghaffar market. These two markets are separate and located just opposite to each other. The moment we got to know about the incident, we reached here," Satinder Singh said. He said that Ghaffar market has 276 shops of mobile phones and other electronic equipment, while Rani Jhansi market deals mostly in footwear.

# No respite from heatwave, min temp settles at 32.8 deg

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

No respite for Delhities even in the early morning, as the minimum temperature of the national Capital on Sunday settled at 32.8 degrees Celsius, which is five notches above the normal for this time of year. The Safdarjung Observatory, Delhi's base station, recorded a maximum temperature of 43.9 degrees Celsius, four notches above normal. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a yellow alert, warning of a heatwave in parts of Delhi on Monday.

The maximum temperature settled at 46.7 degrees Celsius at the Sports Complex automatic weather station near the Akshardham temple, making it the hottest place in the city. Najafgarh, Munghespur, Pitampura, and Ridge stations recorded a high of 46.4 degrees Celsius, 46.2 degrees Celsius, 45.8 degrees Celsius and 45.8

degrees Celsius, respectively.

However, the minimum temperature on Saturday was 29.7 degrees Celsius, which was two notches warmer.

The relative humidity in Delhi on Sunday at 8:30 in the morning was recorded at 29 per cent and 20 per cent at 5:30 in the evening, at Safdarjung observatory. The IMD said that the heat wave conditions are likely to continue in isolated pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, and southeast Uttar Pradesh during the next two days and abatement.

"No significant change in maximum temperatures very likely over Northwest India during next two days and gradual fall by two-three degree Celsius," the weather station said.

The IMD predicted that on 13th-14th June, Delhi will witness a partly clouded sky with the possibility of the development of thunder lightning, and heat wave at isolated places,

while the maximum temperature will shoot up to 43 degrees Celsius and the minimum temperature will come down to 32 degree Celsius.

"On June 15th, the city's maximum temperature will settle at 41 degrees Celsius despite the generally clouded sky with light rain or drizzle and strong surface winds during day time. However, the minimum temperature will be 32 degrees Celsius," predicted the meteorological department.

On June 16th, the IMD predicted a thunderstorm with rain in the national capital but still, the maximum temperature will be above 40 degrees Celsius and the minimum will be 32 degrees Celsius.

Kamal Jain, a resident of Preet Vihar, said the temperature of the city is unbearable. "I own a confectionery shop, but it has become very difficult for me to sit at the shop during the day time. Yesterday, I had a heat stroke and my stomach is still



not well, but it is my compulsion to open the shop to earn my livelihood.

"I hope that the monsoon season comes as soon as possible." Last year, the IMD had forecast that the monsoon would arrive in Delhi nearly two weeks before its usual date. However, it reached the capital only on July 13, making it the most delayed in 19 years.

The Delhities may get

some respite from the heat wave from 17th June as there will be a slight drop in the maximum temperature and will fall to 38-39 degrees Celsius, IMD further predicted.

Meanwhile, the city's peak power demand on Sunday cloaked 6835 MW at 5:10 in the evening. Delhi witnessed the peak power demand of 7166 MW on June 9, which is the highest this year.

# As city faces water shortage, leaders urge Hry CM Khattar to give water

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

With the national Capital facing water shortage, Delhi BJP leaders on Sunday met Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and urged him to supply water to the city from his State.

According to Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta, who was part of the BJP delegation, the Haryana Chief Minister has assured them of full cooperation in the issue.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also on Friday had urged Haryana to release water in the Yamuna River that had dried up.

After the meeting with Khattar, the Delhi BJP president tweeted, "In a meeting with Haryana CM ML Khattar along with Delhi BJP, urged him for supply of water due to



growing shortage in Delhi during intense heat. Haryana has been for years supplying water to Delhi and Haryana government has also assured full cooperation on our request."

In a memorandum submitted to Khattar, the Delhi BJP expressed gratitude to the neighbouring state for supplying water to Bawana and Haiderpur water treatment plants during summer.

Haryana supplied 84,000 MGD water in 2015, 88,000 MGD in 2016, 88,500 MGD in 2017, 88,000 in 2018, 89,500

MGD in 2019, 92,000 MGD in 2020, 92,500 MGD in 2021 and 85,500 MGD so far this year, said the memorandum.

"I urge you in the behalf of Delhi people to provide some more water to Delhi so that they can go about their lives normally," said the memorandum signed by Gupta. The ruling AAP has been accusing the BJP-ruled Haryana of not releasing enough water to Delhi during the summer season.

AAP MLA and Delhi Jal Board vice chairman Saurabh Bhardwaj on Friday demanded that Haryana release Delhi's share of water, claiming only six inches of water was left in the Yamuna. "Yamuna is almost dried up in Delhi because the Haryana government is refusing to release Delhi's share of water despite the sweltering heat," he had charged.

# Asola Bhatti Mines forest area: Prepare Master Plan for storing rain water, officials told

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

Delhi's Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, along with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, on Sunday visited the Asola Bhatti Mines forest area and directed the officials to prepare a Master Plan for developing the large abundant pits into reservoirs for collecting rain, flood and storm water and recharging ground water.

The Master Plan will be prepared by a committee of officers of the concerned departments in consultation with experts and institutions and they have to submit it in 30 days. As per the statement released by the Raj Niwas, "Saxena, CM and Dy CM were in unison on the desirability of developing the 14 pits, with a holding capacity of more than 800 million gallons of water, into reservoirs that would help recharge the city's ground



water. Accordingly, it was decided to put in place, a Master Plan for rejuvenation and redevelopment of Asola-Bhatti Mines area."

"Following the LG's visit to the location on 31st May 2022, when he had directed officials to explore the possibilities, and a subsequent meeting with the CM where the two had discussed the idea, today's joint visit along with senior officers in charge of concerned depart-

ments with chief secretary, witnessed an on location assessment, inputs from different stake holder departments and a slew of specific directions and decisions," the statement said.

"It was informed that low-lying inhabited areas outside the forest reserve witnesses persistent waterlogging and flooding, about 35 per cent of which came from the gradient of the higher mines area itself. Apart from this, the main drains flowing

right outside the forest area were also prone to overflowing during the monsoon," it said.

"Officials were directed to hold the water flowing down the slopes by constructing a bund on one hand, and devise ways and means to pressure-lift the collected water thus, as also to channelize and pressure lift the water from the drains and low-lying inhabited areas into the Bhatti Mines pits," it read.

# 'Govt's Transport Dept issued maximum international driving permits for US, Canada this year'

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

The Delhi Government's Transport Department has issued the maximum number of international driving permits for the US and Canada so far this year. The transport department's data showed that a total of 4,286 international driving permits were issued between February and June 7 this year.

"Between February and June 7 this year, 986 international driving permits were issued for Canada while the number of such permits issued for the United States stood at 1,150," data showed.

With the easing of restrictions on international travel, the demand for international driving permits has picked up this year, according to officials. Owing to travel restrictions imposed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for international driving permits was low in 2020 and 2021.

The data showed that 116 permits were issued in February, 212 in March, 302 and 282 in April and May respectively for Canada. There were 74 such permits issued in the first week of this month.

The numbers of international driving permits issued for the US for individual months from February to May stood at 155, 242, 272 and 381 respectively. A hundred permits were issued in the week in June, data showed.

During the same period, 442 international driving permits were issued to Delhiites for Great Britain and 335 for the United Arab Emirates (UAE). France (116) and Ireland (111) also saw more than 100 permits being issued till June 7. According to data by the department, 9,142 and 10,040 international driving permits were issued in 2018 and 2019. In 2020 and 2021, as many as 2,421 and 4,825 international driving permits were issued, respectively.

# City records 735 new Covid cases, 3 deaths in 24 hrs

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

The national Capital on Sunday reported 735 fresh coronavirus cases and three death in the last 24 hours, while the positivity rate stands at 4.35 per cent, according to the data released by the health department.

With the new cases, Delhi's Covid-19 tally has increased to 19,12,798 while the death toll stood at 26,221.

"There are 9,587 beds for Covid patients in Delhi hospitals and 100 (1.04 per cent) of them were occupied," it said.

A total of 16,878 Covid tests were conducted here a day ago, the department said in its latest bulletin.

Delhi on Saturday recorded 795 fresh coronavirus cases and zero death, while the positivity rate increased to 4.11 per cent.

Delhi had reported 899 new coronavirus cases and four related deaths on May 13, while the positivity rate had stood at 3.34 per cent, according to official figures.

On both Thursday and Friday, daily cases were reported in excess of 600, and the positivity rate had stood at over 3 per cent.

Delhi on Friday had logged 655 COVID-19 cases and two fatalities, while the positivity rate was 3.11 per cent.

The city on Thursday had logged 622 COVID-19 cases and two more fatalities, while the positivity rate was 3.17 per cent.

A total of 19,326 COVID-19 tests were conducted in the capital the previous day, it said.

On May 15, Delhi had reported 613 Covid cases with a positivity rate of 2.74 per cent and three deaths.



# Rahul to appear before ED today, Cong to put on show of strength

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Congress is gearing up to hold a political show of strength on Monday when the party leader Rahul Gandhi will appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with a money laundering case.

While Rahul will appear before the ED on Monday, party president Sonia Gandhi is expected to miss her date with the probe agency due to her hospitalisation for Covid-19 complications.

Senior party leaders Digvijay Singh, Sachin Pilot, and Sanjay Nirupam addressed Press conferences simultaneously in different locations on Sunday to criticise what they dubbed “political vendetta” unleashed by the Modi Government.

Accusing the BJP of indulging in vendetta politics,



Congress veteran Digvijaya Singh said Rahul will appear before ED on Monday morning in connection with an alleged money laundering case. “Rahul will go to the ED office on Monday morning from the All India Congress Committee (AICC) headquarters.

Congress MPs and working committee members will be present at the party office at 9.30 am on Monday,” Singh said briefing the media at AICC headquarters in the national Capital. When asked

if the Congress MPs and working committee members would take out march to the ED office along with Gandhi, he said no decision has been taken on that yet.

“The AICC will discuss with the local administration, after which it will be decided if some leaders will go with him (Gandhi) or not,” Singh said. “The ED had closed the case in 2015 after finding that there was no truth in it. No FIR has been registered so far in this case.

There is no proof... This is an effort to put political pressure on Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. This is politics of pressurising. It has become the habit of the present regime to frame false cases for political vendetta,” Singh said.

The Rajya Sabha member said that the Gandhi family never bowed before the British.

“Will the family whose two members attained mar-

tyrdom for the country be afraid of such summons and fake cases? “They won’t be afraid. This case will be faced and fought strongly,” he said. Sonia Gandhi was also asked to appear before the ED in this case. However, she tested positive for COVID-19 on June 2 and was recuperating.

She was to appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on June 8 and had sought more time from the probe agency, which has now issued a fresh summons for her to appear on June 23. The case pertains to the probe into the alleged financial irregularities in the party-promoted Young Indian that owns the National Herald newspaper.

The paper is published by Associated Journals Limited (AJL) and owned by Young Indian Pvt Limited. Officials said the agency wants to record the statements of Rahul and Sonia Gandhi under criminal

sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The party also held press conferences fielding prominent faces in Lucknow (Sachin Pilot), Raipur (Vivek Thanka), Shimla (Sanjay Nirupam), Ranjeet Ranjan (Chandigarh), Pawan Khera (Ahmedabad) and Alka Lamba (Dehradun), targeting the Modi dispensation. In Lucknow, Pilot said the central agencies were misused. “ED, CBI will do only that what will benefit the Centre,” Pilot while addressing a press conference in Lucknow on the issue.

Khera said in Ahmedabad, “there is not an iota of illegal activity. Despite this, Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi were served notices by the ED out of political vendetta, with the aim to gain some headlines for a week. We should learn from PM Narendra Modi how to manage headlines.

# Taliban’s popularity in virtual world on wane

**RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI**

Following months of its rule in Afghanistan post-takeover of that country in August last year, the Taliban’s social media profile is dwindling due to governance failures and stricter controls on citizens through the strict and forceful implementation of Sharia laws. The Taliban largely banks on social media platforms like Twitter for promotion of its policies and projection of its popularity.

Following the announcement of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan early last year, the Taliban began targeting multiple cities, including Herat and Kandahar, especially on the bases and outposts of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) and finally entered Kabul on August 15, leading the then Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to flee the country.

“The Afghans then backed the Taliban for two reasons--- one was the assumption that the Taliban might have changed the



operational perspectives and could lead the country in a better way and the other being the anger they felt for former President Ghani who fled country leaving the public to suffer,” said counter-terrorism expert Dr Rituraj Mate.

However, the popularity of the Taliban fell due to the forceful implementation of Sharia laws, prohibiting women from joining universities, barring men and women to be seen in public and making hijab mandatory for women among others, he further said.

“Many other factors also contributed to decline of Taliban’s popularity on various social media platforms like ascendance of Islamic State Khorasan and Panjshir Group,” said Sonali Nagarkoti who is pursuing MBA in

homeland security from National ForeNSIC Sciences University Gandhinagar. While ISIS is seeking to dethrone the Taliban in order to establish dominance in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, the Panjshir Group is aiming for the decline of Taliban’s power so that the rule of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan is established, she said.

ISIS is also increasing the number of fighters and carrying out attacks to create a sense of panic and turmoil as also puncture the credibility of Taliban’s capability to rule the country in the long term.

Initially, the Taliban neglected ISIS threat, assuming it to be a Western propaganda but following deaths of hundreds of innocent Afghan citizens, a signal was sent by ISIS that Taliban was unable to control territory.

The Taliban’s negligence and several deaths of innocent citizens led to a marked decline in Taliban’s popularity on social media platforms and loss of credibility, she added.

# Amid LAC standoff, Central team to scout for ancient monuments

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

In the backdrop of rising tension between India and China at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), a Central team has been constituted to scout ancient monuments, especially those bordering the Tibet-China region of the North-eastern State to bring them under the Central protection ambit.

In its two days visit from June 14 to June 18, the three members team of the National Monuments Authority (NMA) under the Union Culture Minister will meet local tribal leaders to find out places of Indigenous faith that connect Arunachal Pradesh with other parts of India through legends and verbal history.

The team members are Hemraj Kamdar and Prof Kailash Rao besides NMA Chairman Tarun Vijay. “Arunachal Pradesh has lagged behind in the area of heritage protection and enlisting of new monuments in the Centrally Protected list of national archaeological sites.

The stream of the local indigenous faiths and their monuments, tangible and intangible heritage connecting them to the westernmost coast in Gujarat and other parts of India has remained relatively unnoticed and unrecognized,” said tarun Vijay. He shared that the NMA

team will meet village elders and leaders of various tribes, each of them having fascinating stories about dharma and cultural connection through ancient monuments of the strategically important north-eastern state with mainland India.

“A report will be submitted to Union Minister of Culture and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, suggesting new additions in the list of Centrally Protected Monuments and identifying cultural tourism sites that strengthen national unity in the context of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav,” said Tarun Vijay.

The Parushuram Kund, Bishmakhnagar, Bhalukpong and Tawang are a few indigenous sites of archaeological importance which connect Arunachal Pradesh with Gujarat, Goa, Kerala and the Yadava community, he elaborated.

Arunachal Pradesh, known as the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) until 1972, is the largest state in the northeast and shares international borders with Tibet to the north and northwest, Bhutan towards the west and Myanmar to the east. The state is like a protective shield to the northeast. However, China claims Arunachal Pradesh as a part of southern Tibet.

# J&K ranks highest among UTs in national e-governance service delivery assessment

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Jammu and Kashmir, assessed for the first time, ranked the highest among Union Territories with an overall compliance of nearly 90 per cent for national e-governance service delivery assessment (NeSDA), according to an official report on Sunday.

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh will release on Monday the NeSDA 2021 Report which provides suggestions for governments to further enhance their e-Governance service delivery systems. In the Union territories category, Jammu and Kashmir was assessed for the first time in NeSDA 2021 and scored the highest amongst all UTs for six sectors, the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions said in a statement.

Meghalaya and Nagaland are leading State Portals with an overall compliance of more than 90 per cent across all assessment parameters amongst northeast and hill states, it said.

Among Union territories, Jammu and Kashmir ranked highest with an overall compliance of nearly 90 per cent, according to report. Kerala,

Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh had a compliance of more than 85 per cent among the Remaining States category, it said.

According to the report, Kerala had the highest overall compliance score amongst all the States and UTs. Among the Services Portals for North-East and Hill States, the highest-ranking states of Meghalaya and Tripura showed improvement across all six sectors compared to NeSDA 2019, the report said.

Among the Remaining States, the overall score of Tamil Nadu increased the most in 2021 compared to 2019. Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab, Goa, and Odisha also improved the compliance of their Services Portals by 100 per cent.

Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Rajasthan are the leading states with compliance of more than 75 per cent across all parameters for their Services Portals.

The second edition of the NeSDA has been prepared covering the assessment of states, Union Territories. It focuses on Central Ministries for their effectiveness in delivering online services to citizens.

# ITBP presents paper on use of medical cannabis on canines

**RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI**

In its bid to reduce the pain of animals like dogs and horses, a top veterinarian of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has presented the country’s first clinical paper on the use of medical cannabis on canines to record the efficacy of the organic drug in alleviating the suffering from inflammation.

“It was a clinical use of medical cannabis on dogs belonging to private parents. This clinical paper, first time in India, is purely a social service initiative without any monetary angle.

But this paper will have wide ranging ramifications in scientific research as it is the first recorded veterinary study in the country. Many animals will have long term pain relief with the least deleterious effects,” Deputy Inspector General (Veterinary) Dr Sudhakar Natarajan told The Pioneer.

The production of the full spectrum cannabis extract or pharmaconeuroherbaceutical is being done in India under the approval of Ayush and is



being successfully used in humans but the clinical trial of the medical cannabis is a first for animals.

Medical cannabis acts as a painkiller to alleviate various kinds of pain due to inflammatory conditions without many side effects, as against the inorganic drugs that will have deleterious effects on vital organs due to long-term use, Dr. Natarajan said in his clinical paper.

The pioneering clinical study was conducted between January 2021 and May, 2022 on four canines, one male and three females, suffering from a range of inflammatory conditions causing pain and making normal mobility impossible.

All the dogs were Labrador

variety between six and eight years of age and all weighing about 30 Kg each. They were suffering from mobility issues with severe pain due to advanced osteoarthritis, hip dysplasia and some early onset of geriatric condition, he said.

Full-spectrum cannabis extract was obtained under veterinary prescription from a Noida-based firm Noigra.

Following administration of eight drops of the cannabis extract for a week resulted in significant improvement and the dogs were able to walk without pain.

They were even able to defecate and urinate without pain. Further, they started behaving normally with improved appetite and enhanced quality of life, underscored the study.

After 30 days of administration of the extract, a blood test was done on them which showed no elevation of liver enzymes, leading to the conclusion that this was an effective long-term strategy to maintain the canines pain-free, reduce inflammation with overall improved quality of life, added the study.

# BSF jurisdiction: Final report on new 50km limits, logistics prepared

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

A blueprint that defines the extended jurisdiction of the Border Security Force (BSF) and its new logistical requirements in various frontier states has been prepared and is soon expected to be submitted to the Union Home Ministry, officials said.

The BSF guards over 6,300 kms of the Indian fronts with Pakistan on the west and Bangladesh on the eastern flank of the country.

The central government in October, 2021 had issued a notification to amend a July, 2014 enabling provision for the BSF personnel and officers

while they operate in the border areas. While in Punjab, West Bengal and Assam the BSF jurisdiction, from the border towards the hinterland, was enhanced from the earlier 15 kms to 50 kms, in Gujarat the same limit has been reduced from 80 kms to 50 kms while in Rajasthan the limit has been kept unchanged at 50 kms.

An exercise has been undertaken by the BSF along with its other sister agencies to identify and mark the new 50 km jurisdiction and its alignment on the ground as per the notification issued last year.

This is part of the step-by-step implementation of the

new government order. The geographical locations, physical structures that will fall along new axis have been identified, officials told PTI. The requirement for having some halting points, posts and other logistical requirements for troops undertaking operations against cross-border crimes have been identified and will be placed before Union home ministry in due time for approval, they said.

Once proposal is approved, new communication, logistics and if required posts for jawans will be created gradually, the officials privy to the exercise said. Officials in the security establishment said the force has

undertaken a number of operations under the enhanced jurisdiction powers in various states over the last few months and every such action has been undertaken “after informing the local (state) police.”

The results have been good so far and the force has been able to check cross-border crimes like narcotics trafficking and cattle smuggling in the about dozen cases where it has undertaken operations under the new jurisdiction, they said.

The Union home ministry informed the Parliament in December last year that the enhancement in jurisdiction “is aimed at empowering BSF to discharge its border guarding

duties more effectively in wake of use of technology like dynamic remotely operated navigation equipment (drones), unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), etc., generally having long range, by anti-national forces for surveillance as well as for smuggling for arms, narcotics and fake Indian currency notes (FICN).”

“It would also help in curbing menace of cattle smuggling as smugglers take refuge in interior areas outside jurisdiction of BSF. There is no impact on jurisdiction of state government,” Minister of state for home affairs Nityanand Rai said in a written reply in Rajya Sabha. He was responding to a question after governments of West Bengal and Punjab “expressed their apprehension that such a move encroaches upon powers of state government.”

“Their apprehensions are ill-founded. The extension of territorial jurisdiction of BSF would result in better and more effective control on trans-border crimes in conjunction and cooperation with states,” the minister had said.

Rai stated that Section 139 (1) (i) of BSF Act, 1968 empowers central government to confer powers and duties on members of force in respect of any central Acts for purposes specified.

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# Outcast those from Islam who indulged in Friday’s violence: Muslim Rashtriya Manch

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

The RSS-linked Muslim Rashtriya Manch (MRM) on Sunday condemned Friday violence and demanded that those participated in it be outcast from Islam, saying incidents of stone-pelting, arson and rioting did not only brought disrepute to religion but also ashamed Muslims.

In a statement, the outfit, led by its founder and RSS national executive member Indresh Kumar, called incidents of violence “a conspiracy” to create unrest in India and malign its image abroad, and urged Muslims to stay calm and do not get misled by anyone.

The Muslim forum demanded that all state governments take swift action against such rioters to maintain law and order as well as peace, and asked non-BJP political

parties including TMC, AAP, Samajwadi Party, Shiv Sena, Congress to take action against their leaders “who indulge in insulting Hindu deities and religion.”

“In wake of incidents of violence, an emergency online meeting of all key office bearers of Manch (forum) was held on Saturday. The meeting, presided over by national convenor Mohammad Afzal, strongly condemned the incidents of stone pelting, arson and rioting that took place in different parts of the country on Friday,” the MRM said.

The meeting noted that incidents of Friday violence did not only brought disrepute to Islam, but ashamed Muslims, the outfit said. It also noted that Islam is recognized as a peaceful religion, but the Friday’s incidents of stone-pelting and rioting in different

parts of country indicates that it has gone into clutches of “Satan”, the outfit added. “The Manch demands that all those who indulged in stone pelting, arson violence on Friday and made hate speeches be outcast from Islam. It is Manch’s appeal to all Ulema and Maulvis to consider this demand,” the MRM said.

“The MRM demands that TMC, AAP, Samajwadi Party, Shiv Sena, Congress and other parties also take strict action against their leaders who indulge in insulting Hindu deities and religion as well as incite violence,” it added.

The outfit alleged that Friday violence was part of “a conspiracy to create unrest in India and malign its image abroad in name of protest against certain remarks made by two BJP functionaries against Prophet Mohammad.

# India achieved new milestones in ‘gram swaraj’, democratic empowerment of panchayats: PM

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Asserting that India has attained new milestones in ‘gram swaraj’ and democratic empowerment of panchayats in the last eight years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has urged sarpanches to make efforts for saturation coverage of welfare schemes, conserving water and making the upcoming Yoga Day special.

In a letter to sarpanches (village heads) days after his government marked its eighth anniversary, Modi listed several issues on which he sought their support while appreciating their contribution in the last eight years.

He asked them to work to make the eighth International Yoga Day, which falls on June 21, special and to encourage everyone in their village to join the exercise. They can select an

ancient or tourist place or a place near a water body in their area for everyone in the village to do yoga on the day, he said, urging them to share pictures to inspire others.

People all over the world observe the day enthusiastically, and pictures of them doing yoga in different corners, from skies to the Himalayas and sea, in the preceding years have made Indians proud, the prime minister has written.

Noting that “Yoga for humanity” is the theme of the Yoga Day, he said the COVID-19 pandemic has made people realise the importance of health and how big a role yoga can play in this.

Emphasising on the need for conserving every drop of water, Modi asked village heads to continue making collective efforts in villages in this regard while pitching for rain water

harvesting measures. To achieve this goal, the country has resolved to make 75 ‘amrit sarovars’, a reference to water bodies, in every district in the 75th anniversary of its Independence, he said.

With the prime minister often stressing on the need for saturation coverage of welfare measures to help every eligible beneficiary, he told sarpanches that they will have a big role in this and asked them to speed up their efforts to ensure that no one is left out from the benefits of government schemes.

“When every eligible person in the village gets full benefits of schemes, then the village as well as the entire country will prosper,” he wrote. Modi also asked them to continue with the efforts for ‘Swachh Bharat’ (clean India) with all seriousness.



# ‘Centre will ensure return, rehabilitation of Pandits in Valley’

PTI ■ JAMMU

Asserting that the terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir is “taking its last breath”, Union Minister Prahlad Singh Patel on Sunday said the Central Government would ensure honourable return and rehabilitation of displaced Kashmiri Pandits in the valley. He said the government and its agencies are alert to the tactics of a handful of people who are jealous of the nation touching new heights under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and are creating communal tension in the country. The minister also said that the crown of India is incomplete without Pakistan-occu-

pled Kashmir (PoK). “We salute to the Kashmiri Pandit community for their determination in braving the challenges of the past three decades. The situation is changing fast and the terrorism is taking its last breath,” Patel told reporters on the sidelines of a function organised by the BJP’s displaced Kashmiri unit here. He said the fight against terrorism has reached in decisive stage and “we are moving towards the victory.” “The central government is alive to the problems of the Kashmiri Pandits living in Jammu and different parts of the country and outside. The central and Union Territory governments are working

together to ensure your honourable return and rehabilitation in the valley within a time frame,” the minister said. Referring to the targeted killings by terrorists in the valley, he said there is no need for a major concern as the government and the security agencies are alert and are giving a befitting reply to them. Patel said the central government under the leadership of Modi had shown to the world that the party is capable of doing anything. “We have restored grassroots democracy (by holding elections to panchayat and urban bodies), fast forwarded development, proclated the benefits of central schemes to the poor, completed delimita-



tion and also provided reservation to the deserving communities,” he said. Asked about communal tension prevailing in different parts of the country including J&K following remarks by two now-suspended BJP leaders,

he said since the country under the leadership of Modi is growing in popularity, there are certain forces who are jealous and do not want peace to prevail. “These forces are a handful and the government and its agencies including police and intelligence are alert and will be dealing with them as per the law,” he said. Earlier addressing the function, he said the protests over the past 48 hours in different parts of the country cannot be ignored. “It is evident that those behind these protests are jealous of Modi since his return to power for the second time,” Patel said. Referring to the revocation of Article 370 of the Constitution in August 2019, the minister said he had joined BJP only because he wanted removal of this article. “I have not imagined that Article 370 will go before our eyes...It was not an easy task,”

he said, adding the same was the case with the construction of Ram temple and triple talaq and said most of the central government schemes are women-centric. He said while most of the issues were addressed by the Modi-led government, there are still some pending issues which are linked to the heart and need to be addressed. “The crown of India is incomplete without PoK which will be ours one day...Without this, our progress is incomplete,” he said as he spoke about various achievements made by the BJP-led government in the country after Modi came to power in 2014. He assured Pandits that all

their pending demands like adequate space in flats, enhancement of monthly relief and employment opportunities for the youth will be addressed. Kashmiri Pandits United Front, meanwhile, handed over a memorandum to the minister highlighting various demands including permanent solution and rehabilitation of the community at a single place. It also appealed to the government to acknowledge that Kashmiri Pandits are “victims of genocide” and pleaded for passage of a bill in the parliament in this connection with a provision to identify those behind their “genocide” to bring them to justice.

## 4 LeT terrorists gunned down in Srinagar, Pulwama

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU



In a major success four Lashkar-e-Toiba terrorists were gunned down by the security forces in Srinagar and Pulwama districts on Sunday. So far 100 terrorists majority of them from Lashkar-e-Toiba have been eliminated in sustained anti-terrorist operations in different parts of Kashmir valley since Jan 1, 2022. A Lashkar-e-Toiba terrorist, responsible for killing two police personnel, was gunned down by the Jammu and Kashmir police. In the second operation three LeT terrorists were neutralised in an overnight encounter in Drabagam area of South Kashmir’s Pulwama district. According to Inspector General of Police, Kashmir range Vijay Kumar, LeT terrorist Adil Parry of Ganderbal,

involved in the killing of 02 JKP personnel Gh Hassan Dar in Sangam & Saifulla Qadri in Anchar Soura and injuring a 9 year old girl, was killed in a chance encounter at Kreesbal Palpora Sangam area of Srinagar. In the second operation, one terrorist was eliminated late last night while two more local terrorists of LeT were gunned down on Sunday after

the gunfight resumed. According to police spokesman, all three killed terrorists were locals. They were associated with terror outfit LeT. They have been identified as Junaid Sheergorji, involved in killing of police martyr Reyaz Ahmad on 13/5/22, Fazil Nazir Bhat & Irfan Ah Malik of Pulwama district. Security forces also recovered “He was

also involved in the June 2 attack on labourers at a brick kiln in Chadoora on the outskirts of the Pulwama-Budgam axis, in which one labourer was killed and others were injured,” the spokesperson said. Incriminating materials, arms and ammunition, including two AK-47 rifles and a pistol, were recovered from the encounter site. All the recovered materials have been taken into the case records for further investigation, the spokesperson informed. Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kashmir Vijay Kumar congratulated the security forces for carrying out the anti-terrorist operation in a professional manner and without any collateral damage. Kumar also lauded them for tracking and neutralising the terrorists involved in the recent killing of police personnel in Pulwama.

## Gauhati HC quashes poll code violation case against Himanta

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The Gauhati High Court has quashed a case in a trial court relating to the alleged violation of the model code of conduct by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. A single-judge bench of Justice Rumi Kumari Phookan quashed the case and set aside all the proceedings as well as observations by the Chief Judicial Magistrate of Kamrup Metropolitan. “In view of the legal proposition discussed above, the impugned order of taking cognizance by the learned trial court is nothing but a mechanical one, without due application of judicial mind, which is bad in law,” she said in the order on June 10. The case was filed by the Additional Chief Electoral Officer in May 2019 against Sarma, who was a minister in the then chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal’s govern-

ment, and News Live TV channel for allegedly violating the model code of conduct during the Lok Sabha polls. The Chief Judicial Magistrate of Kamrup Metropolitan, AK Baruah, on February 25 had imposed a fine of Rs 2,000 on Sarma and his wife Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, who is the chairman-cum-managing director of News Live channel, and ordered the duo to appear before the court on March 21. Challenging this order and appealing to quash the case, Sarma approached the high court on February 28 and filed a criminal petition. Justice Phookan said, “The Magistrate has totally failed to discharge its judicial discretion while conducting a proceeding. The conduct of a judicial officer must be above the personal whims and traits and every order should be founded on cogent and reasonable grounds, which is not reflected in the present case. “It is said ‘justice should not only be done but also seen to

be done’... The (trial) court also made certain observation in the said order which is self contradictory and difficult to dilute as it does not conform to the procedure to be followed in a complaint case.” The high court also noted that the prohibition imposed by the Election Commission is applicable to the polling area during the 48 hours ending with the hour fixed for conclusion of the poll for any election in that area. “In the present matter, at the time of news telecast in Guwahati on 10.04.2019, no polling was scheduled to take place in Guwahati on the next 48 hours because as per the notification poll was scheduled to be held on 23.04.2019 in Guwahati,” it added. “Obviously, while passing the aforesaid order, the learned CJM, has exceeded the jurisdiction. Being an officer of justice delivery system, no one can conduct the affairs of the prosecution as an inquiry officer,” the high court said.

## 4 devotees die due to heat at fest in Bengal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

At least four devotees forming part of a large crowd coming to visit a religious fair at a Panihati ISKON temple on Sunday died when they jostled for space in sweltering heat. Panihati is a suburban town adjoining northern Kolkata. About a hundred others were injured and had been hospitalised. According to sources about two lakh people had assembled in the area to take part in the 500-year-old Dahi-Cheera Utsav (Curd and flattened rice festival) when the incident occurred. Local MLA Swapan Ghosh said “as thousands of people jostled for space in the sweltering heat many of them fell ill and some died ... about a hundred of them have been sent to hospitals ... some of them are critical.” The administration immediately vacated the premises, Barrackpore Commissioner of Police Manoj Verma said.

## AAP restructures Gujarat unit ahead of Assembly poll

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Days after dissolving its organisational structure in Gujarat, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday announced the list of its new office-bearers in the restructured unit, and said it is ready for a direct fight with the ruling BJP in the Assembly elections due in December this year. During the AAP’s recent ‘parivartan yatra’ and village-level meets, lakhs of people joined the party and more than 30,000 people took its active membership, AAP’s Gujarat in-charge Sandeep Pathak claimed while talking to reporters here.

The Aam Aadmi Party had on Wednesday said its Gujarat organisational structure was dissolved to restructure the party unit with an aim to defeat the BJP, which has been in power in the state for over two decades. Pathak said the “idea behind the dissolution was to accommodate new members in the expanded family, and to reorganise the party before the Assembly polls.” This time, the political fight is going to be between the BJP and the AAP, he claimed, and said “with the public supporting us, the new AAP organisation will be able to fulfil their expectations for a change.”

A total of 850 AAP members have found the place in the restructured organisation in Gujarat, as per the list release by the party. The AAP has appointed Kishor Desai as the state president (frontal organisation), Manoj Sorathiya as state general secretary, and Kailash Gadhi as treasurer. The party has also appointed Isudan Gadhi as its national joint general secretary and Indranil Rajguru as the national joint secretary. The AAP has also appointed presidents and vice presidents of various wings, secretaries, joint secretaries at the state level, Lok Sabha and district pramukhs, and Vidhan

Sabha sangathan mantris, according to the list. “As we speak, our organisation at the village level is also ready, and we have already put in place an 11-member team in each village,” Pathak said. He claimed the Gujarat AAP unit is now capable of challenging any party with the best organisational capability in the state. “When we reach the booth-level and map every house, we shall be fully prepared organisation-wise,” he said. Pathak said the AAP is an organisation-specific party, and it has received an unprecedented response in the state. “When you look at Punjab, our organisation is the

strongest among all parties. In Delhi too, our organisation is very strong. When I started working in Gujarat, I did not know that the state has so much energy,” he said. “The response we received in setting up the organisation is double than that of Punjab. In just one month, we managed to do this. The energy was there and people were ready. They were only looking for an alternative,” Pathak said. He claimed the political fight this time will be between the BJP and the AAP. “The way people are with us and God is with us, our organisation will fulfil the expectations of the public for a change,” Pathak said.

## Sanjay meets Sharad to discuss Presidential poll, say sources

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A leader Sanjay Singh met NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday to discuss the upcoming presidential polls, sources said. The meeting assumes significance as the race to the Rashtrapati Bhavan gathers pace. It is to be noted that ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, it was Pawar who had urged the AAP and Congress to have an understanding in Delhi to counter the BJP. However, this did not materialise. The AAP and the Congress are opposed to each



other in several states including Delhi and Punjab. The government as well as the Opposition is yet to name any candidate for the Presidential poll which will be

held on July 18. In the 2017 Presidential election, the Opposition had forced a contest by backing Meira Kumar, who lost to Ramnath Kovind.

## Bengal LoP prevented from visiting violence-hit Howrah; to move court

PTI ■ TAMLUK (WB)

High drama was witnessed at Tamluk in Purba Medinipur district on Sunday afternoon as West Bengal League of Opposition (LoP) Suwendu Adhikari was prevented by police from visiting violence-hit areas in Howrah. He was later allowed to proceed after a two-hour-long stand-off on the condition that he would go straight to Kolkata, without making any pit stop in violence-hit areas in adjoining Howrah district. Adhikari said he would move the court on Monday over being prevented from visiting the areas affected by violent protests over controversial remarks on Prophet Mohammad by now suspended BJP spokespersons. Police claimed preventing him from travelling to Howrah was a “precautionary measure” as prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPC have been clamped in many areas in the district and his visit may have caused law and order problems. Adhikari was moving with his security entourage when he was stopped by a huge police team at Radharani More in Tamluk. He was not accompa-



nied by any other BJP leader. “We have received information that Adhikari was planning to visit Howrah district, in parts of which Section 144 of CrPC has been imposed. So, as a precautionary measure, we had to prevent him from going there as his visit may have caused a law and order problem,” a senior police officer told PTI. Adhikari remained seated inside the vehicle, claiming he had no intention of visiting Howrah. He was also reluctant to return to his hometown Kanthi in Purba Medinipur district from where he had started. He engaged in heated arguments with police officers present at the spot, stating that he wanted to have lunch and take rest at a guest house in

Kolaghat in Purba Medinipur district, before proceeding to Kolkata. “I have been unlawfully obstructed by @WBPolice on NH 116 at Radhamoni under Tamluk PS. @MedinipurSp is there a Curfew in place in Purba Medinipur District or Section 144 has been imposed? I am moving towards Kolaghat for having lunch. How is it prohibited?” Adhikari said in a series of tweets from the spot. “I wonder why @WBPolice DGP @mmalaviya1 is using the Police personnel to obstruct @BJP4Bengal leadership when the need of the hour is to deploy them across WB where rioters are having a free run destroying & looting public & private properties,” he added. Adhikari said he has a programme to attend at Indian Museum in Kolkata in the afternoon and assembly session will take place on Monday. After this, police allowed him to proceed but on the condition that he won’t make any pit stop in troubled areas in Howrah district and go straight to Kolkata, ending the two-hour-long stand-off. Upon reaching Kolkata, Adhikari straightaway went to the site of party colleague and

state BJP chief Sukanta Majumdar’s sit-in demonstration against alleged failure of the Mamata Banerjee government in containing violent incidents in Howrah. “I did not get down from my vehicle, even while passing by our gutted party office in Uluberia. I offered by tributes with folded hands as the car slowed down. We will later purify it with Ganga water,” he said. Adhikari alleged that he was not treated in a proper manner and such treatment was never meted out to the then LoPs Pankaj Banerjee or Partha Chatterjee during the previous Left Front rule. He also alleged that Majumdar was prevented from visiting Howrah on Saturday to “hide” torching of properties by a mob in Panchla. Majumdar was arrested on Saturday afternoon when he was heading towards Howrah district. He was later released. In an apparent reference to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and her nephew and TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, Adhikari said, “Only aunt and nephew are given security by police in the state.”

## Hindu congregation in Goa to discuss continued attacks on Sanatana Dharma

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Sanatana Dharma scholars Sdrawn out from India, Nepal, Fiji and Hong Kong have assembled at Ramnadi, Goa for a brainstorming session to chalk out strategies to prevent continued attack on Hindu religion, according to Sanatha Sanstha, an institution of monks and seers. “Considering the violence perpetrated by religious fanatics across the country after Friday prayers, we will have to fight for the Hindu Rashtira till the entire system of governance remains in the interest of Hindus. Nandi (Shivling) in Varanasi still looks at the ruins of the original destroyed temple facing the enlightened Gyanvapi mosque. In Karnatak, the campaign ‘Pahale Hijab, Baad Mein Kitab’ (First the Hijab, later the textbook) was started by the fundamentalists through the girl students. Despite the High Court ruling against it, not a single ‘secularist’ in the country has dared to ask the Muslims who are demanding hijab. Is the Quran superior or the constitution of the country? How is it inappropriate for Hindus to demand the ‘Hindu Rashtira’?” asked Dr Charudatta Pingale, national guide, Hindu Janajagruti Samiti, the organ-



isers of the congregation told the delegates on Sunday. Ramesh Shinde, national spokesman, HJS, said that the country is under attack from religious fanatics over the alleged statement made by Nopur Sharma, the former BJP spokesperson. “If she has violated the laws and has committed blasphemy, let them approach the judiciary and police with documentary evidences. What we see in the name of targeting the minorities is highly reprehensible,” said Shinde who pointed out that the Hindus in the country were suffering silently when their Gods and Goddesses were taunted, ridiculed and insulted by religious fanatics. “Religious tolerance is a two-way traffic. You cannot go on humiliate other religions while you turn

intolerant when fingers are pointed at you for shortcomings,” said Shinde. The seven day conclave will hold discussions on subjects such as ‘Jnanvapi Mosque at Kashi (Varanasi), ‘Mathura Liberation Movement’, ‘Places of worship Act’, ‘Slaying of Kashmiri Hindus’, ‘Sound pollution caused by the loud speakers on places of worship’, ‘Hijab agitation’, ‘Halal certification – An economic jihad’, ‘Protection of Hindus’, ‘Protection of Temple-Culture-History’, ‘Conversions’, ‘Muslim encroachment on mountains and forts’, etc. Former director of CBI Nageshwar Rao and a host of personalities drawn out from academia, trade and industries, science and technology would address the delegates, said Shinde.

## Police of 4-5 States working together on Moose Wala murder case: Maha HM

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Maharashtra Home Minister Dilip Walse Patil on Sunday police teams from four-five States were working together on the case of murder of popular singer and Congress leader Sidhu Moose Wala in Punjab last month and the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) was also keeping an eye on it. The Delhi Police recently said gangster Lawrence Bishnoi was the mastermind behind the murder and that they had identified six shooters allegedly involved in the killing of Moosewala. The singer’s death was an organised and brazen killing, the Delhi police had said. Investigators had also revealed that Mahakal alias Siddhesh Kamble, arrested by Pune rural police in Maharashtra recently, knew that Moosewala was going to be murdered, and was in touch with gangster Vikram Brar a week before the killing. Kamble is an alleged member of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, which is said to be behind Moosewala’s murder. Brar is a close aide of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, who is currently in the Delhi Police’s custody.








FIRST COLUMN

ENDING CHILD LABOUR BY 2025: UPHILL TASK

A holistic approach and urgent measures are needed

RAVIKANT

The UN general assembly in 2015 adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), one of which was to eliminate all forms of Child Labour by 2025. India as a country has accepted this goal. On June 12, the World Day Against Child Labour, there should be introspection, on the one hand, and strategic planning, on the other, so that children receive their inalienable rights—a happy childhood, education and justice. The present situation of child labour in India is distressing. According to the 2011 census of India, the total number of child labourers in the country is 1.01 crore (10 million). A research report by the Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation has estimated that by 2021, the year when a new census was due, the total child labour population in India would be 81.2 lakh. This figure is expected to decline further to 74.3 lakh by 2025, the report says. The top three states which will together have half of the total child labourers by 2025 in the country will be Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra, it said. The pandemic has compounded the existing situation of child labour, thus making it difficult to achieve the global goal of ending child labour. According to an International Labour Organisation (ILO) report, the COVID-19 crisis threatens to reverse the progress made globally in eliminating child labour. There would be a rise in child labour—for the first time in the last two decades—because of millions of children are being pushed into it.



The children in developing economies and populous countries are more vulnerable, the report said. During the pandemic years, the *Bachpan Bachao Andolan* (BBA)—a sister organisation of KSCF founded by Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi in 1980 to liberate and rehabilitate vulnerable and exploited children and prosecute those responsible for the atrocities—has rescued more than 10,000 child labourers across 16 States. According to the National Crimes Records Bureau (NCRB) 2020, the cases registered under the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act in 2018, 2019 and 2020 were 464, 772 and 476, respectively. The top five states recording the maximum number of offences were Telangana (147 cases), Karnataka (54 cases), West Bengal (41 cases), Assam (40 cases) and Andhra Pradesh (37 cases). To formulate a decisive plan for eliminating child labour, urgent measures are required. A holistic approach is needed—from legislative measures to a viable rehabilitation strategy, from poverty alleviation and socio-economic development to awareness generation and education. Alongside, the rescue of child labourers has to become a priority for the law enforcement agencies. Powerful targeted intervention models, such as Bal Mitra Gram (BMG)—a flagship KSCF programme to prevent multiple forms of child exploitation and address such issues of education, Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Livelihood (WASH)—need to be replicated and adopted in villages across the country. Also, the measures initiated by the government require effective implementation. In 2016, the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 2016, was amended, thereby making the offence of employing children cognisable and providing stricter punishment for such offences. It also framed the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Central Rules along with the model state action plan enumerating action points to be taken by State Governments. The union government also implemented the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) scheme for the rehabilitation of child labour, which has been subsumed under Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Eliminating child labour by 2025 remains a colossal task. June 12 can be a reminder to start action in a mission mode immediately.

*(The author is country head, Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation (US). The views expressed are personal.)*

# RBI hikes repo rate but more is needed



UTTAM GUPTA

While there is no guarantee that the RR hike will tame inflation, we can't rule out the risks to growth

Normally, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) conducts a review once in every two months based on which the RBI makes policy announcements at the beginning of each of the following months viz. February, April, June, August, October, December. Deviating from this practice, in early May 2022, Governor Shaktikanta Das announced changes in the important monetary policy instruments. Das increased the policy repo rate (interest rate at which the RBI lends to banks) or RR from 4 per cent to 4.4 per cent. He also increased the cash reserve ratio (percentage of a bank's total deposits that it needs to maintain with the RBI as liquid cash; the bank does not earn interest on this liquid cash, neither can it use this for investing and lending purposes) or CRR from subsisting 4 per cent to 4.5 per cent. He kept the reverse repo rate (interest rate banks get on their surplus funds parked with the RBI) unchanged at 3.35 per cent. The Governor has followed it up (this time based on MPC's bi-monthly review), by announcing on June 8, further increase in RR to 4.9 per cent. However, he has kept the RRR and CRR unchanged at 3.35 per cent and 4.5 per cent, respectively. The RBI has also made a major shift from an 'accommodative' policy stance adopted for over three years—to one what Das has described as 'withdrawing accommodation.'

The RBI has justified a cumulative increase of 0.9 per cent in RR within a short span of over one month in terms of an overarching need to rein in inflationary pressure. For four months in a row, inflation—as measured by the consumer price index (CPI)—has been staying at over 6 per cent which is above the higher end of the medium-term target of 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent) that the RBI has been mandated to ensure. Against this backdrop, one wonders as to why it waited for that long to get cracking on measures to contain inflation. The big question is: how does a hike in the RR rate, increase in CRR, or 'withdrawing accommodation' help in taming inflation?

Theoretically, things should unfold in the following manner: A hike in RR implies that the banks will have to pay a higher interest rate on the money they borrow from the RBI. This will force them to charge more from their customers if only to recover the higher cost of their funds. Faced with higher borrowing cost, individuals, businesses/firms, etc., will borrow less from the banks leading to contraction in demand which in turn, will have a moderating effect on prices. The increase in CRR is expected to yield a similar result by way of the RBI impounding more of cash from the banking system (for instance, the 0.5 per cent hike notified in May, 2022 is estimated to



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MONETARY POLICY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF REINING IN INFLATION OR PROMOTING GROWTH CAN'T BE VIEWED IN ISOLATION FROM MACRO-ECONOMIC FACTORS WHICH CAN BE A MAJOR BOTTLENECK

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



suck out about ₹87,000 crore); hence less money available for onward lending. As for the impact of 'withdrawing accommodation,' let us first understand what 'accommodative' policy stance means. Conceived in the context of the need to give a push to growth, an 'accommodative' stance unambiguously points towards a cut in RR in the future besides making more credit available. The RBI first talked about it in its bi-monthly monetary policy announced on June 6, 2019, when RR was reduced from the subsisting 6 per cent to 5.75 per cent. Since then, this stance has been maintained all along till the alteration made in the June 8 announcement. Now, the withdrawal from accommodation connotes that henceforth, the RR will only increase (indeed, a hike of 0.25 per cent is likely in the next review in August 2022 when the rate will be restored to the pre-pandemic level of 5.15 per cent before March 2020). Further, the RBI would like to see less cash with the banks so that indiscriminate proliferation of credit disbursements does not happen. Things look fine but only as long as one remains within the bounds of the theoretical construct. They begin to bite the moment one comes out of it and looks at the reality. Inflation, which was well within the target of 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent) until 2021-end, spurted in the beginning of 2022. It is clearly supply-driven, being the result of geopolitical tension, disruption in global supply chains, and steep

increase in prices of commodities and, most importantly, food, fuel and fertilizers. In fact, hikes in food prices alone contribute around 75 per cent of inflation. Fundamentally, the problem lies on the supply side but the thrust of RBI actions is on the demand side. That the banking regulator itself is not sure of its initiatives making a dent would be clear from its own projection of inflation during the first quarter of the current—7.5 per cent. In Q II, it is projected at 7.4 per cent, Q III 6.2 per cent, and Q IV 5.8 per cent. For the entire fiscal, the projection is 6.7 per cent. While there is no guarantee that the RR hike will tame inflation, we can't rule out the risks to growth as banks and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) increase repo-linked lending rates and marginal cost of funds based lending rates (MCLR). This will lead to rise in EMIs of existing borrowers and make new home, vehicle and personal loans costlier in turn, impacting demand. The effectiveness of monetary policy as an instrument of reining in inflation or promoting growth can't be viewed in isolation from macroeconomic factors which can be a major bottleneck. For instance, during 2020-21, despite a steep cut in RR by 1.15 per cent and RBI pumping tons of money, GDP growth was -6.6 per cent. This was because the demand was annihilated, particularly during the first half (because of the Covid pandemic). The other major impediments were decline in credit growth and

high non-performing assets (NPAs) of banks. During 2021-22, apart from dilution in the impact of Covid, there was an increase in availability of credit aided by reduction in bank NPAs. As a result, GDP growth was 8.9 per cent even as inflation remained well within 6 per cent for most part of the year. During 2022-23, even as RBI recognises the emerging risks to growth, the bigger problem is surging inflation. This calls for a frontal attack on the supply side. Already, the Modi Government has taken such measures as diversifying sources of supply (for instance, more oil from Russia), reduction in import duty on vegetable oils, and cut in central excise duty (CED) on petrol and diesel. More such measures are needed. As for the RR, a hike in it should be viewed from the perspective of protecting millions of depositors. Since 2020, they have already suffered due to a cut of at least 2 per cent in the interest earned on bank deposit. Now, inflation is eroding their real income. The government should ensure that all banks increase the deposit rates in sync with the increase in the RR. The banks also need to show some sensitivity to the borrowers, especially MSMEs and individuals, by not raising the lending rates or keeping the hike to a bare minimum. Given the improvement in their NPAs, low-cost funding from existing deposits and healthy balance sheet (during 2021-22, almost all public sector banks posted profit), they have the cushion to do it.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY (EXAM) PAPERS GET LEAKED IN GUJARAT, HARYANA AND HIMACHAL; WHY NOT IN DELHI? — AAP NATIONAL CONVENER ARVIND KEJRIWAL



INSTEAD OF DERIVING POLITICAL MILEAGE FROM NON-ISSUES, KEJRIWAL SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON PUNJAB (WHERE MOOSEWALA WAS SHOT). — HIMACHAL BJP GENERAL SECRETARY TRILOK JAMWAL

# Bank privatisation will be futile exercise to begin

## Instead of trying to privatise public sector banks, Govt and the RBI must improve their efficiency and credibility

While presenting the budget in 2021, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced that the Government budgeted ₹1.75 lakh crore from stake sale in public sector companies and financial institutions. This included two public sector banks. Earlier, the Niti Aayog had recommended the privatisation of three such banks—Bank of Maharashtra, Indian Overseas Bank and Punjab and Sind Bank. In July 2021, Finance Secretary T.V. Somanathan stated, "We have now announced that the public sector banks, most of them will eventually be privatized. Now saying eventually privatised and actually privatising them are two different things, but we are actively engaged in privatising them.



S KALYANASUNDARAM

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

And banking is one of those sectors where only a bare minimum public sector banks will eventually remain that is the stated policy." About a million bank employees struck work in December 2021 opposing the government's move to privatise banks. Leaving aside the merit or otherwise of privatisation, here an attempt is made to analyse just to reveal to what extent the possibility of privatisation of banks exists today. First and foremost, amending the Banking companies' acquisition and transfer laws of 1970 and 1980 and the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, is required to do any privatisation of banks. This may be possible as the ruling party is having a comfortable majority in Parliament. There exists an 'on tap' licence norms for banks' released



by the Reserve Bank of India. Though these norms are applicable for any new bank licence, it should be construed as equally applicable for any new entrant who wants to buy any bank, as the RBI may not relax any such norms. Any selling of government banks can be based on its valuation. One way to know the valuation is based on its present market capitalisation, as these banks are quoted in the stock exchange. As per data from the

National Stock Exchange, these banks' market capitalisation comes to ₹724,436.21 crore (March 31, 2022). These banks are not fully owned by the government. The value of government holding in these banks (based on market cap) comes to ₹480,207.35 crore. Hence it may be important to find buyers who have financial powers at least to this extent. In the eventuality of successful privatisation, the market cap may go up also based on investors' perception. Large industrial houses, whose income from non-banking sources are over 40 per cent of total, will not be eligible to set up a bank in the country as per the RBI's bank licence norms. This means that industrial houses like Reliance, Adani, Tata, and Birlas cannot have any banking licence and hence cannot partic-

ipate in the government's programme to privatise banks. Only individuals with 10 years of experience, as well as business groups with ₹5,000 crore of total assets will be eligible for a bank licence provided the non-financial business of the group does not account for 40 per cent or more in terms of total assets/in terms of gross income. There do not seem to be any individuals (without industrial connection) to have net worth to take over any Government bank. The existing private banks may be eligible to take over government banks, provided they are willing to bid for it. But here there are two constraints. Firstly, the private banks may not be interested in buying the Government banks, considering the work culture and huge staff strength. It will be a long process

to change work culture in an organisation with decades of standing. Getting rid of excess staff will also be difficult. Secondly, the private banks do not have enough surplus funds to take over any banks. These are mandated to have a cash reserve ratio of 4.5 per cent and a statutory liquidity ratio of 18 per cent. Hence any bank can comfortably lend only 78 per cent of its deposits. If any bank is lending more than this, it is out of borrowings and not deposits. We call it credit-deposit ratio. Now see the credit-deposit ratios of some leading private banks (see the table). One can see that invariably all these banks are having CD ratio of more than 78 per cent and hence they are borrowing to meet their credit demand. Financial position of these banks

will not allow them to buy government banks. Yet another type of eligible entity to buy Government banks may be non-banking financial companies (NBFCs). They may come under the fit and proper criteria. However, an NBFC which is a part of a group where the non-financial business of the group accounts for 40 per cent or more in terms of total assets/gross income is not eligible to become a bank. Leading NBFCs like Bajaj Finance Limited, Shriram Transport Finance Company Limited, Aditya Birla Capital Limited, L&T Finance Holdings Limited, Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited, and Sundaram Finance may all be part of the industrial group and may not get the banking licence.



# IRDAI’s new norms to prompt innovative policies: Experts

**New Delhi:** IRDAI’s decision to permit ‘use and file’ facility for most of the insurance products will encourage insurers to come out with innovative covers quickly to the benefit of customers and also deepen the insurance penetration in the country, said experts.

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) last week extended the ‘use and file’ procedure for most of the life insurance products, thereby allowing insurers to launch new products without prior approval of the regulator.

Earlier, similar relaxations were extended to all the health insurance products and almost all the general insurance products.

The relaxed norms for launching insurance products, experts feel, will also make insurers more responsible as they would be held accountable for the products which are offered in the marketplace without prior approval of IRDAI.

S Prakash, MD, Star Health and Allied Insurance said the new guidelines will support the



industry to launch products faster.

“This also puts a lot of responsibility on insurers. While the regulator has given freedom to industry, it also will require insurers to act in a more responsible manner,” he said. Prasun Sikdar, MD & CEO - ManipalCigna Health Insurance Company said the reforms will further reduce the human intervention, thereby cutting down on the cum-

bersome waiting period that will ease the process, help the suitable products to reach the untapped geographies and enable their launch in a faster and efficient manner.

Commenting on IRDAI’s move, Rakesh Jain, CEO of Reliance General Insurance, said it will support customer-centricity and fuel product innovation, which in turn will boost insurance penetration in the country. **PTI**

## 4.8 L homes worth ₹4.48 L crore stuck in top seven cities

### 2.4 lakh units in Delhi-NCR

**New Delhi:** Construction work of nearly 4.8 lakh homes worth ₹4.48 lakh crore are currently stuck or significantly delayed across seven major cities, although builders have completed 37,000 such units so far this year, according to property consultant Anarock.

For its research, Anarock has taken only those housing projects that were launched in 2014 or before across seven cities -- Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune.

As per the data, 36,830 languishing homes were completed in these cities between January 2022 and May 2022.

At the end of May 2022, Anarock said that 4,79,940 units worth ₹4,48,129 crore were stuck in various construction stages across these seven cities. **PTI**

The property markets of these seven cities were saddled with about 5.17 lakh units worth ₹4.84 lakh crore at the end of 2021 calendar year.

“Developers remain committed to completing their projects and are capitalizing on the ongoing demand for ready-to-move homes,” said Prashant Thakur, Senior Director & Head - Research, Anarock.

“What is notable is that they are maintaining momentum despite considerable headwinds from increased input costs, which have gone through the roof in the last five months. The fact that housing demand has remained strong in last two years obviously helps,” he said.

Several large developers as well as the SWAMIH fund and state-owned NBCC have taken over stuck/delayed inventories and are completing pending construction works, Thakur said. Anarock said that the Delhi-NCR and MMR together account for 77 per cent of the total stuck/delayed housing units. **PTI**

# ‘Power demand jumped by record 45K MW in a year’

## Govt ensuring 23-23.5 hours supplies, says Power Minister

**New Delhi:** India’s power demand this year has jumped by a record 40,000-45,000 MW per day as an intense heat wave sweeps through northern parts of the country, the economy expands, and electricity reaches millions of unelectrified homes, Power Minister RK Singh has said.

A massive addition in the generation capacity, integrating the country into one transmission grid and strengthening of the distribution system during eight years of the Modi government is ensuring the 23 to 23.5 hours of electricity supply, he said in an interview with PTI.

India’s electricity demand on June 9 was recorded at an all-time high of 2,10,792 megawatts, and 4,712 million units of electricity were consumed.



Power plants are operating at full throttle to meet this demand, and the government has ordered coal import to meet the shortfall in domestic supplies.

“The whole power sector has changed (in last 8 years),” Singh said. “Before (2014), we were power deficit, load shedding was endemic.”

According to a survey by an NGO, the average availability of power in rural

areas was about 12.5 hours at the national level. “Today it is 22.5 hours,” he said.

A power deficit nation with an average shortage of anywhere between 17 and 20 per cent, India has been transformed into a power surplus country.

Detailing the steps, he said in 8 years, 1,69,000 MW of capacity was added to take electricity generation capacity to over 4,00,000 MW (or 400 gigawatts). **PTI**

## FPIs pull out ₹14K-cr from Indian equities in June on global, domestic concerns

**New Delhi:** Wary of the scenario on the global and domestic fronts, foreign investors continued to withdraw from Indian equity markets and pulled out close to Rs 14,000 crore in this month so far.

With this, net outflow by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) from equities reached Rs 1.81 lakh crore so far in 2022, data with depositories showed.

Going forward, the FPIs’ selling may continue in the near-term, however, a moderation in sell-off is expected during short to medium-term, Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

“This is because a large part of the changover like economic slowdown, hawkish monetary policy, supply constraints and high inflation is factored in, in the market prices, which was consolidating over the last 7 months. And for central banks to maintain the aggressive policy in long-term, the inflation must remain

high,” he added.

According to the data, foreign investors withdrew a net amount of Rs 13,888 crore from equities during June 1-10. FPIs have been incessantly withdrawing money from Indian equities since October 2021.

Nair attributed the latest FPI outflow to anticipation of a hawkish Federal Reserve meeting.

“Global markets witnessed selling pressure in anticipation of record high inflation numbers in the US, which could force the Fed to accelerate increasing interest rates. At 8.6 per cent, the US inflation is at a 40-year high. Talks of stagnation and China announcing another of lockdowns all weighed down on investors, prompting another round of selling,” Vijay Singhania, Chairman, TradeSmart, said. In addition, RBI also increased repo rate by 50 basis points and revised upwards its inflation projection. **PTI**

## FinMin issues draft SoP for e-commerce jewellery exports through courier route

**New Delhi:** The finance ministry has come out with draft SoP for facilitating e-commerce jewellery exports through courier route, as it looks to provide a simplified regulatory framework for manufacturers and traders who want to export jewellery.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has invited feedback and suggestions from stakeholders by June 14 on the Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) for implementation of a simplified regulatory framework to facilitate export of jewellery made of precious metals and imitation jewellery through e-commerce in courier mode.

The CBIC also proposes to amend the Courier Imports and Exports (Electronic Declaration and Processing) Regulations, 2010, and related forms and come out with a notification prescribing conditions for reimport of returned jewellery and has invited views



from stakeholders on the same.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had in the 2022-23 Budget announced implementation of a simplified regulatory framework to facilitate export of jewellery through e-commerce.

Subsequently stakeholder consultations, including those with the Express Industry Council Of India (EICI), Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC),

e-commerce operators, members of the trade, officers working in the Directorate General Of Export Promotion, Directorate General of Systems and Customs field formations, have been held.

“The feedback received through the aforesaid consultations showed that a simplified regulatory framework is required for e-commerce exports of Jewellery through courier mode. **PTI**

### Vedanta to modify design of waste heat recovery plant in Goa to increase power generation

**New Delhi:**Vedanta plans to modify the design of one of its waste heat recovery power plants in Goa and reoptimise its turbines through the use of a specialised technology in order to increase power generation by another 5 MW, a top official of the company said.

This is in line with Vedanta’s efforts towards reducing the carbon footprint.

“The design of turbine of our power plant will be slightly modified and it is getting reoptimised. The idea is in the nascent stage. The turbine which used to generate 30 MW will generate 35 MW using same amount of heat. We will ensure that heat loss and recirculation loss has been optimised through very specialised technology,” Sujal Shah, CEO- iron ore business , Vedanta Ltd, told PTI.

Vedanta has already used this technology to increase the power generation of one its power plants in Rajasthan.

“Vedanta’s iron ore business has two power plants of 30 MW (each). Once we complete optimisation of one power plant, we will replicate the same for other one ,” Shah explained.

The company plans to invest on the technology, he said adding that it is just a technological upgradation of higher efficiency. In the same way, the company also plans to install waste recovery power plant at its coke oven batteries at newly acquired coke making facilities in Maharashtra and Gujarat. “These power plants will help us to continue to supply power to state grids at nominal cost and to other sources. This is a safer way of green power generation using waste heat from coke oven batteries” he explained. **PTI**

## Steel industry seeks Govt intervention to check coking coal price

**New Delhi:** Industry body ISA has sought the government’s immediate intervention to check coking coal price, which has grown three-fold to around USD 450 a tonne.

“Coking coal prices is something, which is impacting the industry drastically and the production cost is impacted, affecting the steel prices,” Alok Sahay, Secretary-General of Indian Steel Association said during an interaction with PTI.

Indian Steel Association (ISA) represents the domestic steel industry.

Explaining the situation, Sahay said the price of coking coal used to be in the range of USD 120-130 per tonne around a year back.

In March 2022, coking coal prices had peaked at about USD 670 per tonne, he added.

At the current price range, the industry expert said, the cost of coking coal alone in steel making is around Rs



28,000 to Rs 30,000 per tonne, which works to about 40-45 per cent of the production cost. Besides, there are other input materials like iron ore, ferroalloys, logistics, fuel costs and other fixed costs.

Sahay further noted that when crude oil prices go up, prices of petrol and diesel also go up, impacting the entire sup-

ply chain. Similarly, steel prices also rise in line with increasing coking coal rates.

However, ISA has been apprising the government since February 2022 to take a note of coking coal prices as the association is of the view that “the price needs to be checked so that the cost of steel production can be reduced.” **PTI**

## Zara logs 61% growth in India with revenue of ₹1,815 cr in FY22; posts profit of ₹148.76 crore

**New Delhi:** Spain’s Inditex, which owns luxury fashion brand Zara, posted a net profit of ₹148.76 crore and revenue of ₹1,815 crore for the financial year ended on March 31, 2022, according to the latest annual report of Trent Ltd.

In FY21, Inditex Trent Retail India Private Ltd (ITRIPL), a JV which is engaged in the operation of Zara stores in India, had reported a net loss of ₹41 crore and its revenue fell 28.3 per cent to ₹1,126 crore in the pandemic impacted year.

The Inditex group of Spain owns 51 per cent while Trent has 49 per cent in ITRIPL.

“During the year under review, the Zara entity recorded revenues of ₹1,815 crore,” said the annual report of Tata group retail arm Trent.

The entity for Zara currently operates 21 stores across 11 cities. There has been no

increase in the number of stores in the last two years.

“The incremental store openings for Zara continue to be calibrated with focus on presence only in very high-quality retail spaces,” it said.

Zara competes with the likes of other foreign brands such as H&M, and UNIQLO in India.

Inditex group of Spain has another similar association with Trent, which operates Massimo Dutti stores in India. It has also reported revenue growth of 43.9 per cent during FY22. “The entity for Massimo Dutti operates 3 stores and recorded revenues of ₹59 crore in FY22,” it said.

Massimo Dutti India Pvt Ltd had reported a profit of Rs 1.48 crore in FY22. The business of both entities is essentially limited to the distribution of Zara and Massimo Dutti products in India. **PTI**

## Procurement of ‘moong’ crop starts in Punjab

**Chandigarh:** Procurement of summer ‘moong’ (green gram) from farmers at a minimum support price of ₹7,275 per quintal has started in Punjab, an official spokesperson said here on Sunday.

The AAP-led government had earlier announced that it would procure ‘moong’ crop at the MSP. The move was aimed to encourage crop diversification.

“Summer ‘moong’ crop is being procured at ₹7,275 per quintal thereby, farmers will get ₹36,000 as an additional income, with five quintals expected yield per acre between wheat harvest and paddy cultivation,” the spokesperson of the chief minister’s office said.

After Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann appealed to growers to sow ‘moong’, the total area under this crop rose to one lakh acres from 50,000 acres last year, the official added. **PTI**



A yield of 4.75 lakh quintal is expected this year.

Mann had earlier said that the ‘moong’ crop sowing would save the natural resources of the state in terms of precious groundwater, besides improving soil health and generating additional income for the farmers.

The State Government has declared Markfed and cooperative societies as the state nodal agencies for the procurement and storage of ‘moong’ and other logistic support for the marketing season 2022-23.

# Govt loses challenge to \$111 mn arbitration award in dispute with Reliance/Shell

**New Delhi:** The Government has lost its appeal in the English High Court against a USD 111 million arbitration award in favour of Reliance Industries Ltd and Shell in a cost recovery dispute in the western offshore Panna-Mukta and Tapti oil and gas fields.

High Court judge Ross Cranston on June 9, 2022 ruled that the government should have brought its objections over the arbitration tribunal not meeting the required thresholds, when issuing the 2021 award earlier, two sources with knowledge of the matter said.

Rejecting the government’s arguments, the court said the

objections are barred by an English law principle whereby a party cannot raise matters in new proceedings that could have been raised in earlier proceedings.

While an email sent to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas for comments remained unanswered, officials said the government will study the court order and look for appropriate forums for remedy.

A separate email sent to Reliance for comments too remained unanswered.

Reliance and Shell-owned BG Exploration & Production India on December 16, 2010, dragged the government to

arbitration over cost recovery provisions, profit due to the State and amount of statutory dues including royalty payable. They wanted to raise the limit of cost that could be recovered from sale of oil and gas before profits are shared with the government.

The government of India also raised counter claims over expenditure incurred, inflated sales, excess cost recovery, and short accounting.

A three-member arbitration panel headed by Singapore-based lawyer Christopher Lau by majority issued a final partial award (FPA) on October 12, 2016. It upheld the government view

that the profit from the fields should be calculated after deducting the prevailing tax of 33 per cent and not the 50 per cent rate that existed earlier.

It also upheld that the cost recovery in the contract is fixed at USD 545 million in Tapti gas field and USD 577.5 million in Panna-Mukta oil and gas field. The two firms wanted that cost provision be raised by USD 365 million in Tapti and USD 62.5 million in Panna-Mukta.

Royalty, it said, had to be calculated after inclusion of marketing margin charged over and above the wellhead price of natural gas.

The government used this award to seek USD 3.85 billion in dues from Reliance and BG Exploration & Production India Ltd (BGEPIL).

The two firms challenged the 2016 FPA before the English High Court, which on April 16, 2018, remitted one of the challenged issues back to the Arbitral Tribunal for reconsideration.

The arbitration tribunal ruled in favour of the two in a January 29, 2021 award.

“The Arbitral Tribunal decided in favour of the Claimants (Reliance and BGEPIL) in large part vide its final partial award dated October 1, 2018. Government

of India and Claimants filed an appeal before the English Commercial Court against this 2018 FPA,” Reliance had said in its annual report last year.

“The English Commercial Court rejected GoI’s challenges to the 2018 Final Partial Award and upheld Claimants’ challenge that the Arbitration Tribunal had jurisdiction over the limited issue and remitted the issue back to the Arbitration Tribunal,” it added.

The final award on the issue came in January 2021, it had stated.

Subsequently, both sides filed clarification applications before tribunal, which on April 9, 2021 granted minor correc-

tions requested by Reliance and Shell and rejected all of the government’s clarification requests.

Thereafter, the government challenged the award before the English High Court.

The court gave its ruling on June 9, 2022, they said.

The government had used the 2016 partial award not just to raise a USD 3.85 billion demand on Reliance and Shell but also sought to block Reliance’s proposed USD 15 billion deal with Saudi Aramco on grounds that the company owed money to it.

Following this, the court asked company directors to file affidavits listing assets. **PTI**



# Ukraine’s President says his troops keep defying predictions

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said no one knows how long the war in his country will last but that Ukrainian forces are defying expectations by preventing Russian troops from overrunning eastern Ukraine, where the fighting has been fiercest for weeks.

In his nightly video address, Zelenskyy said he was proud of the Ukrainian defenders managing to hold back the Russian advance in the Donbas region, which borders Russia and where Moscow-backed separatists have controlled much of the territory for eight years.

"Remember how in Russia, in the beginning of May, they hoped to seize all of the Donbas?" the president said late Saturday. "It's already the 108th day of the war, already June. Donbas is holding on."

After failing to capture Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, early in the war, Moscow focused on seizing the parts of the largely

Russian-speaking Donbas still in Ukrainian hands, as well as the country's southern coast.

But instead of securing a swift, decisive takeover, Russian forces were drawn into a long, laborious battle, thanks in part to the Ukrainian military's use of Western-supplied weapons.

Both Ukrainian and Russian authorities said Sievierodonetsk, an eastern city with a prewar population of 100,000, remained contested.

The city and neighbouring Lysychansk are the last major areas of the Donbas. Luhansk province not under the control of the pro-Russia rebels.

Leonid Pasechnik, the head of the separatist-declared Luhansk People's Republic, said Ukrainian fighters remained in an industrial area of the city, including a chemical plant where civilians had taken shelter from days of Russian shelling.

"Sievierodonetsk is not completely 100 per cent liberated," Pasechnik said on Saturday, alleging that the Ukrainians were shelling the



city from the Azot plant. "So it's impossible to call the situation calm in Sievierodonetsk, that it is completely ours."

Luhansk Gov. Serhii Haidai reported on Saturday that a big fire broke out at the plant during hours of Russian shelling. To the north of the city, Russian shelling of settlements in the Kharkiv region killed three people, Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said Sunday.

Elsewhere in Ukraine, a

counteroffensive pushed Russians out of parts of the southern Kherson region they took early in the war, according to Zelenskyy.

Moscow has installed local authorities in Kherson and other occupied coastal areas, offering residents Russian passports, airing Russian news broadcasts and taking steps to introduce a Russian school curriculum.

Zelenskyy said that while

an end to the war was not in sight, Ukraine should do everything it can so the Russians "regret everything that they have done and that they answer for every killing and every strike on our beautiful state".

The Ukrainian leader asserted that Russia has suffered about three times as many military casualties as the number estimated for the Ukrainian side, adding: "For what? What did it get you, Russia?" There are no reliable independent estimates of the war's death toll so far.

Speaking at a defence conference in Singapore on Sunday, Chinese Defence Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe said Beijing continues to support peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, and hopes the US and its NATO allies have discussions with Russia "to create the conditions for an early ceasefire".

"China will continue to play a constructive role and contribute our share to easing tensions and realising a political resolution of the crisis," Wei said.

## Ukraine’s teen drone hero ‘happy that we destroyed someone’

AP ■ KYIV

As Russian tanks and trucks rumbled close to their village, a Ukrainian teenager and his father stealthily launched their small drone into the air.

Working as a team, they took bird's-eye photos of the armoured column moving toward Kyiv and pinpointed its coordinates, swiftly messaging the precious information to the Ukrainian military.

Within minutes, artillery batteries rained shells down on the invading forces, with deadly effect.

Andriy Pokrasa, 15, and

his dad, Stanislav, are being hailed in Ukraine for their volunteer aerial reconnaissance work in the early days of the invasion, when Russian troops barrelling in from the north made an ultimately failed attempt to take the capital and bring the country to its knees.

For a full week after the Feb. 24 invasion, the pair made repeated sorties with their drone - risking capture or worse had Russian troops been aware of their snooping.

"These were some of the scariest moments of my life," Andriy recounted as he demonstrated his piloting

skills for an Associated Press team of journalists.

We provided the photos and the location to the armed forces," he said. "They narrowed down the coordinates more accurately and transmitted them by walkie-talkie, so as to adjust the artillery."

His father was happy to leave the piloting to the boy.

"I can operate the drone, but my son does it much better. We immediately decided he would do it," Stanislav Pokrasa, 41, said.

They aren't sure how many Russian targets were destroyed using information they provided.

## Open to Russian oil: Sri Lanka PM

AP ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka may be compelled to buy more oil from Russia as the island nation hunts desperately for fuel amid an unprecedented economic crisis, the newly appointed prime minister said.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said he would first look to other sources, but would be open to buying more crude from Moscow.

Western nations largely have cut off energy imports from Russia in line with sanctions over its war on Ukraine.

In a wide-ranging interview with The Associated Press on Saturday, Wickremesinghe also indicated he would be willing to accept more financial help from China, despite his country's mounting debt.

And while he acknowledged that Sri Lanka's current predicament is of "its own making", he said the war in Ukraine is making it even worse - and that dire food shortages could continue until 2024. He said Russia had also offered wheat to Sri Lanka.

Wickremesinghe, who is also Sri Lanka's finance minister, spoke to the AP in his office in the capital, Colombo, one day shy of a month after he took over



for a sixth time as prime minister. Appointed by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to resolve an economic crisis that has nearly emptied the country's foreign exchange reserves, Wickremesinghe was sworn in after days of violent protests last month forced his predecessor, Rajapaksa's brother Mahinda Rajapaksa, to step down and seek safety from angry crowds at a naval base.

Sri Lanka has amassed USD 51 billion in foreign debt, but has suspended repayment of nearly USD 7 billion due this year.

The crushing debt has left the country with no money for basic imports, which means citizens are struggling to access basic necessities such as food, fuel, medicine - even toilet paper and matches.

The shortages have spawned rolling power outages, and people have been forced to wait days for cooking gas and gasoline in lines that stretch for kilometers.

Two weeks ago, the country

bought a 90,000-metric-ton shipment of Russian crude to restart its only refinery, the energy minister told reporters.

Wickremesinghe did not comment directly on those reports, and said he did not know whether more orders were in the pipeline. But he said Sri Lanka desperately needs fuel, and is currently trying to get oil and coal from the country's traditional suppliers in the Middle East. "If we can get from any other sources, we will get from there. Otherwise (we) may have to go to Russia again," he said.

Officials are negotiating with private suppliers, but Wickremesinghe said one issue they face is that "there is a lot of oil going around which can be sourced back informally to Iran or to Russia". "Sometimes we may not know what oil we are buying," he said. "Certainly we are looking at the Gulf as our main supply."

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February, global oil prices have skyrocketed.

While Washington and its allies are trying to cut financial flows supporting Moscow's war effort, Russia is offering its crude at a steep discount, making it extremely enticing to a number of countries.

## Alaska tallies US House primary after ballot access fight

AP ■ JUNEAU (US)

The special primary for Alaska's only US House seat moved forward as planned on Saturday, after a tense legal fight over ballot access issues cast a shadow over the election.

The legal drama was the latest twist in an already extraordinary election, packed with 48 candidates running for the seat left vacant by US Rep. Don Young, who died in March. Young, a Republican, held the seat for 49 years.

The state Division of Elections released initial vote counts late Saturday from the election conducted primarily by mail. Saturday marked the first ballot count; additional counts are scheduled for Wednesday and Friday, with the final count on June 21.

Initial results showed Republican former Gov. Sarah Palin with 29.8 per cent; Republican Nick Begich with 19.3 per cent; independent Al Gross with 12.5 per cent, and

Democrat Mary Peltola with 7.5 per cent.

Republican Tara Sweeney had 5.3 per cent, while a self-described "independent, progressive, democratic socialist" named Santa Claus had 4.5 per cent.

The early tally released by the division included 108,729 votes. It was not clear how many ballots were outstanding; the division reported late Friday afternoon that it had received around 130,000 ballots. Ballots had to be post-marked by Saturday.

Saturday's election was the first under a system approved by voters in 2020 that ends party primaries and uses ranked choice voting in general elections.

The top four candidates in the special primary will advance to a special election in August, when ranked choice voting will be used.

The Associated Press has not called any winners in the special primary.

## China accuses US of trying to ‘hijack’ support in Asia

AP ■ SINGAPORE

China's Defence Minister Accused the United States on Sunday of trying to "hijack" the support of countries in the Asia-Pacific region to turn them against Beijing, saying Washington is seeking to advance its own interests "under the guise of multilateralism." Defense Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe lashed out at U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, rejecting his "smearing accusation" the day before at the Shangri-La Dialogue that China was causing instability with its claim to the self-governing island of Taiwan and its increased military activity in the area.

Austin had stressed the need for multilateral partnerships with nations in the Indo-Pacific, which Wei suggested was an attempt to back China into a corner.

"No country should impose its will on others or bully others under the guise of multilateralism," he said. "The strategy is an attempt to build an exclusive small group in the



name of a free and open Indo-Pacific to hijack countries in our region and target one specific country - it is a strategy to create conflict and confrontation to contain and encircle others."

China has been rapidly modernizing its military and seeking to expand its influence and ambitions in the region, recently signing a security agreement with the Solomon Islands that many fear could lead to a Chinese naval base in the Pacific, and breaking ground this past week on a naval port expansion project in Cambodia that could give Beijing a foothold in the Gulf of Thailand.

Last year U.S. Officials

accused China of testing a hypersonic missile, a weapon harder for missile defense systems to counter, but China insisted it had been a "routine test of a spacecraft."

Answering a question about the test on Sunday, Wei came the closest so far to acknowledging it was, indeed, a hypersonic missile, saying, "As for hypersonic weapons, many countries are developing weapons and I think there's no surprise that China is doing so."

"China will develop its military," he added. "I think it's natural."

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken last month said China represented the "most serious long-term challenge to the international order" for the United States, with its claims to Taiwan and efforts to dominate the strategic South China Sea. The U.S. And its allies have responded with so-called freedom of navigation patrols in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait, sometimes encountering a pushback from China's military.

## ‘Enough is enough’ say thousands demanding new gun measures

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Thousands of people rallied on the National Mall and across the United States on Saturday in a renewed push for gun control measures after recent deadly mass shootings from Uvalde, Texas, to Buffalo, New York, that activists say should compel Congress to act.

"Enough is enough," District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser told the second March for Our Lives rally in her city. "I speak as a mayor, a mom, and I speak for millions of Americans and America's mayors who are demanding that Congress do its job. And its job is to protect us, to protect our children from gun violence."

Speaker after speaker in Washington called on senators, who are seen as a major imped-



iment to legislation, to act or face being voted out of office, especially given the shock to the nation's conscience after 19 children and two teachers were killed May 24 at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde.

"Four government can't do anything to stop 19 kids from being killed and slaughtered in their own school, and decapitated, it's time to change who

is in government," said David Hogg, a survivor of the 2018 shooting that killed 17 students and staff at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

A co-founder of the March For Our Lives organization that was created after that shooting and held its first rally in Washington not long afterward, Hogg led the crowd in

chants of "Vote them out".

Another Parkland survivor and group co-founder, X Gonzalez, delivered an impassioned, profanity-laced plea to Congress for change. "We are being murdered," she screamed and implored Congress to "act your age, not your shoe size".

Added Yolanda King, granddaughter of Martin Luther King Jr, "This time is different because this isn't about politics. It's about morality. Not right and left, but right and wrong, and that doesn't just mean thoughts and prayers. That means courage and action."

Manuel Oliver, whose son, Joaquin, was killed in the Parkland shooting, called on students "to avoid going back to school until our elected leaders stop avoiding the crisis of gun violence in America and start acting to save our lives."

AP ■ LONDON

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II Bon Sunday overtook Thailand's King to become the world's second-longest reigning monarch in history, after France's Louis XIV.

The UK has been celebrating the 96-year-old Queen's Platinum Jubilee to mark 70 years of service to the nation with grand events taking place last weekend.

Now she has overtaken Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who reigned for 70 years and 126 days between 1927 and 2016, to set another record. Louis XIV of France remains the longest-reigning monarch, with a 72-year and 110-day reign from 1643 until 1715. Crowned in 1953, Queen Elizabeth II became the longest-serving British monarch in September 2015,



surpassing her great-great grandmother Queen Victoria.

After four days of royal parades, street parties, pageantry and other events held across the UK and the Commonwealth to mark the Platinum Jubilee milestone, the monarch thanked the nation in a letter, saying that she had been "humbled and deeply touched", and that "this renewed sense of togetherness will be felt for many years to come". "When it comes to how

to mark 70 years as your Queen, there is no guidebook to follow. It really is a first," the letter read.

"But I have been humbled and deeply touched that so many people have taken to the streets to celebrate my Platinum Jubilee," she said.

The Queen has been hit with some age-related mobility problems and chose to miss some of the events, with her son and heir Prince Charles and second in line Prince William and close ranks of the royal family joining. But she did appear on the balcony of Buckingham Palace at the end of the Jubilee Pageant as the extended Bank Holiday weekend drew to a close.

AP ■ CAIRO

An Egyptian court Saturday sentenced a man to die for the April stabbing death of a Coptic Christian priest in an attack that shocked the Arab world's most populous nation.

Nehru Tawfiq, 60, was convicted in Alexandria criminal court of murder for killing 56-year-old priest Arsanious Wadid and illegal possession of a knife. His lawyers had argued that the killing was not deliberate. Tawfiq can appeal the verdict. Wadid was killed at a popular seaside promenade in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria in April.

Investigators found that Tawfiq was an Islamist with an extremist background. During last month's court session he appeared in court in a caged-off section of the room shouting "God is great" in Arabic. He attempted to recite verses from the Quran, the Muslim holy book, before judges ordered him to keep silent. The attack marked the latest sectarian violence in Egypt.

Islamic extremists have repeatedly targeted Christians in recent years, especially after the 2013 military ouster of late Islamist President Mohammed Morsi, an elected but divisive leader, amid mass protests against his rule.

In September 2017, an alleged supporter of the Islamic State group stabbed to death an 82-year-old Christian doctor in Cairo. He was sentenced to death the following year.

Egyptian Copts - the Middle East's largest Christian community - account for about 10 per cent of the country's 103 million people and repeatedly complain of discrimination at the hands of the Muslim majority.

## UN-brokered talks on Libya elections resume in Cairo

AP ■ CAIRO

Libyan officials returned to the Egyptian capital Sunday for a third round of talks on constitutional amendments for elections. The North African nation once again finds itself at a political impasse with two rival administrations claiming legitimacy.

The talks in Cairo come on the heels of clashes between rival militias that caused residents of the Libyan capital of Tripoli to panic and revived nightmares of previous bouts of fighting in the chaos-stricken nation. Lawmakers from Libya's east-based parliament



and the High Council of State, an advisory body from western Libya, began the U.N.-brokered negotiations amid concerted international pressure on the two chambers to put their disputes aside and agree on the election's legal basis.

The U.N. Special adviser on Libya, Stephanie Williams, said talks in a Cairo hotel will

continue till June 19 with the aim of establishing a constitutional framework "required to take the country to national elections as soon as possible."

In the previous two rounds of talks, the parties came to an initial consensus on 137 articles of the constitutional draft, including on rights and freedoms. They would continue discussing a handful of disputed articles on legislative and judicial authority, Williams said. The dispute over the constitutional framework of the election was among major challenges that caused planned national elections to fail in December.

## France holds Parl polls in vital test for Macron

AP ■ PARIS

French voters are choosing lawmakers in a parliamentary election Sunday as President Emmanuel Macron seeks to secure his majority while under growing threat from a leftist coalition.

More than 6,000 candidates, ranging in age from 18 to 92, are running for 577 seats in the National Assembly in the first round of the election. Those who receive the most votes will advance to the decisive second round on June 19. While candidates have sought to address consumer concerns about inflation, which was a key campaign issue, voter enthusiasm has been generally low. That was reflect-



ed in Sunday's early turnout figures, which showed just 18% of France's 48.7 million voters had cast ballots by noon.


Hard-left leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who hopes the election may vault him to the prime minister's post, was among only a trickle of voters as he cast his ballot in a diverse neighborhood of Marseille, a southern port city. On France's opposite coast, a small crowd

gathered to watch Macron arrive to vote in the English Channel resort town of Le Touquet. Following Macron's reelection in May, his centrist coalition is seeking an absolute majority that would enable it to implement his campaign promises, which include tax cuts and raising the retirement age from 62 to 65.

But the latest opinion polls suggest Macron and his allies may have trouble winning over half of the parliamentary seats. A government with a large, but not absolute majority would still be able to rule, but only by bargaining with legislators. The main opposition force appears to be Mélenchon's newly-created coalition made up of leftists, greens and communists. The coalition's platform includes a significant minimum wage increase, lowering the retirement age to 60 and locking in energy prices.

Mélenchon, an anti-globalization firebrand who has called for France to pull out of NATO and "disobey" EU rules, urged voters to give his coalition a majority and thereby force Macron to name him as Prime Minister.




talktime

SUNIEL SHETTY

The actor, who is also a sports enthusiast and an entrepreneur by passion is known for his work in films like Dilwale, Dhadkan, Main Hoon Na, Border, Hera Pheri, among others. He speaks with SUPRIYA RAMESH about Horses Stable Junior, a platform which allows kids to pitch their start-up ideas like any other adult and instead of direct funding, they will provide grants for their future research, experimentation and entrepreneurial ideas

‘THE EXCITEMENT IS NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE ENTREPRENEURS BUT JUNIORS’



■ Horses Stable is a reality show where entrepreneurs meet investors. Could you please elaborate on the process whereby an entrepreneur pitches his business idea to the investor convincing him to invest?

There is Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), a flagship initiative to promote innovation and entrepreneurship set up by the NITI Aayog that is helping us curate and find the right talent. We choose the best among them and later present the ideas to the corporate. That being done, we try to figure out which corporate will work best for what idea. It's like making sure that we are that matrimonial website that arranges the marriage of the talent and their work in the best possible way.

■ On what basis are the contestants being selected?

On their ideas, how far they have come with that idea, what stage they are at and what are the kind of ideas they are talking about. Checking the need and potential of growth of an idea and it doesn't

### GIVE IT YOUR BEST AND IF YOU FAIL, UNDERSTAND WHY YOU ARE FAILING AND WHAT IS WRONG WITH WHAT YOU ARE DOING

matter whether it's tech, product-based or others. We examine if the idea has the potential to make it big or to go to the next stage, where can it stagnate or how far can it go.

■ Are the juniors being trained for the same?

Of course they will be. They will be mentored by all of our team which are a bunch of young entrepreneurs who are involved with Horses Stable.

■ It is obvious that the rules and regulations of the show will not entirely match those of the one for adults but what are the similarities?

It's about talent, ideas and innovation. ■ You have been hosting the show for three seasons now. How has your experience been? What are your expectations from the younger lot?

Fantastic! Very satisfying. It is a talent platform that gives young talents a great opportunity. Young girls and boys no matter where they come from, all of them get this

opportunity. There have been over 2000-3000 success stories. Horses stable is an exciting concept where kids will pitch their start-up ideas like any other adult and instead of direct funding, we will provide grants for their future research, experimentation and entrepreneurial ideas till they become old enough to venture it out on their own. My expectations are huge. Even if we can get one Gates or Musk coming out of India, we can get the Ambanis, the Birlas and the Adanis to get involved too. It's an icing on the cake.

■ You yourself are a businessman and if you were to train or guide an aspirant, how would you go about it?

Give it your best and if you fail, understand why you are failing and what is wrong with what you are doing. When I failed as an actor, my film was successful but I was not. That bothered me but I realised that I didn't learn acting. One opportunity came and I just grabbed it. Until then, I did death defying stunts. By the time I did four to five films I was successful as people saw me. It's also about how you market yourself. I haven't done a film in seven-eight years. People should have forgotten but they haven't. They love me and media has kept me alive and nobody gives

me a complex. No super successful actor will make me feel that he is more successful than me. I'll give him a bigger complex, that's how confident I am. It's not about my pride, it's about what kind of a person I am. What am I doing in the society? What is my reputation? I will outdo all of them together. So, that's what mentoring is all about, to tell a child what you have is magical. Go there and kill it. You tried while the others haven't ever.

■ You have been into acting and equally into sports. What drove you to the business world?

I have passion. I started young with dad. I understood the value of money. I made my own money when I was 15. I did my own things. I bought my own tickets, clothes. That is a matter of pride for me but a bigger pride for my father. He always told people that I didn't take a single rupee from him. That one thing kept me going. That became a part of me. When I was training in martial arts, he told me not to drink or smoke, you will be stronger and I listened to him to only notice that I am actually becoming stronger.

■ Do you see any similarities in strategising ideas on the cricket field and in the business arena?

Sports or business, teamwork is what matters the most.

Plan Your Day

BURNING MAN | THE MUSICAL



It is a new musical comedy about techies vs hippies at Burning Man.

Follow Molly, a promising young tech grad, as she returns to the playa of Black Rock City - this time employed by the very tech company that, unbeknownst to her, seeks to destroy it. After being given the task of acquiring drugs for her boss's exclusive party, Molly

finds herself on a journey inward - and through the community of Burning Man - finds her truest self.

◆ This musical will be streamed online, no refunds on tickets once purchased, you may not be able to view the musical if you are late.

**What:** Theatre & Arts  
**Where:** Online  
**When:** Watch on demand

Sound of music



Music is the best medicine. Here are the top 10 songs of the week that will lift up your weekend mood

**Bollywood vibes**

Dafa Kar (A R Rahman)

Saamna (Akasa)

Mast Nazron Se (Rochak Kohli)

Kya Kar Diya (Vishal Mishra)

Macha Macha Re (Mika Singh)

# SMILE MORE THIS SUMMER

All the ice creams and cold drinks we get to enjoy during the hot weather is why we look forward to summer season despite the scorching heat. While your favourite cold drink could make you happy and energetic for a bit, they may also play havoc with your dental health. Here are a few tips on how to avoid common mistakes that could damage your teeth

Summer is a great season to take a break from your normal daily routine. One of the best health benefits of summer is that you get more of sunshine which means more of Vitamin D, which helps in building strong bones and teeth. It is very important to stand in sunshine for at least five minutes in a day in morning. At present, summer is at its peak and we need to ensure that we take proper steps to maintain excellent oral hygiene.

#### FOLLOW ORAL HEALTH CARE ROUTINE

◆ Brushing teeth twice a day with a soft toothbrush and fluoridated toothpaste (or as advised by your dentist) for at least two minutes a day, keeps dental problems at bay

◆ Always change your toothbrush after 3 months

◆ It is also advised to clean your tongue with a tongue scraper, as tongue harbours harmful bacteria which leads to oral malodor

◆ It is necessary to clean your toothbrush after one month by dipping the head of toothbrush in a cup of vinegar or povidone iodine mouthwash

◆ Always keep your toothbrush upright so that it dries out easily

#### FLOSSING

◆ While brushing, we often forget to clean the gaps between teeth, this can lead to dental decay. It can be prevented by using interproximal brushes or dental floss

**EAT HEALTHY, STAY HEALTHY**

◆ Ice creams and cold drinks are very tempting during summers and are unavoidable. It is advised to eat ice creams in moderation. Cold drinks should be taken using straws as it avoids damage to teeth

◆ It is advised not to brush teeth immediately after eating sugary food as it can lead to erosion of outer layer of teeth called enamel. It is better to wait for 30 minutes



◆ Taking healthy diet in which seasonal fruits need are included such as watermelon, muskmelon, lychee and cucumber. This increases the salivary flow and prevent food particles from sticking to teeth

◆ Avoid chewing tobacco and drinking alcohol. It not only damages oral cavity but our entire body

◆ Fruits such as pineapple, guava and kiwi are rich source of vitamin C. They help in preventing bleeding of gums

◆ It is very important for pregnant ladies to consume foods that are rich source of folic acid. It will help in preventing cleft lip and palate in infants. Rich source of folic acid includes eggs, grapes, tomatoes and lady finger

◆ It is always advised to eat calcium-rich foods — milk, paneer, apricots, papaya — that helps in building strong teeth.

#### STAY HYDRATED

◆ During summers, it is very necessary to keep our oral cavity moist. A moist mouth increases the flow of saliva and thus protecting our oral cavity from harmful microorganisms.

◆ It is of paramount importance to drink water at regular intervals to prevent dehydration

◆ It is also crucial to swish mouth with plain water after eating as it prevents food particles from sticking to teeth

#### DO NOT FORGET TO GARGLE

◆ It is all important to gargle with salt water twice a day. This not only promotes good gum health but also prevents infections such as COVID

#### VISIT YOUR DENTIST AT REGULAR INTERVALS

◆ During summers, frequently visiting



your dentist is the key for sparkling and healthy smile

◆ Summer vacations provide an idle time for students to resolve their dental issues. Students can easily schedule an appointment with their dentists without fear of missing school classes

◆ Our oral health is a gateway to overall health, your dentist will help in diagnosing your underlying health issues and will help you connect to the concerned medical specialty

**AVOID CHEWING ICE**

◆ Chewing ice is seen as one of the best ways to cool down and get hydrated in summers, but it can lead to chipping of tooth. Instead of chewing ice, drink a glass of cold water

#### PROTECTION OF LIPS

◆ Sun rays not only harm our skin but also our lips. To protect lips, it is advised

to apply lip balms containing SPF (Sun Protection Factor) to your lips before going out in sun

#### USE MOUTHGUARDS

◆ If your kids love sports like hockey, basketball, football, etc, it is always advised to wear mouthguards (delivered by the dentist)

◆ Mouthguards are also essential for those who have a habit of clenching teeth or night grinding

#### SUMMER VACATIONS

Summer vacations are a great time to plan family trips. During summer vacations, it is better not to neglect your and your loved one's oral hygiene.

**Keep these things in mind during a trip:**

◆ Carry a toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, tongue scraper and mouthwash (if prescribed by your dentist)

◆ Do not share your oral hygiene kit with others as it can lead to transfer of harmful microorganisms

◆ Schedule your and your loved one's dental appointment before planning a trip

◆ As we all know that COVID is not over yet, it is better to disinfect your hands before and after brushing teeth

◆ Follow your regular oral health care routine

◆ Eat teeth-friendly food

◆ We need to ensure that our toothbrushes dry after brushing teeth (because moist toothbrushes lead to germ growth)

◆ Choose a toothbrush holder that has holes so that toothbrushes dry out easily

◆ It is very important to schedule a dental appointment even after your trip is over

◆ Keep scissors and knife to tear off packets. Do not use teeth as tools to tear packets as it can lead to tooth erosion

◆ In case if you feel teeth sensitivity or tooth pain during your trip, it is better to visit a local dentist

Dr Riya Gupta, Dental Surgeon

Masterstroke



Junekeri Homes is a homegrown brand that specialises in quality handcrafted goods for the modern home which celebrates the heritage of India's oldest handicrafts.

Started in 2020 by another-daughter duo Ayesha and Sudha, the name Junekeri is inspired by the word Junkeri, referring to Jugnu, a firefly. It draws creativity from the fascinating jugnu and creates and curates functional and beautiful pieces.

The brand expresses itself in the form of contemporary designs built to stand the test of time by blending traditional craftsmanship with modern designs.


It has a capsule collection of hand-woven rugs. Made of all-natural jute fibres and incredibly soft wool, these timeless collectable pieces are suited to adapt to any space- be it modern, vintage, bohemian or anything in between.

From the living room to the foyer each rug bears a stunning display of elaborate detailing that enhances any room with timeworn charm. Grounded in warmth and made in organic texture, this capsule collection is produced in small batches taking up to three to four weeks to be meticulously handcrafted by numerous artisans across India. They are hand-separated, dyed, and hand-woven using traditional wooden looms.

The collection includes five luxurious rugs measuring 3x5 ft and comes in easy-to-coordinate neutral hues and statement abstracts to offer year-round luxury and feel as good as they look. **Priced between ₹5,500 to ₹6,500**

QUIRKYTALE

Tech companies are looking for talent acquisition from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities




After the pandemic, remote and hybrid working has become the new normal for companies across all industries. Ensuring the physical, emotional, social, mental, and holistic well-being of the employees is crucial for organisations for maintaining a healthy work culture and happy workplace. Phasing stages of expansion across the nation is crucial for meeting the skilled workforce demand while creating equitable opportunities in the coming years.

Several tech companies are aiming for a strong pan-India presence and are expanding their footprints in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities such as Jaipur, Hyderabad, Indore, Tiruchirappalli, Coimbatore, Indore, Kochi, and others.

Suresh Kumar Chitralayam, Director of People and Operations at Vuram, said: "Vuram is looking forward to Tier 2 cities as we are expanding across India. As a result, we have had our office functional from Tiruchirappalli since 2018. In 2022, we are adding three new offices in India and one in the United Kingdom. Apart from our offices in Chennai, Bengaluru, and Tiruchirappalli, we will expand to Coimbatore, Jaipur, and Hyderabad in 2022."

Over 60 per cent of Vuram's workforce is from rural areas. Hence offices in Tier 2 cities help the people in the organisation to work closer to their homes and enjoy aspects of congestion-free life. Furthermore, the People Team at Vuram cites more reasons to look forward to expanding into Tier 2 cities, including increased job satisfaction, enhanced quality of life, and supporting the local economy indirectly.

“Pollution-heat combo is putting Delhi/NCR residents at added risk of illness,” says Dr Rajesh Kesari



The residents of Delhi/NCR are fighting a gruelling battle on two fronts — extreme dry heat and high air pollution — which is making it impossible for people to breathe outdoors. These factors have put residents at a very high risk of illness.


According to an ASSOCHAM study, high levels of air pollution are a leading cause for the rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in India. Some of the ailments from excessive exposure to pollution are stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, hypertension, and lung cancer.

Examining the impact of indoor, outdoor and workplace pollution, the study reveals that 76 per cent of country's population with NCDs is exposed to air pollution. The younger folks, who step out regularly for employment or education are more prone to pollution-related illness. 29 per cent of population is exposed to household pollution, which is caused by cooking fuel. Similarly, 20 per cent of people are exposed to it at their workplace. Pollution can have lasting effects on a person's health. A few ways in which people in Delhi-NCR can protect themselves from hazardous air include wearing a mask outside, checking the AQI before going out for exercise, staying away from dust, investing in air purifiers and air purifying plants. For household pollution, residents can switch to induction cooktops.

Also, scorching heat is certainly viewed as a more immediate concern by people and many risks are involved. Keep yourself hydrated, eat healthy and light and cover your head and body when going out in the sun.

Kesari is Diabetologist, Physician & Expert, ASSOCHAM Illness to Wellness

“Life is full of ups and downs, but never give up,” says T Lavanya



In today's world, everyone is fighting a battle but there are only few stories that are inspiring and T Lavanya's is something similar. She was a single and pampered child and got everything she wanted. Her parents also spent quality time with her so that she can explore her potential to the fullest. However, life took an ugly turn when her father incurred a huge loss in his business. She had to take the responsibility to support her family financially.

Lavanya worked as life coach and taught kids in the orphanages to build their self esteem. Later, even her married life was a heard one. After she parted ways with her partner, she started afresh and took all the challenges that life threw with a smiling face.

She also decided to adopt a child and convinced her parents too. In fact, her father surprised her and placed a day-old baby boy in her arms. This decision was the turning point in Lavanya's life and it made her feel more content and confident.

She says: "I decided to explore my professional life as well. I succeeded as a trainer, leader, and entrepreneur. I also started travelling to many places to enrich my knowledge and explore as much as possible. But life had some more surprises left for me and I met my better half in one of the orphanages while attending an event. Despite being from different cultural and social backgrounds, we connected immediately and the best part was his bond with my son was inexplicably wonderful. He blended with my family so effortlessly well that we were bound to be connected."

She is a Principal, Orchids -The International School, Perumbakkam



# We'll be backing ourselves against Hong Kong: Chhetri

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Their tails up after two successive wins in front of a strong home crowd, India captain Sunil Chhetri has backed his team to beat Honk Kong in the last qualifying game and secure a berth in next year's AFC Asian Cup.

India prevailed over Afghanistan 2-1 in a thrilling match that saw three quick goals being scored at the fag end of the game after both teams denied each other for 86 minutes at the Salt Lake Stadium that had 40000 spectators in the stands on Saturday evening.

The day coincided with talismanic skipper Chhetri completing 17 years in international football.

"It feels great to celebrate my 17th year in international football in this fashion. I felt that maybe we will be splitting the points after Afghanistan equalised. But the boys did what they did."

"But at the same time, such milestones don't mean much to me. I am honoured and privileged to wear the national team jersey for so long," Chhetri said.

Chhetri laughed when reminded about him sprinting like Usain Bolt to celebrate Abdul Sahal Samad's decisive strike in the injury time.

"The GPS will say that that was my fastest sprint of the night. We will rest, recover, and have a look at the videos. Hong Kong are a good side, but we are at home, and will be backing ourselves. All of the fans will be



there too." The win helped India consolidate their position in the group as they seek to make a second

straight appearance in the Asian Cup and fifth overall, having been knocked out in the group stage in the

last edition in 2019.

Head Coach Igor Stimac stated, "We were Blue Tigers in the match

against Afghanistan, and that's what they need to be on the pitch. That's our intent, keeping the pride intact."

Abdul Sahal, who scored the winner late in the second-half, sounded ecstatic.

"The victory was earned in front of the fans, and hence, it tastes sweeter. I had to back myself, and placed it beyond the goalkeeper. And even before I could realise, the entire team was there to celebrate," he said.

Central defender Sandesh Jhingan also highlighted the character in the squad.

"We played some great football. The character of the team was there for all to see after we conceded. The biggest strength is the talent available in the team. But the attitude, mentality and the desire to get going describes this lot," he uttered.

Stimac added, "We showed character, resilience, willingness and a good spirit on the pitch. Everyone was wonderful - Roshan, Akash, Suresh, Jeakson, and all. I felt Jeakson (Singh) was having fun playing football. They have now enough experience of winning games, and that's our treasure."

Chhetri put India ahead with a brilliant free-kick from just over 20 yards, taking only a couple of steps before unleashing his shot straight into the right corner of the net beating Afghanistan's goalkeeper.

It was the Indian superstar's 83rd goal in international football as he closed in on second-placed Argentine genius Lionel Messi among active players.



## Running individual 400m is not yet over for Hima Das

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Star sprinter Hima Das is not shrugging out a return to 400m, an event which shot her to fame in 2018, and is hoping to make a comeback to the quarter-mile in the now-postponed Asian Games, which is likely to be held next year.

The 22-year-old 'Dhing Express' last ran a major 400m race during the Asian Championships in Doha in April 2019. She pulled out of that race midway due to a lower back injury.

She later ran two 400m races in low-grade events in Czech Republic in 2019, but since then, has not featured in the one-lap race. She also missed the World Championships in the later part of 2019 due to the back injury.

Hima, who became the first Indian to win a global track event title by clinching Gold in the World Junior Championships in 2018, first suffered the injury during the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta where she won an individual 400m Silver and Gold medals in the 4x400m and mixed 4x400m relays.

After returning from the injury lay-off, Hima has been running 100m and 200m. She holds the national record of 50.79 seconds in 400m.

"I have not cut (off) running the 400m. It (recovery from injury) is a long process. During my injury time, I was not being able to run 400m because a lot of pressure developed on the right side of my back," Hima said

after winning the 100m Gold in the National Inter-State Championships here with her personal best time of 10.43s.

"My L4 and L5 (two lowest vertebrae in the lumbar spine) were broken and was in a different position. Whenever I run it affects me. Then I did my physiotherapy and ran 30m, 40m, 50m, 100m and then 200m gradually. Till 300m, I am fine. I ran 300m in Europe sometime earlier."

"You need to pick up speed in the last 100m (of 400m) and when I did that once I had to be taken to the hospital (during a training stint in Poland in 2019)," said the sprinter from Assam.

Asked when she can start running 400m, she said, "Not at this point in time, but will surely do it (in near future)."

"It may happen at the end of this year, otherwise I may prepare 400m for the postponed Asian Games because I will get time to prepare (for Asian Games)."

Hima had also suffered a hamstring injury during the National Inter-State Championships last year in Patiala. She was forced to pull out of the 100m and 4x100m relay finals due to the injury. She ran in the 200m final but finished fifth to miss out on the Tokyo Olympics.

The Asian Games, earlier scheduled to be held in September this year, have been postponed due to an upsurge in COVID-19 cases in host country China. The Games are likely to be held next year.



## Verstappen wins in Baku to boost title defence

AP ■ BAKU

World champion Max Verstappen led a Red Bull 1-2 in Sunday's Azerbaijan Grand Prix in a potentially key moment of the title race after Charles Leclerc and Ferrari endured another dose of race-day misery.

Sergio Perez had jumped pole sitter Leclerc to the first turn before Verstappen took control as first the Ferrari of Carlos Sainz and then Leclerc retired with engine problems.

George Russell took third with teammate Lewis Hamilton fourth for Mercedes who suffered badly from bouncing on the streets of Baku this weekend.

Verstappen's fifth win of the season tightened his grip on the drivers' standings with Perez now moving into second, 21 points behind, while the luckless Leclerc slipped to 34 points adrift.

"Was that a good drive or was that a good driver?" a pleased Verstappen asked over

the team radio, mindful that he had ended his Baku jinx having never made the podium on any of his previous visits.

He hailed his car's "incredible pace", adding "we were a tiny bit lucky because of the retirement but nevertheless our car was really quick today, so I could have closed that gap, then you have a race on your hands".

It was a memorable day for Red Bull who are now 80 points clear of Ferrari in the constructors' championship ahead of round nine of the season in Montreal next week.

As for Ferrari their habit of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory through a combination of questionable strategy or unreliability issues is beginning to look potentially fatal for their title ambitions.

Leclerc for the fourth time was unable to convert pole into a win, and he had his head in his hands in frustration.

"Better days will come" if the team just sticks together, Sainz suggested.

## Federer admits 'things moving slowly' in recovery

AP ■ LAUSANNE

Roger Federer admitted Saturday that "things are moving slowly" in his attempt to recover from knee surgery.

The 20-time Grand Slam title winner and former world number one has not played since a quarter-final defeat at Wimbledon almost a year ago.

He then underwent a third surgery on his knee while his world ranking has slumped to 50, his lowest in 22 years.

Federer told Swiss broadcaster SRF that he "plays from time to time" with his four children, but "things are moving slowly".

He still intends to return to action at the Laver Cup in London at the end of September when he will have already celebrated his 41st birthday.

"I had surgery at the end of August and people ask me 'So, how does it look?'. And each time I have to answer that it will take a little more time," he said.

Federer said he is "currently focusing on (his) physical condition, so that there



is no overload" and goes to the gym "five to six times a week."

"I just have to stay patient, I'm making constant progress."

After the Laver Cup from September 23-25, Federer has already said he intends to play in his hometown tournament of Basel from October 24-30.

Federer, the winner of 103 trophies over his career, played only 13 matches in 2021 and just six in 2020.

### ALEXANDROVA WINS

s-Hertogenbosch: World number 30 Ekaterina Alexandrova sprung a surprise on the grass of s-Hertogenbosch by beating top seed Aryna Sabalenka 7-5, 6-0 in Sunday's final.

It is only the Russian's second career title following her win in Shenzhen in 2020.

Neither player, however, will be able to take this form to Wimbledon as Russians and Belarusians are barred from playing at the Grand Slam event following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

## US judge dismisses rape suit against football star Ronaldo

AP ■ LOS ANGELES

A US district judge in Las Vegas has dismissed a rape lawsuit against football superstar Cristiano Ronaldo, castigating the legal team behind the complaint.

Judge Jennifer Dorsey threw out the case brought by Kathryn Mayorga of Nevada, who alleged she was assaulted by the Portuguese football star in a Las Vegas hotel room in 2009. In a 42-page ruling released on Friday, the judge accused Mayorga's attorneys of "abuses and flagrant circumvention of the proper litigation process" and said that as a result, "Mayorga loses her opportunity to pursue this case."

Her attorneys had actually moved to dismiss the case voluntarily last month, US

media said, but Dorsey decided that their repeated use of illicitly obtained confidential documents meant the case had to be dismissed "with prejudice" -- meaning it cannot be revived.

"Nothing less than a with-prejudice dismissal will purge the taint that has permeated this case from its very inception and preserve the integrity of the litigation process," Dorsey wrote. Mayorga filed a complaint in September last year alleging she was sexually assaulted by Ronaldo, who strongly denied the accusations. Mayorga said that while she had agreed to a financial settlement with Ronaldo shortly after the alleged incident -- reportedly for \$375,000 -- her emotional trauma at the time did not allow her to participate in the mediation process.

## World No. 1 Axelsen wins Indonesia Masters title



AP ■ JAKARTA

Danish badminton ace Viktor Axelsen clinched the men's singles title at the Indonesia Masters on Sunday, beating

Taiwan's Chou Tien-chen in straight sets.

The world number one beat Chou 21-10, 21-12 in a 41-minute match held at the Istora sporting arena in Jakarta.

"I love playing here in Istora and I always

dreamt of winning a tournament at Istora. It's a legendary venue, so to have done that is something that is really special to me," 28-year-old Axelsen told reporters.

Axelsen's victory came after he downed home favourite Anthony Sinisuka Ginting in the semi-finals.

In the women's singles, China's Chen Yufei overcame Thailand's Ratchanok Intanon to win her first title since her Gold medal at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

She defeated Ratchanok, who won the Indonesia Masters women's title in 2020, in a 74-minute three-set match 21-16, 18-21, 21-15.

"I am very pleased to get the gold medal today. I faced some difficulties during the game but I'm very pleased to overcome them and secure the win," world number four Chen said.

After the Indonesia Masters, the Indonesia Open is set to begin on June 14 and will last until June 19.

## Eng remain at bottom of Nations League group table

AP ■ PARIS

England are bottom of their UEFA Nations League group without a win after drawing 0-0 with Italy in a repeat of the Euro 2020 final on Saturday, while Germany settled for a point in a 1-1 stalemate in Hungary.

The meeting in Wolverhampton between Gareth Southgate's side and the European champions was played before just 3,000 people, largely school-children, as a punishment for the incidents that marred the Euro 2020 final between the same nations at Wembley last year.

UEFA rules say a match ordered to be played behind closed doors can still be attended by children accompanied by an adult, as happened last weekend when Hungary beat England in Budapest.

England followed that reverse by drawing 1-1 in Germany and another draw at



Molineux leaves them bottom of League A, Group 3 with just two points from three outings before they host Hungary at the

same venue on Tuesday in their final game of a long campaign.

Mason Mount hit the bar



early on for England, while Aaron Ramsdale produced a fine save to deny Sandro Tonali for an Italy side featuring just two starters who also lined up in the European Championship final.

"We had two or three really good chances we need to score, but just lacked that sharpness in front of goal," said Southgate.

Roberto Mancini's Italy are

rebuilding after failing to qualify for the World Cup and are top of the group after Hungary and Germany cancelled each other out in Budapest.

Zsolt Nagy gave Hungary an early lead, smashing in after Manuel Neuer had palmed out a Roland Salai header.

However, Germany needed just three minutes to draw level as Borussia Moenchengladbach's Jonas

Hofmann latched onto a long ball forward and rounded the goalkeeper before slotting in.

"I said beforehand that this was the hardest game you could have after England," Germany coach Hansi Flick told RTL after his side's third consecutive 1-1 draw.

"But we are in a development process. We have to see that we learn the lessons from this game."

### DEPAY MISSES LATE PENALTY

The Netherlands are top of League A, Group 4 after coming from two goals down to draw 2-2 with Poland in Rotterdam, but they could have claimed a third win in as many games had Memphis Depay not squandered a late penalty.

English-born full-back Matty Cash gave Poland an 18th-minute lead with a fine low strike, and the visitors doubled their advantage five minutes after half-time as

Przemyslaw Frankowski squared for Piotr Zielinski to finish.

Yet the home side pulled one back almost immediately when Daley Blind's cross from the left was swept in by Davy Klaassen, and they were level by the 54th minute as Denzel Dumfries made it 2-2.

They could have won it in stoppage time when Cash was penalised in the box, but Barcelona forward Depay saw his spot-kick come back off the post.

### IRELAND HAMMER SCOTLAND

Youri Tielemans gave Belgium the lead early in the second half in Cardiff, but

Wales earned their first point of the Nations League campaign.

Their attention had previously been on their decisive World Cup qualifying play-off against Ukraine, which they won 1-0 last weekend to qualify for the global showpiece for the first time since 1958.

Wales now travel to play the Netherlands in Rotterdam on Tuesday.

In League B, the Republic of Ireland got their first win in Group 1 in emphatic fashion, beating hapless Scotland 3-0 in Dublin.

Alan Browne and Troy Parrott netted in the first half for Ireland before Michael Obafemi smashed in an emphatic third early in the second half.

In the same group Ukraine got their second win in as many games since losing to Wales, as they beat Armenia 3-0 in a match played in the Polish city of Lodz.



# SOUTH AFRICA WIN 2ND T20I

PTI ■ CUTTACK

Comeback man Heinrich Klaasen followed Rassie Van der Dussen's suit in turning out to be an unlikely hero with a career-best 81 as South Africa once again outwitted India by four wickets on a tricky pitch to take a 2-0 lead in the five-match T20I series here on Sunday.

On a two-paced track where most of the batters struggled, Klaasen made it look ridiculously easy as he smashed seven fours and five towering sixes in his 46-ball knock to help his team knock off a target of 149 with 10 balls to spare.

The wicketkeeper-batter, who was included into the side as a forced change for injured Quinton de Kock, completed his fourth T20I fifty in 32 balls before he smashed three sixes off Yuzvendra Chahal to virtually seal the chase.

Looking to finish it off with a six, he fell victim to Harshal Patel and in the very next over, Bhuvneshwar Kumar dismissed Wayne Parnell to finish with a superb 4-0-13-4.

But it was not enough as they just needed three runs from the last two overs and the in-form David Miller (20 not out) completed the win to give the Proteas a commanding 2-0 lead going into the Vizag T20I on June 14.

The visitors seek their first ever bilateral T20 series win in India. Making a comeback after more than seven months, Klaasen never took his foot off the pedal and got his team out of the woods after Bhuvneshwar pegged them back to 29/3 inside the powerplay overs.

Klaasen first shared a match-turning 64 run partnership from 41 balls with skipper Temba Bavuma (35) before in-form David Miller joined him in the middle.

Defending a modest 149, the Rishabh Pant-led India got off to a superb start thanks to 'Swing King'



Bhuvneshwar's triple blow in successive overs.

Bhuvneshwar, who looked out of sorts in the Kotla T20I, was back in his element as he sharply swung the ball back in to clean up Reeza Hendricks in his first over. He then dismissed Dwaine Pretorius with a knuckle ball before casting the in-form Rassie van der Dussen (1).

Earlier, Indian batters found it tough to get going against some tight bowling display by South Africa to be restricted to a modest 148 for 6.

Shreyas Iyer (40) was the top-scorer for India while Ishan Kishan provided some early sparks (21-ball 34) but the hosts lost the momentum in the middle-overs under tough batting conditions.

That in-form finisher Dinesh Karthik was sent way down at No 7, behind Axar Patel, also made it difficult for the Rishabh Pant-led India.

Karthik, team's designated 'finisher' (30 not out from 21 balls) smashed two sixes and two fours to give the total some semblance of respectability.

Harshal Patel (12 not out from nine balls) gave him good company as the duo improved Indian run-rate, stitching together 36 runs from the last three overs to give them some respite.

Put into bat on a challenging track, the Indian batters struggled barring a small 45-run second wicket partnership between Kishan and Shreyas Iyer. Opening the bowling, Kagiso Rabada set the tone early on, giving a breakthrough straightway in his first over.

He brilliantly set up Ruturaj Gaikwad (1) with a barrage of short balls before mixing up a fuller one to cleverly deceive the opener en route to a miserly spell of 4-0-15-1 that included 13 dot balls. After the sedate start, it was Kishan (34 from 21 balls) who provided the firepower in the power play, smashing Nortje for two sixes to improve their run-rate.



## IMAM TAKES PAK TO 269-9

AP ■ MULTAN

After winning the toss and electing to bat first, Pakistan posted 269-9 at end of the first innings in the third ODI against West Indies. One of the chief architects who helped them achieve this total was Imam-ul-Haq who continued his rich vein of form in this match as well, helping Pakistan achieve a great start. He scored 62 runs off 68 balls, at an impressive strike rate of 91.18. His knock included seven fours and a six.

During his innings, Imam-ul-Haq registered his seventh successive score of 50+ in ODI cricket. He thus became the second-ever batsman after Pakistan legend Javed Miandad to achieve this feat.

In fact, captain Babar Azam also had the chance to achieve this feat against West Indies

today. But , unfortunately, he got out for a score of just one run from three deliveries.

Before his 62-run knock today, Imam-ul-Haq had registered scores of 56, 103, 106, 89, 65 and 72 in his last six innings. With this feat, the Pakistan opener surpassed an elite list of batsmen namely Mark Waugh, Gordon Greenidge, Andrew Jones, Mohammad Yusuf, Chris Gayle, Shai Hope, Paul Stirling, Ross Taylor and Kane Williamson, all of whom have six consecutive scores of 50+ in ODIs. Javed Miandad has nine consecutive 50+ scores in ODIs, the most by any batsman in history.

Two more half centuries, and Imam-ul-Haq will equal the legendary batsman's record. In a match curtailed to 48 overs per side, Pakistan posted a healthy total courtesy Imam's 62 and Shadab Khan.

## Root, Pope tons take Eng to 331-2



AP ■ NOTTINGHAM

Ollie Pope's second Test century was soon followed by Joe Root's 27th as England reached tea on 331-2 on Day 3 of the second Test against New Zealand on Sunday, 222 runs behind the Black Caps' first-innings total of 553.

Promoted to No. 3 for this international summer, Pope reached three figures for the first time in a home Test - and since his 135 not out against South Africa in January 2020 - and was immediately congratulated by Root, who raced 40 meters to be with his jubilant teammate. Root is more used to compiling centuries and he got his fourth in his last five Test matches with an inside edge for four just before tea. It was his quickest century of his career so far - in just 116 balls - and surely one of his best, given the

sublime stroke-play he produced at Trent Bridge. Pope walked off unbeaten on 142 and Root was 109 not out. They appear to have crushed the spirit of New Zealand's bowlers, who at least have a new ball in their hands after tea. The only wicket to fall on Sunday came in the first session and was that of opener Alex Lees, who reached his first Test half-century before wafting at a loose delivery from Matt Henry and edging behind to Daryl Mitchell at slip for 67.

Mitchell, who made a career-best 190 in New Zealand's innings, looked relieved as he clutched the ball having dropped Lees and Pope after tea on Saturday.

Root, who was dropped on 35 by Tim Southee at second slip just before lunch, has repeatedly dipped into his playbook of cover drives on the way to his fourth Test century at Trent Bridge. The ground is again proving a runscore's paradise on a balmy day in Nottingham, central England.

## Moeen 'unretires' from Test cricket

AP ■ LONDON

Moeen Ali has confirmed his willingness to return to Test cricket for this winter's tour of Pakistan, and has announced that he is officially "unretired" following a conversation on Sunday morning with England's new head coach, Brendon McCullum. Moeen called time on his Test career in September, after claiming 195 wickets in 64 Tests, as well as five centuries. However, McCullum's arrival has indicated a new more attacking mindset to England's Test cricket, and Moeen says his hunger for the longer format has

been renewed. "When, or if, Baz McCullum wants me, I'll definitely play in Pakistan," Moeen told BBC Test Match Special on Saturday, adding that his family heritage in the country made the trip - England's first since 2005, when his cousin Kabir Ali was part of the white-ball squad - all the more tempting. "I have played Pakistan Super League out there a few years ago but it's not the same," Moeen said. "To travel with an England side there having family background from that part of the world will be amazing. It would be a historic event because of England not touring there for so many years.

## Afghanistan seal T20I series against Zimbabwe



AGENCIES ■ HARARE

Najibullah Zadran and Rashid Khan shined for Afghanistan in their 21-run win over Zimbabwe in the second T20I of the three-match series at Harare on Sunday.

It was a solid day for Afghans at the field as they were superior to their opponent in all departments. With this, Afghanistan has clinched the series 2-0 with one match to go. Batting first, Afghanistan was off a shaky start

and lost their first three batters for just 46 in the sixth over. Darwish Rasooli retired hurt. After that Najibullah Zadran and Karim Janat tried to stabilise the innings for their side, but their promising stand was cut short at the 37-run mark after the latter was dismissed for 12 by spinner Ryan Burl.

Then Mohammad Nabi arrived at the crease. He and Zadran put up an entertaining 70-run stand, which ended with the dismissal of Zadran for a well-made 57 off 46 in the final ball of the 19th over.

Nabi ended with an entertaining 43\* off 22 with one four and four sixes with Rashid Khan (2\*). Afghanistan ended on 170/5 in their 20 overs.

Pacer Tendai Chatara (2/33) was the leading bowler for his side. Luke Jongwe, Ryan Burl also got a wicket each.

Chasing 171, Zimbabwe were off a shaky start, losing Wesley Madhevere for 8. Then opener Innocent Kaia and Tadiwanashe Marumani rebuild things for Zimbabwe, forming a 50-run stand soon broken by Nabi after dismissing Marumani for 30. Skipper Craig Ervine also departed for 2.

Then Kaia and Sikander Raza had a 70-run stand, which ended with Raza falling for 41 off 21. The rest of the batters could not provide enough support to Kaia who scored 54 off 57.

Zimbabwe ended at 149/7 in their 20 overs, falling short 21-runs of what could have been a crucial series-levelling win. Rashid Khan (2/32) was a standout bowler. Mohammad Nabi, Karim Janat, Nijat Masood, Fazalhaq Farooqi got a wicket each. Farooqi was given the 'Man of the Match' for his economical spell of 1-19 in four overs.



## 2 Silver for Indian lifters in Youth Worlds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's Akansha Kishor won the Silver medal in 40kg category while Vijay Prajapati finished second in 49kg in 2022 IWF Youth World Weightlifting Championships for men and women in Leon, Mexico.

The two Silver medals were won on Saturday, the opening day of the event. Akansha lifted a total of 127kg (59kg + 68kg), while Vijay managed to lift 175kg (78kg + 97kg).

Akansha is a trainee of SAI National Centre of Excellence, Aurangabad and Vijay is a trainee of NCOE Patiala.

"I would like to congratulate all the weightlifters for putting a good show during 2022 IWF Youth World Weightlifting Championships at Leon and laud the efforts of Indian coaches," said Sahdev Yadav.

## We got little one-dimensional at certain periods: Oz coach after 4-wicket loss to SL



AGENCIES ■ KANDY

After his side's four-wicket defeat to Sri Lanka in the final T20I of the three-match series, Australian head coach Andrew McDonald said that the side got a little one-dimensional at certain periods.

"The small reviews we had last night with individuals was that if you had the time again you would have taken some different options," ESPNcricinfo quoted McDonald as saying. "We felt we got a little one-dimensional at certain periods,

a little too predictable and probably went away from what made us really good in the first two games, albeit we were not defending a total," he added.

The head coach said that pressure probably at times took the side away from what made them really good.

"We have been really good over a period of time and even last night you could argue that for 34 overs we playing really good cricket. We have got some personnel who are getting exposed to situations which is always a positive."

"There were a couple of areas we could tidy up, no doubt about that. When you get put under that type of pressure...we did not execute as well as we may have hoped to in that situation but full credit to an innings of that quality, it deserves the result it got and it was a great game. Unfortunately, we were on the wrong side of that but plenty of opportunities to learn from those types of situations," he added.

The Sri Lanka team on Saturday created history by scoring 59 runs off 17 balls in a successful run chase against Australia in the third and final T20I in Kandy.

The team scored 59 runs in the last 17 balls to register a new record in T20 Internationals. This is the most number of runs scored in the last three overs by any team to win a T20I game.

Sri Lanka captain Dasun Shanaka smashed 54 runs off just 25 balls to script a massive record and power his team to four wickets win over visitors. Dasun's knock of unbeaten 54 runs was decorated with five fours and four sixes.

## Berrettini defeats Andy Murray for Stuttgart title



AP ■ STUTTGART

Matteo Berrettini capped a successful injury comeback with a 6-4, 5-7, 6-3 defeat of Andy Murray to win the ATP Stuttgart title on Sunday.

The 2021 Wimbledon finalist, who last competed in March prior to hand surgery, denied Murray a first grass court title since the Scot won his second Wimbledon crown in 2016.

Berrettini remains undefeated (9-0) at the Stuttgart tournament after winning in

2019.

Former world number one Murray looked like taking charge as he broke the 10th-ranked Italian to level the final at one set apiece.

But the momentum did not last, with 68th-ranked Murray losing serve to love to start the third set.

With his long-standing groin problem appearing to bother him, Murray immediately called for the trainer.

He was treated on court but was never able to close the gap on 26-year-old Berrettini despite saving a match point in the final game.

Murray was competing in the 70th final of his career. His last final came at Sydney in January, where he lost to Aslan Karatsev.

Berrettini won his first trophy since Queen's a year ago prior to his run to the Wimbledon final against Novak Djokovic.

## FIH Pro League: Belgium blank Indian women 5-0

FIANS ■ ANTWERP

Indian women's hockey team lost 5-0 to the hosts Belgium in the second leg of their FIH Hockey Pro League 2021/22 tie at Sportcentrum Wilrijkse Plein here on Saturday.

Barbara Nelen (2'), Charlotte Englebert (4'), Abi Raye (19'), Stephanie Vanden Borre (23') and Ambre Ballenghein (36') scored a goal each for the hosts Belgium.

The match started in almost a similar fashion as Saturday, with Belgium's Barbara Nelen giving the hosts an early lead in the second minute. Two minutes later, the hosts doubled their lead through Charlotte Englebert.

The hosts rode on the momentum as they started the second quarter aggressively and hold most of the possession in the opening minutes. Young Indian custodian Bichu Devi, who came in as a substitution in this quarter, was called into action right from the start of the quarter. During Belgium's



attack, she did make a couple of rebound saves, but Abi Raye was successful in converting the third attempt and gave her team a 3-0 lead in the 19th minute.

Belgium went on to add a fourth goal to their tally through Stephanie Vanden Borre, who duly converted the Penalty Corner in the 23rd minute.

India started the third quar-

ter cautiously and made some moves inside their opponent's half, but Belgium responded quickly and went on to stretch their lead further through a brilliant effort by Amre Ballenghein in the 36th minute.

The Indian women's hockey team will next face Argentina on June 18 and 19 in Rotterdam, Netherlands.