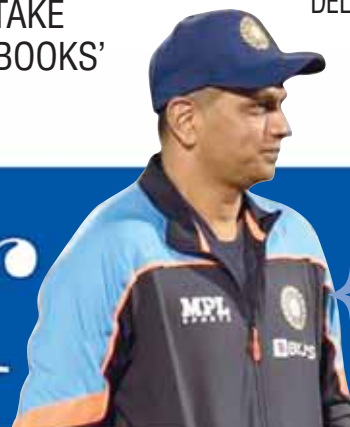


**OPINION 6**  
IMPLICATIONS OF  
NAGALAND TRAGEDY**WORLD 9**  
FUEL CRISIS WORSENS  
IN SRI LANKA**MONEY 10**  
'BANKS SHOULD UNDERTAKE  
STRESS TESTING OF LOAN BOOKS'

NEW DELHI, FRIDAY JUNE 17, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

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# Agnipath stokes rage, protests engulf States

Trains set on fire, stones pelted, roads blocked, 40 trains cancelled as angry protesters run amok

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Protests erupted in several States, including Bihar, Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh (UP), Delhi, and Jammu on Thursday against the new recruitment policy "Agnipath". Protesters set train coaches on fire, blocked highways, and indulged in stone-pelting and violence. They also attacked a BJP MLA in Bihar. Nearly 40 trains were cancelled in Bihar due to unrest. The Haryana Government suspended internet services in Palwal as protests against "Agnipath" took a violent course on Thursday. Haryana Police personnel who were deployed at the residence of



Smoke billows out after protesters set on fire a train in protest against the Agnipath scheme at Chhipra railway station on Thursday

PTI

Palwal's Deputy Commissioner Krishna Kumar fired in the air to warn protesters.

The Government unveiled the "Agnipath" scheme on Tuesday for recruiting jawans called "Agniveers" for a four-year tenure on a contractual basis in the armed forces. The recruitment process will start after 90 days from the date of

the rollout of the policy on Tuesday. More than 46,000 jawans will be recruited in the first phase which will complete by July next year.

Also, all recruitments will now be done through the "Agnipath" route. The recruitment process was put on hold for the last two years due to the corona pandemic.

Reports from Patna said trains were set afire, window panes of buses smashed, and a ruling BJP MLA pelted with stones in Bihar.

Police fired teargas shells and charged batons to disperse the crowd of angry youngsters who blocked rail-

way tracks, threw burning tyres on roads, and performed push-ups and other drills on the streets as a mark of protest against the new recruitment process in the military, under which hiring has been proposed for a four-year-period followed by compulsory retirement for at least 75 per cent of the recruits without any pension benefits.

In Nawada, the vehicle of BJP MLA Aruna Devi, who was on her way to a court, was attacked by the agitators who hurled stones at her car, leaving five persons, including the legislator, injured.

*Continued on Page 2*

# Demolition can't be retaliation, says SC

SC gives UP Govt three days time to respond to 'illegal' demolition pleas

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Demolitions have to be in accordance with law, they cannot be retaliation, the Supreme Court said on Thursday amid allegations of Uttar Pradesh using bulldozers to target those who protested against the controversial comments on Prophet Muhammad by members of the ruling BJP.

Observing that "everything should be fair" and authorities should strictly follow the due procedure under the law, the SC gave the UP Government and its authorities three days to respond to petitions on the "illegal" demolition of homes of those accused in last week's violence.

"There must be a sense among the citizens that the rule of law prevails in the country," a vacation bench of Justices AS Bopanna and Vikram Nath said and urged the authorities to ensure nothing untoward happens until it hears the matter on June 21.

"Everything should be fair. We expect the authorities to strictly follow the due proce-



dure under the law," said the bench. The bench added, "How do we ensure their safety in the meantime? We have a duty towards them. We should ensure their safety in the meantime. Let us be clear, they (accused) are also part of society. Ultimately, when someone has some grievances, they should get a chance to address them. If this court does not come to their rescue, that would not be appropriate. Everything should look fair."

The bench clarified that it cannot stay the demolitions but said such action should be strictly under the due process of law. Justice Bopanna said, "We as judges are also part of society. We also see what is happening. Sometimes, we also form our impressions."

The apex court was hearing pleas filed by the Muslim body — Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind — seeking directions to the

Uttar Pradesh Government to ensure that no further demolitions of properties of alleged accused of the recent violence are carried out in the State.

The Muslim body in its plea has said no demolitions of properties be carried out without following due process and such exercise is done only after adequate notice.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Uttar Pradesh Government, and senior advocate Harish Salve, representing the Kanpur and Prayagraj civic authorities, said the due process of law was followed and notice in one instance of demolition was given way back in August 2020.

Mehta said none of the affected parties are before the court and the Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind approached the SC seeking a generic order that there should not be any demolition.

*Continued on Page 2*

## CAPSULE

### CUTTING TIES WITH INDIA TO HARM PAK: BILAWAL

**Islamabad:** Pakistan's Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Thursday made a strong pitch for re-engaging with India, saying cutting ties with New Delhi would not serve the country's interests as Islamabad was already "internationally isolated and disengaged." Bilawal said, "We have our issues with India. Pakistan and India have a long history of war, conflict..."

### BJP, CONG WIN 2 SEATS EACH IN K'TAKA MLC POLL

**Bengaluru:** The ruling BJP continues to have a majority in the Karnataka Legislative council, as the party managed to win one teachers' and graduates' constituency each in the recently held biennial elections, while the Congress too managed to win one each.

### TERROR FUNDING: SIX NIA RAIDS IN KASHMIR

**Srinagar:** The NIA on Thursday carried out searches at six locations in Kashmir in connection with a terror funding case involving the Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel), an official said.

### SLIGHT DECREASE IN MERCURY IN DELHI

**New Delhi:** Partly cloudy conditions provided a marginal relief from the searing heat in Delhi on Thursday but the city did not see any major pre-monsoon activity. However, the Meteorological Department has issued an orange alert, warning of moderate rainfall, thundershowers and strong surface winds on Friday.

# Agnipath age limit raised to 23 years; Centre says soldiers' future secure

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

As protests against the "Agnipath" recruitment policy erupted in some States, the Government on Thursday said the future of soldiers will be secured and the new scheme will not impact armed forces' regimental system and the operational effectiveness.

Late at night, a Defence Ministry press release said that as it has not been possible to undertake the recruitment during the last two years due to Covid-19, the Government has decided that a one-time waiver in upper age limit shall be granted for the proposed recruitment cycle for 2022. Accordingly, the upper age limit for the recruitment process for Agnipath scheme for 2022 has been increased to 23 years from 21 years.

Clarifying the doubts about the scheme, the Government said the new model will bring in new capabilities to the armed forces and also open up avenues for youth in the private sector as well as help them in becoming entrepreneurs with the aid of the financial package.

Apart from issuing a "Myth vs Facts" document to address the concerns raised on the scheme, the Government's

information dissemination arm issued a series of social media posts, saying that in the coming years recruitment of "Agniveers" will be around triple the current recruitment in the armed forces.

"The scheme will bring in new dynamism to the armed forces. It will help the forces bring in new capabilities and take advantage of the technical skills and fresh thinking of the youths... It will allow the youths to serve the nation," the Press Information Bureau said in a Facebook post.

As regards the ₹11.71 lakh financial package to be given to each of the recruits at the end of the four-year tenure from the "Seva Nidhi Package", it said it will provide financial independence to the youths and even help them to venture into entrepreneurship.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Opp slams Govt, seeks rollback

**New Delhi:** Opposition parties on Thursday slammed the "Agnipath" policy and demanded that it should be scrapped. They sought a discussion on the new scheme in Parliament.

**Detailed report on P4**

# ED nod to Rahul's plea to defer questioning to Mon

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) late on Thursday accepted the request of senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to defer his questioning from Friday to Monday (June 20). Rahul had cited his mother and Congress president's health condition and hospitalisation as the reason for the request.

After three days of grilling in an alleged money-laundering case linked to the National Herald newspaper, Rahul was scheduled to appear before the ED again on Friday.

Rahul on Thursday wrote to the ED and cited his mother Sonia Gandhi's health as the reason for seeking deferment of the questioning.

After being questioned for eight hours on the third day on Wednesday, Rahul was summoned by the ED again for the fourth time on June 17. Meanwhile, the Congress workers on Thursday staged protests across the country against Rahul's questioning.

*Continued on Page 2*

# Sensex, Nifty close at over 1-year lows

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**

Equity benchmarks reeled for the fifth straight day to finish at over one-year lows on Thursday, in tandem with weak global equities, after the US Federal Reserve hiked rates by 75 basis points to tame surging inflation.

The US central bank delivered its biggest interest rate hike since 1994 and indicated further policy tightening this year as the focus shifts to taming price rise which has soared to over four-decade highs. The Fed also projected slowing US economic growth.

Across-the-board selling played havoc on the domestic indices, with index majors Reliance Industries and HDFC twins contributing most to the decline.

**Detailed report on P10**

# Massive spike in Covid count

Over 12,000 cases in last 24 hours

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

India recorded a big jump in daily Covid-19 count as cases crossed the 12,000 mark in the last 24 hours on Thursday. This is the highest single day count in the number of cases in 111 days.

The country saw around a 38.4 per cent surge compared to the previous day when 8,822 cases were logged. According to the Union Health Ministry data, the country's active case-load currently stands at 58,215 — accounting for 0.13 per cent of the total cases. The daily positivity rate stands at 2.35 per cent, while the weekly positivity rate is at 2.38 per cent.

However, experts have said there is a need to be alert but not panic as there are low hospitalisation cases and death



figures. A large population of the country is already vaccinated fully but States have been told to remain alert.

On Thursday, India reported 12,213 Covid-19 cases and 11 deaths in the last 24 hours. Meanwhile, the daily positivity rate stood at 2.35 per cent.

Maharashtra, Delhi and Kerala are witnessing the highest surge in the country. While

Maharashtra recorded 4,024 new cases, Kerala saw 3,488 new infections. Four new cases of B.A.5 variant of coronavirus have been detected in the State. New B.A.5 cases were reported from Mumbai, Thane, Navi Mumbai and Pune, and all four patients were in the age group of 19 to 36 years, according to an official release.

*Continued on Page 2*



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## NCR PULSE

### 7-YR-OLD GIRL MOLESTED

New Delhi: A seven-year-old girl was allegedly molested in north Delhi's Wazirabad area by her neighbour. Police said that they have arrested the accused while he was trying to flee away to his hometown in Bihar. According to Sagar Singh Kalsi, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), North district, an incident was reported to them Tuesday around 9 PM about a child's molestation in the Wazirabad area.

### 21-YR-OLD ARRESTED FOR RAPING MINOR

New Delhi: Delhi Police has arrested a 21-year-old man for allegedly raping a minor girl in southeast Delhi's Badarpur area. Police said that the accused, a casual labourer, and the 8-year-old minor's family shared a two room rented accommodation. The incident happened on Tuesday when the minor was home alone. The accused took her to a room and allegedly raped her and the accused is a drug addict, police said.

### KEJRIWAL TO HOLD ROADSHOWS IN RAJINDER NAGAR

New Delhi: The Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will hold roadshows for three consecutive days in the Rajinder Nagar constituency starting from Friday to campaign for AAP candidate Durgesh Pathak, a member of the party's national executive and political affairs committee in the by-polls. The Election Commission is scheduled to conduct the bypoll on June 23 and the counting of votes will take place on June 26.

### 2 SUSPECTED BEEF SMUGGLERS ARRESTED

Noida: Two suspected beef smugglers from western Uttar Pradesh were arrested near the Delhi border after a gunfight with the Noida police on Thursday morning. This was the third incident of a gunfight between police and suspected beef smugglers since Tuesday, when four men were arrested and around 1,500 kg of the banned bovine meat was recovered in the city.

### DU ORGANISES YOGA WEEK FROM JUNE 21

New Delhi: In order to mark the 8th International Day of Yoga, the Delhi University on Thursday said that a yoga week will be organised from June 21, officials said. A yoga camp-cum lecture will also be organised on June 22 where 1500 people will perform various asanas. "The university is organising a Yoga week from June 21 to 27. A yoga camp-cum-lecture will also be organised on June 22 as part of it," said DU registrar Vikas Gupta.

### 3-YR-OLD DIES IN HOUSE COLLAPSE IN PAHARGANJ

New Delhi: A three year-old boy died while his two sisters and father were rescued after a house collapsed in Paharganj area, Fire department said that a call was received at 8:40 PM regarding the house collapse following which seven fire tenders were rushed to the site. "So far one child, two girls and their father were rescued from collapsed structures at Paharganj," said the fire department.

### BMW DRIVER HELD FOR RUNNING OVER 2 KIDS

New Delhi: A 27-year-old man was arrested for allegedly ramming his speeding BMW car into another vehicle and killing two kids sleeping on sidewalk and injuring eight others in southeast Delhi. The accused has been identified as Sahil Narang, a resident of Nirman Vihar, they said. He runs a garment manufacturing business in Noida, police said. The incident occurred on June 10.

# LG chairs meet with police to review law and order

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Thursday chaired a meeting to review the law and order situation in the national Capital and directed the Delhi Police officials to conduct public hearings in the localities to facilitate redressal of public grievances.

As per the statement released by the LG office, Saxena was briefed about the current law and order scenario, crime data analysis, preventive measures, major challenges, reforms and initiatives undertaken and their impact by Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana.

The LG appreciated the steps taken by Delhi Police for maintaining law and order in the capital city. He also praised their police investigation and integration of Police Control Room (PCR) at police station level.<He also appreciated several initiatives taken by the police including women safety, skill training through YUVA etc.

During the meeting, Saxena also emphasized on ensuring timely and proper investigation of the cases with a special focus on collection of scientific evidence thus enhancing the conviction rate and thereby reinforcing the deterrent effect of law.

While stressing on the importance of public outreach and community policing, the LG emphasised on public hearings in the localities to facilitate redressal of public grievances.

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# 1,323 fresh coronavirus cases reported in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

For the third consecutive day the coronavirus cases remained over the benchmark of thousand with 1,323 fresh Covid19 cases reported in the national capital with two fatalities, while the positivity rate stood at 6.69 per cent.

With the new cases, Delhi's tally of Covid cases increased to 19,17,228 and the death toll stood at 26,225, according to the data released by the city health department.

"There are 9,582 beds for Covid patients in Delhi hospitals and 182 (1.9 per cent) of them were occupied," the Health Department said in its latest bulletin.

Meanwhile, several market associations here have started putting up banners urging people to follow Covid protocols and are also encouraging them to take booster shots amid a spike in coronavirus cases in Delhi.

Several trader associations said they are making announcements asking people to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour and are also planning to hold vaccination camps in the market.

More than 7,100 coronavirus cases have been reported in Delhi in the last 10 days as doctors and other medical experts cautioned people to not lower the guard and follow all Covid-appropriate behaviour.



Amid a spike in daily cases, the positivity rate too has climbed from 1.92 per cent registered on June 7 to 7.01 per cent on June 15, as per official figures.

"We are ensuring that people are wearing masks. We are encouraging people to take

the booster shots. The authorities must ensure that the people in crowded places follow the mask mandate.

"Staying vigilant is all that is required. We are asking shopkeepers to take booster doses and to customers also," Atul Bhargava, who heads the New Delhi Traders Association, said. Over 500 Delhi Metro passengers have been penalised by authorities in the first week of June for violation of various norms, including those in place for containment of COVID-19, officials said on Thursday.

Besides, flying squads are randomly carrying out inspections to ensure people adhere to Covid-appropriate behaviour, amid a spike in coronavirus cases, they said.

Delhi has reported more than 7,100 coronavirus cases in the last 10 days and the positivity rate has climbed from 1.92 per cent on June 7 to 7.01 per cent on June 15, according to official figures.

Flying squads keep an eye on passengers who flout Covid norms, like not wearing a mask or not wearing it improperly, or not following social distancing and other rules.

In May, 2,158 people were penalised for creating nuisance (under section 59 of the O&M Act of DMRC), and in the first week of June, over 500 passengers have been penalised under the same section, a senior DMRC official said.

# NGT panel tells Govt to have zero-tolerance to noise pollution

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With an aim to curb the noise pollution in the national Capital, A committee set up by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to monitor compliance of noise rules in Delhi has on Thursday urged the city Government to follow a zero-tolerance policy against unnecessary honking and the use of modified silencers.

In a report submitted to the green court, the panel said the incessant traffic noise, relentless honking, pressure horns and modified silencers are a



major contributors to noise pollution.

"Alternative measures such as planting of trees, awareness with respect to no-honking, quieter vehicles, quieter tires, speed reduction, home insulation, smooth road surface etc.,

could be adhered to reduce vehicular noise. The better option is to increase awareness just like in case of firecrackers and to increase prosecution.

"A zero-tolerance policy should be followed in case of unnecessary honking and use of modified silencers," the report read.

The panel told the court that the Delhi Traffic Police issued 331 challans against the use of pressure horns, 30 against honking in silent zones, 773 against modified exhausts/silencers and 59 for playing loud music in vehicles between January 1 to March 31.

The committee has also asked sub-divisional magistrate, Hauz Khas, the nodal officer to monitor compliance of noise rules in Delhi, to prepare and put up a proposal to prevent illegal sale of modified silencers and pressure horns in markets.

To prevent noise pollution due to amplifiers and loudspeakers at religious places, the panel suggested that local bodies and station house officers conduct regular meetings with office-bearers of religious institutions for "self-regulation of noise instruments".

## CBI chargesheets Delhi-based company for bank fraud

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Thursday said it has filed a chargesheet against Delhi-based private company and others including its promoters, directors, Statutory auditor and company Secretary among others for defrauding a consortium of 12 Banks led by Punjab National Bank (PNB) to the tune of Rs 2,040.63 crore.

A case was registered on September 25, 2020 against a private company (borrower) Hanung Toys & Textiles Ltd and others including its promoters and directors, Ashok Kumar Bansal and Anju Bansal; Associate persons Rishu Agarwal, Manoj Kumar Garg and Kali Kant Jha; Statutory Auditor Piyush Jain and Company Secretary Arvind Kumar Gupta. for cheating the consortium of banks, the CBI said in a statement.

It was alleged that the borrower company having its registered office at Greater Kailash Enclave-I, New Delhi and its units at various places in Noida, Roorkee and Mumbai was engaged in manufacturing and exports of stuffed toys, home furnishing items, dyeing and bleaching besides processing of fabrics, reads the FIR.

"Investigation revealed that the accused allegedly manipulated the books of accounts by suppressing the actual derivative loss and made false financial statements across the years, from year 2008-2013, in order to present the inflated financial worth of the company for the purpose of obtaining various credit facilities from the banks,"the CBI said in a statement.

## Pervert held for sending sexual videos to 200 women

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has arrested a 32-year-old juice factory worker from Haryana for allegedly stalking and sending sexual images and videos to over 200 women.

The accused has been identified as Manoj Kumar, a resident of Bahadurgarh in Haryana. A complaint was received from a 28-year-old woman, who has a beauty page on Facebook.

She alleged that some unknown person had been stalking and harassing her through anonymous calls and WhatsApp messages and had been sending her sexual images and videos.

## Jairam replaces Surjewala as AICC GS-in charge of comm, publicity and media

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Thursday appointed senior party leader and a former Union Minister Jairam Ramesh as the AICC general secretary in-charge of communication, publicity and media, replacing Randeep Singh Surjewala.

A statement released by the party said Surjewala has been relieved of his current responsibility as the general secretary in-charge of communication and will continue as the general secretary in-charge of Karnataka.

This comes after the party had resolved to revamp its communication and media department at its three-day brainstorming session in Udaipur last month. The party

in its Udaipur Nav Sankalp Declaration last month had said that in the changing environment, the jurisdiction, scope and structure of the media and communication department of the Congress should be expanded and made more effective with the help of subject-matter experts, and by connecting media, social media, data, research, etc. to the communication department.

All the media, social media, research departments of the states should be placed directly under the communication department of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) so that the message of the party can be spread in every nook and corner of the country every day, the party had said in the special conclave post the assembly poll debacle.

## Sisodia sets targets and strategy for new academic session 2022-23

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia held an interaction with the principals of Delhi Government Schools on Thursday to set the targets and strategy for the new academic session (2022-23) from July. Officials said that over 800

school principals from all across national Capital participated in the meeting.

Sisodia, who also hold the portfolio as Education Minister, instructed the school principals to set minimum benchmarks in their school regarding the school infrastructure, cleanliness, and school environment.

During the meeting, Sisodia said that in the last seven years, the government has done a lot of work on schools and has given a great model of education.

"But now it is the responsibility of the school heads to set their own accountability for their school and ensure that nothing in the school falls below the minimum benchmark set by them. For this, the government will provide all the necessary facilities and funds to the schools. Also, schools will be reviewed from time to time by the Directorate of Education (DoE) officials to check the maintenance of schools," said Sisodia. Sisodia also said that the schools are implementing the curriculum well and the results are evident. "But to make it a huge success the government will need their further support.

With the new session principals have to take the complete responsibility of implementing the curriculum innovatively and properly. They must ensure that dedicated duration for Mindset Curricula should not be utilized for any other subject", he said.

## Agnipath...

**From Page 1**

"The protesters seemed to have been provoked by the sight of the party flag, fitted on my car, which they tore. My driver, two security guards, and two personal staff members have sustained injuries," the MLA told reporters. Protesters also attacked and set fire to the Nawada BJP district office. Railway property bore the brunt of the protesters as stationary bogies were set on fire at Bhabhua and Chhapra stations and window panes of compartments smashed at many places. In Arrah, the railway station swarmed with a large number of protesters who were dispersed after the police fired teargas shells.

The East Central Railway zone, headquartered in Hajipur, reported a massive disruption of rail traffic. Busy routes like Patna-Gaya, Barauni-Katihar and Danapur-DDU were listed among those worst affected by the stir, the officials said.

In Buxar, station manager Rajan Kumar said many trains were stranded at the outer signal as the tracks were blocked by the agitators whom the police and the administrative officials were trying to pacify. Demonstrations staged by the protesters disrupted road traffic in the districts such as Jehanabad, Buxar, Katihar, Saran, Bhojpur, and Kaimur, where many locals sustained injuries in the incidents of stone-pelting, the officials said.

## Agnipath age limit raised...

**From Page 1**

The Government officials also strongly rejected criticism that "Agniveers" could be a danger to society after their exit from the armed forces.

"This is an insult to the ethos and values of the Indian armed forces.

Youngsters who have worn the uniform for four years will remain committed to the country for the rest of their lives," they said.

"Even now thousands retire from armed forces with skills, but there have not been any instance of them joining anti-national forces," they said.

Elaborating upon the avenues for demobilized "Agniveers", they said for those wishing to be entrepreneurs will get a financial package and bank loan scheme. For those wishing to study further, they will be given a Class 12 equivalent certificate and bridging course for further studies.

There were apprehensions that the "Agnipath" scheme would change the composition of several regiments that recruit youths from specific regions as well as castes such as Rajputs, Jats and Sikhs.

"No change is being done to the regimental system. In fact, it will be further accentuated because the best of "Agniveers" will be selected, further boosting the cohesiveness of the units," they said.

## ED nod to...

**From Page 1**

"This is a judicial proceeding and selective leaks by the ED to malign Rahul Gandhi's image is a criminal offence and an attempt to interfere with an ongoing judicial proceeding which is a second crime," Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said. The notice asks them to ensure the Enforcement Directorate immediately stops spreading "false narratives about Rahul Gandhi for ulterior political motives and as a tool to settle political scores".

## Massive spike in Covid...

**From Page 1**

The States also have the highest overall cases. Delhi too has been witnessing a worrying surge. The national Capital's Covid-19 tally rose by more than 1,000 fresh infections for a second straight day on Wednesday, with as many as 1,375 people testing positive in 24 hours.

Across India, a total of 11 deaths have been recorded in the last 24 hours, taking the total deaths recorded since the start of the pandemic to 5,24,803.

# Demolition can't be retaliation...

**From Page 1**

Senior advocates CU Singh, Huzefa Ahmadi, and Nitya Ramakrishnan, appearing for the Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, said statements are being made by the highest constitutional authorities, including the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, and demolitions are subsequently being carried out without giving an opportunity to the alleged riot accused to vacate their houses.

Singh said on April 21, in a matter related to demolitions in the Jahangirpuri area here, this court had passed a status quo order and restrained the authorities from carrying out the demolition till further orders.

"Since the status quo order was only in connection with Jahangirpuri, the State authorities in Uttar Pradesh have acted and demolished properties of persons accused of rioting, protesting, and criminal activities. This action of demolition of houses of the alleged accused is appalling and has never been seen in this country even during the emergency period. More so members of a particular community are targeted," Singh said.



# PROTESTS AGAINST CENTRE’S AGNIPATH PLAN ROCK DELHI-NCR



Indian Army aspirants blocked both sides of the Delhi-Jaipur Expressway in Gurugram's Bilaspur area on Thursday



Pioneer photo

## Kejriwal comes out in support of youths seeking Defence jobs

Give youth chance to serve nation their whole life, not just for four years, Delhi CM tells Centre

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As violent protests against the new recruitment scheme Agnipath raged across several States, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday came out in support of Defence job aspirants and appealed to the Central Government to give them the chance to serve the country throughout their life, and not just for four years.

The Agnipath scheme, announced on Tuesday, seeks

to recruit soldiers in the Army, Navy and the Air Force on a short-term contract of four years. "Appeal to the Central Government: Youth should be given the chance to serve the country their whole life, not four years. Those who became overage due to lack of recruitment in the Army in the last two years should also be given a chance," Kejriwal said in a tweet in Hindi.

Kejriwal added that the youth are "unhappy" and opposing the Agnipath scheme across the country.

The move has drawn the ire of Defence job aspirants, who have taken to streets at a number of places across the country, especially in Bihar. More than a dozen Defence force aspirants on Thursday stopped a train at Nangloi

Railway Station in Outer Delhi by lying down on tracks.

"The Central Government's new scheme in Army recruitment is being opposed everywhere in the country. The youth are very angry. Their demands are right. The Army is the pride of our country, our youth want to give their whole life to the country, don't restrict their dreams to four years," Kejriwal said in a series of tweets.

In Delhi, according to police, around 15-20 people gathered at Nangloi Railway Station around 9.45 A.M. to protest against a delay in railway recruitment examinations and also against the Agnipath scheme. They stopped a train which was bound for Old Delhi from Jind in Haryana, police said.

## Aspirants take protest to Railway tracks in Nangloi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

More than a dozen military Aspirants on Thursday stopped a train at outer Delhi's Nangloi Railway Station by lying down on the tracks in protest against the Centre's 'Agnipath' scheme.

According to the police, around 15-20 people gathered at the station around 9.45 A.M. to protest against the delay in the Railway recruitment examinations and against the Agnipath scheme.

They stopped a train which was bound for Old Delhi from Jind in Haryana, police said.

Police and GRP staff reached the spot immediately and asked the protesters to vacate the railway track peacefully. According to Sameer Sharma, Deputy



Military aspirants blockade Nangloi railway station in protest against the Centre's Agnipath scheme, in New Delhi on Thursday

Commissioner of Police (DCP), Outer district, the protesters told police they had applied for some Government jobs two to three years ago, but the examinations for the recruitment have not been

conducted yet, and they have crossed the minimum eligibility age now.

"At present the situation is under control and all the students have been dispersed from the railway track," he said.

## Pockets of protests in Delhi: DMRC closes Rajiv Chowk station gate for 30 minutes

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Metro on Thursday evening closed the entry and exit gate of Rajiv Chowk Metro Station after scores Indian Youth Congress (IYC) activists gathered at Jantar Mantar to protest against the new recruitment rules for the

armed forces. The gates were opened after 30 minutes and several protesters were also detained by the police.

"Due to security reasons, Gate No. 5 & 6 are closed at Rajiv Chowk Metro Station. All other gates are operational," Delhi Metro wrote on its Twitter handle at around 7: 34

PM. However, at around 7: 58 PM, in another tweet Delhi Metro informed that all gates were open for entry/exit at Rajiv Chowk Metro Station.

The IYC on Thursday evening held a rally near Janpath during which they

raised slogans against the Central Government. The IYC activists said they were marching from Kerala House to Jantar Mantar, however, they were stopped by police.

Another group of people said they were holding a peaceful protest in Connaught Place but were detained by police.

They also accused the police of using force against them.

The police said around six people had been detained for carrying out the protest without permission.

"They applied for the permission to take out a march around 6.30 PM, but it was

denied. We tried to persuade them not to take out the march as they did not have the requisite permission.

But when they did not pay heed to police instructions, they were detained around 7.30 PM and taken to Mandir Marg Police Station," the senior police official said.

## Police break up Cong march to LG house

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Mayhem broke out during a protest march by Delhi Congress workers and leaders to the Lieutenant-Governor's residence on Thursday, with police using water cannons twice to disperse the gathering. The protest march, that was led by Delhi Congress president Anil Kumar, was stopped by the police, minutes after it started from Sushrut Trauma Centre near Chandgiram Akhara to the L-G's house. The protest had been called against "police high-handedness" at the All India Congress Committee headquarters on Wednesday. This was part of a national call by the party to gherao Raj Bhavans across the country over Wednesday's events.

The Delhi Congress has claimed that its president Anil Chaudhury sustained injuries.

A Delhi Congress delegation also submitted a memorandum to the LG seeking action against Delhi Police for

allegedly entering the party headquarters and "thrashing" party workers and leaders.

On Wednesday, the Congress had alleged that the Delhi Police forcibly entered their national headquarters in New Delhi and "thrashed" their workers and leaders.

### 2 NSUI activists climb water tank to protest ED's grilling of Rahul

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Two National Students' Union of India (NSUI) workers, namely Vinod Jhakar and Niraj Rai on Wednesday late evening climbed a water tank to protest the Enforcement Directorate probe against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in the National Herald money laundering case.



Security personnel use barricades to stop Congress workers during their protest march to LG's residence at Raj Niwas over the manhandling of Congress workers by police at AICC headquarters, in New Delhi on Thursday

## FIR filed for manhandling cops, damaging barricades

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has registered an FIR against unknown persons for allegedly manhandling on-duty police personnel, burning tyres and damaging barricades during a protest against Rahul Gandhi's ques-

tioning by the Enforcement Directorate a day before.

"The case was registered on Wednesday under Sections 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions) and 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his

duty) against unknown persons," police said.

A senior police officer said some Congress leaders and workers pushed and manhandled on-duty police personnel and damaged barricades.

Some of the protesters also burnt tyres, the officer said.

## Restoration work on Gole market must begin soon: L-G

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Thursday inspected the closed Gole market area and directed officials to begin restoration work on the heritage building and revamp its surrounding areas.

According to a statement released by the L-G's office, upon seeing the status of the heritage structure that came up in 1921 and being briefed by the engineers about the structural damage that had been done to the building over time, Saxena directed officials to restore the building to its original design as much as possible and undertake repair and reconstruction to restore the remaining area.

The heritage building was shut down about a decade ago due to structural damage over the years, following which, it was declared dangerous.



"Pointing once again at the general derelict, encroachments and lack of maintenance in the surrounding areas, the officials have been instructed to address these issues in a manner that they are in alignment with the main Gole Market structure," it said.

Saxena also enquired about the subways to be built to connect the main structure to the surrounding areas for better

traffic management.

The L-G directed the officials to immediately start working on getting the required permissions for the restoration of the building. He also instructed the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) Chairman Bhupinder Singh Bhalla to take the owners of private property and shops around the Gole Market on-board in the renovation exercise.

## MCD to collect property tax from commercial establishments in unauthorised colonies

### To deal with its financial crunch

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With an aim to improve its financial health, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) is planning to collect tax from major commercial establishments located in unauthorised colony areas of the national capital.

According to the sources, there is hardly any tax collection from unauthorised colony areas. So the civic body is con-

sidering to tap big commercial properties in such localities and collect tax from them. They said any formal proposal in this connection is yet to be moved but the plan is under discussion at MCD meetings on financial issues.

Sources in the MCD said that the civic body is planning to widen its tax net to boost revenue generation, under which it is also likely to review its property tax collection system in a way that could not put burden on people.

He said currently the property tax collection from unauthorised colony is almost neg-

ligible despite the fact that the civic body provides basic amenities like sanitation in these areas.

"Instead of troubling common people living in unauthorised colonies with property tax, we are planning to go after big commercial establishments for tax collection. These commercial establishments may include car and bike showrooms, supermarkets, hotels or restaurants etc. Such commercial establishments can pay property tax, which they should anyway pay as they use our services," said the sources.

## Jama Masjid wall damaged in anti-encroachment drive; we will repair it soon, says MCD

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The historic Jama Masjid's wall portion of the park damaged during the Municipal Corporation of Delhi's (MCD) anti-encroachment drive in the national capital. However, the MCD officials accepted negligence on its part and assured to get it repaired as soon as possible.

According to a senior MCD official, on Thursday following the orders from the Delhi High Court, the teams of MCD along with BSES carried out a joint encroachment removal drive in a park situated near Jama Masjid area.

"However, during the



encroachment drive an illegal e-rickshaw charging facility was removed and subsequently the illegal charging station's electricity was cut along with the demolition of a temporary room built inside the park with police assistance," he said.

"While some part of the wall of the park was damaged during the drive following which the Executive Engineer of the maintenance department was immediately given the task to repair the damaged portion of the wall," the official further said.

## Mother Dairy to lower rates of edible oils up to ₹15/litre

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a big relief to the common man who is reeling under inflation, the Mother Dairy has decided to lower the rates of its edible oils up to ₹15 per litre across variants.

According to the Mother Dairy spokesperson, the maximum retail prices (MRP) of Dhara edible oils are being reduced by up to ₹15 per litre across variants.

"This reduction is largely being done for oils majorly consumed in our country such as Mustard Oil, Soyabean Oil and Sunflower Oil, on account of recent government-led ini-

tatives, reduced impact of international markets and ease in availability of sunflower oil including improved domestic sunflower crop. Dhara edible oil variants with the new MRP will reach market by next week," informed the Mother Dairy spokesperson.

According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) data, this year in the month of April, the retail inflation had risen to 7.79 per cent. However, the price rise in edible oils was reported to be 17 per cent for the same period, more than double the rise in general prices.



# Scrap Agnipath scheme: Opp to Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Thursday slammed the "Agnipath" recruitment policy and demanded that it should be scrapped. They also sought a discussion on the new scheme in Parliament.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Samajwadi Party(SP)leader Akhilesh Yadav, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Bahujan Samaj Party(BSP)supremo Mayawati and Left parties questioned the efficacy of the policy. BJP MP Varun Gandhi also raised doubts over the scheme.

Rahul Gandhi urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to listen to the voice of unemployed youths and not take "agnipareeksha (trial by fire)" of their patience by making them walk on "Agnipath".

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra hit out at the government over the scheme and urged the prime minister not to "crush the dreams of the youth".

"No rank, no pension, no direct recruitment for 2 years, no stable future after four years, no respect shown by the government for the army," Rahul said in a tweet in Hindi.

"Listen to the voice of unemployed youths of the country, don't take 'agnipareeksha' of their patience by making them walk on 'Agnipath', Mr. Prime Minister," the former Congress chief said. Priyanka Gandhi said in a tweet there are many dreams for the future in the eyes of those preparing for recruitment in the armed forces such as serving the country and their parents.

"What will the new army recruitment scheme give them? After 4 years, no job guarantee, no pension facility = no rank, no pension. @narendramodi ji don't crush the dreams of the youth," she said.

Questioning various provisions of Agnipath, BJP MP Varun Gandhi said it will give rise to more dissatisfaction among the youths and asked the government to make its stand clear.

In a letter to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Varun Gandhi said the young population has shared their questions and doubts with him about the radical changes in the soldiers' recruitment process which also proposes that the 75 per cent of the recruits under the scheme will retire after four years of service without pension.

Arvind Kejriwal urged the centre not to limit the service period for the new recruits in the armed forces to just four years and extended his support



Protesters against Central Govt's 'Agnipath' scheme block train in Nangloi station in national Capital

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

## Will open new avenues for the youth: CMs of BJP-ruled States to protesters

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid students' protests over the Agnipath scheme for recruitment into the armed forces, Union Ministers and Chief Ministers of the BJP-led States defended the step on Thursday, saying it will open new avenues for youngsters, and urged them to keep away from those inciting them.

Union Minister Ashwini Choubey, a senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader from Bihar where the protests started on Wednesday, claimed that some people are using students for their own political gains, an apparent reference to the opposition parties that have criticised the scheme for short-term contractual employment in the armed forces as soldiers.

In a statement, Choubey said Prime Minister Narendra Modi always thinks and works for the welfare of the country.

"We assure you that this programme is a constructive step to bring in long-term positive results. Lakhs of youngsters will not only benefit from this, but the nationalistic sentiments within them will also be strengthened," he said.

Those selected under the scheme will get priority in central and state government jobs, he added.

Echoing similar sentiments, Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar said the scheme is a grand campaign for developing skilled manpower in the country.

Describing the scheme as "historic", Tomar said, "It will open new avenues for youngsters and pave the way for their better future."

Similarly, Yogi Adityanath and Pushkar Singh Dhami, the chief ministers of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, also assured the students that they will give "preference" to "Agniveers" for selection in their respective state police forces and other jobs.

"Agnipath Yojana will give a new dimension to youngsters' lives. It will lay a golden base for their future," Adityanath said in a tweet, while urging young people not to be deceived.

Underlining that the Uttarakhand government is committed to providing employment opportunities to youngsters, Dhami urged them to stay away from any kind of misleading news.

to the Army aspirants who are protesting against the scheme.

With this, Kejriwal has joined the growing list of politicians who have condemned the scheme, under which soldiers will be recruited in the armed forces as 'Agniveers' on a contractual basis.

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav called the move 'negligent' and potentially "fatal" for the country's future. Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav also condemned the scheme.

"The security of the country is not a short-term or informal issue; it expects a very serious and long-term policy. The negligent attitude that is being adopted regarding military recruitment will prove to be fatal when it comes to the protection of the future of the country and the youth," Akhilesh said in a tweet. "Agnipath se path per agni na ho ('Agnipath' must not set the path on fire)," he added in the same tweet.

The Left parties demanded that the 'Agnipath' scheme be scrapped and be taken up in Parliament for discussion, alleging that it does a "disservice" to India's national interests.

"The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly disapproves the 'Agnipath' scheme that does disservice to India's national interests. Professional armed forces cannot be raised by recruiting 'soldiers on contract' for a period of four years. This scheme, to save pension money, severely compromises the

quality and efficiency of our professional armed forces," CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said in a tweet.

He further said for the last two years there has been no recruitment in the Indian Army and instead of recruiting regular soldiers into the armed forces, this scheme leaves such contract soldiers with no other prospects of employment after four years.

"This creates a dangerous situation where they may end up serving private militias. This has hazardous implications for our social fabric already under severe strain. It is criminal to call upon our youth to be prepared to make the supreme sacrifice without the minimum protection of job security. The spontaneous protests in various parts of the country, reflects the anger against this scheme.

"The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) demands that this 'Agnipath' scheme be scrapped forthwith and regular recruitment into the armed forces be undertaken urgently," Yechury said.

Binoy Viswam(CPI) too opposed the scheme and sought its withdrawal. "It is contractualisation in Indian military, exploitation of youth through low wages, back door entry for RSS, part of militarisation, betrayal of unemployed. Military Recruitment is not kitchen recipe of BJP. Need discussion in parliament," he tweeted.

CPI general secretary D Raja tweeted, "Finding jobs has become literally a 'Path of Fire' under Modi. Govt is trying to hoodwink the restive youth by #AgnipathScheme. It'll make our army contract based and jeopardise the future of our youth. "It should be withdrawn immediately! Youth deserve proper, secure jobs!"

In a separate statement, the CPI said any dilution in the service conditions of defence personnel, including their discipline will only harm the security and sovereignty of the country.

"Contract appointment and short-term employment after imparting full-fledged training at the cost of the exchequer will not only affect the quality of the services but also will harm the future of the trained personnel who will find it very difficult to get a suitable job.

"The party warns the government against tinkering with the present set up of recruitment, promotion, etc, in the defence services. The party demands that the 'Agnipath' scheme should be immediately withdrawn and the government fill the existing vacancies by following the established procedures," the statement said.

## Cong slams cops' 'brutality' on leaders

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress Parliamentarians on Thursday met the Presiding officers of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha to raise the issue of Delhi Police action against party MPs, including women colleagues during their protests in the national Capital, and alleged they were treated like "terrorists".

Top Congress leaders also held a meeting of party general secretaries and in-charges to decide on their response to the police action against the Congress leaders.

The grand old party also staged a gherao of all Raj Bhawans across the country against the police action and "brutalities" against Congress workers and leaders.

In a memorandum to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu the Congress MPs alleged that their privileges as members of parliament have been breached and demanded lawful action against the Delhi Police.

Congress leaders and MPs have been staging demonstrations against their former president Rahul Gandhi's questioning by the Enforcement Directorate in a money-laundering case pertaining to the National Herald newspaper, which they have alleged is "false".

The delegation that met LS Speaker Om Birla was led by the party's leader in the House Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, while the delegation that called on RS Chairman Venkaiah Naidu was led by the Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge.

They also handed over a pen drive containing videos of the alleged harassment of MPs and how they were "ill-treated" by Delhi Police personnel.

Chowdhury also trashed as "plants by the ED and the BJP government" reports that Rahul Gandhi allegedly put the blame on former Congress treasurer Motilal Vora for wrongdoings in the National Herald case.

"These are only plants. It is done for their convenience to divide and break the Congress. We do not know, he is our leader, but they know," he said briefing

the media.

The Lok Sabha MP from West Bengal said the ED and the government should not pursue politics of vendetta and violence.

"Have you ever seen any political leader being questioned for so many days? But what crime have we done? We only wanted to stand in solidarity with our leader. The manner in which the police have treated us, looks as if we are all terrorists," Chowdhury told reporters after the meeting.

He alleged even women MPs were beaten up and their clothes "torn". "Is this an 'Amrit Kaal'? The Modi and Amit Shah government are turning this Amrit kaal into a Poison Kaal? Have there never been agitations and we are only peacefully trying to put across our side peacefully in a Gandhian way," he said.

Former Home Minister and also a senior party leader P Chidambaram said the ED cannot leak its version of the interrogation. "The fact that ED has leaked selected parts of the investigation according to their understanding clearly establishes bias and prejudice."

He also said the police have assaulted MPs of both house and have taken them away MPs in police stations bordering Haryana and held them without a written order for eight to 10 hours and have denied them food and water.

"It is a clear violation of liberty. MPs have privileges and have fundamental right as per Article 19 and Article 21. Every fundamental right and privilege has been violated. We have appealed to the Chairman to take action of breach of privilege as well as breach of liberty and let the process of law take its course," the former union minister said.

Chowdhury was accompanied by chief whip of the party K Suresh, the party's whip in Lok Sabha Manickam Tagore and other MPs including Gurjit Aujla.

The RS delegation was led by Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge and had senior Congress leaders such as P Chidambaram, Jairam Ramesh and KC Venugopal.

## 2 FIRs over leasing of enemy properties



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered two FIRs against officials man-aging enemy properties for allegedly leasing out over 100 acres of prime commercial land in Uttar Pradesh at nominal rates by showing these as ponds.

Following registration of the FIRs, the agency is also conducting searches at 15 locations in Lucknow, Delhi, Kolkata and Barabanki in connection with the case.

The scam is related to enemy properties in Lucknow, Barabanki and Sitapur, officials said.

The CBI has booked Samandar Singh Rana, the then officiating Custodian of Enemy Property of India (CEPI) at Delhi, Utpal Chakraborty, Assistant Custodian and Ramesh Chandra Tewari, a retired Supervisor (both based in Lucknow) under Indian Penal Code sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy), 420 (cheating) and 471 (forgery) and provisions of Prevention of Corruption Act related to bribery.

In addition, the CBI has also named 15 beneficiaries as accused in the FIRs.

Enemy properties vested with CEPI are the left behind assets of Indians who took Chinese and Pakistani nationality after wars with these countries. The government took over these properties under The Defence of India Act, 1962 after their migration and change in nationality.

Enemy properties are currently vested with the Custodian of Enemy Property of India (CEPI). "A property of an individ-

ual or a company recorded in the name of an enemy, enemy subject or enemy firm at the crucial vesting period i.e. from September 10, 1965 to September 26, 1977 is treated as an enemy property strictly as per procedures laid down in the Enemy property Rules, 2015," according to the Home Ministry's website.

The FIR said that the officials of CEPI allegedly colluded with beneficiaries by "forging and manipulating lease agreements in favour of lessees" and granting lease without agreements.

The leases were regularised without the approval of the Central government, by waiving of lease rental arrears, unauthorised out of court settlements and other illegal means, causing loss of revenue to the government, the FIR alleged.

One of the beneficiaries was Ramesh Chandra Tewari's brother Avinash Tewari, posted in the revenue department of the State, who got the lease of over eight acre of prime land having a mango orchard with 177 trees at annual rate of ₹5,000 as against the market rate of ₹5.55 lakh per annum, according to an enquiry done by the CEPI.

The CBI has also named as accused beneficiaries named Ram Pratap Singh, Babu Lal, Swapna Singh, Sivaz Iqbal and Mohrin Iqbal, Anup Roy, Sunil Kumar Bajpayee, Om Prakash Singh, Gyanendra Tiwari, Jainuddin Md Siddique, Umair Sivaz, Bilal Ahmed, Diwakar, Rudresh Pandey and Vinay Srivastava

It is alleged that loss of over ₹1.45 crore was caused to the government in three years, officials added.

## 30 FTOs found violating multiple safety rules: DGCA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After a series of accidents and incidents, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has audited 30 flying training organisations (FTOs) since March 21 and found them violating multiple safety regulations. The DGCA found in the audit that "the facilities at the airfield/training organization are not being maintained as per the requirements — runway surface was found worn out, wind sock was found torn or nonstandard."

"False logging was observed in a few cases where dual flight had been logged as solo flight and in a few other cases the taxi time was calculated towards the instrument flying of the student pilot. Deficiencies," it added.

Based on the findings of this audit and probes into recent crashes, the DGCA said it has initiated "enforcement action (like issuing



warning letter to two accountable managers; suspension orders to two CFIs for a year, two CFIs for three months, one deputy CFI for a year, two deputy CFI for three months, one AFI for three months and one student for 3 months." The approval of one FTO has been suspended. Enforcement actions against other individuals/ FTOs are at various stages, it noted.

The pre-flight alcohol test regulations were not followed at mul-

multiple FTOs, it said. As per the audit findings, few of the instructors, student pilots and aircraft maintenance engineers did not undergo BA (breathalyser) test or submit undertaking prior to commencement of duty/exercise of privileges.

In a few cases, the testing equipment being used were not in compliance with the requirements or calibrated as required, it added.

"In addition, approval of one FTO has been suspended.

Enforcement actions against other individuals/ FTOs are at various stages," it added.

"Deficiencies in the ground training of student pilot i.e., overlap of flying training and ground training, lack of arrangement for ground training, not having the required instructors. Deficiencies in flying training procedures and their implementation i.e., student pilots not appropriately briefed and trained on emergencies/essential exercises

before being released for solo flights/cross country, adhocism in allocation of trainers as trainers are frequently changed and thereby affecting the learning experience of student pilots," it said.

According to the DGCA, of the 32 functional FTOs, 39 schools have been audited. The audit was conducted to assess safety standards and systemic deficiencies in operations, maintenance and training.

## DCGI approves SI's vax qHPV for cervical cancer patients

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Drugs Controller General of India's (DCGI) Subject Expert Committee has recommended Serum Institute's indigenously developed quadrivalent human papillomavirus (qHPV) vaccine for cervical cancer patients belonging to the age group of nine to 26 years.

Most cervical cancers are caused by the human papillomavirus, and are sexually transmitted.

The SI's tetravalent or quadrivalent HPV vaccine includes L1 virus-like particles (VLPs) of serotypes 6, 11, 16, and 18. A quadrivalent vaccine works by stimulating an immune response against

four different antigens, such as four different viruses or other microorganisms. The L1 protein is sufficient to form virus-like particles, which are molecules that mimic viruses but are not infectious. HPV vaccines are important because they could reduce the impact of cervical cancer and other cancers caused by the human papillomavirus. More than 95 per cent of cervical cancer is caused by sexually transmitted human papillomavirus. This is the fourth most common type of cancer in women globally, with 90 per cent of these women living in low-and middle-income countries.

## IISc, KIER develop self-regulating footwear to help diabetic patients

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Diabetic foot wounds heal at a slower rate than in healthy individuals, which increases the chance of infection, and may lead to complications that require amputation in extreme cases. Coming to their rescue, the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in association with the Karnataka Institute of Endocrinology and Research (KIER), has developed a set of self-regulating footwear for diabetic.

The footwear developed by the Department of Mechanical Engineering's IISc-led team is 3D printed and can be customized to an individual's foot dimensions and walking style.

"Unlike conventional therapeutic footwear, a snapping mechanism in these sandals keeps the feet well-balanced, enabling faster healing of the injured region and preventing injuries from arising in other areas of the feet," said Pavan Belehalli, Head, Department of Podiatry, KIER, and one of



the authors of the study published in Wearable Technologies.

The footwear can be especially beneficial for people who have diabetic peripheral neuropathy — those who suffer from nerve damage caused by diabetes, leading to a loss of sensation in the foot. "Diabetic peripheral neuropathy is one of the long-term complications of diabetes, and its diagnosis is mostly neglected. The lack of sensation results in irregular walking patterns in persons with diabetes,"

For example, a healthy person usually places their heel first on the ground, followed by the foot and toes, and then the heel again. Such a 'gait cycle' distributes the pressure evenly across the foot. But due to the loss of sensation, persons with diabetes may not always follow

this sequence, which means that the pressure is unevenly distributed. Regions of the foot where the pressure exerted is high are at greater risk of developing ulcers, corns, calluses and other complications, stated the researchers.

There are several varieties of therapeutic footwear in the market. But the researchers observed that it is seen to be ineffective at off-loading the uneven pressure exerted by the 'abnormal' gait cycle of persons with diabetes. "When we remove the pressure, the arch will automatically come back to its initial position which is known as self-offloading," explained Priyabrata Maharana, PhD student, Department of Mechanical Engineering, IISc and first author.

Now the team is collaborating with start-ups like Foot Secure and Yostra Labs to commercialise their product. This footwear can be used not only by diabetic neuropathy cases, but by others too," said Prof Ananthasuresh.

## India, ASEAN for mutually-beneficial strategic partnership

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to further strengthen ties, India and the Association of SouthEast Asian Nations(ASEAN)on Thursday agreed to work towards a comprehensive strategic partnership that is meaningful, substantive and mutually-beneficial by further enhancing their strategic ties.

This was the main takeaway from the two-day meeting here of the India-ASEAN foreign ministerial conference hosted by New Delhi to mark the 30th anniversary of its relations with the 10-nation grouping.

The objective to make the India-ASEAN ties substantive was stated in a statement by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Singaporean counterpart Vivian Balakrishnan at the meeting.

Jaishankar and Balakrishnan are the co-chairs of the two-day meeting that began on Thursday. The meeting discussed the situation in the South China Sea, a resource-rich region that has been witnessing increasing Chinese muscle-flexing, sources said. Fall-out of the Ukraine conflict also came up for discussion, it was learnt.

India fully supports a strong, unified and prosperous ASEAN with a central role in the Indo-Pacific and both sides should identify a new set of priorities while navigating the "arduous path" arising from developments in Ukraine, Jaishankar said in his opening remarks.

He talked about the "geopolitical headwinds" triggered by the Ukraine crisis and its knock-on effects on food, energy security, prices of fertilisers and commodities as well as logistics and supply chains.

In his remarks, Balakrishnan slammed Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, saying such actions if unchecked can threaten the "whole system of peace and stability which we have depended on for the basis of our growth, development and prosperity over many decades".

Balakrishnan, who is the country coordinator for India in ASEAN, said Russian actions have "upended the international system of rules and norms and international law which we all depend on".

In their statement, the co-chairs said the meeting reaffirmed commitment to multilateralism founded on the principles of international laws including the Charter of the United Nations, the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and other relevant UN treaties and conventions.

The foreign ministers agreed to work towards maintaining an open and inclusive regional cooperation framework, support ASEAN centrality in the evolving rules-based regional architecture and uphold multilateralism in jointly responding to regional and global challenges.

"Had a good interaction with Foreign Ministers and Representatives of @ASEAN countries as we celebrate 30 years of close India-ASEAN cooperation," Modi tweeted.



# Agnipath sparks protests across UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh, on Thursday simmered as those aspiring to join the Indian armed forces staged stiff protests across the State against the Union Government's short-term recruitment scheme for the armed forces, brought with the aim to slash the salary and pension bills of the Defence forces, giving the UP Police a hard time on the law and order front.

A huge number of students blocked the GT Road in Bulandshahr and raised the slogan 'Arthi do ya vardi do' (give us uniform or death) and demanded withdrawal of the scheme which allows short-term recruitment in the armed forces.

The police and district officials had a hard time persuading the protesters to call off the blockade. The protest-

ers submitted a memorandum to the district magistrate. In Gonda, students carrying placards and shouting slogans against the Agnipath army recruitment scheme staged a massive protest.

In Aligarh, the police detained three youths who were part of a group staging a protest against the Agnipath scheme and took to violence. The protesters ignored the presence of Provincial Armed Constabulary jawans and blocked the highway causing a massive jam. There were reports that some of the protesters burnt a tyre and later ransacked a bus. A heavy police force was rushed to the scene but the protesters took to their heels before the cops reached the spot.

In Bareilly, the youths staged protests and raised slogans against the scheme. They said short term service in the



armed forces would be of no use to the nation as well as the youths.

In Agra, the police used force when some youths staging a protest against the recruitment scheme started ransacking public property. In Agra, Firozabad and Mathura the protests ended by after-

noon while in Unnao and Fatehpur districts, the protest ended before afternoon.

In Unnao city and its Shuklaganj town, the protesters raised slogans against Defence Minister

Rajnath Singh and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and questioned the logic behind the new scheme for recruitment in the army.

They expressed concern over the four-year period for which the aspirants were to be recruited.

The police had to struggle

hard to disperse the mob.

In Ballia, the protest by an irate mob affected the movement of some trains, including Swatantrata Senani Express going from Jai Nagar to New Delhi, at Varanasi-Chhapra railway section.

On the other hand, there were reports that Barauni-Gondia Express and Lichchavi Express were held for some hours in view of the protest at Chhapra and Bhatni railway stations.

In Deoria, the protesters blocked the Deoria-Kasya road in protest against the short term recruitment in the army. The protest spread to Subhash Chowk area, Tarkulwa locality and Garhrampur area of Deoria.

In Gorakhpur, the protesters took out a procession, demanding that the government withdraw the 'Tour of Duty' (ToD).

# Agnipath will compromise country's security: TMC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress on Thursday strongly condemned the BJP Government's decision to create a "contractual military cadre" which would not only create a big question mark on the future of the eligible youth but also comprise the country's security.

Reacting to the ongoing violent movement in States like Bihar, Haryana against the Centre's decision to create the Agniveer rank in the Defence forces limiting the aspirants' military career to four years (with some exceptions) TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said "the decision has put the country's security in danger."

Incidentally a special court on Thursday acquitted Ghosh of charges level against him in

Some youth on Thursday evening staged blockade and burnt tyres at Bhatpara in North 24 Parganas raising slogans against the Centre and asking for the withdrawal of the Agnipath policy

the Sharada chit fund scam.

Saying that the Agnipath move was the direct fallout of New Delhi's "bad economic policy" Ghosh asked "what is this contractual army all about ... never have we heard of such compromise being made with the country's security ... this is the result of the Government's bad economic policy ... which is why now they are forced to cut expenditure by taking temporary staff in the defence forces ... but it is dangerous not only for the youth but also for the national security."

Alleging that the RSS was pushing its cadre in the Army in the name of Agneepath scheme Ghosh said "this is not a child's play ... the people have understood their game plan and so they have revolted ... it is the same youth that had voted for Narendra Modi ... now it is for this Government to calm them down ... Every time they call out Army to suppress movements ... now what will they do ... will they call out Army again to suppress the country's youth ... The BJP must come to senses."

Meanwhile, some youth on Thursday evening staged blockades and burnt tyres at Bhatpara in North 24 Parganas raising slogans against the Centre and asking for the withdrawal of the Agneepath policy. The rally was however cleared by the police.

# Govt playing with future of rural youth and their kin: Mayawati

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati has questioned the new military recruitment scheme Agnipath in view of the protests by youths and has urged the Central Government to reconsider its decision.

In a series of tweets on Thursday morning, Mayawati wrote, "After keeping the recruitment pending in the Army for a long time, now the Centre has announced a new recruitment scheme of four years in the armed forces and named it 'Agniveer'. Despite



(the government) calling it attractive and beneficial, the youth of the country are dissatisfied and angry. They are openly opposing change in the Army recruitment system."

In another tweet she says: "People believe that in order to eliminate pension benefits in the Army and Government jobs, the Government is limiting the tenure of the recruits in the army to only four years, which is grossly unfair and illegal. The government is playing with the future of rural youth and their families."

The BSP president further said, "People in the country are already sad and afflicted by rising poverty, inflation, unemployment, wrong policies and arrogant working style of the government. In such a situa-

tion, the uneasiness spread among the youth regarding new recruitment in the army is now causing disappointment. The government should immediately reconsider its decision; this is the demand of the BSP"

Agnipath proposes the recruitment of jawans on a contractual basis for a four-year period followed by compulsory retirement for most without the benefits of gratuity and pension. The new recruitment plan aims to cut down the government's massive salary and pension bills and free up funds for arms procurement.



Jan Adhikar Party supporters stage a protest against the Centre's 'Agnipath' scheme, at Kargil crossing in Patna on Thursday

PTI

# Agnipath a historical step towards strengthening Defence power: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Thursday, said that the Agnipath scheme was a historical step towards strengthening the country's defence power, allaying apprehensions of youths protesting against the implementation of the scheme. "This scheme will prepare youths for the service of the country and society. The

recruits - Agniveers -- will be an invaluable asset for the country," he said.

The chief minister assured the youth that the state government would give preference to Agniveers in UP Police and other services of state government. He appealed to the youths not to be misled, saying the recruitment in Agnipath scheme will give youth a new dimension to use their talent.



"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi,

the Central government is committed to the development of youths' power and their bright future. Agnipath is an attractive scheme of recruitment in armed forces. The recruited Agniveers will contribute positively in the making of the nation and they will obtain military skill and experience by working as Agniveers and the scheme will also enhance their leadership qualities, fitness,

courage and discipline," he said.

Meanwhile, the UP Police have made ample arrangements to contain the protest by youths across the state. The government ordered the district administration officials to counsel the youths protesting against the Agnipath scheme by putting the reality before them and not allowing them to disturb peace.

The police have been asked

to remain on vigil round the clock and conduct foot patrolling in their respective areas. The police officials have also been asked to deploy paramilitary forces for conducting flag marches. The senior officials have been asked to visit the sensitive places and ensure peace and order of law there while ensuring proper police deployment. Earlier, a meeting through video conference was

held at Yojana Bhawan here on Thursday and it was jointly addressed by Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Awasthi and UP DGP DS Chauhan. The meeting reviewed efforts made by officials for compliance with the chief minister's order. The officials were warned of strict action in case any laxity was found in implementing the chief minister's order.

The officials were asked to deal strictly with any unpleasant incident, ensure foot patrolling and flag marches to instill a sense of confidence among the people, deploy senior officials at sensitive places and monitoring of sensitive places by drones, CCTVs and video cameras. The officials were asked to ensure peace and maintain law and order under any circumstances.

# Rajnath visits LoC in Baramulla; breaks bread with the troops

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Thursday took a first hand account of the prevailing security situation along the line of control in North Kashmir district of Baramulla where he was briefed by the top army commanders.

He trekked some of the forward posts along with Army Chief General Manoj Pande and boosted the morale of the foot soldiers guarding the frontiers of the Nation. General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GoC-in-C), Northern Command Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi; GoC, 15 Corps Lt Gen AS Aujla and GoC, 19 Infantry Division Maj Gen Ajay Chandpuria accompanied the Defence Minister and briefed him about the operational preparedness of the Armed Forces.

Remembering the heroes



of Galwan who fought valiantly for the honour of the country and laid down their lives on June 15-16, 2020, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also paid glowing tributes to them. "Their courage, bravery and supreme sacrifice will never be forgotten. I pay homage to those bravehearts" Singh tweeted during his two day long visit to Jammu and Kashmir.

In Baramulla, Rajnath Singh broke bread with the jawans during 'Barakhanna'. He arrived at the venue sitting on the hot seat of an All Terrain Vehicle (ATV). Army Chief General Manoj Pande was seen escorting him.

Addressing a joint gathering of jawans of the Indian army, para military forces and Jammu and Kashmir police in Baramulla Singh accused Pakistan of trying to destabilise India by way of continuing its 'bleed India with 1000s of cuts' policy. Acknowledging the role of the security forces in dealing with the situation Singh said, "our security forces are such a protective shield for this country that whoever tries to break it, bleeds himself". "The Nation has immense faith in our forces who are always ready to deal with any situation," the defence minister said.

He made this charge against Pakistan at a time when the Union territory is witnessing sudden spike in incidents of terrorist violence in the region. So far over 100 terrorists, including 21 foreign nationals have been eliminated in different anti-terrorist

operations in the Kashmir valley. Even when Defence Minister was present in the Kashmir valley the security forces were conducting two major anti terrorist operations to flush out terrorists.

Reiterating that India is a peace-loving country which has given the message of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the whole world is one family) to the world, Rajnath Singh asserted that "we have never tried to hurt any country in any way, nor have we tried to capture even an inch of anyone's land. He, however, assured the Nation that if an attempt is ever made to hurt the unity and integrity of the Nation, the Armed Forces will give a befitting reply. He exuded confidence that the Armed Forces will face the future challenges with full strength and their valour & dedication will build a golden future for the country.

# Dirty minds playing communal card: Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday attacked a section of "self-seeking, narrow-minded" politicians for the present state of communal confusion in the country.

Speaking on the 167th anniversary of Kolkata's Dakshineswar Kali Temple associated with the memories of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Dev and his disciple Rani Rashmoni who constructed the temple, the Chief Minister said that common people were not communal minded and that they were victims of provocation.

"The common people are not communal ... they want peace but there are some self-seeking leaders who have a closed heart and a dirty brain ... they incite these common

people to create disturbance so that they can reap political dividends," the Chief Minister said.

"The negative people always indulge in hatching conspiracy ... their brains are like dustbins which are stuffed with rotten ideas ... there dustbin-like brains always are busy in producing dirty plans ... they indulge in propaganda politics and set one section of common people against the other ... these are power-hungry selfish leaders who see their own interest in dividing people on the basis of religion," the Chief Minister said, apparently taking a dig at arch rival BJP.

"No religion divides people ... all religion preaches unity of mankind ... but these selfish politicians ignite communal division ... so we it is in the interest of the common man



Common people are not communal minded and they are the victims of provocation: Mamata

that peace is mutual harmony is maintained."

Recalling the preaching of Ramakrishna who stood for unity of religions Banerjee said the people should always think of amity and not division. Recalling how

Ramakrishna said "money is earth and earth is money," the Chief Minister said "some people always set their eyes on extra gratification which is wrong ... we should do our work without thinking of extra gains."

On the occasion of the 167th anniversary of the Temple, Banerjee inaugurated a 3-D light and sound show apart from a library at the Temple premises which also associated with Ramakrishna's wife Holy Mother Sharada and his disciple Swami Vivekananda.

Asserting that Dakshineswar was a centre of international tourist attraction Banerjee said her Government would build a helipad near the Temple. Already a sky-walk has been constructed linking the Temple and the nearest Metro Railway station.

# Maharashtra: Daily Covid cases rise to 4,255

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

With no let up in the continued spurt in the Covid-19 infections in Maharashtra, the daily cases shot up further to 4,255 cases on Thursday, even as the total number of active cases in the state mounted to 20,634.

On a day when two more persons tested positive for the BA variant, the daily Covid-19 cases rose from 4,024 to 4,255 cases, taking the total number of cases in the state from 79,19,442 to 79,23,697.

Similarly with two fresh

Covid-19 deaths reported during the day, the total number of deaths registered in the state since the outbreak of Covid-19 in the state in March 2020 rose from 1,47,877 to 1,47,880.

Of the total 4,255 fresh cases reported in the state, Mumbai accounted for 2,366 positive cases, taking the total number of cases reported in the metropolis since outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020 from 10,85,882 to 10,88,248. The metropolis recorded two Covid-19 deaths taking the total number of deaths in the metropolis from

19,576 to 19,578. The authorities pegged the overall growth rate of Covid-19 cases during the period from June 9 to June 15 at 0.163 per cent.

As 2,879 Covid-19 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March 2020 increased from 77,52,304 to 77,55,183. The recovery rate in the state dropped from 97.89 per cent to 97.87 per cent.

The number of "active cases" in the state rose from 19,261 to 20,634. The fatality

rate in the state stood static at 1.86 per cent.

The active cases in Mumbai rose from 12,341 to 13,005. The active cases in Thane increased from 3,611 to 3,978, while the active cases in Pune rose from 1,344 to 1,453. The active cases in Raigad district increased from 646 to 709, while the active cases in Palghar went up from 556 to 625.

Of the 8,14,72,916 samples sent to various laboratories across the state so far, 79,23,697 have tested positive (9.73 per cent) for COVID-19 until Thursday.

Meanwhile, two more fresh BA variant positive cases were reported from Nagpur. A report from the Nagpur-based National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), said that a 29-year-old man and a 54-year-old woman tested positive for BA Variant on June 6 and 9 respectively. They have a history of travel to Kerala & Mumbai respectively during last week.

Both are vaccinated & recovered at home isolation. With this the total tally of BA 4 and BA 5 variant cases found in state goes to 19.

# Bengal Assembly nixes 5 BJP MLAs' suspension

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee on Thursday revoked the suspension of five BJP MLAs including Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari and Chief Whip Manoj Tigga.

As saffron MLA Agnimitra Paul read out the formal "request" to the Speaker asking him to withdraw the suspension of the BJP leaders Banerjee withdrew the suspension. Adhikari and five other



leaders had been suspended for one year in the last session for alleged misdemeanor after which the saffron leaders moved the High Court which

asked the Speaker to settle the issue and directed the Opposition MLAs to approach him with a formal request.

On Thursday the suspension was withdrawn after the BJP leaders made a formal request.

Saying that he did not want to create bitterness and that the Members should take the House to greater glory, the Speaker said, "You had moved the court which left it to the Assembly to find a resolution. Any remedy should be available within the House."





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## 5G boost

Digital connectivity has opened up new vistas in governance, business & economy

The Government's decision to auction 5G airwaves will give a fillip to new-age businesses and boost machine-to-machine communications, Internet of Things (IoT) and artificial intelligence (AI) across sectors including automotive, healthcare, agriculture and energy. A total of 72,097.85 MHz of spectrum with a validity period of 20 years will be auctioned by the end of July. The auction will be held for spectrum in various low (600 MHz, 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1,800 MHz, 2,100 MHz, 2,300 MHz), mid (3,300 MHz) and high (26 GHz) frequency bands, an official press release has said. Digital connectivity has not only brought people closer in terms of communication but also opened up new vistas in governance, business and economy. E-commerce, aggregation and other digital-enabled businesses have not just created unicorns but also generated a large number of jobs. Broadband, particularly its mobile version, has hugely impacted lives. The 4G services have brought in a sea change in the way people use their mobile phones. In fact, change is so immense and all-encompassing that the present-day scenario could not have been imagined in 1995 when mobile services began at that time. With extremely high tariffs — even on incoming calls — owning a cell phone was a status symbol. And today even the poorest of the poor own such phones; indeed mobile telephony is playing a key role in bringing welfare measures to the doorstep of those from the weaker sections.



Therefore, the Government should focus on the spread and quality of 5G services. But sometimes economic policy in India gets hurt, even derailed, by the Government's impulse of revenue maximisation. The introduction of retrospective taxation to get more money from Vodafone by the Congress-led UPA Government is a case in point; for about a decade, it hurt the capabilities of India to attract foreign investment. Equally pertinent to the telecom sector was the issue of adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues. This was an irrational demand made on telcos, which brought Vodafone Idea to the brink of closure — something that was averted by a kind of package at the last moment. The same impulse of revenue maximisation seems to be at play in 5G airwaves auction, for the reserve price of 5G airwaves at the auction, to be held in July-end, has not been changed from the 2018 levels. Telecom companies wanted 90 per cent reduction in the reserve price of 5G airwaves. But following the Trai recommendations in April, they have been cut by 39 per cent. By putting up 72GHz of 5G frequencies for sale, the Government could earn net up to ₹4.5 lakh crore at base prices. While the public exchequer receiving large sums is good news, it should not be at the expense of the business it is getting the money from. The Government should be focused on the wellbeing of the telecom sector and the businesses and activities associated with it; when they thrive, tax revenue will zoom.

## PICTALK



Locals stand on a road damaged by the flooded Pagladiya river at Goalbil village, in Baksa district

PTI

## Path of fire?

The Agnipath scheme is drawing fire from all quarters: Politicians, aspirants, general public

The Centre's Agnipath scheme for recruitment of armed defence personnel has stoked public protests across at least seven States, besides leading to a political slugfest. Getting brickbats from across the political spectrum, the plan has expectedly been criticised by several Opposition as well as BJP leaders. Naturally, the scheme is being viewed as not only being against the aspirations of the nation's youth but also a step toward weakening the robust setup of our armed forces. While Congress leader Rahul Gandhi advised the Prime Minister not to take the "agnipariksha" of unemployed youth, his sister Priyanka wondered why the Government was making defence recruitment its "laboratory". Several other Opposition leaders, including SP president Akhilesh Yadav ("potentially fatal move for nation's future"), BSP supremo Mayawati ("the youth are dissatisfied and angry"), and even BJP MP Varun Gandhi prudently asked about the prospects for these soldiers when the corporate sector doesn't show much interest in hiring even the regular military personnel who retire after 15 years. The Government should have seen all this coming, and taken steps to preempt such vociferous protestations either by making its policy details unambiguous or sealing all possible routes of inviting reproof.



These accusations and remonstrance, though clearly borne out of political adversity and the desire for on-upmanship and to score brownie points, do carry a point. As only 25 per cent of the Agniveers will be absorbed for regular employment after four years, the scheme will actually result in a waste of training cost and likely prove to be an unnecessary burden on the defence budget. Already military recruitment has been suspended for more than two years on account of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since unemployed youth yearning to become soldiers cannot suppress their zest, they are apparently running aimlessly. However, the bitter truth is that the tenacious 19-year-old Pradeep Mehra has not been running 10 km each night, nor did Suresh Bhuchar carry the national flag 350 km from his Rajasthan village to Delhi, to join the Agnipath scheme which is anyway ill-suited for Indian conditions. Since recruitment to the defence forces is age-driven, this halt on recruitment has adversely impacted youngsters, mostly from rural areas, who suddenly find themselves stuck in limbo. Then there have been tragic cases like the suicide by Pawan of Bhiwani district on becoming overage.

## Implications of Nagaland tragedy



DEEPAK SINHA

There are grave suspicions that either the information provided was false or that the Mon operation had been compromised at the highest levels

This columnist's piece yesterday drew attention to the farcical nature of the investigations conducted by the Nagaland Police into December's tragic incident in which six coalminers were mistakenly killed by troops from a Special Forces unit in Mon district. Prior to the SIT even beginning its work, Nagaland DGP T John Longkumer and Divisional Commissioner (Kohima) Rovilatuo Mor made serious accusations against the Army unit involved, based purely on hearsay and speculation.

By their own admission, the accusations were based on information conveyed by villagers who reached the scene four hours later. The same villagers attacked the detachment and killed a soldier and injured the rest while they were still awaiting the police's arrival. Not only does it put serious doubts on the credibility of their statement, but also casts a deep shadow on the work of the SIT, composed wholly of personnel from the Nagaland Police, on its ability to carry out a free, fair and unbiased investigation.

The fact that the police have rushed ahead and decided to chargesheet 30 Army personnel, accusing them of crimes under various sections of the IPC, including murder and attempted murder, among others, without awaiting the requisite sanction from the Centre, suggests that they are under certain pressure. However, what is truly intriguing is that the police never reached the incident site till much after the mob had attacked the personnel and forced them to flee. Among the many questions that the DGP needs to answer, an important one would be the reason for the police's lack of response. It is well-established that the police were informed of the incident within minutes by the Army. Yet, despite the nearest police post being just 40 minutes away, the police did not respond at all. In fact, it has been alleged that the DSP called up the villagers and asked them to pro-



ceed to the site, which resulted in escalation of the situation and more deaths.

This leads to the suspicion that there is more to this incident than what we have been given to believe. Context is important and one must keep in mind that this operation was undertaken based on intelligence provided at the highest levels, duly vetted by the chain of command. Moreover, just as the intelligence provided had suggested, a vehicle carrying personnel suspected to be militants was observed and attempts made to halt it. The troops opened fire only after it didn't halt, with expected results. The real tragedy was that the vehicle was in fact transporting innocent miners, instead of militants. This raises suspicions that either the information provided was false or that the operation had been compromised at the highest levels.

One also needs to factor in the fact that eastern Nagaland (where this incident occurred), led by the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO), is agitating for a new State, Frontier Nagaland. This is due to perceived ill treatment of the local Konyak tribe, which is

the largest Naga tribe. Moreover, well before this operation had been undertaken, the ENPO had directed all factions of the NSCN to desist from operating in the area. They had also developed close ties with the Army which, in turn, had helped the Army achieve some major successes against the NSCN(K), the faction that has yet to sign the ceasefire.

This state of affairs would not have suited many, and there is thus the distinct possibility that the NSCN leadership, which has fairly strong links within the Nagaland Government, may have been instrumental in deliberately feeding wrong information to intelligence sources, to place the Army and the Centre in an untenable position. Not only would such an incident put severe strain on the relationship between the ENPO and the Army but also provide local political parties and civil society groups to demand AFSPA removal, which would lead to de-induction of the Army from the State.

This would give the NSCN factions a free run to indulge in what can best be termed the "business of insurgency" and thrive on a range of illegal activities ranging

from drugs and small arms smuggling to human trafficking which they indulge in along with transnational criminal syndicates. Economic clout has enabled them to subvert elements within polity, bureaucracy and the security establishment.

In the final analysis, while accountability is extremely important and provides closure to the families of those killed, the Centre must proceed with abundant caution. From the evidence available, it appears that the Special Forces personnel involved are but pawns in a much larger and complex game. It has implications on the smooth and peaceful integration of the region into our national fabric. It is the Centre's responsibility that soldiers are not sacrificed to allow criminals to make good in a game of political oneupmanship.

(This is the concluding part of the series.)

(The writer, a military veteran, is a Visiting Fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and Senior Visiting Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai. The views expressed are personal.)



IT HAS BEEN ALLEGED THAT THE DSP CALLED UP THE VILLAGERS AND ASKED THEM TO PROCEED TO THE ENCOUNTER SITE, WHICH RESULTED IN ESCALATION OF THE SITUATION AND MORE DEATHS

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## MUSINGS ON THE NEXT PRESIDENT

Sir — It is remarkable that Sharad Pawar and Nitish Kumar, who were considered the frontrunners in the race for presidency, have made it clear that they are not interested in the post. They have categorically ruled themselves out. It is worth pondering why few national-level leaders aspire to be President. Has the country's highest constitutional post lost its attractiveness? Perhaps the office of President has now come to be perceived in reductionist terms, ie as a rubber stamp devoid of any real power. One plausible explanation for the office lacking lustre, perception-wise, is that it has come to be held by those who have been handpicked by the ruling party for political or ideological considerations.

It implies that the President should ideally be elected on the strength of her/his personality. The post deserves famous sons of India like Dr Radhakrishnan and K Narayanan, who were looked up to for their integrity, erudition, sagacity and philosophical outlook. Why shouldn't Gopalkrishna Gandhi, Kailash Satyarthi or Madhav Gadgil or someone like them, who is eminently qualified to be the First Citizen, be considered for the post? Whether it is possible for the President to ever 'outshine' the Prime Minister, even if s/he is not worth her/his salt is a different question.

G David Milton | Kanyakumari

## LOGIC BEHIND THE AGNIPATH SCHEME

Sir — The proposed 'Agnipath Yojana' for the recruitment of soldiers in the armed forces will help the Government cut its salary and pension bills. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, however, rejected such an assumption. But the statistics of the last few years do not back the Minister's statement. In 2020, the Government allocated ₹3.3 lakh crore for defence pension. The allocation towards the defence sector in the 2022-23 budget was ₹5.25 lakh crore, whereas the allocation for the pre-

## A mix of the good and bad



In Kedarnath, ₹9,100 are charged for engaging a *doli* if the person weighs 70 kg and below and ₹10,100 if the person weighs above 70 kg. ₹7,000 are shared by the four persons involved in the *doli* commute; meaning that each person gets ₹1750 per trip. Undoubtedly, those involved in carrying the *doli* are humble and render such good service that no customer can be niggardly at paying tips at the journey's end. Then there are porters who single-handedly carry devotees to the hilltop in a basket tied to their back.

vious fiscal was ₹4.78 lakh crore. It shows the defence budget for 2022-23 is about 10 per cent higher than the previous year.

Again, the salary given to the Army has also been increasing over the years. In 2020-2021, ₹88,800 crore were paid to the Army for salary and allowances. This year, the Government has allocated ₹1.07 lakh crore for salary and allowances of the Army. With the strength of more than 11 lakh officers and soldiers, the Army is the largest among the three armies of our country. In 2020, the Army had come out with a preliminary proposal to make a rough assessment of how much money could be saved by such a scheme.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

## THE BENEFITS OF DONATING BLOOD

Sir — Many thanks to *The Pioneer* for publishing a useful and important article, 'Let us donate blood because we can' (June 14) on the World Blood Donor Day. Every year, this day is observed to promote awareness on the need for blood donation and thank voluntary blood

These people need payments commensurate with the work they do.

But what is disturbing is that they demand from the pilgrims their whimsical 'fixed amount' in the concluding session of the journey. This practice needs to be desisted at the intervention of either the temple management or the State Government. Tourists and pilgrims, having already paid the hefty amount, feel annoyed at the demand. That is why the *doli* experience is a mixture of good and bad. The helicopter facility should be made available to all those who ask for it. If one uses a *doli*, it takes a minimum of six hours going to the temple and four hours climbing down. Therefore, in the interest of all pilgrims in general and senior citizens in particular, the Government and the temple management committee should take it seriously.

KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

donors for their life-saving gift. The host nation for World Blood Donor Day 2022 is Mexico, and the theme this year is 'Donating blood is an act of solidarity. Join the effort and save lives'. Blood is needed for all kinds of patient care: from traumas to obstetrical haemorrhage to haematological conditions.

Provider organisations can play an important role in raising awareness of the importance of donating blood. Besides creating an opportunity to receive free health screening, donating blood can help lower blood pressure and the risk of heart attack. Donating blood can lengthen a donor's lifespan and improve mental well-being. The feeling someone gets by helping an unknown person by donating blood is something indescribable. By simply committing about 15 minutes of one's time, a life can be saved with minimal effort. Where else can a small investment yield such a great return?

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## SOUND BITE

Our efforts are to create a youthful profile of the armed forces.

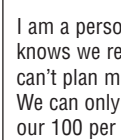


Defence Minister — Rajnath Singh



I'd really like to emphasise the heroism of the Ukrainian people. This situation is martyring a heroic people.

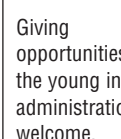
Catholic Church head — Pope Francis



Actor — Rakul Preet Singh



Tennis player — Serena Williams



Finance Minister — Nirmala Sitharaman



FIRST COLUMN

INDIA WANTS BROADER FTA WITH ASEAN

Wants several novel aspects of services to be included



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

New Delhi played host to the Special Asean-India Foreign Minister's Meeting (SAIFMM) to mark three decades of dialogue and a decade of strategic level engagement with Asean this week. The SAIFMM was preceded by a senior officials' in-person meeting. The senior officials of Asean, which is a regular platform for engagement, had last interacted virtually in May 2022. During the virtual meeting in May, India had talked about the "convergence between the Asean Outlook for the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), India's Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative (IPOI) and Indo-Pacific policies announced by several ARF countries." The focus for all the meetings had been on security, post-pandemic recovery, development of resilient supply chains, cybersecurity and open transparent rules-based maritime zones. The Asean leaders held a special summit with US President Joe Biden in Washington DC in April. The summit was high on political and regional posturing but lacked economic push. The US-Asean relationship is likely to be elevated to the "comprehensive economic partnership" status towards the end of the year. However, this would not guarantee a wholehearted support from all of Asean for a US-led Indo-Pacific order. Most of the nations in the southeast Asian neighbourhood, which constitutes Asean, are striving for greater economic engagement with rich nations. The US has investments worth \$330 billion in Asean nations. However, as many analysts have pointed out, the US has taken a back seat in furthering its economic engagements and trade relations with Asean. This has led to an aggressive China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) dictating most of the economic agenda. Notably India is not part of RCEP,



which is the largest free trade agreement in force. The Asean countries have been using the RCEP+ model to negotiate favourable agreements with large trading partners such as EU and Canada.

The Asean members' agility in negotiating trade and economic relations has also seen many of the member countries joining the recently announced Indo-Pacific Economic Framework in Tokyo. India has had a free trade agreement in place with Asean members since 2010; however, it has always seen a trade imbalance, with imports exceeding exports by huge margins. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, speaking at an event for Asean trade and finance ministers, had last year lamented, "It is unfortunate that in the recent past, we had to deal with several restrictive barriers on our exports in the Asean region, particularly in the agriculture and auto sectors." The rising challenges of non-tariff barriers, import restrictions, export taxes by Asean countries, together with backdoor entry of China (read China-made goods) through Asean countries is a major cause of concern for India. There have been ongoing talks for setting up a review panel on the India-Asean FTA for a more equitable growth for the partners. India has been looking at expanding the Asean FTA to include several novel aspects of such as services, digital economy, electronics, supply chains, fisheries, etc. The goal, as highlighted by the Minister, is to take the economic relationship from nearly \$80 billion to \$200 billion. It might be a difficult FTA review for India to pull out, given it is entering in parallel negotiations with bodies such as the EU and UK. The EU and UK trade agreements could include negotiations on some of the novel aspects including those related to the digital trade on which India has apprehensions. These upcoming negotiations could have dedicated work groups on cross-border data flows, data privacy related topics, on some of which India has chosen to tread a path different from that of the Western world. India's position on these new-age trade issues with the developed world could shape its negotiations with existing partners such as Asean.

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

# Haste can impair the Vande Bharat project



SUDHANSHU MANI

## IR has done well in giving a fillip to the Vande Bharat project but now it must move with circumspection

It was significant that the Integral Coach Factory (ICF) of Indian railways (IR) conceived but also marshaled and achieved the impossible in 2018—Train 18/Vande Bharat Express, a world class train. A sterling team of brilliant engineers and technicians from ICF and the allied industry came together with great synergy and delivered Train 18/Vande Bharat Express, which was made entirely in India in just 18 months at a fraction of what it would take both in terms of time and cost, anywhere across the globe.

This train caught the imagination of people because they saw it as a symbol of resurgent and aspirational India; the first time that a rolling stock project of this magnitude was executed from concept-to-manufacturing entirely in India. The train paved the way for a whole new ballgame in rail transportation—not a mere organic continuation of what IR had been used to be producing in respect of trains but a courageous, transformational leapfrog into the future, a signal that India had arrived on the global scene in the Rail sector.

The first train was launched between New Delhi and Varanasi by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the second one between New Delhi and Katra by Home Minister Amit Shah in 2019. Shortly after, some negativity emerged out of the blue. The train was scandalised, but since it was working flawlessly, the mud did not stick; some unscrupulous media houses persisted though. Soon the entire team responsible for Vande Bharat trains was victimized through bogus vigilance cases.

Even as this negativity continued, delaying furtherance of the project, the two trains continued trouble-free service and then came the announcements by the PM on August 15, 2021, that 75 such trains would ply across the country in 75 weeks. A new Minister had taken charge. Vibes had changed dramatically.

The Budget this year sprang another surprise by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman that 400 Vande Bharat trains would be manufactured in the coming three years. Meanwhile, the Central Vigilance Commission threw away the vigilance cases, restoring the dignity and honour of the team which built the train.

Negativity is a thing of the past now. It is time to look at the future dispassionately against the backdrop of the plan to introduce 400 Vande Bharat trains. The common refrain in Railway and industrial circles has been that the government had overreached because, while not even one train had been made after the success of the first two in 2018-19, the financial performance of IR was so poor that such a massive investment in passenger trains, which are largely losing propositions, seemed out of place.

A more practical analysis would, however, be that the government had shown its intent, and the question should be how, and not whether, this can be achieved,



IT IS NOT THAT THE TRAIN DOES NOT NEED IMPROVEMENT. THE ICF DID BUILD A GREAT TRAIN BUT WAS IT WORLD-CLASS? NOT QUITE. THEY WANTED TO, BUT THEY WERE RUNNING AGAINST TIME

*(The writer is retired General Manager, Indian Railways. The views expressed are personal.)*



given that Vande Bharat trains had proved to be remunerative. As for the question of financial viability, IR has leapfrogged to spend multiple times more on infrastructure upgrade since 2014, underlying government's belief that investments would drive growth of railways and country's economy by borrowing heavily and, therefore, IR's financial performance in isolation is not a deterrent to government investments.

It is important to review the announcements made when Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw visited the ICF recently. It was announced that the third rake, or the first prototype of the revised-specification train, is expected to roll out in the first week of August, to be followed by the second prototype in the second week of August.

After the rolling out of the trains, prototypes would be put on trial for 45 days before launching commercial services. This means a delay of some months from the earlier announcements but that is not important. In case the testing is indeed completed in 45 days it would be a great progress which would clear the way for quick serialization of manufacture at ICF.

A word about the revised specification: Revision of the specification was an exercise driven by extraneous factors and not by any deficiency in the product; it attempts to enhance the acceleration of a train which was at the optimum already or improve the ride index of a train which is acknowledged to have a ride-comfort far superior to the existing coaches.

The die was already cast by the

time the thrust came for a large number of trains. One can only hope that these pointless modifications do not come in the way of proliferation of the trains due to some unforeseen complication; these changes have already set the project back by three years.

It is not that the train does not need improvement. The ICF did build a great train but was it world-class? Not quite. They wanted to, but they were running against time; they were trying to do something in 18 months against the global norm of 36 to 42 months. The improvements relate to passenger amenities like more comfortable seats, spacious catering paraphernalia, finish of the interiors, reliability of light fittings and similar issues, in addition to some minor technical issues like ventilation of traction motors and provision of shatter-proof glass. One hopes that these issues have been addressed appropriately.

It was also announced that the production capacity of Vande Bharat rakes at the ICF was being enhanced from four to six rakes per month to meet the target of 75 Vande Bharat trains in 75 weeks. The ICF may be eager to go into a mad rush to meet, or at least reach close to, this ambitious timeline declared by the PM, but this seems too far fetched.

The ICF has not made any rake for more than three years and to claim its capacity of four rakes per month is bizarre, let alone its upgrade to six rakes per month. Heavens would not fall if the ICF goes about making these trains cautiously to ensure that the quality does not get compromised. The country had waited for

decades for modern train sets till 2018-19. It can wait a little more; the tearing hurry, which may impact continued reliability, should be avoided.

Then there was the declaration that IR had finalised the plan of setting up depots for maintenance at 15 stations on the 28 routes of Shatabdis and other intercity trains. Can we really run these trains in large numbers all over the country without a robust plan for maintenance and training? Shall we push these rakes on unprepared railway zones, running the risk of frequent cancellations and disruptions due to maintenance downtime and reduced reliability? Once again, IR must tread with caution.

The intended routes should first be concentrated around two or three depots in addition to Delhi; and only after a robust regime of running and maintaining at least 30 rakes is consolidated, should they think of introducing more routes which would necessitate additional maintenance depots.

IR also needs to address other important issues like development of sleeper and energy-efficient aluminium-bodied versions to replace Rajdhani. It is quite an overreach to run 104 trains, which are on order, only in day time services like Shatabdis, simply because we do not have that many viable day services at present.

IR has come very far in giving a much-needed fillip to the Vande Bharat project but they must move with circumspection instead of moving rashly. The country is hoping to see an improved avatar of Vande Bharat trains and those hopes should not be dashed because of hasty execution.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

YOU HAVE QUESTIONED HIM (RAHUL GANDHI) FOR 30 HOURS ALREADY ... AND AGAIN CALLED HIM! — CONGRESS LEADER ABHISHEK SINGHVI



WHEN LAWFUL ACTION IS TAKING PLACE IN A CASE OF CORRUPTION, THE CONGRESS IS DOING THIS DRAMA. — BJP NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON SAMBIT PATRA



# RWAs must give up biases, actions against pets

## The Vedas say, 'Sarva-bhuta-hita,' which encourages people to see life in all animals

Content creator from Noida, along with his husky dog Nawab, recently visited the famous Kedarnath shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva (also known as Pashupati, the lord of animals). Many people praised the footage of Nawab paying homage to the stone figure of a seated Nandi (the bull vahana of the Lord of Kedarkhand) and receiving blessings from the priest.

However, some people got offended and filed an FIR against the pet owner (but not against the priest) for hurting their religious sentiments. Mr. Tyagi, the pet owner, said that people should not be so bitter that they don't spare a creature that can't even defend itself.

Nepal and India revere dogs. The scriptures stress feeding animals, especially dogs, on



SATENDRA SINGH

*(The author is a medical doctor, teacher, disability rights activist and a pet lover. The views expressed are personal.)*

Saturday. According to the Puranas, Indra's female dog, Sarama, is the mother of all wild creatures. Many temples have dog murals. The Pandavas erected the Kilkari Bhairava Temple in Delhi. Dogs are common in this temple since they are Lord Bhairava's vehicle. The same goes for Gujarat's Goddess Hadkamai, whose vahana is a dog. The Khandoba and Mallana in the Deccan plateau and Revanta on the Eastern plateau (Bihar and Bengal), are all revered as guardian deities of animals.

According to Islam, Allah has given humans authority over animals. To treat animals inhumanely is thus to contravene Allah's will.

Kindness to animals is also connected with righteousness in Hebrew texts. The story of Jonah



also offers insight into God's concern for animals.

While Nawab, which had visited many temples before, faced the ire of the more vocal, privileged, and 'rational' human species, the new government in Punjab came up with a Tuglaq-like diktat banning pets in government accommodations. There is no precedent for such a move. The government was forced to withdraw the order within a week after a justifiable outcry.

Soon after, a prominent high-rise in Vasundhara, Ghaziabad, came up with its own set of rules banning entry of pets in green areas, parks, and basements. They even went ahead and proposed that people have to take clearance from their residents' welfare association (RWA) before getting a new pet. The Noida Authority, in one of the tweets, prevented the entry of animals into one of its parks.

These two examples from a state having an ardent animal lover as Chief Minister!

The Vedas say, "Sarva-bhuta-hita." This encourages people to see life in all animals. People who can't understand this idea of life miss the whole point of being alive and risk losing their humanity.

Article 51A (g) of the Indian Constitution deems it a fundamental duty of all people to exhibit "compassion for living

creatures." The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), a statutory body established under Section 4 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960, mandates in its 2015 circular that the general body of an RWA cannot frame bye-laws or amend them in a manner that is at variance with the laws of the country. The Thane Consumer Dispute Redressal Forum ordered a housing society to pay the complainant pet owner towards compensation and legal expenses when the complainant's dog was not allowed to use the lift.

The AWBI also encourages the use of parks by pets and suggests arriving by consensus at timings acceptable to all residents.

The Kerala High Court in People For Animals vs. State of Kerala (2021) held that the clauses in the byelaws of RWAs that seek to prevent owners/occupiers of residential apartments from keeping pet animals of their choice in the residential apartments are illegal, unconstitutional, and unenforceable in law. The court further stressed that RWAs should stop posting signs prohibiting pets on their premises.

The Supreme Court of India in AWBI vs. A. Nagaraja & Ors (2014) emphasized that "animal rights" is an issue of "seminal importance."

In determining whether an action is ethically correct, the total amount of good that will result is compared against the entire amount of harm that will result. All religions talk about the cyclical embodiment of all living beings. RWAs' colonial

mindset stems from the concept of speciesism—a prejudice or attitude bias in favour of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of another one.

The Kerala High Court lashed out at this anthropocentric view of RWAs that humans alone are seen as morally worthy and privileged to enjoy the bounties that nature has to offer.

Thankfully, we have a judiciary but the states should step up to set up active state animal welfare boards. Pet owners should come forward to educate their ignorant RWAs. They celebrate Gandhi Jayanti in parks (with 'pets banned' signage). They must reflect on Gandhi's statement: "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."



# US, Germany sending weapons to Ukraine as Russia advances

**AP ■ KYIV**

The Russian military said it used long-range missiles Wednesday to destroy a depot in the western Lviv region of Ukraine where ammunition for NATO-supplied weapons was stored, and the governor of a key eastern city acknowledged that Russian forces are advancing in heavy fighting.

The battle for Sievierodonetsk in Ukraine's eastern Donbas area has become the focus of Russia's offensive in recent weeks.

Russia-backed separatists accused Ukrainian forces of sabotaging an evacuation of civilians from the city's besieged Azot chemical plant, where about 500 civilians and an unknown number of Ukrainian fighters are believed to be sheltering from missile attacks. It wasn't possible to verify that claim.

Russian officials had announced a humanitarian corridor from the Azot plant a day earlier, but said they would take civilians to areas controlled by Russian, not Ukrainian, forces.

The Ukrainian governor of Luhansk, Serhiy Haidai, told The Associated Press that "heavy fighting in Sievierodonetsk continues today as well." The Luhansk and Donetsk regions make up the Donbas.

The situation in the city is getting worse, Haidai said, because Russian forces have more manpower and weapons. "But our military is holding back the enemy from three sides at once," he added.

In the Lviv region near the border with NATO member Poland, Russian forces used high-precision Kalibr missiles to destroy the depot near the town of Zolochiv, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said. Konashenkov said shells for M777 howitzers, a type supplied by the United States, were stored there. He said four howitzers were destroyed elsewhere and that Russian airstrikes also destroyed Ukrainian "aviation equipment" at a military aerodrome in the southern Mykolaiv region.

Ukrainian officials did not immediately comment on the Zolochiv strike.

While focusing most of their attacks on eastern Ukraine, where they are trying to capture large swaths of territory, Russian forces have also been hitting more specific targets elsewhere, using high-precision missiles to disrupt the international supply of weapons and destroy military infrastructure. Civilian infrastructure has been bombarded as well, even though Russian officials have claimed they're only targeting military facilities.

NATO members are pledging to send more and longer-range weapons to Ukraine.

President Joe Biden said Wednesday the US will send an additional USD 1 billion in military aid, the largest single tranche of weapons and equipment since the war began. The aid will include anti-ship missile launchers, howitzers and more rounds for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket



Systems - all key weapons systems that Ukrainian leaders have urgently requested.

Germany is providing Ukraine with three multiple launch rocket systems of the kind that Kyiv has said it urgently needs to defend itself against Russia's invasion. Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht said Wednesday that Germany will transfer three M270 medium-range artillery rocket systems along with ammunition.

Germany said the transfer, which echoes similar moves by Britain and the United States, will be accompanied by training and will have "a swift and significant battlefield impact."

In recent days, Ukrainian officials have spoken of the heavy human cost of the war, with Kyiv's forces outgunned and outnumbered in the east.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked Biden for the new aid package. "The security support of the United States is unprecedented," he said, reporting on a phone call the two leaders held earlier Wednesday.

"It brings us closer to a common victory over the Russian aggressor," Zelenskyy said he has accepted invitations to speak at the NATO and Group of Seven summits at the end of the month.

"During the 112 days of this war, the Ukrainian army has proved that courage and wisdom on the battlefield, together with the ability to tactically outmaneuver the enemy, can have a significant result, even despite the Russian army's significant advantage in number of soldiers and equipment," he said in his nightly video address. "Of course we are doing everything we can to overcome this advantage. Every day I fight for Ukraine to receive the weapons and equipment we need."

Meanwhile, Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy chair of Russia's Security Council, ominously suggested that Russia is intent on not just claiming territory but eliminating Ukraine as a nation. In a Telegram post, he wrote that he saw Ukraine wants to receive liquefied natural gas from its "overseas masters" with payment due in two years.

He added: "But there's a question. Who said that in two years, Ukraine will even exist on the map?"

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Zelenskyy, responded on Twitter: "Ukraine has been and will be. Where will Medvedev be in two years? That's the question."

## EU beefs up disinformation code amid Russia fake news fears

**AP ■ LONDON**

The European Union is beefing up its code of practice on disinformation by enlisting more tech companies beyond Google, Twitter and Facebook parent Meta and adding measures to prevent online purveyors of fake news from profiting.

The EU's executive Commission unveiled an update on Thursday to its four-year-old voluntary code that, together with sweeping new rules in the pipeline for digital companies, will step up its efforts to fight the spread of false information in the 27-member bloc. EU leaders are alarmed about disinformation flourishing on online platforms, notably involving the COVID-19 pandemic and Russian propaganda amid the war in Ukraine. The code shows Europe's efforts to take a global lead in clamping down on fake news, while officials in the US have done little to curb its spread.

Disinformation "is a growing problem in the EU, and we really have to take stronger measures", Commission Vice President Vera Jourova told reporters in Brussels.

## Kyiv Diary: European leaders bear witness to war's horror

**AP ■ KYIV**

Before the ceremony and the serious meetings about war, the European leaders witnessed the devastation wrought by Russia. A must. To understand Ukraine's fight for survival, they had to see it themselves, with their own eyes.

The blown up buildings. The smashed cars. And a message of hope spray-painted on a damaged building despite mounting Ukrainian deaths.

French President Emmanuel Macron spotted it immediately amid the ruins Thursday.

"Look at that, Make Europe, not war," Macron said, pointing and reading the words out loud in English. "It's very moving to see that."

The leaders of France, Germany, Italy and Romania had a walking tour of Irpin, a small city which bore the full brunt of Russia's failed assault on the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, in the first weeks of the war.

The tour preceded a meeting in Kyiv with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who met them wearing army green pants, a matching T-shirt and sneakers.

If the four hadn't fully grasped the scale of the horrors inflicted by the Russian invasion, ravages like the ones visited across much of Europe during World War I and World War II, then Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Italian Premier Mario Draghi and Romanian President Klaus Iohannis have no excuses now.

The leaders travelled by overnight train to the Ukrainian capital because flights aren't possible in the wartime airspace where missiles, drones, fighter jets and helicopters have rained down death and destruction.

Iohannis, whose country has been a key destination for Ukrainian refugees, travelled separately from the others.



## Russia's war on Ukraine will shape Czech EU presidency

**AP ■ PRAGUE**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and what Europe must do to counter the consequences of that have become the key task for the Czech Republic's upcoming presidency of the 27-nation European Union.

The Czech Republic's motto for the six-month presidency, which it takes over from France on July 1, is "Europe as a Task: rethink, rebuild, repower," based on a 1996 speech by the late Czech President Vaclav Havel.

"Europe and the whole world have been undergoing a crucial change," Prime Minister Petr Fiala said Wednesday as he introduced his country's priorities. "The Russian invasion has shaken many our certainties."

The country has pledged to use the rotating presidency of the Council, which sets and moderates the EU's political agenda, to help Ukraine in all possible ways. The Czechs are among Eastern European countries that warmly support speeding up Ukraine's EU membership bid.

"We have two concrete goals," Fiala told the Czech Parliament.

"The first one is to grant Ukraine a candidacy status as soon as possible ... and the second one is our support for the toughest possible sanctions against Russia."

More than 7.5 million people have fled Ukraine since Russian troops invaded on Feb. 24 and another 8 million are displaced within the country, the UN refugee agency says. This has created the biggest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II. The Czech presidency will work together with the European Commission, the EU's executive body, to provide assistance to nations most affect by the influx of Ukrainians, including Poland, Romania and Hungary. Over 375,000 Ukrainians, mostly women and children, have registered in the Czech Republic to receive a special long-term visas that give them access to jobs and health care. Looking ahead, the Czech's ultimate hope is to host a summit in Prague of European leaders on Ukraine's post-war reconstruction with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy attending in person.



**SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE**

**ICICI Bank**  
Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

Whereas The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Narinder Kumar/ Neeta/ LBDEL00004833606	Flat No- 303, Third Floor, Tower- 4, Serenas, Sector 36, Sona Gurgaon, Haryana/ June 14, 2022	August 30, 2021 Rs.14,37,051/-	Delhi/ NCR
2.	Neelu Sharma/ Rahul Sharma/ LBDEL00003362984	Plot No-10, Second Floor (Without Roof Rights), Road No D11, Ardes City, Sector 52 Gurgaon, in and Around Village Wazirabad And Bindapur Tehsil and Distt/ June 14, 2022	January 18, 2022 Rs. 25,17,190/-	Delhi/ NCR
3.	Premendra Mohan Sharma/ Devendra Kumar Sharma/ Manju Sharma/ LBDEL00001814788	Plot No-238, Pocket-B, Sector-20, Noida, Noida/ June 14, 2022	January 27, 2022 Rs. 37,12,155/-	Delhi/ NCR
4.	Ritu Kapoor/ Asha Kapoor/ LBGH00002357593	Flat No 504, 5th Floor, Tower-D, Sanskriti Tower, Plot No GH-10, Sector-01, Greater Noida 201307/ June 14, 2022	December 06, 2021 Rs.31,86,978/-	Delhi/ NCR

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date : June 17, 2022  
Place: Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

NOTICE is hereby given that Sudhir Kumar Ahuja is the absolute owner of Built-Up Flat on Upper Ground Floor (Front Side), Area Measuring 198.63 Sq. Mtrs., built on Property bearing No. B-4, situated at Vivek Vihar Phase-I, Delhi-110055 having acquired by Sale Deed dated 20.12.2019 (Doc No. 9772) executed by Arun Kumar Malhotra & Ranjana Malhotra in favour of Mini Ahuja & Sudhir Kumar Ahuja and by virtue of Will dated 25.02.2022 (Doc No. 274) executed by Mini Ahuja in favour of Sudhir Kumar Ahuja.

All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, family arrangement, maintenance, bequest, partnership, possession, lease, sublease, tenancy, license, lien, charge, pledge, easement or otherwise howsoever, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 7 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned.

Kamali Kant Gupta (Advocate)  
Shop No. 5 & 6, Pit-E, CSC, Mayur Vihar-I, Delhi-91 011-43052822, 09810063351

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**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Centre For Sight - Group of Eye Hospitals, through this notice informs all public that the old medical records up to March 31st 2017 (except MLC & court cases) are to be discarded at the following locations:

Delhi/NCR: Dwarka, Safdarjung Enclave, Preet Vihar, Vikaspuri, Rohini, Rajouri Garden, Ashok Vihar, Gurugram (sector 29 & NRR), Faridabad

After one month of publication of this notice, we will destroy all medical records up to March 31st 2017 (except MLC & court cases) and will not be responsible for same.

**Medical Superintendent - Centre For Sight**

**New Okhla Industrial Development Authority**  
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida-201301 (U.P.)  
Website : [www.noidaauthorityonline.com](http://www.noidaauthorityonline.com)

**E-TENDER NOTICE**

E-Tenders are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: [www.noidaauthorityonline.com](http://www.noidaauthorityonline.com) & <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/ amendments & corrigendum etc.

(A)	1.	08/PGM/AO/SM(JAL-OA)/22-23 - M/o STP (S/F KVA DG Set with shed & Platform for 50 MLD UGR compound, Sector-168) Noida. Cost: 48.84 Lac
	2.	36/PGM/AO/SM(JAL-OA)/21-22 - O/M of Sewer line and MSPS/IPS at Expressway (Cleaning and removal of existing Desilting/Debris/Silt rubbish/Bio mass/Grit & Sediment Material from Open inlet Chamber including Cleaning of all wall/floor by Super Suker Machine/ Mechanical Cleaning Machine/Chemical Cleaner in Mechanical Sewage Vibrator upto Bottom Invert Level MSPS-2 at Sector 168, R.H.S. of Noida Gr. Noida Expressway) Noida. Cost: 58.10 Lac

Which can be uploaded by date **24.06.2022** upto **5.00 PM**. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date **27.06.2022** at **11.00 AM**.

Principal General Manager  
**NOIDA**

**CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

For and on behalf of my client Mrs. Deepali Chakravorty W/o Late B. R. Chakravorty, I the undersigned hereby declared that (1) Mrs. Deepali Chakravorty W/o Late B. R. Chakravorty (2) Ms. Sujata Chakravorty D/o Late B.R. Chakravorty both r/o E-846, C.R. Park, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019 and (3) Mrs. Leena Banerjee D/o Late B.R. Chakravorty are the legal heirs of Late B.R. Chakravorty s/o Late M.R. Chakravorty in respect of property No. E-846, Chitranjan Park, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019 which was allotted by the land & development office, new Delhi to Late B.R. Chakravorty. That all the original documents related with the said property has been lost/misplaced by them and are not traceable in any manner, so that an FIR/NCR has been lodged on online portal of delhi police vide LR No.379598/2022 dated 07-05-2022. Founder please contact within 15 days from the publication of this notice to the undersigned, thereafter the user/founder shall be sole responsible for the use of the lost documents.

**PREM PRAKASH (Advocate)**  
207, Plot No.1, MLU Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075  
Phone:9871268399

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Known to all that my client SUNISHA VASHISHT W/o PRITHVI RAO VASHISHT R/o FLAT No 163, ROSEWOOD APARTMENT, POKHET-A SECTOR-13, DWARKA, NEW DELHI has been lost / misplaced the original DEMAND LETTER vide File No.W/312(388) 2004/AY/DW in respect of DDA FLAT No.163, ROSEWOOD APARTMENT, POKHET-A, SECTOR-13, DWARKA, NEW DELHI issued by DDA in favour of Smt. Krishna Kumari Chauhani, which is not traceable. An FIR in C.R. to this effect has been lodged on online portal of Police Station Crime Branch, Delhi vide LR No.422445/2022 Dated 21-05-2022. Any person(s) claiming any rights, interest having any objection or found in possession of original DEMAND LETTER may write/contact w/ft above named person at above Address/Phone No.9811193629 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice, thereafter the user/holder shall be responsible for the use of the same.

**PREM PRAKASH (Advocate)**  
207, Plot No.1, MLU Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075  
Phone:9871268399

**COSCO (INDIA) LIMITED**  
CIN : L25199DL1980PLC010173  
Regd. Office : 2/8, Roop Nagar, Delhi-110 007  
Website : [www.cosco.in](http://www.cosco.in) Email : [mail@cosco.in](mailto:mail@cosco.in)  
Tel. : 91-11-23843000 Fax : 91-11-23846000

**NOTICE**  
**FOR THE ATTENTION OF EQUITY SHAREHOLDERS OF THE COMPANY**  
**Sub: Transfer of Equity Shares of the Company to the Demat Account of Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF) Authority**

This Notice is published, pursuant to the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013, and the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (Accounting, Audit, Transfer and Refund) Rules, 2016 read with the relevant circulars and amendments thereto ("IEPF Rules"), that the Company has informed to the shareholders concerned regarding transfer of their shares to the Demat Account of the IEPF Authority and unpaid/unclaimed dividend to IEPF Fund in accordance with the IEPF Rules, in case they do not encash their dividend which remains unpaid/unclaimed for last seven consecutive years, by the due date of transfer i.e. 17th September, 2022. The details of such shareholders including their name and folio number or DP-Client ID number are available on the Investor Section of the Company's website [www.cosco.in](http://www.cosco.in).

Any person whose shares/unpaid/unclaimed dividend is transferred to the IEPF Authority may claim the shares/dividend from IEPF Authority, pursuant to the provisions of Section 124 and 125 of the Act and the Rules made there under by submitting as online application in Form IEPF-5 with IEPF Authority, available on the website [www.iepf.gov.in](http://www.iepf.gov.in) with a copy to the Company. Shareholders are requested to go through the Individual communication issued by the Company in this regard and also the provisions of Section 124 and 125 of the Act and the Rules.

The above information is also available on the Company's website [www.cosco.in](http://www.cosco.in) and also on the website of stock exchange i.e. [www.bseindia.com](http://www.bseindia.com).

For Cosco (India) Limited

Date: 17.06.2022  
Place: New Delhi

Sudha Singh  
Company Secretary

**EXCLUSIVE CAPITAL LIMITED**  
Registered Office: 7/17, L.G.F., Near Hauz Khas Metro Station, Sarvpriya Vihar, New Delhi - 110016

**PUBLIC NOTICE – AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET**  
[See proviso to rule 8(6)]  
**Notice for sale of Immovable asset**

Auction sale notice for sale of Immovable asset under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Exclusive Capital Limited will be sold on "As is Where is", "As is What is" and "Whatever there is" as per the brief particulars given hereunder:

S. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)	Details of the Secured Asset with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price/ Earnest Money Deposit	Date and time of property inspection	Date & Time of Auction
A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Wel Intertrade Pvt. Ltd. (Borrower) Mr. S. K. Jatia (Guarantor)	Plot No. 05, Block-E, Local Shopping Centre, Masjid Moth, Greater Kailash, Part - II, New Delhi - 110048	₹8,84,25,202 as on 05.04.2022	₹10 Crore/ ₹2 crore	12.07.2022 5.00 pm	16.07.2022 11:00 am

The auction will be conducted at the registered office of Exclusive Capital Limited at 7/17, L.G.F. Near Hauz Khas Metro Station, Sarvpriya Vihar, New Delhi - 110016. The mortgagors/noticee are given a last chance to pay the total due with further interest till July 14, 2022 before 05:00 PM else this secured asset will be sold as per schedule.

The prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer column E) at Exclusive Capital Limited, 7/17, L.G.F. Near Hauz Khas Metro Station, Sarvpriya Vihar, New Delhi - 110016 on or before July 15, 2022 before 02:00 PM and thereafter they need to submit their offer by Hand on or before July 15, 2022 before 05:00 PM along with the photocopy of Bank Acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Earnest money deposit DD/PO should be from a nationalized/ scheduled bank in favour of **Exclusive Capital Limited** payable at "New Delhi".

For any further clarifications with regard to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact the authorized officer of Exclusive Capital Limited on 9999310689.

The Authorised officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please contact the authorized officer of Exclusive Capital Limited on 9999310689.

Date: 15-06-2022  
Place : New Delhi

Authorised Officer  
Exclusive Capital Limited

## Chinese destroyer on long-distance exercises in Sea of Japan

**AP ■ BEIJING**

One of China's largest and most capable combat ships is conducting long-distance exercises in the Sea of Japan, state media reported Thursday, in a display of China's increasing naval reach.

The Communist Party newspaper Global Times said the mission was the first for the Type 055 destroyer Lhasa since its commissioning last year.

It is accompanied by the Luyang-class Type 052D destroyer Chengdu and the Type 903 oiler Dongpinghu, the paper said, citing Japan's Defense Ministry. The Sea of Japan lies to the north of China between the Japanese archipelago, Sakhalin Island, the Korean Peninsula and the Russian Far East mainland.

Japan's Defense Ministry said the three ships were spotted about 200 kilometers (120 miles) west of Fukue island in Nagasaki on Sunday traveling east toward the Sea of Japan.

It said it also spotted a Dongdiao-class intelligence ship on Sunday operating near the Tsushima Strait which later sailed into the Sea of Japan.



# 1/6 panel probes Trump pressure on Pence to reject election

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The 1/6 committee is set to plunge into Donald Trump's last-ditch effort to salvage the 2020 election by pressuring Vice President Mike Pence to reject the electoral count — a highly unusual and potentially illegal strategy that was set in motion in the run-up to the US Capitol riot.

With two live witnesses Thursday, the House panel intends to show how Trump's false claims of a fraudulent election left him grasping for alternatives as courts turned back dozens of lawsuits challenging the vote. Trump latched onto conservative law professor John Eastman's obscure plan and launched a public and private pressure campaign on Pence days before the vice president was to preside over the Jan. 6 joint session of Congress to certify Joe Biden's election victory. A federal judge has said it is "more likely than not" Trump committed crimes over the scheme.

"The illegality of the plan was obvious," the Jan. 6 panel said in a court filing against Eastman. The committee will hear from Greg Jacob, the vice president's counsel who fended off Eastman's ideas for Pence to carry out the plan; and retired federal judge



Michael Luttg, who called the plan from Eastman, his former law clerk, "incorrect at every turn."

Thursday's session is also expected to divulge new evidence about the danger Pence faced that day as the mob stormed the Capitol shouting "hang Mike Pence!" with a gallows on the Capitol grounds as the vice president fled with senators into hiding. Nine people died in the riot and its aftermath.

The session is expected to show how Trump's pressure on Pence "directly contributed" to the attack on the Capitol and how the Eastman strategy posed a "grave, grave threat" to democracy, according to a committee aide who insisted on anonymity to discuss the upcoming hearing.

Ahead of the hearing,

Pence's former chief of staff, Marc Short, said his boss was determined to stay at the Capitol that night and finish the job, despite the threats.

"He knew his job was to stay at his post," Short said on CNN on Wednesday. Short said Pence didn't want the world seeing the vice president leaving the Capitol when "a hallmark of democracy" was under siege.

"He thought it was important that he stay there and make sure the work of the American people was completed that night," said Short, who testified under subpoena to the committee for eight hours, but has not yet appeared as a live witness.

"The panel is reconvening for a third hearing this month after a blockbuster prime-time start last week,

followed by logistical setbacks in recent days. Monday's key witness, former Trump campaign manager Bill Stepien, abruptly declined to appear in person because his wife was in labour with their child. Wednesday's scheduled hearing with witnesses from the Justice Department who tried to convince Trump that his claims of voter fraud were just not true was postponed.

Nevertheless, the panel's yearlong investigation is portraying a publicly gripping account of Trump's final weeks in office as the defeated president clung to "the big lie" of a rigged election even as those around him — his family, his top aides, officials at the highest levels of government — were telling him he simply lost the election.

Former Attorney General William Barr, who resigned at the end of 2020 rather than be part of Trump's plans, testified earlier that the president was becoming "detached from reality" if he believed the lies.

He said he told the president his claims of voter fraud were "bull—"

With 1,000 interviews and reams of 140,000 documents, the committee is connecting the dots, showing how Trump's false claims of election fraud became a bat-

tle cry as he summoned thousands of Americans to Washington for a Jan. 6 rally and then sent them to Capitol Hill to "fight like hell" for his presidency.

More than 800 people have been arrested in the Capitol siege, and the panel is considering whether to send a referral for criminal charges against Trump to the Justice Department.

No president or former president has ever been indicted by the Justice Department, and Attorney General Merrick Garland has said he and his team are following the proceedings in Congress.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

This is to inform that the **Smt. Santosh W/o Shri Giriraj R/o 597-B, Gali No-6, Govindpuri, Kalkaji, South Delhi, Delhi-110019** declares through this public notice that Smt. Santosh Disown her son namely Manish Kumar from her Property and he has no right towards her moveable and immovable assets and only reason is due to his behavior and his wife nature and misbehavior towards her.

**NISHKARSH GUPTA (ADVOCATE)**  
Chamber No - 862, Lawyer's Block Saket Court Complex, Saket, New Delhi- 110017

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client i.e. **WDC Bank Ltd.** that **Kashi Vikas Kendra** through its partners is the owner of Plot bearing No. 52, Block-M, situated in New Market Scheme, DLF Colony, Gurgaon Haryana vide a Sale Deed dated 15-01-1991, registration no. 9450. All persons are hereby informed that above mentioned owner wants to mortgage the said plot and intend to obtain loan in the name of **M/s Action Earth Movers** from our client against the said plot & that Original Sale Deed dated 25-05-1985 (Doc. No. 1094) & Original Sale Deed dated 08-07-1988(Doc. No. 4245) in respect of said plot have been lost/ misplaced, if anybody has any objections on the ownership of above owner over the said property, its mortgage/ligation, & any other objections, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.

**Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Consultants)**  
200, 11nd Floor, 23, Shivaji Marg, Moh Nagar, N. Delhi-15  
Ph: 011-26125723 Fax: 011-26125724  
E-mail: kumar.associates@rediffmail.com

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

It is for general information that I, **SUSHMITA KUMARI POUDEL D/O RAMJI KUMAR POUDEL R/O 2002, Village Piliyari, Kotla Mubarak Pur, South Delhi, Delhi-110003**, declare that name of mine and my father has been wrongly written as **SUSHMITA KUMARI and RAM KUMAR PODEL** in my educational documents. The actual name of mine and my father are **SUSHMITA KUMARI POUDEL and RAMJI KUMAR POUDEL**, respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

It is notified for the information of General Public that my clients (1) Gurdev Singh S/o Late Prtam Singh & (2) Raj Kaur W/o Shri Gurdav Singh both R/o 82/4, Arjun Nagar, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi-110029 have severed all their relations & connections with their son Mr.INDER PREET SINGH & daughter-in-law Mrs.Parul Bhatnagar because of their miss-behavior & Not Obedient and have debarred the from their all movable & immovable properties with immediate effect. Any body deals with them will be doing so at his/her/their own risk, costs and expenses. My Client will not be liable and responsible for their acts. Deeds & things under any circumstances.

**Vijay Lakshmi (Advocate),**  
Enrollment No.D/2637/2011

**Public Notice**

This is to bring to the notice of the general public that in pursuance of the **Order of Mr. Pradeep Rathore** issued by **Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd.** having ID card no. **MUMRA8677** has been found missing and/or lost on **13MARCH2022**. Anyone, who finds the said ID card, is requested to return the said ID card to the Manager, Debt Services & Management Group, **Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited, B 235 2nd floor Naraina Inds Area Ph-1 New Delhi 28**. Therefore, all the customers of Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited are hereby notified not to make any payment to any unauthorised person holding the said ID card no **MUMRA8677**. Please take further notice that anybody making payment to any person holding the said ID card shall do so at his/her own costs, risk and peril and Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited shall not be bound and/or responsible for any payment.

Date: 16.06.2022  
Place: Delhi For Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

My Client, **Zakia Sultan D/o Abdul Salam R/o H.No. 462, Gal Malik Mahal, Jama Masjid, Delhi-110006** do hereby notify for public at large that he is executing the Will Deed of her brother Late Kalam Jee after his death, who has expired on 10.04.2022, and as per his will made deed on 07.04.2021 in favour of my client. When Kalam Jee passed away there was no surviving member from his family. Any person's have any objection/claim (s) interest for the proposed Will Deed Registration of aforesaid Late Kalam Jee may contact the undersigned within 2 days from the publication of the notice, failing which the claim of any such person will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned and the Will Deed shall be Registered and Application with immediate effect.

**Amil Anand (Advocate),** 102, G.K. House, Post. No. 187A, Sant Nagar, ND-65, M.No. 9959068865

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

It is hereby brought to the notice of public at large that Original Registered Deed of Conveyance dated 16.12.1983 executed by HUDA in favour of M/s Bhagwan Dass Time Industries Pvt. Ltd. related to Plot No. 65, Sector 27-A, situated at 15/2 mile stone Delhi Mathura Road, Faridabad, Haryana is not available with present owner, Sanden Vikas India Pvt. Ltd. The Public at large is hereby informed that Sanden Vikas India Pvt. Ltd. has availed/s'll avail credit facilities from HDFC Bank Ltd. against security of the aforesaid property Plot No. 65 with publication of this notice. Any person (other than owner), who comes in knowledge or possession of aforementioned original conveyance deed, may please return the same to above mentioned property address or at below mentioned address. Any person or authority dealing with the deed and/or the aforesaid Property and/or deriving any benefit by impersonation or claiming any interest in the aforesaid Plot No. 65, Sector 27-A, situated at 15/2 mile stone Delhi Mathura Road, Faridabad, Haryana, on the basis of said conveyance deed or in any manner whatsoever, he/she/it shall do so at his/her/its own cost, expense, liability and risk or may also send his/her/ their claims in writing to the undersigned along with documentary evidence in support of the claim within 15 days from date of publication of this Notice.

**Sushli Kumar Singh (Advocate)**  
F-10, LGF, Jangpura Ext., New Delhi-110014

## Fuel crisis worsens in Sri Lanka

PTI ■ COLOMBO

A 53-year-old auto-rickshaw driver in Sri Lanka died of a heart attack on Thursday in Colombo's suburb while waiting in a serpentine queue for fuel for the entire night near a petrol pump, becoming the latest victim, as the fuel crisis in the island nation worsened.

People have left their vehicles for over two nights near filling stations as mostly diesel supplies have dried while long queues remain for petrol supplies. The three-wheeler driver



had been waiting in line for fuel since Wednesday night in the Colombo south suburb of Panadura and he succumbed to cardiac arrest inside his vehicle, authorities said.

This is not the first time a person died while waiting in line for fuel in Sri Lanka. Similar incidents were reported since the

beginning of 2022, as some died of heat exhaustion.

Another 64-year-old man died while waiting in a queue for cooking gas at Pugoda, north-west of here on Wednesday night, police said.

The state fuel entity Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) said the final shipment of diesel under the existing ILC of USD 700 million for fuel arrived on Thursday. However, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said the issues would be based on a priority for essential services.

## WHO: Covid deaths rise, reversing 5-week decline



AP ■ GENEVA

After five weeks of declining coronavirus deaths, the number of fatalities reported globally increased by 4% last week, according to the World Health Organisation.

In its weekly assessment of the pandemic issued on Thursday, the UN health agency said there were 8,700 COVID-19 deaths last week, with a 21% jump in the Americas and a 17% increase in the Western Pacific.

WHO said coronavirus

cases continued to fall, with about 3.2 million new cases reported last week, extending a decline in COVID-19 infections since the peak in January.

Still, there were significant spikes of infection in some regions, with the Middle East and Southeast Asia reporting increases of 58% and 33% respectively.

"Because many countries have reduced surveillance and testing, we know this number is under-reported," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said

earlier this week.

He said there was "no acceptable level of deaths from COVID-19," given that the global community now has the vaccines, medicines and diagnostics to stop the virus.

While many rich countries in Europe and North America have mostly dropped their virus restrictions, China's extreme COVID-19 policies have meant more mass testing, quarantines and sequestering of anyone who was in contact with a case.

China's capital put school back online this week in one of its major districts amid a new COVID-19 outbreak linked to a nightclub.

Residents in Beijing are still undergoing regular testing — mostly every other day — and must wear masks and swipe a mobile phone app to enter public places and facilitate case tracing.

China has maintained its "zero-COVID" policy despite considerable economic costs and an assertion from the head of the World Health Organisation that the policy isn't sustainable.

## ISIS leader captured in US-led military raid in Syria

AP ■ BEIRUT

US-led coalition forces captured a senior Islamic State leader in a military operation in northern Syria on Thursday, the coalition said.

In a statement, it said the captured leader was an experienced bomb maker and operational facilitator, describ-

ing him as one of the top leaders of the extremist group's Syria branch.

The statement did not identify the individual nor say where the raid took place. It said the operation was "successful" with no civilians harmed nor any injuries to coalition forces.

The U.S.-backed forces



captured victory over the Islamic State in March 2019 after retaking the last piece of territory held by the group in Syria.

But IS continues to operate and carry out deadly attacks in both Iraq and Syria through sleeper cells and maintains several affiliates in various countries.

### DC trolls Saudi Embassy by naming street Jamal Khashoggi Way

AP ■ WASHINGTON

One month ahead of President Joe Biden's trip to Saudi Arabia, the District of Columbia is renaming the street in front of the Saudi embassy Jamal Khashoggi Way, trolling Riyadh for its role in the killing of the dissident Saudi activist and journalist in 2018.

With members of the DC Council in attendance, a Jamal Khashoggi Way sign was unveiled directly in front of the embassy's main entrance.

"We intend to remind the people who are hiding behind these doors ... That we hold them responsible and we will hold them accountable for the murder of our friend," said

Sarah Leah Whitson, executive director of DAWN, the pro-Arab world democracy organisation founded by Khashoggi prior to his death.

Whitson also criticised what she called the "shameless capitulation" of the Biden administration for seeking improved relations with the Saudi government and scheduling an official presidential visit to the kingdom.

Khashoggi, a prominent Saudi journalist and Washington Post columnist, entered the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on October 2, 2018, seeking the necessary documentation for a planned marriage with his fiancée waiting outside for him. The 59-year old never emerged.

## In energy-strapped Europe, coal gets an encore

AP ■ KOZANI (GREECE)

At Greece's largest Acoal mine, controlled explosions and the roar of giant excavators scooping up blasted rock have once again become routine. Coal production has been ramped up at the site near the northern Greek city of Kozani as the war in Ukraine forced many European nations to rethink their energy supplies.

Coal, long treated as a legacy fuel in Europe, is now helping the continent safeguard its power supply and cope with the dramatic rise in natural gas prices caused by the war.

Electricity generat-

ed by coal in the European Union jumped by 19% in the fourth quarter of 2021 from a year earlier, according to the EU's energy directorate, faster than any other source of power, as tension spiked between Russia and Ukraine and ahead of the invasion in late February.

Russian gas made up more than 40% of the total gas consumption in the EU last year, leaving the bloc scrambling for alternatives as prices rose and the supply was cut off to several nations. Russia also provided 27% of the EU's oil imports and 46% of its coal imports.

The crisis caught

Greece at a difficult moment in its own transition. For decades, the country relied on the domestic mining of lignite, a low-quality and high-emission type of coal, but recently accelerated plans to close down older power plants, promising to make renewables the main source of Greece's energy by 2030.

Currently, renewables account for about a third of the country's energy mix.

A newly-completed solar park, one of Europe's largest, is just a half-hour drive from the country's biggest open-pit lignite mine, near the northern city of Kozani.

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to PCHFL as aforesaid, PCHFL shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers as to the costs and consequences. The said Borrowers are prohibited under the Act from transferring the aforesaid assets, by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of PCHFL. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the said Act or Rules made there under, shall be liable for imprisonment and/or penalty as provided under the Act.

**Date : 17-06-2022**  
**Place: Delhi**

**Sd/-**  
**(Authorized Officer)**  
**Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited**



# Markets go into tailspin after Fed reserve rate hike

Sensex tumbles 1,046 pts

**Mumbai:** Equity indices faced heavy drubbing on Thursday after an initial rally, with the Sensex tanking 1,045.60 points amid a largely bearish trend overseas after the US Federal Reserve hiked rates by 75 basis points. Across-the-board selling played havoc on the headline indices, with index majors Reliance Industries and HDFC twins contributing most to the decline.

Despite a smart rally in morning trade, the BSE benchmark failed to hold on to the gains and plummeted 1,045.60 points or 1.99 per cent to settle at 51,495.79 -- its fifth day of decline.

During the day, it tumbled 1,115.91 points or 2.12 per cent to its one-year low of 51,425.48.

On similar lines, the NSE Nifty plunged 331.55 points or 2.11 per cent to close at 15,360.60.

From the Sensex pack, Tata Steel, Tech Mahindra, IndusInd Bank, Wipro, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finance, Kotak Mahindra Bank and NTPC



were the biggest laggards.

Nestle India was the only gainer. Elsewhere in Asia, markets in Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower, while Tokyo and Seoul ended marginally higher.

Markets in Europe were trading sharply lower in mid-session deals. Stock exchanges in the US ended with sharp gains in the overnight session on Wednesday despite the rate hike by Fed.

“The early gains led by an

in-line Fed policy was dampened as recessionary fears haunted global sentiments,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.66 per cent to USD 117.68 per barrel.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) remained net sellers in the capital market, as they sold shares worth Rs 3,531.15 crore on Wednesday, as per exchange data. **PTI**

# ‘Banks should undertake stress testing of loan books’

**Mumbai:** Despite the improvement in asset quality, financial institutions, including banks, need to proactively undertake stress testing of loan books to examine their loss absorption limits and take steps to improve them wherever required, RBI Deputy Governor M Rajeshwar Rao said on Thursday.

The gross non-performing assets (GNPAs) and net NPAs of banks improved to 5.97 per cent and 1.7 per cent as of March 31, 2022, from 9.23 per cent and 3.66 per cent as of September 2019, respectively, he said.

Although the asset quality has improved from the pre-pandemic levels, lenders should ascertain whether this is on account of better fundamentals or due to the regulatory support extended to deal with the impact of the pandemic, he noted.

“We expect banks and other financial institutions to proactively undertake stress testing of their loan books, subjecting them to various levels of stress, including extreme scenarios, to estimate the loss absorption limits wherever available at their disposal, and take measures to augment the same wherever necessary,” Rao said at an event organised by



IMC Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

He said while the central bank has attempted to combat the impact of the pandemic on the financial system, (but) the task is only half done.

“We have to ensure that the financial system escapes unscathed as we exit from the pandemic-driven regulatory forbearances,” Rao said.

Rao said the pandemic saw the financial sector enjoying favourable momentum with an increase in liquidity, the flow of credit and normal spending on relief programmes.

“It is getting increasingly debated in the global fora as to whether the pandemic-induced measures have led to a build-up of leverage and debt overhang in the non-financial sector.

“Prudence has to be exhibited by banks to ascertain whether the current levels of asset quality being exhibited is on account of improvement in fundamentals of business on account of deleveraging and efficiency gains or on account of support extended by authorities through the measures,” the deputy governor noted. **PTI**

## GST Council to meet on June 28-29 in Srinagar

**New Delhi:** The GST Council, chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, will meet on June 28 and 29 in Srinagar.

“The 47th meeting of the GST Council will be held on June 28-29, 2022 (Tuesday & Wednesday) in Srinagar,” Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman’s office tweeted.

The council meeting assumes significance as it is expected to discuss the report of the panel of state ministers on rate rationalisation and also the GST rate on casinos, race courses and online gaming.

The GST Council, chaired by Union Finance Minister and comprising state counterparts, is also expected to discuss certain simplifications in procedures. **PTI**

## Rupee recovers from record low, spurts 12 paise to 78.10 per US dollar

**Mumbai:** The rupee on Thursday recovered from its record low to close 12 paise higher at 78.10 (provisional) against the American currency, tracking the overnight weakness of the dollar and falling crude oil prices.

The dollar index fell from its elevated levels after the Federal Reserve raised interest rates by 75 basis points in a historic move to fight inflation and projected a slowing economy and rising unemployment in the months to come, traders said. At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened at 78.06 against the greenback and moved in a narrow range. It finally ended at 78.10, higher by 12 paise over its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee had plunged 18 paise to close at a new all-time low of 78.22.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback’s strength



against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.13 per cent to 105.02. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.25 per cent to USD 118.21 per barrel.

“Even after higher trade deficit numbers, weaker regional currencies and risk-averse sentiments, the rupee got support from the fall in crude oil prices,” said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

Parmar further noted that some relief rally in the rupee in the near-term is likely but odds of 78.50 are very much alive. **PTI**

## Contactless cards account for 16% of face-to-face transactions in Dec 2021: Visa

**Mumbai:** The share of contactless cards, which help a customer pay at a merchant by tapping the card on a device, grew to 16 per cent in December 2021, global payments major Visa said on Thursday.

The number of usage of contactless cards during face-to-face transactions at merchants’ end was less than 2.5 per cent in December 2018, the company, which commands a big share of the market, said.

It can be noted that the RBI regulations now allow users to pay up to Rs 5,000 per transaction through the contactless alternative, which does not require a four-digit PIN code. The maximum limit has been capped keeping security concerns in mind, wherein just the presence of a card can result in losses to the user.

Visa’s head of products and solutions for India and South Asia Ramakrishnan Gopalan

**THE NUMBER OF USAGE OF CONTACTLESS CARDS DURING FACE-TO-FACE TRANSACTIONS AT MERCHANTS’ END WAS LESS THAN 2.5 PER CENT IN DECEMBER 2018,**

said that availability, convenience, utility, and security are the key drivers of growth in contactless cards.

The report done in association with payments processing company Worldline India said the highest adoption of contactless payments was observed in sectors like quick-service restaurants, pharmacies, food, grocery, etc., which accelerated with the impact of the pandemic. In supermarkets, a fourth of the overall transactions were done using contactless cards in January 2020, which has increased to 31 per cent in January 2022, it added. **PTI**

## Sebi forms Building Advisory Committee to advise on premises related matters



**New Delhi:** Capital markets regulator Sebi has formed a Building Advisory Committee, which will advise and assist it in all the premises related matters such as planning, acquisition and furnishing.

The seven-member committee will be headed by B K Katyal, former Chief General Manager at Reserve Bank of India (RBI), a latest update with Sebi showed.

The other members of the committee are K. V. Krishna Rao, former head of depart-

## BUSINESS BRIEF

### TESSOL RAISES ₹7.5 CR FROM MELA VENTURES

**Mumbai:**The city-based cold chain solutions startup TESSOL on Thursday said it has raised ₹7.5 crore from Mela Ventures for enhancing its R&D capabilities, new products, application development as well as geographical expansion and capacity building. Besides Mela Ventures, existing investors 1crowdAngels and 1Fund will also participate in this round and top up the current investment, the company said in a statement. Currently, TESSOL Founder and Chief Executive Officer Rajat Gupta and 1crowd are on the board and as a part of the process, Mela Ventures will also get on the company’s board soon, it said.

### AMPERE ROLLS OUT 50KTH ELECTRIC SCOOTER

Greaves Electric Mobility’s two-wheeler brand Ampere has rolled out its 50,000th electric scooter from its EV megasite in Ranipet, Tamil Nadu. The milestone has been fuelled by the conscious shift of consumers towards sustainable and affordable electric mobility, growing product awareness, increased fuel prices and heightened cognisance about environmental issues, the company said. The Ranipet EV (electric vehicle) manufacturing plant was set up with an aim to disrupt the domestic transportation landscape and creating an affordable and sustainable ecosystem for clean last-mile mobility in the country, it stated.

### CRUDE OIL FUTURES DECLINE ON LOW DEMAND

**New Delhi:** Crude oil futures on Thursday declined by 0.87 per cent to ₹8,908 per barrel as participants trimmed their positions on low demand. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude oil for July delivery fell by ₹78 or 0.87 per cent to ₹8,908 per barrel with a business volume of 4,492 lots. Globally, West Texas Intermediate crude oil was trading 0.64 per cent up at USD 116.05 per barrel and Brent crude was 0.51 per cent higher at USD 119.11 per barrel in New York.

### US BRAND’S MADE-IN-INDIA LAPTOP

**New Delhi:** Latching on to the Make-in-India initiative, US-based lifestyle gadget brand AVITA is launching AVITA SATUS ULTIMUS, a completely Made-in-India laptop that starts at an attractive price of MRP 29,990. “We are delighted to build on the policy of local initiatives and self-reliance ‘Make in India’ by introducing the finest-quality laptops in India,” said Seema Bhatnagar, regional business director, South Asia & MEA, Nextsgo Company Ltd.

## Gold marginally higher by ₹21; silver gains ₹37

**New Delhi:** Gold prices in the national capital rose by ₹21 to ₹50,602 per 10 grams on Thursday in line with recovery in global prices, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the yellow metal settled at ₹50,581 per 10 grams.

Silver also jumped by ₹37 to ₹60,525 per kg from ₹60,488 per kg in the previous trade. In the international market, both gold and silver were trading flat at USD 1,833 per ounce and USD 21.58 per ounce, respectively.

“Gold prices traded steady with spot gold prices at COMEX trading at USD 1,833 per ounce on Thursday. Gold prices held supported by weaker dollar and fall in US bond yields,” said Tapan Patel, Senior Analyst (Commodities) at HDFC Securities. **PTI**

# Hyundai undeterred by threat to lose second-biggest carmaker position in India

**New Delhi:** South Korean auto major Hyundai is undeterred by the threat to its position as the second-biggest car maker in India, and believes that it will continue to do well in the market as it has done over the last two decades, according to a senior company official.

The auto major, which has been facing tough competition from Tata Motors for the second spot in the domestic passenger vehicle industry, is counting on its continuous focus on new product launches and the introduction of new technologies to maintain its leadership in the market.

“What I can say is that we are a long-term player and we have no reason to believe that we will not do well,” Hyundai



Motor India Ltd (HMIL) Director-Sales, Marketing, Service Tarun Garg told PTI in an interaction.

He was replying to a query if the company would be able

to hold on to the second spot in the domestic passenger vehicle segment this fiscal.

In the past six months, Tata Motors has surpassed Hyundai twice in terms of dispatches to

the dealers.

“We will definitely do well and make efforts to not only get volumes but to offer sustainable offerings to the customer. I think that is very very important, we should not lose focus on our long-term sustainable goals.

“In the past two years, there has not been any let-off in new model launches or on the up-gradation of models, so we have never let the foot off the accelerator and I believe, we will continue to bring in solutions for the customers,” Garg said.

He noted that the company is a long-term player and its efforts and identity could not be limited by one month sales number. **PTI**

## Retail businesses grow 24% in May against pre-pandemic level: Report

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

The retail businesses across India witnessed a growth of 24 per cent in May this year against the pre-pandemic level of the same month in 2019, according to industry body RAI.

As per the latest ‘retail business survey’ by the Retailers Association of India (RAI), sales in western India grew by 30 per cent, while eastern India showed a growth of 29 per cent compared to the pre-pandemic sales level in May 2019.

Similarly, southern India posted a rise of 22 per cent and northern India grew 16 per cent, it added.

RAI CEO Kumar Rajagopalan said, “It is encouraging to see a steady improvement in sales with 23 per cent growth in April and 24 per cent in May as compared to the pre-pandemic levels.”

Categories, such as garments and footwear, have begun to do well on account of the ongoing wedding season and resumption of work from office, he added.

“The worry around inflation continues to exist, however, as of now, customers are willing to come out and shop as socialising is now picking up pace,” Rajagopalan further said. RAI said sales across categories continue to indicate steady growth.

## Tribeca, Tricon to invest ₹525 cr to build luxury housing project in Pune

**PTI ■ PUNE**

Realty firm Tribeca Developers has tied up with Tricon Infra Buildtech to develop a luxury housing project in South Pune with an investment of around ₹525 crore, as part of its expansion plan.

The Mumbai-based company on Thursday launched the project ‘YOO ONE’ in partnership with Pune-based Tricon Infra.

The two partners will construct 286 apartments in this project under two phases. The price of apartment ranges from Rs 1.9 crore to Rs 3.6 crore. “Tribeca brought Trump brand in India. We have now

partnered with another global brand YOO for our new project,” Tribeca Developers founder Kalpesh Mehta told reporters here.

Tricon Infra owns the 6.75 acres land, while Tribeca is the development manager of this project. YOO is brand partner.

“The total project cost, including land cost, is ₹525 crore,” Mehta said. The construction cost is estimated at Rs 450 crore. The total investment will be funded through equity, debt and advances from customers against sales, he added.

Brayesh Singh, Managing Director of Tricon, said that the project will be completed in the next four years. **PTI**

## Airtel launches hi-speed FTTH broadband service in Ladakh, Andaman & Nicobar Islands

**New Delhi:** Telecom company Bharti Airtel on Thursday announced the launch of its Fiber-To-The-Home (FTTH) broadband service – Airtel Xstream Fiber – in Ladakh and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

By 2025, Airtel Xstream Fiber plans to scale its footprint to 2000 towns, according to a statement by the company.

“Airtel Xstream Fiber expands FTTH network to India’s farthest corners... Launches high-speed broadband services in Ladakh and Andaman & Nicobar Islands,” the company said.

Airtel said it has become the first private ISP to roll-out FTTH broadband in these remote geographies and bring quality digital access to customers by connecting them to



the data superhighway.

Airtel Xstream Fiber’s high-speed broadband is available to customers in Leh in Ladakh, and Port Blair in Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

The company plans to scale the service to other key locations in the regions in the

coming months.

The post pandemic era has led to a surge in demand for high-speed broadband in homes, especially for work from home, online learning as well as online entertainment, Vir Inder Nath, CEO – Broadband business, Bharti Airtel noted.

## India has scope to produce hydrogen from domestic coal, says experts panel

**New Delhi:** An expert panel constituted by the government has suggested that India has enough potential to produce hydrogen from domestic coal and the country should strongly pursue this option.

This assumes significance in the wake of Prime Minister Narendra Modi announcing hydrogen mission on India’s 75th Independence Day.

Hydrogen is a clean fuel and can serve as a possible substitute to liquid and fossil fuels. It is also the most abundant element in the universe, making up more than 90 per cent of all known matters.

“India has an opportunity to produce hydrogen from domestic coal and we may aggressively pursue this option in our overall hydrogen ecosystem,” the expert committee

said in its report on roadmap for coal to hydrogen production. The panel also suggested for setting up of a couple of semi-commercial gasification units to convert coal to hydrogen.

The integration of Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) units along with gasification, it said, can be explored so that blue hydrogen thus produced is more acceptable.

“The gasification technologies may be selected based on assessment of the potential for eventual commercial upscaling and keeping the option of biomass co-gasification along with coal subject to availability of biomass in the close vicinity of such gasification units,” the panel said.

The coal gasification units should be set up near the

hydrogen demand centres or close to the coal mines.

The cost of transportation of hydrogen would be high at present and hence there was a need to examine the economics before deciding upon the locations of gasification plants.

“Alternatively, we could establish the plants closer to the natural gas grid so that hydrogen thus produced could be injected to some extent i.e. Up to 18-20 per cent into the natural gas pipelines, as to that extent of hydrogen injection in the natural gas pipelines may not need the modification of the gas pipelines,” the panel recommended.

This, it said, will facilitate the utilisation of hydrogen produced from coal in the industries currently using imported natural gas. **PTI**





PTI ■ JAKARTA

One of the heroes of India's Epic Thomas Cup triumph, HS Prannoy continued

his rich vein of form as he stormed into the quarterfinals of the Indonesia Open Super 1000 tournament with a straight-game win over Hong

Kong's Ng Ka Long Angus here on Thursday.

The 29-year-old from Kerala, who is desperately looking to break his five year title

drought, dished out another impressive performance to outwit Ng Long 21-11, 21-18 in a second round match that lasted 41 minutes.

It was Prannoy's fourth win over the 27-year-old, who is currently ranked 12th in the world.

A former top 10 player, Prannoy will next face either Denmark's Rasmus Gemke or France's Brice Leverdez.

Among other Indians in the fray, Sameer Verma ended his campaign with a 10-21, 13-21 loss to world number five Lee Zii Jia of Malaysia in the second round.

This was Sameer's fifth loss to Lee in seven meetings.

Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy also bowed out of the tournament after losing 16-21, 13-21 to top seeds Chen Qing Chen and Jia Yi Fan of China in women's doubles competition.

The men's doubles pairing of MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila also went down 19-21, 15-21 to China's Liu Yu Chen and Ou Xuan Yi.

In the men's singles contest, it was all Prannoy in the first half of the opening game as he simply dominated the proceedings, grabbing the initiative early to lead 11-3 with a sensational cross court jump smash.

Prannoy was, however, erratic after the interval and his unforced errors allowed Ng Long to collect a few points before the Indian unleashed another cross court smash and made some sound judgements at the baseline to keep moving ahead. Prannoy's movement

was smooth as he mixed up the shots and varied the speed well and with his opponent committing errors, he had no issues in closing out the match comfortably.

He moved to nine game point opportunities with a precise smash and sealed it when his rival went to net.

Former Commonwealth Games bronze medallist RMV Gurusaidutt's presence at the coach's chair also helped Prannoy as he was seen chatting with the player during the mid-game interval. Gurusaidutt is on his first assignment with the Indian team after retiring from the game. Ng Long gave a better display in the second game as his movements improved and he managed to stay on the rallies but Prannoy did well to keep his nose ahead at 9-7 with a return on his opponent's back hand corner.

He had a two-point cushion at the mid-game interval after the Hong Kong player went wide again.

The Indian extended his lead to 16-11. Ng Long produced occasional winners but he was too erratic, while Prannoy unleashed another jump smash to again wriggle out. In the end, a precise return on the baseline gave Prannoy four match points. He squandered two before converting the third chance with a booming smash following a superb rally.



## 'Mbappe stayed in PSG because of political pressure'

AP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez has claimed Kylian Mbappe decided to stay at Paris Saint-Germain because he was "confused" after being put under intense "political and economic pressure".

But when asked about the possibility of Mbappe joining Real Madrid in the future, Perez kept the door open to the 23-year-old.

"This Mbappe is not my Mbappe," Perez said. "But if he changes, who knows? Life takes a thousand turns."

Mbappe stunned Real Madrid last month by rejecting a move to the Santiago Bernabeu in favour of signing a new three-year contract at PSG, with a reported salary of between 40 to 50 million euros (\$41.6 million to \$52 million).

"They practically offered him the chance to be the leader, not only of a football team, but the management," Perez told the Spanish television programme El Chiringuito on Wednesday. "We saw that it was not the Mbappe that we wanted to bring - but it was a result of the pressure he was under that he changed his dreams."

"If a kid is called by the president of a country, of course it affects him... that influenced him a lot. But you can succeed at Real

Madrid, like Zidane did, and also be a source of pride for the president of your country."

Perez believes Mbappe was influenced most by French and Qatari political pressure, due to the reported involvement of French president Emmanuel Macron, as well as PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi, who is chairman of Qatar Sports Investments. "I think the pressure that might have affected him the most was the politics," Perez said.

"That, plus the money and the offer of leadership have made him change his mind. He had a hard time. When you get into a panic, you try to get out of that as quickly as possible, I can understand that. But what I can't understand is the King of Spain calling a Spanish club to tell him a player should stay."

"There are two states involved there, one is Qatar and the other is France," Perez continued. "I have been here since 2000 and I have never seen that before, that a president of a state calls a player. You can be a world-class player and not play in France, like (Zinedine) Zidane or (Karim) Benzema."

Asked for a second time about Mbappe joining in the future, Perez said: "I tell you calmly, that life is not over yet."



## Medvedev hails 'great news' that he can defend US Open title

AP ■ HALLE

Daniil Medvedev said on Wednesday it was "great news" that Russian and Belarusian players will be able to compete at this year's US Open, where he will be defending the title. The Russian world number one will be forced to sit out Wimbledon after the grass-court Grand Slam event banned him and his compatriots and Belarusians due to the invasion of Ukraine. But on Tuesday, the US Open organisers announced players from the two nations would be able to feature at Flushing Meadows, competing under neutral flags.

Wimbledon gets underway on June 27, with the US Open starting on August 29.

"It's great news," Medvedev said after winning his opening match at the Halle grass-court tournament, 6-3, 6-2 against David Goffin.

"I've always said I will follow the rules and play where I can play. I just want to show my best tennis."

"I'm happy to be able to defend my title. I have some amazing memories from last year."

"That was one of the most

special tournaments for me."

Medvedev won his maiden major title last September with victory over Novak Djokovic in the US Open final, denying the Serb a calendar Grand Slam.

The 26-year-old said he will try and play as much as possible while Wimbledon is being held.

"I will play Mallorca next week for sure, I want to defend that title," added Medvedev, who lost in the s-Hertogenbosch final last weekend to Tim van Rijthoven.

"Without Wimbledon coming up, I don't have to preserve my body and I can play three tournaments in a row."

"I'll then spend a few more days in Mallorca and then return to the south of France to train for the hard courts."

"I may add another tournament to my list, but I'm not sure yet."

Medvedev has a poor record at Wimbledon, with a run to the fourth round last year his best effort in four appearances.

"Grass is physically a very tough surface," he said. "Wimbledon is always in the back of your mind. Right now, it's easier for me to have just this tournament that matters."

## Melbourne to host Australian F1 race until 2035

AP ■ MELBOURNE

The Australian Grand Prix will continue to be held in Melbourne until 2035 after race organisers announced a new 10-year agreement with Formula One on Thursday, beating off rival bids from Sydney and the Gold Coast.

The race was first run in 1928 and has been held at the Albert Park Circuit in Melbourne since 1996.

It attracted record crowds in April when it returned for a race won by the Ferrari of Charles Leclerc after missing out in 2020 and 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

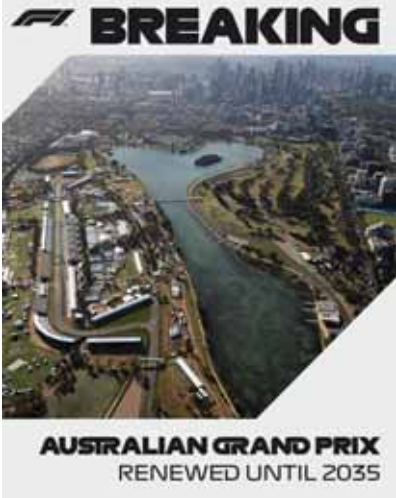
"The race has always been a favourite for the fans, drivers and the teams, and Melbourne is an incredible and vibrant international city that is a perfect match for our sport," Formula One president Stefano Domenicali said in a statement. Organisers said that nearly 420,000

people attended over four days this year, eclipsing the previous record of 401,000 set at Melbourne's inaugural grand prix in 1996.

The scenes were a big factor in Albert Park seeing off rival bids and securing the race for the next 13 seasons.

Sydney, the Gold Coast and Adelaide were thought to be among those wanting to grab a piece of the Formula One action. Formula One's popularity has hit new heights thanks in part to the Netflix series Drive to Survive, which has attracted a younger audience and made drivers into superstars.

"The race is here to stay," said Martin Pakula, the Victoria state government's minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events. "It's an Australian icon and the fact that we'll be here until at least 2035 is something that all motor racing fans, all major event fans and hopefully all Victorians can be very, very excited about."



Formula Two and Three races will be added to the grand prix weekend in Australia for the first time next season.

Melbourne used to be the first race of the season but this year was the third of the new campaign.

## Man City to launch PL title defence at West Ham



AP ■ LONDON

Manchester City will begin the defence of their Premier League title at West Ham while Liverpool travel to Fulham on the opening weekend of the season.

The 2022/23 fixtures, published on Thursday, give new

Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag an opening test at Old Trafford against Brighton, who hammered United 4-0 last month.

Nottingham Forest's first match in the top flight for 23 years will be at Newcastle.

Pep Guardiola's City will start their bid for a fifth title in

six seasons at the London Stadium on Sunday, August 7, after all their rivals have begun their campaigns.

Frank Lampard, whose Everton side narrowly escaped relegation, comes up against his former employers Chelsea on the previous evening.

For the second season running Arsenal have the honour of kicking-off the new campaign with a short trip to Crystal Palace on Friday, August 5.

Liverpool and City renew their rivalry at Anfield in mid-October, after a midweek Champions League tie, with the return fixture scheduled for the start of April.

Following the resumption of the campaign on December 26, Leeds host City and United welcome Forest.

City head to Brentford on the final day of the season, with Liverpool away at Southampton.

## New national record eludes Chanu despite Gold medal

PTI ■ NAGROTA BAGWAN

Olympic medallist Mirabai Chanu won the Gold medal comfortably but could not better her national record in snatch at the inaugural Khelo India Women Weightlifting League tournament here on Thursday.

The Tokyo Olympics Silver medallist lifted a total of 191kg (86kg+105kg) to stand atop the podium in the ranking event for women in the senior, junior and youth categories.

Gyaneshwari Yadav 170kg (78kg+92) and former 45kg Asian Weightlifting Championship Gold medallist Jhilli Dalabehra 166kg (75kg+91kg) finished second and third respectively.

After starting off with a successful 86kg lift, the 27-year-old Chanu failed to hoist 89kg in her second and third snatch attempts.

The national record and her personal best in the section stands at 88kg, which Chanu had lifted during the National Championships in 2020.

Chanu has been working on tweaking her snatch technique, once considered her weakness. She has been consulting Dr. Aaron Horschig, a former weightlifter-turned-physical therapist



and strength and conditioning coach in the USA for the same.

The former world champion, who will be vying for a third Commonwealth Games medal in the quadrennial event next month, has been targeting the 90kg mark for a couple of years.

In the clean and jerk, she hoisted 105 kg in her first attempt, a far cry from her world-record lift of 119kg. She did not attempt a second or third lift in the section.

The gulf between Chanu and the other Indian lifters in the category was on full display as the second placed-lifter Gyaneshwari lifted a whopping 21kg less than the Manipuri while the gap 25kg for Jhilli.

## Neeraj to lead 37-member athletics team in CWG

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) on Thursday named a 37-member Indian athletics team, to be led by Olympic champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, for the upcoming Commonwealth Games, with the selection committee picking the athletes on expected lines with no major surprises.

Out of the 37 picked by the selection committee of the AFI, 18 are women, with the likes of star sprinters Hima Das and Dutee Chand getting their berths through the women's 4x100m relay team.

The selectors also named a men's 4x400m relay team.

The team also have the likes of Avinash Sable, who broke his own 3000m steeplechase national record for the eighth time recently, as well as Jyothi Yarraji, who broke her own 100m hurdles NR twice last month.

It also has Aishwarya Babu, who smashed her own triple jump

national record with a stunning 14.14m effort during the recent National Inter-State Championships in Chennai.

However, 200m national record holder Amlan Borgohain, who won a sprint double (100m and 200m) during the National Inter-State, missed the bus as he could not reach the CWG qualifying standard set by the AFI.

Although selected, some of the athletes will have to prove their form and fitness before the Birmingham Games.

Veteran discus thrower Seema Punia has been given a chance to feature in her fifth CWG considering her past performances in the Games. Her participation, however, is subject to reaching the qualifying standard set by the AFI in a competition in USA.

Punia has won a medal in each of the four CWG she has taken part earlier.

"Seema Punia's participation in the CWG will absolutely depend



on her performance in the USA," AFI president Adille Sumariwalla said.

"We have allowed her to train and compete in the USA considering here past results in the CWG

and Asian Games," he said of Punia, who skipped the June 10-14 National Inter-State Senior Championships which was the qualifying event for CWG selection.

There will be three Indians in the men's javelin throw in the Birmingham Games with DP Manu and Rohit Yadav joining Chopra. The same is for men's triple jump, with Abdulla Aboobacker, Praveen Chithravel and Eldhose Paul making it to the team.

"We are requesting the Indian Olympic Association to increase our quota by one and to assist in securing accreditation for a couple of athletes. We have also selected a few subject to proving their fitness and form before the Games," Sumariwalla said.

The AFI has been given a quota of 36 in the Indian team for the July 28 to August 8 Games.

Shot putter Tajinderpal Singh Toor will have to perform well in Kazakhstan while Amoj Jacob has

been selected in the men's 4x400m relay team subject to his recovery and fitness level.

Jacob had pulled his hamstring while running the last leg of the India 'A' team during the Inter-State Championships.

"Similarly, discus throwers Navjeet Kaur Dhillon and Seema Antil Punia as well as Hammer Thrower Sarita Singh will have to perform in Kazakhstan or California. Race walker Bhawna Jat will have to prove her fitness," the AFI president said.

National record holder high jumper Tejaswin Shankar, who won gold at the NCAA Outdoor Track & Field Championships 2022 in the US last week with a season-best performance of 2.27m, was not picked as he did not take part in the National Inter-State and did not seek exemption.

**THE TEAM**

**Men:** Avinash Sable (3000m Steeplechase); Nitender Rawat

(Marathon); M Sreeshankar and Muhammed Anees Yahiya (Long Jump); Abdulla Aboobacker, Praveen Chithravel and Eldhose Paul (Triple Jump); Tajinderpal Singh Toor (Shot Put); Neeraj Chopra, DP Manu and Rohit Yadav (Javelin Throw); Sandeep Kumar and Amit Khatri (Race Walking); Amoj Jacob, Noah Nirmal Tom, Arokia Rajiv, Muhammed Ajmal, Naganathan Pandi and Rajesh Ramesh (4x400m Relay).

**Women:** S Dhanalakshmi (100m and 4x100m relay); Jyothi Yarraji (100mHurdles); Aishwarya B (Long Jump and Triple Jump) and Ancy Sojan (Long Jump); Manpreet Kaur (Shot Put); Navjeet Kaur Dhillon and Seema Antil Punia (Discus Throw); Annu Rani and Shilpa Rani (Javelin Throw); Manju Bala Singh and Sarita Romit Singh (Hammer Throw); Bhawna Jat and Priyanka Goswami (Race Walking); Hima Das, Dutee Chand, Srabani Nanda, MV Jilna and NS Simi (4x100m relay).



# MUST-WIN GAME FOR INDIA

PTI ■ RAJKOT

Under pressure India skipper Rishabh Pant will be hoping to tide over his struggles with the bat and help the hosts improve their middle overs play when they take on South Africa in the fourth T20 International here on Friday.

Save Pant's problems, India were able to plug the gaps in Vizag to open their account in the series with a comprehensive win. They will need another near perfect game to take the five-match series into the decider.

Such has been the brilliance of Pant that every time he has been written off across formats, he has found a way to bounce back. The stage is set for him in another must-win game for India.

The southpaw has been caught in the deep multiple times in the series trying to reach for the ball when it is not there in his hitting zone. Pant prefers to hit in the cow corner region but the South African bowlers have not allowed him to do that by bowling a wide line.

The hosts had got off to an electric start in the last game with Ruturaj Gaikwad finding some much-needed runs and complementing Ishan Kishan who has made a good case for being India's reserve opener in the long run, including in the T20 World Cup in Australia later this year.

The two will be looking to make the most of the remaining two games, followed by a couple in Ireland, before the regular openers walk back into the playing eleven.



Shreyas Iyer, who has been tested with the short ball regularly in the series, has not yet made a significant contribution at number three and will be itching to change that on Friday.

The home side struggled in the middle overs in Vizag after a perfect start before Hardik Pandya came to the team's rescue and took the score close to 180. Pant's men will be aiming to

rectify that here and ensure the momentum is not lost through the innings.

India rely on their spinners in the middle overs and the biggest positive out of the last game was

the performance of Yuzvendra Chahal and Axar Patel.

While Axar kept it tidy, Chahal bore the fruits of bowling slower through the air. The turn and dip that deserted him in the earlier games was back and he looked at his threatening best.

In the pace department, the seasoned Bhuvneshwar Kumar has been remarkably consistent. Avesh Khan has not gone for a lot of runs but is yet to take a wicket in the series while Harshal Patel, who relies on his variations to be effective, found his rhythm in Vizag and ended up with a four-wicket haul.

The South Africans, on the other hand, would back themselves to win the next game and seal the series. They currently lead 2-1.

The visitors will be hoping their star batter Quinton de Kock recovers fully from a wrist injury and rejoins skipper Temba Bavuma at the top.

After outplaying India in the first two games, the South Africans were at the receiving end in the third match, eventually losing by a massive 48-run margin. Their batting failed miserably after a mixed performance with the ball.

Their spinners Tabraiz Shamsi and Keshav Maharaj have leaked more than 10 runs an over with the Indians purposely going on the offensive against them.

Pace spearhead Kagiso Rabada has been their most impressive bowler and the hosts have given him due respect by not taking many chances against him.

Although South Africa's ground fielding has been alright, catching has left a lot to be desired.

# I've to keep developing my skills, says Harshal

PTI ■ RAJKOT

As he doesn't possess the pace of Umran Maik, India medium pacer Harshal Patel feels he has to keep upping his 'variations' game to extend his nascent international career.

Harshal had made his India debut after the T20 World Cup last November and more than six months into international cricket, the 31-year-old has 17 wickets in 11 games at an average of 19.52.

Slower pitches suit his style of bowling more and that was evident in the last two games after the hammering he got on a true Kotla surface in the series opener.

Being a shrewd operator, Harshal very well knows how to remain effective under extreme pressure despite his limitations.

"To be honest, people have been trying to anticipate what I am bowling for the last two years (in IPL). With every bowler they longer they play, the opposition will realise what the bowlers strengths and patterns are.

"As a bowler my job is to stay one step ahead of them. At the end of the day you can have 15 plans but on a particular day in a pressure situation if you don't go out and execute with confidence, everything doesn't fall in place.

"My focus is on trying to execute the best possible delivery at that point of time," he said ahead of the fourth T20 against South Africa.

The RCB bowling mainstay relies a lot on his variations to outsmart the batters and he says that is something he needs to constantly develop.

"I can't worry about pace because I can't bowl fast as Umran Malik. I have to develop skills to render myself effective at the international level. I have never been an express fast bowler though on a good day I can go near 140 kmph.



"My focus has always been to develop skills around my bowling and whatever limitations and advantages I have in my bowling.

"I would certainly prefer to pay on slow wickets. It gives you a fighting chance. If you can keep playing on pitches like Delhi it can hamper your confidence a little bit.

"We have bowlers who can bowl on all pitches but it brings them more into the game when there are slightly slower pitches and slightly bigger ground dimensions," he said.

# Nortje in relentless pursuit of 'missing ingredient'

PTI ■ RAJKOT

South African speedster Anrich Nortje says he remains a work in progress and is constantly trying to find the 'missing ingredient' in his bowling after coming back from a long injury lay-off.

Nortje was out of action for six months after the T20 World Cup last year. He had bowled exceptionally well in the 2020-2021 IPL season before being sidelined due to a stress fracture.

Alongside Kagiso Rabada, Nortje formed arguably the most potent fast bowling pairing in the IPL.

Delhi Capitals chose to retain him ahead of Rabada but when he made a comeback to this year's IPL,

Nortje was not the same bowler.

"I am still not there. I am still working on it, still trying to find one or two things. Body wise I am still not 100 percent, slowly building it up. I would probably rate myself from where I was at the end of IPL last year and start of T20 World Cup. Still trying to get there," said Nortje here on Thursday.

Nortje was putting in the hard yards ahead of the fourth T20 International against India. He bowled at the centre wicket for a while alongside Dwaine Pretorius and spinner Tabraiz Shamsi.

So, what exactly is missing from his bowling?

"If I knew exactly what it was, I would have done it (laughs). It is going to be a minor adjustment. I generally

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**—ANRICH NORTJE**

keep it simple. I am working on something at this stage and we will see how it goes.

"It is not like it is completely out of shape. It is about small margins for me and I would like to get back to where I was," said the 28-year-old.

Nortje said injury has taught him a valuable lesson.

"It was hard (the comeback phase) because some of the stuff is limited. Some of the bowling is limited. You can't go out and bowl 8 to 9 overs every day. It has been a good challenge and will help in the future if there are any niggles or injuries going forward," he said.

Like India's Umran Malik, who is yet to get a game in the series, Nortje built his reputation by bowling in excess of 150kmph regularly. He also

held the fastest delivery record in the IPL for a while but this season Lockie Ferguson raised the bar with a 157.3 kmph scorchers.

When asked about the 'pace' war, Nortje said he is not in the race with Malik or any other fast bowler.

"Malik is a good bowler and a very fast bowler. He has shown that on the field. If he goes faster, good for him, if I go, faster good for me. It is not about bowling fast, it is about winning games," said Nortje.

Star opener Quinton de Kock has not played since the series opener in Delhi due to a wrist injury and South Africa rely heavily on him. He was present at the nets on Thursday, raising hopes of his return but Nortje did not reveal much.

# ICC retains Nitin Menon in Elite Panel



PTI ■ RAJKOT

India's Nitin Menon has retained his place in the ICC Elite Panel and is set to make his maiden appearance as a neutral umpire in Sri Lanka later this month.

A BCCI official told PTI that Menon has got a one-year extension from the International Cricket Council.

The 38-year-old from Indore remains the only Indian in the 11-member Elite Panel of Umpires.

"The ICC recently gave a one-year extension to Menon who has been our leading umpire over the last three to four years. You will also see him making his debut as a neutral umpire later this month," the official told PTI.

Menon was promoted to the Elite Panel at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, becoming the third

Indian to enter the club after S Venkataraghavan and S Ravi.

However, Menon was limited to officiating international matches only within India with the ICC allowing local umpires due to the travel restrictions in place.

With COVID-19 on the wane, the governing body has resumed normal service with Australian Paul Reiffel currently performing duties in England's home series against New Zealand.

After completing his duties in the ongoing five-match T20 series between India and South Africa, Menon is set to travel to Sri Lanka for the home team's two-Test series against Australia, beginning June 29 in Galle.

There is no change in the Elite Panel and besides Menon, it includes Aleem Dar from Pakistan, Chris Gaffaney from New Zealand, Kumara Dharmasena from Sri Lanka, Marais Erasmus from South Africa, Michael Gough, Richard Illingworth and Richard Kettleborough (all three from England), Paul Reiffel and Rod Tucker from Australia and Joel Wilson from the West Indies.

The BCCI takes the call on who to include in the ICC International Panel of Umpires. Currently, four Indians are in the lower tier including Anil Chaudhary, Virender Sharma, J Madanagopal and K N Ananthapadmanabhan.

# Australia need 216 to win rain-hit Sri Lanka ODI



PTI ■ PALLEKELE

Pace bowler Pat Cummins claimed four wickets as Australia kept Sri Lanka down to 220 for nine as rain forced the innings to end in 47.4 overs on Thursday.

The tourists, who lead the five-match series 1-0, have been set a target of 216 runs in 43 overs in Pallekele, as per the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method.

Australia's bowlers backed up their captain's call to field first, as they removed the openers inside 10 overs and Sri Lanka suffered from a lack of partnerships.

Debutant left-arm spinner Matthew Kuhnemann struck in his third over of international cricket to send back Pathum Nissanka, who was caught behind for 14.

Kuhnemann returned figures of 2-48 and took two catches.

Cummins, Australia's Test captain who returned to the side after recovering from an injury at the start of the series, got the left-handed Danushka Gunathilaka caught in the deep for 18.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Kusal Mendis, who hit 36, and Dhananjaya de Silva, who made 34, attempted to rebuild with a 61-run stand that was broken by Cummins.

Cummins took down De Silva and Mendis fell to Glenn Maxwell's caught and bowled effort. Maxwell took one wicket with his off-spin to rattle the opposition middle order.

Wickets kept falling despite skipper Dasun Shanaka's attacking cameo of 34, which ended with a mishit to point off leg-spinner Mitchell Swepson.

Cummins was looking for a five-wicket haul when rain stopped play and the innings ended after more than an hour of persistent showers. He finished with figures of 4-35.

# NZ's Conway tests +ve for Covid-19

AP ■ LONDON

Devon Conway became the fourth person in the New Zealand contingent to test positive for COVID-19.

Earlier, all-rounder Michael Bracewell and support staff including physio Vijay Vallabh and strength & conditioning coach Chris Donaldson had tested positive and were under isolation.

Conway will now have to begin his five days of isolation and New Zealand have not called for any replacements.

"The three will travel separately from the team to Leeds on Sunday and providing they recover as expected will be able to join the squad for training at Headingley on Tuesday ahead of Thursday's final Test.

"The rest of the touring party have returned negative results and will continue following the tour health protocols of symptom reporting and subsequent test-



ing if required," read a statement from New Zealand Cricket (NZC).

New Zealand are set to play the third Test at Leeds starting on June 23.

**ENG INCLUDE JAMIE OVERTON**

England have handed a maiden Test call-up to Surrey seamer Jamie Overton for the third and final Test against the visitors, New Zealand, starting at Headingley on June 23. The 28-year-old, who will join his twin brother Craig in the squad, has been in excellent form in the ongoing County Championship for league leaders Surrey, having taken 21 wickets this season at an average of 21.61. In his 81-match first-class career, Jamie has picked up 206 wickets including five fifers. The fast bowler was also called up to the England ODI squad against New Zealand in 2015 but didn't play a game.

**England squad for 3rd Test:** Ben Stokes (C), James Anderson, Jonathan Bairstow, Stuart Broad, Harry Brook, Zak Crawley, Ben Foakes, Jack Leach, Alex Lees, Craig Overton, Jamie Overton, Matthew Potts, Ollie Pope, Joe Root.

# Mumbai on cusp of Ranji final

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Mumbai produced an incisive bowling display to bundle out Uttar Pradesh for a paltry 180 and take the crucial first-innings lead on the third day of their Ranji Trophy semi-final, here on Thursday.

Resuming at the overnight score of 25 for two, UP batters could add just 155 runs as Tushar Deshpande (3/34), off-spinner Tanush Kotian (3/35) and Mohit Avasthi (3/39) shared nine wickets between them for Mumbai. Dhawal Kulkarni (1/25) also chipped in with a scalp.

Skipper Prithvi Shaw made 64 off 71 balls with the help of 12 boundaries as Mumbai finished the day at 133 for one in their second innings, taking an overall lead of 346 runs.

Mumbai had posted 393 in their first essay, courtesy hundreds by Yashasvi Jaiswal and Hardik Tamore.



UP lost wickets regularly after resumption with the 41-time Ranji Trophy champions dominating from the start.

The first UP batter to be dismissed on the day was skipper Karan Sharma (27), who became Avasthi's first victim.

Opener Madhav Kaushik (38) and Rinku Singh (16) tried

to rally the innings, but managed to forge only a 32-run stand for the fifth wicket before the former was dismissed by Kotian.

After that, the UP batters made a beeline to the pavilion. Rinku, Dhruv Jorel (2) and Saurabh Kumar (0) fell in quick succession. Kotian trapped

# MP IN DRIVER'S SEAT

PTI ■ ALUR

Rajat Patidar hit an unbeaten half-century to put Madhya Pradesh in the driver's seat against Bengal in their Ranji Trophy semifinal, here on Thursday. Continuing his dream run, Patidar took the center stage in MP's second essay with an elegant 63 not out after his side gained a vital 78-run first innings lead.

The Royal Challengers Bangalore batter, who scored one century and two half centuries in the recently-concluded IPL, found himself at home as he slammed 10 boundaries in his 109-ball unbeaten knock to push MP to 163 for two at stumps on day three.

In their quest for first appearance in Ranji final since 1998-99, MP now have an overall lead of 231 runs with skipper Aditya

Shrivastava lending Patidar fine support at the other end with a resolute 34 not out from 90 balls.

Earlier, resuming the day on 197 for five, veteran Manoj Tiwary (102), who was overnight 84, completed his 29th first class hundred, his second in a row.

He was well-supported by Bengal and RCB all-rounder Shahbaz Ahmed (116), who notched up his maiden first-class hundred after resuming at overnight personal score of 72.

The duo formed the backbone, in an otherwise, sloppy batting display by Bengal as eight of their batters failed to get double digits scores.

Skipper Abhimanyu Easwaran (22) was the only other batter to register double digit runs as Bengal were bundled out for 273 in 89.2 overs in reply to MP's 341.

action and ripped apart the tail.

But the day belonged to Kotian, who broke Mavi's resistance as UP conceded a massive 213-run first innings lead.

There was more agony in store for UP as Shaw (64) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (35 not out) made an aggressive start by adding 66 runs for the opening wicket in Mumbai's second

innings.

While Shaw played in his usual aggressive style, Jaiswal played the second fiddle.

After Shaw's dismissal, Jaiswal and Armaan Jaffer (32 not out) continued to torment the UP bowlers as the Amol Mazumdar-coached side seemed to have put one foot in the final.