

OPINION 6

THE CHINESE IN A
SOUP ON TAIWAN

WORLD 8

WEST MOVING TOWARDS WAR IN
SPACE: RUSSIA SPACE AGENCY

MONEY 10

INDIA PROTECTED FARMERS'
INTEREST AT WTO MEET: MIN

NEW DELHI, MONDAY JUNE 20, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

NEERAJ READY
FOR DIAMOND
LEAGUE
11 SPORTGovt to stay on Agnipath,
says 'no' to rollbackPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Amid pan-India protests against the 'Agnipath' recruitment scheme for the armed forces, the Government on Sunday ruled out rolling it back.

The Government said the recruitment process of jawans called 'Agniveers' will commence next week and asserted that the various concessions announced for demobilised soldiers were planned in advance and not taken due to the ongoing protests.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday met the three services chiefs regarding the implementation of the scheme that has been termed "transformative."

It was his second meeting with the chiefs of the Army, Navy, and Indian Air Force (IAF) for the second straight day on the issue.

Meanwhile, explaining the Government's position on the 'Agnipath', Lieutenant-General Anil Puri, Additional Secretary, Department of Military Affairs (DMA), urged the aspirants to start preparing for the recruitment process for all the three services, including the Army, IAF, and the Navy.

Continued on Page 2



Security personnel outside Patna railway station after several trains were cancelled due to protests against the Centre's 'Agnipath' scheme, in Patna on Sunday

PTI

Recruitment schedule of 'Agniveers'
announced by the three servicesPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The three services on Sunday announced the recruitment schedule of 'Agniveers' and said all selections of aspirants will now be done through the 'Agnipath' policy that was rolled out last Tuesday.

More than 46,000 soldiers will be selected this year for a

four-year stint in the Army, Navy and the Indian Air Force (IAF).

Explaining the future path of the scheme, Lieutenant-General Anil Puri, Additional Secretary of the Department of Military Affairs, said here: "In the next four-five years, our intake (of soldiers) will be 50,000-60,000 and will further increase to 90,000-100,000 sub-

sequently. We have started small at 46,000 to analyse the scheme... and to build up our infrastructural capacity." Lieutenant-General C Bansi Ponnappa, Adjutant-General, said the rallies for Army recruitment will start in the first half of August and the first lot of 'Agniveers' will come in by December first week.

Continued on Page 2

TMC leader's bodyguard
has assets worth ₹100 cr

Currently in CBI custody on charges of cattle smuggling the Constable has palatial houses and 2 petrol pumps, say CBI sources

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA



A police Constable, Saigal Hussein, deputed by the Trinamool Congress administration as the personal security guard of TMC strongman and Birbhum district party chief Anubrata Mondal, may have built up property worth around ₹80-100 crore, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) sources said.

His fortunes include both movable and immovable properties. He is currently in the custody of the CBI on charges of cattle smuggling.

Hussein, considered a powerful man in the inner

coterie of Mondal, who, too, is facing similar charges, has palatial houses at Domkal in Murshidabad, luxury apartments near Shantiniketan and in Kolkata New Town, all in the names of his daughters, wife, and even domestic help, sources say, adding the Bengal Police Constable also has two petrol pumps.

The price of Hussein's vacant land at Domkal, a municipal town in Murshidabad district, is valued at ₹7 crore, sources said, adding "the CBI is also trying to ascertain his actual and benami

properties which may worth ₹100 crore."

According to sources, several kgs of gold worth more than ₹10 crore was recently seized from one of Hussein's houses. The CBI is investigating the sources of these properties. Hussein was arrested by the CBI following his call records that linked him to Enamul Haq, the prime accused. Subsequent questionings have also revealed the names of few TMC leaders, including MLA Shaikat Molla, who was last week grilled for several hours by CBI.

"If one Constable has that much money then think what the TMC leaders including the top leadership might have amassed in the past one decade of their rule ... this ill-gotten money is the source of such rampant electoral violence in Bengal," said a senior BJP leader.

Continued on Page 2



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Anurag Thakur, Indian chess grandmaster Viswanathan Anand and FIDE president Arkady Dvorkovich during the launch of torch relay for the 44th Chess Olympiad, at Indira Gandhi Stadium in New Delhi on Sunday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Moose Wala killing:
Accused Kekda
moved to new jail
after prison attack

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

A gang war never ends, it seems. Days after Sandeep Singh alias Kekda was arrested for allegedly carrying out recce ahead of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moose Wala's killing, he was thrashed inside Muktsar jail allegedly by the Bambiha gang - rivals of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang which is accused of killing Punjabi rapper.

Kekda, who has now been shifted to Goindwal Sahib jail, was reportedly attacked by Bambiha gang members in Muktsar jail about four days ago. Timely intervention by the police saved his life. Kekda was sent to Muktsar jail after his police remand was over.

While the Bambiha gang on Sunday took responsibility for the beating, the jail administration claimed there was some issue between the two parties which got resolved immediately.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

PM: CENTRE'S PROJECTS
CHANGING DELHI'S FACE

New Delhi: It is the country's "misfortune" that many good things brought with good intentions get trapped in politics, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday, as he cited development work undertaken by his Government to assert that it is changing the face of Delhi. P3

20 INDIAN FISHERMEN
RELEASED FROM PAK JAIL

Karachi: Pakistan in a goodwill gesture on Sunday released 20 Indian fishermen who have been languishing in a jail here for the last five years for allegedly fishing illegally in the country's waters.

SIX HIGH COURTS GET
NEW CHIEF JUSTICES

New Delhi: New Chief Justices were appointed to six High Courts on Sunday including the Delhi HC. The Department of Justice in the Union Law Ministry tweeted. While five HC judges were elevated as Chief Justices, the Chief Justice of the Telangana High Court was transferred to the Delhi High Court in the same capacity. P4

Flight catches fire
mid-air after bird hitSpiceJet plane
lands at airport,
passengers safe

A Delhi-bound SpiceJet airplane catches fire mid-air, in Patna on Sunday

PTI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

A Delhi-bound SpiceJet plane, carrying 185 passengers and six crew members, had a providential escape and made an emergency landing in Patna on Sunday afternoon, minutes after its take-off, as its cabin crew witnessed sparks coming from an engine and the airport got calls from locals who had reportedly seen fire coming out of one engine.

In a second incident, SpiceJet Q400 aircraft SG-2962 (Delhi-Jabalpur) developed a pressurisation snag on Sunday morning and had to return to the airport soon after take-off. This is the third time in over a month that a SpiceJet aircraft turned back within minutes of take-off.

According to officials, a

SpiceJet flight from Patna to Delhi suffered a bird hit during take-off. The pilot of flight SG 723, switched off the affected engine and returned safely to Patna with everyone onboard unharmed in this emergency landing. The fire in the plane was noticed when the aircraft was between Khagaul and Phulwari Sharif, which is two nautical miles from the Patna airport.

Continued on Page 2

40 lakh hit by Assam, Meghalaya floods

8 more die as
number of areas
inundated in
Guwahati increases

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The flood situation in the Northeast looks grim with Assam and Meghalaya emerging as the worst-hit. At least 42 people have died and nearly 40 lakh have been affected in both the States so far. The flood situation in Assam deteriorated on Sunday with eight more people losing their lives and over 37 lakh people suffering across 30 districts, an official said.

Many new localities have come under the impact of the deluge in several districts of the State and overnight incessant rain inundated more areas in Guwahati, officials said.

Given the grim situation, the Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati will help the Assam Government in surveying the flood affected areas by using drones developed by its startup to aid the relief and

rescue work. According to IIT officials, the State Government has reached out to the institute to seek its expertise in surveying the flood affected areas using drones to assess the condition in the villages where road connectivity has been disrupted due to heavy flow of water.

According to the latest updates by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), the State was witnessing floods and landslides for the last six days, leaving behind a huge trail of destruction everywhere.

In the last 24 hours, 32 districts, comprising 118 revenue circles and 4,291 villages, have reported flooding, it said. Around 37 lakh people have been impacted, and 1.56 lakh of them have taken shelter in 514 relief camps across the State. Relief materials were also distributed among people who are affected by the floods and have not taken shelter in relief camps, the ASDMA said.

According to the daily flood report of the ASDMA, eight people lost their lives in various places due to the floodwaters. The death toll in this



Villagers catch fish at a flooded area after heavy rains, in Nalbari district, in Assam on Sunday

PTI

year's flood and landslides across the State has gone up to 62, it said. At least 302 relief distribution centres or points opened temporarily, it said.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has been helping the district administrations evacuate people from the flood-hit areas.

The State Disaster

Response Force (SDRF), fire and emergency services personnel, policemen and ASDMA volunteers have also been deployed for rescue operations. "So far, 20,983 people have been evacuated by the various agencies," the bulletin said. Incessant rain since Saturday night wreaked havoc in Guwahati, leading to knee-

deep water logging in many areas across the city, while water has touched the chest level at some places.

Guwahati Municipal Corporation Commissioner Devashish Sharma told reporters that sluice gates on the Bharalu river have been shut.

Continued on Page 2

Don't get misled by Opp's propaganda: Yogi



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Sunday, appealed to the youth not to get misled by the propaganda of Opposition parties against the Agnipath scheme as it was in their interest.

He pointed out that the scheme, which has been lauded by the world, would not only see employment of 10 lakh

stipend, Yogi Adityanath said that the governments of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Assam and Uttarakhand had already announced their intention to absorb Agniveers into the police force once they retire from forces after four years of service.

"According to the scheme, 25 per cent of the Agniveers will continue to be in the forces, while the rest will get suitable employment opportunities in the police force. Our government has already announced that priority will be given to the appointment of Agniveers in the police force of UP," Yogi said.

Describing Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samajwadi Party as 'Rahu and Ketu' for the development of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi said that despite having got opportunities to run the state four times and thrice respectively, these parties only played havoc with the life and careers of youth by allowing corruption and encouraging all sorts of bad practices in society. "Their whole politics

revolved around family and selfish ends. Development of state, employment of youth, well-being of farmers as well as safety and security of women and citizens were never on their agendas," Yogi remarked, and asked people not to allow their district to become a centre of terror.

Yogi said that despite having given two chief ministers, Azamgarh had remained deprived of development and was known across the country for all wrong reasons. "Youths of Azamgarh were going through an identity crisis. They were denied accommodation in hotel rooms and rented flats. There was no development and violence and riots were common," he said.

Yogi added that the SP and the BSP only cheated people of Azamgarh and it was the BJP government which was working for the development of the district and its people ever since it took over. "Today, Azamgarh's connectivity has increased with the opening of Purvanchal Expressway and

Fin Ministry asks Govt employees to opt for lowest air fare

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As the Government looks to cut down on unnecessary expenditure, the Department of Expenditure of the Ministry of Finance Ministry has asked Government employees to opt for the 'cheapest fare available' on their entitled travel class and book air tickets at least three weeks prior to their date of travel for tours and LTC.

The Department further said that employees should book only one ticket for each leg of intended travel, make bookings even if approval of the tour programme is under process, and also avoid 'unnecessary cancellations'.

Currently, Government employees are currently required to purchase air tickets only from three authorised travel agents -- Balmer Lawrie & Co, Ashok Travel & Tours and IRCTC.

Any booking made with-in less than 72 hours of intended travel on tour or any cancellation made less than 24 hours before intended travel will require the submission of self-declared justification by the employee, as per the modified instructions regarding the booking of air tickets on the government account.

"Employees are to choose flights having the Best Available Fare on their entitled travel class which is the Cheapest Fare available, preferably for non-stop flight in a given slot at the time of booking," said the office memorandum of the Department of Expenditure.

Tickets for all employees for a single tour should be done through one selected travel agent only and no charges/fees should be paid to these booking agents, as per the instruction. "Employees are encouraged to book flight tickets at least 21 days prior to the

intended travel on tour and LTC, to avail the most competitive fares and minimise the burden on the exchequer," it said.

The modified instruction also nudged employees to make ticket bookings digitally through the self-booking tool/online booking website/portal of the three authorised travel agents.

"Employees should preferably book only one ticket for each leg of intended travel. Holding of more than one ticket is not allowed. However, in case of special exigencies or exceptional circumstances, a maximum of two tickets for the alternative flights for different time-slot may be booked for the same leg of travel with the self-declared justification for the same," the instruction read.

In unavoidable circumstances where the booking of a ticket is done from an unauthorised travel agent/website, the relaxation has to be granted only by an officer of the rank of Joint Secretary or above.

J&K: CRPF's 'Madadgaar' helpline handled over 9 lakh calls in 5 years of operation

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

CRPF's 'Madadgaar' helpline has handled over nine lakh calls and helped more than 37,000 families in its five years of operation, officials said here on Sunday. The Srinagar-based 24x7 helpline—14411—was set up on June 16, 2017 to help the people of Kashmir.

"The CRPF Madadgaar Helpline has completed five years of operation. So far, it has handled more than nine lakh calls and provided assistance to more than 37000 families across Jammu and Kashmir," officials said. The helpline played a vital role in



Women perform yoga asanas on the bank of the Yamuna river, behind the Taj Mahal, ahead of the International Day of Yoga, in Agra, Sunday

Modi in K'taka for two days; 75 Mins to attend yoga day events at 75 locations

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be on a two-day visit to Karnataka from Monday during which he will launch several development projects and also take part in the International Yoga Day on Tuesday.

Integrating the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' with the yoga day, the PMO said mass yoga demonstrations will be held at 75 iconic locations across country under leadership of 75 Union Ministers, with Modi attending exercise at Mysore.

The Expenditure department also asked all ministries and departments to clear their dues to the travel agents within 30 days of completion of journey, while officers will have to submit a certificate/undertaking within 72 hours of journey confirming their travel.

Ministries must clear all previous outstanding dues to the travel agents by August 31, 2022, it said, adding no mileage points will be generated against travel on government accounts.

The Ministry is looking to cut down on unnecessary expenditure as fiscal expenses are already high on account of excise duty cuts on petrol and diesel, customs duty reduction in some commodities, higher fertiliser subsidy and free food scheme for poor.

40 lakh hit by...

From Page 1

"Due to heavy rain in Upper Assam and flowing of excess water through the Brahmaputra, the water level of the river in Guwahati has risen considerably. Its level is now above that of its tributary Baralu," he said.

To stop backflow of Brahmaputra water into the city, the administration has closed all the sluice gates on the Baralu, the lifeline of Guwahati city. "This led to flooding of new areas in the city. During the last few days, we were able to pump out floodwaters to Baralu, but today we are not able to do so," Sharma said.

Flooding was reported from Zoo road, RG Baruah road, Nabin Nagar, Anil Nagar, Hatigaon, Lachit Nagar, Tarun Nagar, Jyotikuchi, Ghoramara, VIP road, Chandmari and many other areas. Meanwhile, fresh landslides were reported from Cachar, Dima Hasao,

flight...

From Page 1

The flight took off at around 12.10 pm and was scheduled to reach Delhi at 1:30 pm. According to residents of localities adjacent to the airport, who claimed to have witnessed the incident, it caught fire immediately. All the passengers were safely rescued. Videos shot by the residents that have gone viral show the aircraft descending after the fire erupted at the plane. The residents are heard shouting that the plane will crash for sure. A video shows smoke billowing out of the plane as it rapidly descends.

SpiceJet said in a statement, "On takeoff, during rotation, cockpit crew suspected bird hit on engine 01. As a precautionary measure..... The captain shut down the affected engine and decided to return to Patna." "The aircraft landed safely in Patna and the passengers deboarded safely. Post-flight inspection showed bird hit, with three fan blades damaged,"

the airlines said in a statement. The airline has provided another aircraft for the passengers to fly to New Delhi.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) also informed that the flight returned back after a "bird hit" led to the failure of Engine 1 on the Patna-Delhi SpiceJet aircraft, which was forced to make an emergency landing at Bihta Air Force Station in Patna after its left-wing caught fire. All 185 passengers were evacuated safely. During rotation, the cockpit crew suspected a bird hit Engine 1. Since the crew did not observe any abnormality, the aircraft continued to climb further.

Some passengers said they felt tremors inside the plane soon after the takeoff and the lights started turning off. "We raised an alarm. The crew members asked us to keep calm and informed us that an emergency landing was being made," a passenger said.

One of the passengers said that from the time the flight took off from Patna at 12.30, they felt that something was off with the plane.

Another passenger said, "The lights inside the aircraft began flickering during the journey. We felt something was wrong right from the time the flight took off. This is entirely the negligence of SpiceJet." According to the reports, the flight was struggling to achieve normal flying altitude.

The officials said that during the climb, the cabin crew on the plane told the pilot in command that they witnessed sparks coming from the engine, following which the pilot shut the power plant down and proceeded for an emergency landing.

During rotation (takeoff), the cockpit crew suspected a bird hit on engine No.1 (left engine). Since the crew did not observe any abnormality, the aircraft continued further climb," the official said. It was in the air for nearly 25 minutes, before making an emergency landing at Bihta Airforce Station in Patna.

Shiv Sena MP Priyanka Chaturvedi took to Twitter immediately after the report came and said this is playing

Moose Wala murder: Accused Kekda moved to new jail

From Page 1

In the social media post, the Bambiha group claimed that its member Bhalla Bathinda and his friends gave a good thrashing to Kekda, who conducted Moosewala's recce for very little money. It added that they wanted to kill Kekda, but jail staff intervened and saved him.

The group also declared that its members would not spare any colleague or associate of "Sidhu Moose Wala's killer" in whichever jail they were lodged. It also declared that each and every individual will have to pay the price.

During the investigations, it has been revealed that Kekda, on the directions of Canada-based gangsters Goldy Brar and Sachin Thapan, had kept tab on the singer's movements by impersonating himself as his fan. Kekda also clicked selfies with the singer, when the latter was leaving his home minutes before his murder.

Kekda, who was arrested on June 6, 2022, during questioning revealed that his brother Bittu of Kalianwali, along with Nikku Takhat Mal of Sirsa in Haryana, had been keeping an eye on the movements of Moose Wala. He revealed that on May 29, 2022, his brother Bittu had tasked him to accompany Nikku on his motorcycle to visit the house of Moose Wala posing as his fans.

Kekda also confessed that they took selfies with the singer on Nikku's mobile phone and the latter made a video call to Sachin Thapan to inform him that Moose Wala had left his house without security and was sitting on the driver's seat in the Black Thar Jeep.

The police investigation also revealed that Kekda is a drug addict, and he carried out Moose Wala's recce for just Rs 15,000. He also claimed he was not aware that they were going to kill Moose Wala, as they had only talked about beating him.

**FORM NO. INC-26
NOTICE**

(Pursuant to Rule 30 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014
Advertisement to be published in the newspaper for change of registered office of the Company from one state to another)

Before the Central Government
Regional Director (Northern Region), New Delhi

In the matter of the Companies Act, 2013 Section 13(4) and Rule 30(6)(a) the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014

AND

In the matter of **DIZO INNOVATION PRIVATE LIMITED** having its registered office at **C-84, Sector-33, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, U.P. 201301**

.....(Petitioner)

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that the Company proposes to make an application to the Central Government under section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013, seeking confirmation of alteration of the Memorandum of Association of the Company in terms of the special resolution passed at the Extra Ordinary General Meeting held on Thursday, 26th May, 2022 at 11:00 A.M. to enable the company to change its Registered office from the "State of Uttar Pradesh" to the "State of Haryana".

Any person, whose interest likely to be affected by the proposed change of the Registered office of the Company may deliver or cause to be delivered or send by registered post of his/her objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his/her interest and grounds of the opposition to the Regional Director, Northern Region, B-2 Wing, 2nd Floor, Paryavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex, New Delhi-110003 within Fourteen days from the date of Publication of this notice with a copy to the applicant at its registered office at the address mentioned below:

DIZO INNOVATION PRIVATE LIMITED
(CIN: U31904UP2020PTC127610)
Registered Office: C-84, Sector-33, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, U.P. 201301
Email: businessofficial@dizo.net

For and on behalf of
DIZO INNOVATION PRIVATE LIMITED

(Subodh Kumar Gupta)
Director
DIN: 08196288

Date: June 20, 2022
Place: Noida

Govt to stay...

From Page 1

He also said that all the aspirants would have to give an undertaking that they did not take part in agitations or any such activity, adding that those facing FIRs would not be eligible for a career in the armed forces. Puri said police verification is a must for all those selected for the forces.

"There is no space for indiscipline in the armed forces. No space for arson and vandalism. Every individual who aspires to join 'Agnipath' has to give an undertaking and pledge that they have not taken part in any protest or arson... There will be police verification after that. No one can come into the armed forces without police verification," he said.

Announcing the schedule of the recruitment process in a news conference, Puri, who is part of the team which formulated the 'Agnipath' policy, also said "inimical forces" and some coaching institutes instigated the protestors. Air Marshal SK

Jha (in-charge of Personnel), Vice-Admiral Dinesh Tripathi (in-charge of Personnel) and Adjutant General Lieutenant-General Bansi Ponappa were part of the media briefing.

Asked if there was a rethink on withdrawing the policy in the backdrop of the ongoing agitations, Puri ruled out any rollback and termed 'Agnipath' as a progressive step.

He also said the Government is making all efforts to secure the future of demobilised 'Agniveers' and listed schemes like reservation of jobs for them in the paramilitary forces, the Defence Ministry, and its Public Sector Undertakings, besides several other Ministries and States. Puri said some more concrete assurances were in the pipeline. As per the new policy, the selected 'Agniveers' will serve a four-year stint in the armed forces and 25 per cent of them will be retained for permanent service of 15 years or more with full pension benefits. In the first batch, 46,000 jawans

Recruitment... TMC leader's...

From Page 1

The second lot will come by February. He said the Army will hold 83 recruitment rallies and touch "every village" in the country.

The Army has uploaded the terms and conditions on its websites and the notification will be issued on Monday and on July 1, the registrations will commence, he said. The first lot of rallies are likely to be held in August and the candidates will have to pass the physical fitness and medical tests before appearing for the entrance examinations. Similarly, the IAF will start its recruitment process on June 24 online and a month later the entrance examinations will take place. The IAF hopes to start training the first batch by December end.

The Navy will also conduct the entrance examination online after issuing the notification on June 25 and hopes to begin training of the first batch, including women, by November at its training base INS Chilka in Odisha.

From Page 1

The CBI had earlier filed a charge-sheet before a special court at Ansool alleging that Haque was the mastermind of the illegal cattle trade, adding how he got active assistance from accused like TMC youth leader Vinay Mishra and his brother Vikas Mishra.

They along with a senior BSF official who is currently in CBI custody had formed a massive cattle and coal-smuggling racket.

Vinay Mishra, also named in multi-crore coal smuggling cases, enjoyed a close relationship with TMC MP and party all-India general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, sources allege.

In fact, he was made the State Youth TMC's vice-president due to his close connections with the top leadership, insiders say. Mishra has reportedly fled to Bhaniatu, a South Asian island country in the Indian Ocean. His younger brother Vikas is presently in CBI custody.

PM inaugurates ₹920 cr Pragati Maidan corridor project

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday inaugurated the Rs 920 crore Pragati Maidan integrated transit corridor project, which includes a 1.4 km tunnel and five underpasses on Mathura Road.

He called it the Centre's gift of modern infrastructure to the national Capital and cited a number of initiatives, including Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressways, more than doubling of metro tracks in Delhi-NCR and the Delhi-Meerut highway, among other things, as steps taken by his government to solve the region's problems to make Delhi one of the better-connected capitals globally.

The new corridor will provide hassle-free and smooth access to the new world-class exhibition and convention centre being developed at Pragati Maidan, thereby facilitating

easy participation of exhibitors and visitors in the programmes being held at Pragati Maidan. Further, it will ensure hassle-free vehicular movement, helping save time and cost of commuters in a big way.

Speaking on the occasion, Modi said that the construction faced several difficulties given the complexity of the project involving one of the busiest routes in the national capital. But, this is new India, it resolves issues, takes new pledges, and to fulfil those pledges, it makes all efforts," he said while inaugurating the corridor. Union ministers Piyush Goyal, Hardeep Singh Puri, Som Parkash and Anupriya Patel were also present at the inauguration. Before inaugurating the integrated-transit corridor, the prime minister inspected the six-lane tunnel between NSIC Purana Quila Road and Pragati Power Station to take stock of

the artwork and paintings on the walls of the tunnel.

The Prime Minister said, "Today, Delhi has got a beautiful gift of modern infrastructure from the Centre. It was not easy to complete this integrated project in such a short time, as the surrounding roads are among the busiest roads in the capital. Every day lakhs of people pass through it". He said that people of Delhi and NCR had to suffer a lot due to traffic congestion in ITO and nearby areas. "The 1.5 km long tunnel will provide relief to thousands of people coming from east Delhi, Noida, Ghaziabad (and commuting to central Delhi). This integrated corridor will help people save time and it will also save fuel. In the presentation it was said that 55 lakh litres of fuel will be saved," said Modi.

The challenging project has been completed in a short span despite all the hurdles,

including Covid-19 and court cases, said the PM. "This corridor is part of the project to transform Pragati Maidan as per the requirements of the 21st century," said the Prime Minister.

Modi also suggested that the tunnel be closed to traffic for four-five hours once a week and instead educational tours be organised for school-children at the site to teach them art, culture and festivals of the country.

Modi said that the central government has planned several road infrastructure projects such as highways (Delhi-Meerut, Delhi Mumbai, Delhi-Jaipur) and Rapid Rail Transit Systems to "make Delhi one of the better connected capitals in the world".

The integrated transit corridor is part of the Pragati Maidan revamp project and is aimed at easing movement in and around the exhibition cen-

tre. The main tunnel, which passes through Pragati Maidan, connects Ring Road with India Gate and opens on Purana Qila Road.

There are six underpasses

-- four on Mathura Road, one on Bhairon Marg, and one at the intersection of Ring Road and Bhairon Marg -- constructed as part of the project. At present, traffic from the W-

point near ITO to Sunder Nagar goes through five signals, which causes frequent snarls along the key stretch.

The project was initially expected to be completed by

2019 but missed at least six deadlines. The tunnel will also serve as an alternative route to Bhairon Marg and is expected to take more than half of the traffic load of Bhairon Marg.

Modi picks up litter at tunnel

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A video of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi picking up litter at the newly-launched tunnel at Pragati Maidan has gone viral on social media on Sunday. In the video PM Modi is seen picking up a discarded water bottle and other pieces of trash with his hands while he inspected the tunnel. The Prime Minister has always stressed on keeping the surroundings clean.

Tweeting a video of this, Amit Malviya, said,



"Commitment to cleanliness is an article of faith for the Prime Minister. Even at the inauguration of the ITPO tunnel, he

made it a point to pick up garbage and lead by example." Back in October 2019, PM Modi, during his tour in Mamallapuram for an informal summit with Chinese president Xi Jinping, had released a video of his morning walk ritual on his Twitter profile.

In the footage, he could be seen picking up plastic bottles, plates and other garbage which was thrown on the beach outside the Taj Fisherman's Cove Resort and Spa from a beach in Mamallapuram while jogging.

Rajinder Nagar bypoll: BJP candidate Bhatia holds massive roadshow

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Rajinder Nagar by-election, the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) candidate Rajesh Bhatia on Sunday led a massive roadshow along with the Union Minister Meenakshi Lekhi. Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta, Member of Parliament Manoj Tiwari.

Thousands of people were gathered in the area including party workers and several slogans were shouted out 'jeete-ga bhai jeete-ga Rajinder Nagar ka beta jeete-ga'.

Bhatia started his day by meeting morning walkers at Talkatora Park which was later followed by door to door campaign in New Rajinder Nagar and Dusghara Village.

Bhatia also assured the people that he will do all he can to make Rajinder Nagar a model constituency like it was from 1993 to 2013.

Addressing thousands of people during the roadshow, Lekhi said that eight years back Rajinder Nagar was not only the cleanest and greenest area of Delhi with the best roads, water power, sports, and education infrastructure but its villages like Todapur, Dusghara, Naraina were model villages.

"Over the past eight years, this constituency is in its worse state due to negligence of the two Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLAs of the constituency.

Gupta said that the people of Rajinder Nagar are fed up with filthy sewer system main-



tenance and erratic water supply by Delhi Jal Board (DJB). The people have made up their mind to defeat AAP this time.

Tiwari said thousands of migrant labourers live in this

assembly constituency and they have not forgotten how Delhi Government has let them down during the Covid lockdown. They will vote in favour of the BJP and will defeat the AAP on 23rd June.

If you want hate to spread, vote for BJP, for progress vote for us: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

For the third consecutive day, the AAP national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal took out a roadshow in Rajinder Nagar in support of his party's candidate Durgesh Pathak ahead of bypolls scheduled for June 23.

During the roadshow, beside the road, the crowd standing in gullies, staircases or balconies waved at the Chief Minister as his cavalcade moved forward. The entire area was dotted with blue, white and yellow festoons and balloons and punctuated by messages in support of AAP.

Atop his car, with candidate Pathak by his side, Kejriwal greeted the public and sought blessings from the

residents. Senior AAP leaders and MLA Saurabh Bhardwaj and Sanjeev Jha as part of the cavalcade also appealed to the public to vote for AAP once again while the area reverberated with chants in support of AAP.

"I have come here to urge you to exercise your electoral power. Everybody has to cast their votes. You have to press the 'Jhaadu' button. I want to thank everybody for excessively voting for us in the previous assembly elections. You showered love and showed faith in us in abundance," said Kejriwal, while addressing the crowd.

"On June 23 June, you have to make us victorious by a double margin than what we got last time. We are working day and night to bring progress



in Delhi. We have transformed the schools to ensure a bright future of your children. We are providing interrupted supply of electricity at free of cost. Women can travel free of cost

in Delhi Government buses," said Kejriwal.

"A lot of development has been made but I acknowledge that some issues need to be addressed.

"There is a shortage of water supply but I am working on it and I assure that it will get fixed soon," said Kejriwal.

Taking dig at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the AAP chief said if you want the hate to spread, vote for BJP and if you want to see progress and welfare, vote for us.

"I will resolve all the problems. This is what I have done ever since I came to power. It is my assurance. I believe in progress and not in picking fights. This time, give us so many votes that we win by a double margin than what we got last time," said Kejriwal.

L-G visits 'Garden of Five Senses'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With an aim to convert the national Capital into a "City of Gardens", Delhi's Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Sunday visited the "Garden of Five Senses" and took the stock of the redevelopment work planned at the garden. The Lieutenant Governor has directed officials to complete the redevelopment work within six months. The deadline of the redevelopment of the project is October 2024.

According to the statement released by the LG office, the proposed redevelopment work includes providing easy access to the Garden, creating public amenities, e-carts and art installations, landscape upgradation, solar powered electric installations, new water harvesting system, modernized garbage disposal, online ticketing, and CCTV surveillance within the premises," it said.

"While appreciating the unique concept and aesthetic appeal of the Garden which

is catering to Delhi's need for leisure and recreational public spaces, Saxena directed the officials to create better public utilities, at the earliest, so as to cause least inconvenience to the visitors," the statement said.

"Th LG also asked the officials to develop a dedicated herbal garden on the lines of 'Arogya Van' and various other gardens developed at the Statue of Unity at Kevadia in Gujarat that houses thousands of ornamental flowers and a variety of rare and exquisite medicinal herbs," it said.

"With the abundance of flora in the garden and its surroundings, the LG also instructed setting up an apirary at the garden that would be a new learning experience for the school children while also creating awareness about beekeeping and its significance to the ecosystem," it stated.

Earlier, the Lieutenant Governor visited MCD Partibha school in Ashok Vihar along with top officials of the corporation. Addressing the teachers and



staff present on the occasion, Saxena promised to take schools run by the MCD to highest standards by providing the best teaching, technological and physical infrastructure to them.

For this purpose, as a pilot 25 schools had already been identified and work will be

started in them at the earliest. The same would gradually be undertaken in all other remaining schools run by MCD, he informed. The LG ensured the teachers that he will do everything possible to provide them with an enabling work atmosphere and exhorted them to put in their best by remaining con-

sistently updated and proactive, so that their students are shaped mentally as well as academically at par with the best amongst their peers.

This visit was to carry forward his "agenda of taking the MCD and the institutions under it to newer heights in a mission mode," it said.

BJP wants to convert Armed forces into security guard training centres through Agnipath: Singh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) senior leader and Rajya Sabha MP, Sanjay Singh, on Sunday alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) wants to convert the Armed Forces into security guard training centres through its Agnipath scheme.

Addressing a press conference, Singh, who was joined by the aspirants who had cleared all the stages of recruitment exams of paramilitary forces including ITBP, CRPF, Assam rifles in 2018 said that in 2018, around 60000 vacancies were announced and 55912 were selected and 4000 who, despite clearing all the stages (physical, written and medical) were left to lead a life of despair.

"They protested against this decision for a year at Jantar Mantar. They held a strike at Samvidhan Chowk in Nagpur for 72 days. And 19 days ago, they marched to Delhi from Nagpur on foot and have reached here today. Many are on their way to reach Delhi.

What they are asking is just because they have cleared the exam in 2018. They are waiting for their appointment letter and they have been fooled multiple times," Singh alleged.

"When Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai was asked in the Parliament about the vacancies in paramilitary forces, he said that 1,11,000 posts are vacant. If that's the case, then why have they been left to lead a life of despair? I am asking the Prime Minister to respond to this," said Singh.

Speaking about the Centre government's Agniveer scheme, Singh said that the Prime Minister has converted the Armed Forces into a Private Security training centre for his industrialist friends.

"The youth who will leave the Armed Forces after four years of service will be jobless. They won't have a choice but to either live a life of destitute or commit suicide. At most, he will work as a security guard in a private company with a meager salary of ? 8000-10000 because with the qualification

of metric or intermediate pass, they cannot become IAS, IPS, doctor or engineer," said Singh.

"Their claim of providing ? 10-12 lakh as Seva Nidhi is a sham.

"I have studied the scheme thoroughly. It says that not 75 per cent but all the agniveers will be retired after four years and they have to reapply to be a part of 25 per cent who will be made permanent.

"They will be inducted as per the available vacancies and they are not bound to hire 25 per cent. The upper limit is 25 per cent and the lower limit can be as low as two per cent," said Singh.

"The scheme also says that if they lose their lives during the action, it will not be considered that they made supreme sacrifice for the nation.

"Their families will not get any pension as well," said Singh adding that BJP is not getting tired of enlisting the benefits but the reality is that if someone becomes an MP or MLA for even a single day, they get a lifetime pension.

Capital reports 1,530 fresh Covid cases, three deaths

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi on Sunday reported 1,530 fresh coronavirus cases with three deaths, while the positivity rate stood at 8.41 per cent, according to the data released by the city health department. The national Capital on Saturday reported 1,534 fresh coronavirus cases and three more deaths, while the positivity rate stood at 7.71 per cent.

On Friday, the national capital had logged 1,797 coronavirus cases, the highest in nearly four months, along with one fatality while the positivity rate had stood at 8.18 per cent.

This is the fourth consecutive day that Delhi has

recorded over 1,300 cases in a day. The capital has logged more than 1,000 daily cases for the fifth day on the trot.

Friday's figures were the highest since February 4, when the national capital logged 2,272 cases and 20 deaths while the positivity rate had stood at 3.85 per cent.

Also, the positivity rate on Friday was the highest since January 29, when 4,044 cases were recorded with a positivity rate of 8.60 per cent, while the city had registered 25 deaths.

The national capital recorded 1,323 new Covid cases and two deaths on Thursday, while the positivity rate stood at 6.69 per cent.

The fresh cases pushed Delhi's coronavirus tally to 19,20,559 while the death toll



rose to 26,229, the department said in its latest bulletin.

Delhi had reported 1,422 fresh COVID-19 cases and zero fatality on May 8, while the positivity rate was recorded at 5.34 per cent.

The city on May 1 had reported 1,485 fresh COVID-19 cases and zero fatality due to the viral disease, while the

positivity rate was recorded at 4.89 per cent, according to official data.

Despite the rise in the positivity rate, the city government is not implementing graded response action plan (GRAP) devised by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority since the hospital admissions are low.

Iranian arrested for posing as Intelligence agent, robbing foreign nationals

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

An Iranian national has been arrested by the Delhi Police for allegedly posing as an intelligence agent and robbing foreign nationals on the pretext of checking their bags for drugs and illegal currency, said officials on Sunday. The police said the accused and his associates often targeted foreign nationals near big hospitals. The accused, identified as Hossein Rezaferd Ahmad, came to India on a medical visa in May this year.

According to EshaPandey, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Southeast district, a complaint filed by a Sudanese national Mohd Bakryat Lajpat Nagar police station on June 16 in which the complainant alleged that he along with his wife was

returning home from a hospital in Greater Kailash when suddenly three people came in a car and stopped them.

"Thereafter, they introduced themselves as officials from the intelligence agency and started searching the victim's bag. After searching the bag, the accused fled away from the spot. When the complainant looked into his hand bag, he found that currency, including Rs 50,000, USD 6500 and some Sudanese Pound, was missing".

Accordingly, a case under section 379 (punishment for theft) of the Indian Penal Code was registered at Lajpat Nagar police station and investigation of the case was taken up," said the DCP.

"The CCTV footage of the cameras installed near the place of incident was analysed and a



suspected car was identified. When the owner of the car was contacted, he said he had sold the vehicle around three months ago to one Nawab. On reaching Nawab's last address, it was found that he had already left Gurgaon. Then Nawab's mobile number was put on surveillance," said the DCP.

"The team finally succeeded in arresting Nawab's co-associate Ahmad and he was

taken into police custody. During the course of investigation, Ahmed confessed to his crime. Police also recovered USD 2,000, 4,000 Sudanese Pound, 28,000 Iranian Riyal, 200 Saudi Riyal, 5,000 INR and a car used in the commission of crime from his possession," said the DCP adding that efforts have been taken to trace the associates of the Iranian national.

Agnipath destructive for youth, Army: Priyanka

Recognise ‘fake nationalists’, ensure that new Govt formed which shows real patriotism: Gandhi to protesters



Congress leaders Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, KC Venugopal, Sachin Pilot, Deepender Singh Hooda and others shout slogans during the Congress satyagraha against the Central Government's Agnipath scheme, at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Sunday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Stepping up its attack on the Centre, the Congress on Sunday held a satyagraha here in support of those protesting against the Government's Agnipath scheme with party leader Priyanka Gandhi urging youth to recognise "fake nationalists" and ensure that a new Government is formed in the country which shows "real patriotism".

She alleged the new military recruitment scheme would be destructive for the youth and

the Army. Several top party leaders, including Priyanka Gandhi, AICC general secretary organisation K C Venugopal, party's leader in Lok Sabha Adir Ranjan Chowdhury, Harish Rawat, Communications department head Jairam Ramesh, Salman Khurshid, Sachin Pilot, Deepender Hooda and Ajay Maken, participated in the 'Satyagraha' held at Jantar Mantar.

While Congress chief Sonia Gandhi is being treated at a hospital for a lower respiratory tract infection and post-

Covid symptoms, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi was not present at the satyagraha. Congress leaders and supporters criticised the BJP-led Central Government and said the Agnipath scheme is not beneficial for the country's youth and will also jeopardise national security.

"There is no bigger patriot than you. I want to tell you, open your eyes and recognise the fake nationalists and fake patriots. The entire country and the Congress are with you in your struggle," Priyanka said in her remarks aimed at the

youths protesting the Agnipath scheme. In her address, the Congress general secretary also recited a few lines from Harivansh Rai Bachchan's Hindi poem 'Agnipath' to urge the youths to persevere and keep struggling peacefully. "The name of the poem has been given to such a scheme that will destroy the youth. This scheme will destroy the Army. Recognise this Government's intentions, she said.

"In a democratic way and by walking on the path of truth and non-violence, bring down this Government. "Your objective should be (to ensure) that such a government is formed in the country which shows real patriotism and takes forward the poor and the youth of the country," Priyanka said. She also appealed to those protesting to not resort to violence. "I want the youth to know that we understand your pain.

"This is your country and this country's property is yours. So, it is your responsibility to protect it. I appeal to you to hold peaceful protests but not stop. It is your duty to protect the country's democracy. "Every leader of the Congress will support you in fulfilling this duty," she said. The Congress leader alleged that the government is working for big industrialists.

"I appeal to you to understand the situations around you (and) what the government is doing. This government is not working for the poor and its people but for big industrialists," Priyanka said. Addressing the gathering, Sachin Pilot said if the Government wanted to save money then it should not have

gone ahead with the Central Vista project and bought two planes, that would have saved thousands of crores.

"But they played with the dreams of the youth by bringing Agnipath scheme. It should be taken back. Youths should also not resort to violence but protest peacefully. Our party is with them," he said. In his

remarks, Hooda said that an 'Agniveer' in the fourth year will become insecure about his future. What will happen to the security of a country whose soldier is insecure about his future, he asked. Slamming the BJP over its defence of the Agnipath, he said foreign models of the US and Israel won't work in India. Former

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Harish Rawat said joining Army was a tradition in his state and was not seen just as a means to earn a living. "Every regiment has a history of valor and you want to destroy that history. We condemn this decision which has been taken without consideration," he said.

Opp politicising issue to destabilise Govt: Patra

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Against the Agnipath military recruitment scheme, the BJP on Sunday accused the Opposition parties of doing politics on issues of national security and armed forces just to destabilise the Government.

Terming the Congress 'satyagraha' in support of Agnipath protests "pure politics", he claimed it was "forcing" officials of the three services of the military to appeal to people not to get involved in arson.

Congress MPs and leaders sat on a 'satyagraha' at the Jantar Mantar in Delhi on Sunday in solidarity with the youths protesting the Centre's newly announced Agnipath scheme for recruitment in the armed forces. At the protest,



Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra urged the youth to recognise "fake nationalists" and ensure that a new government is formed in the country which shows "real patriotism".

She alleged the new military recruitment scheme would be destructive for the youth and the Army. Referring to her speech, Patra said, "Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has stated that they aim to topple the government. So, it is quite clear they

are not concerned about the armed forces and the youth of this country. It is sad." "There should be no politics on subjects of national importance.

But politics is happening on such a subject and officers of the armed forces are having to come forward and explain (the Agnipath scheme) to them," he said. "Where has the opposition gone astray? What does the opposition want after all?" the BJP spokesperson posed. mAsserting the Agnipath recruitment scheme is a much-needed reform, Patra said it aims to give the Indian armed forces a youthful profile.

This issue dates back to 1989. It was then contemplated to reduce average age of the armed forces, he claimed. The average age of the Indian Army now is 32. The Agnipath

scheme will bring it down to 26. All committees after the Kargil war have suggested such a reform in the armed forces, Patra said.

Applauding three forces for explaining whole scheme and its benefits, he said took a swipe at the opposition, saying these were same parties that had questioned the surgical strike, the air strike and the Rafale jet deal.

"They did politics on surgical strike, air strike and Rafale jet deal. They only suffered after that as people of this country have full faith in armed forces and Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said. On issues of safety and security of the country "we all should stand tall, united as Indians, not as individuals from these political parties", Patra said.



Om Birla: MPs should avoid making statements that hurt religious feelings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Underlining that all religions are equal before the Constitution, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla Sunday said MPs should avoid making provocative statements about any religion and maintain the dignity and decorum of parliament at all times.

Birla, who completes three years in office on Sunday, thanked leaders of all political parties for contributing towards making his journey so far successful, and said it was a big achievement that the House's average productivity during the period has been above 100 per cent.

The House has functioned for nearly 1,000 hours across eight sessions so far in the 17th Lok Sabha, he said.

Terming discussions and debates "ornament of a democracy," Birla told PTI in an interview that parliamentarians should avoid unnecessary aggression and shouting while speaking in parliament.

"Discussion, debate are crucial parts of a parliamentary democracy. Sarcasm, taking digs at each other are also acceptable during debates. But unnecessary aggression, shouting and interrupting each other should be avoided by MPs in parliament," Birla said.

He further said parliament should not be used as a platform to make baseless allegations and counter-allegations by political leaders.

On the question of heated debates among politicians these days on religions, Birla suggested members of parliaments should refrain from making provocative statements against any religion as all religions are equal before the Constitution.

"While speaking on religious issues MPs should keep in mind that their statements do not hurt the feelings and sentiments of any other religion. We all should diligently follow this practice and convention. Our Constitution gives everyone the right to practice their own religion," Birla said. Asserting that parliament functions according to the Constitution, Birla said, "Provocative remarks against any religion should not be made in parliament. Its dignity and decorum should be maintained all the time."

Asked about Facebook whistle-blower Sophie Zhang expressing her desire to depose before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on IT but not being asked by the authorities here to appear, Birla said there are rules and regulations in place to call someone to depose before a parliamentary panel. "It is not appropriate that someone says 'I have not been called by the committee'.

There are systems and procedures to call someone before the parliamentary panel. And the final decision lies with the Lok Sabha speaker," Birla said. Talking about the new parliament building being built under the central vista project, Birla said he is confident that the Winter Session this year would be held in the new structure.

"The work on new building is going on in full swing. It will show the glimpses of both modern India and our rich history. It will display culture of all states of India," Birla said. Birla, a second-term MP of BJP from Rajasthan, was unanimously elected as Lok Sabha Speaker on June 19, 2019.

Withdraw Agnipath scheme immediately: Tejashwi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday questioned the silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the Agnipath scheme and demanded its immediate withdrawal. The RJD leader also asked 20 questions from the Government on the scheme.

Addressing a Press conference at his sister Misa Bharati's residence in Delhi, Tejashwi said there were many doubts about the scheme in the minds of the youth and demanded that it be withdrawn.

The RJD leader also announced through social media that the MLAs of 'Mahagathbandhan' in Bihar Assembly will march from the Vidhan Sabha to the Raj Bhavan in Patna on Wednesday demanding jobs for the youth and the roll back of the Agneepath scheme.

Yadav also appealed to the youth to protest peacefully against the scheme and shun violence.



Tejashwi asked whether this was a MGNREGA-like initiative for the educated youth or there was a "hidden agenda" of the RSS in it. "Why is Prime Minister Narendra Modi silent on the whole issue," he asked. He said the government talked about 'one rank, one pension', but has come up with a scheme of "no rank, no pension".

The former deputy chief minister of Bihar posed 20 questions to the government, asserting that there were many doubts in the minds of the people which should be cleared by the government.

Yadav asked why Agnipath

was not for officers to be recruited in the military. "Protests are taking place in many parts of the country and there is anger among those who want to become soldiers," he said.

Tejashwi refuted the BJP's charge that the RJD was behind arson and violence in Bihar and said the Centre is responsible for it. "It's their habit to blame the opposition for their failure," he said.

The RJD leader said that the onus of all the protests taking place in Bihar, and across the country, is on the Modi government and its inability to explain all controversial schemes to the people of the country— be it any schemes related to farmers, students, youths and others.

While urging the Centre to stop playing with the future of India, the Leader of Opposition in the Bihar Assembly also exhorted the youths of his state and other parts of the country to ensure that their protests don't turn violent under any circumstances.

Tejashwi Yadav's 20 questions to the Centre:

- ❌ Will the Agniveers get the same 90 holidays as the normal soldiers get in a year?
- ❌ If the Agnipath scheme is in accordance with the law, why are only soldiers and not officers being recruited on contract?
- ❌ The Centre should clarify whether this scheme is akin to an MNREGA for the educated youth or a hidden agenda of RSS.
- ❌ The Centre should clarify whether the payment received by the Agniveer during his tenure and after the completion of 4 years will be taxed?
- ❌ If the government considers Agniveers as soldiers, will they get gratuity? Has the tenure been reduced to 4 years to save gratuity?
- ❌ Will the government give Agniveers facilities like canteens and the medical treatment to which ex-servicemen are entitled?
- ❌ Did the government take

feedback from defence experts and experienced army personnel before framing this scheme? Was their suggestion implemented?

- ❌ Is this not the first government scheme where there is a 75% guarantee of unemployment after 4 years?
- ❌ Under this scheme, a youth aged 18 will get a job and retire at the age of 22. Will this not impact his higher education?
- ❌ Can a law and order situation arise in the country as a significant number of 22-year-olds having received weapon training retire?
- ❌ Why did a government that talked about One Rank, One Pension have now resorted to No Rank, No Pension?
- ❌ The government is saying that it will recruit only a few thousand for a period of 4 years. Isn't this a betrayal of the youths?
- ❌ What will the youths do if the Indian Railways and Army start giving contractual employment?
- ❌ If BJP likes contractual

employment so much, will all its Ministers, MPs, MLAs and office-bearers get their children to resign from government jobs?

- ❌ Should the Centre interfere in a matter concerning the Armed Forces?
- ❌ Why doesn't the government properly address the complex issue of unemployment? Should the government not think about the issue of unemployment sensitively?
- ❌ The BJP government should answer— aren't 70% of the youths not worried about jobs now?
- ❌ Isn't the government responsible for the violence and unrest arising out of unemployment?
- ❌ 10 lakhs posts are lying vacant in government departments. Are the youths and the opposition responsible for keeping these posts vacant for 8 years?
- ❌ Did the BJP government not promise the youths 2 crore jobs, 80 crore jobs till 2022, Rs.15 lakh in bank account and good days?

4 cr experienced long Covid symptoms: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

If you have recovered from Covid-19 but are still facing health issues such as fatigue, respiratory problems, and forgetfulness, then you are not alone. Nearly four crore people have experienced these symptoms of long Covid since 2020 in India alone, according to a global study.

A paper — 'A global systematic analysis of the occurrence, severity, and recovery pattern of long COVID in 2020 and 2021' published by a group of researchers from various universities across the globe, and from Global Burden of Disease Study (GBD), a collaboration of over 3,600 researchers from 145 countries highlights the need to ensure

rehabilitation of those facing long Covid-19. The researchers put various long-term effects of Covid-19 into three categories — fatigue, cognitive problems and ongoing respiratory issues. They found that 144.7 million people experienced one or more of these three symptoms three months after infection, in 2020 and 2021.

Most cases arose from milder infections. Twelve months after infection, recovery was not seen in 15.1% of the cases. They found that the most common long Covid symptom was respiratory trouble (89.3%), followed by post-acute fatigue syndrome (78.9%) and cognitive syndrome (55.2%). They also found that globally, more women (63.2%) than men were affected by

long Covid. The paper, which was published on medRxiv (a free online archive and distribution server for complete but unpublished manuscripts in medical, clinical and related health sciences), said a substantial number of people with long Covid need rehabilitative care and support to transition back into workplace or education when symptoms start to wane.

Those with milder acute Covid-19 cases had a quicker estimated recovery 3.99 months than those admitted for acute infection 8.84 months. At 12 months, 15.1 per cent continued to experience long Covid symptoms. The risk of long Covid was found to be greater among females between 20 and 29 years and in those

with more severe initial infection. Further, the researchers also found that long Covid also affected "a lower but substantial number of children", while severe acute infection has been very uncommon at younger ages.

The researchers said these differences suggest that underlying mechanism of long Covid may differ from that of severity of acute infection. "The occurrence of debilitating ongoing symptoms of Covid-19 is common.

Knowing how many people are affected, and for how long, is important to plan for rehabilitative services and support to return to social activities, places of learning, and workplace when symptoms start to wane," they added.

Sickle Cell Disease continues to remain health challenge

30% of children die before reaching adulthood in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Social stigma and ignorance around the Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) continue to remain a public health challenge in India which has the second-highest burden of genetic blood disorder after Nigeria. Moreover, even as various states have undertaken screening programmes, still there is no central database for sickle cell carriers and diseased. Tribal populations are

the worst hit with this debilitating and painful disease with children being at the receiving end. Before reaching the age of two, 20% of tribal children with sickle cell disease die, and 30% of children die before reaching adulthood.

As per doctors, there may be 18 million Sickle Cell Traits (SCT) and 1.4 million SCD patients among the tribal population. "There is a need to have a comprehensive care model for SCD," said Dr. Rahul Bhargava, Principal Director, Hematologist Department, Fortis Hospital in Gurugram, Haryana.

In this regard, the Union Tribal Ministry has been taking steps to take action on the prevention and elimination of sickle cell disease in a mission

mode. Anil Kumar Jha, Secretary of Tribal Affairs stressed on the need for database management and elimination plans for the disease.

He also informed that the Ministry would support the initiative of IGIB on research on CRISPER -technology involving gene-editing after consultation with the Department of Science and Technology, ICMR, and Union Health Ministry.

According to officials, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs is also working on a road map for the management, control and eradication of Sickle Cell disease. The action plan will be implemented in coordination with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, State Governments, Organizations

working on SCD and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), he said.

Characterized by repeated episodes of debilitating pain, SCD can lead to serious health complications including pneumonia, bloodstream infections, stroke, and acute & chronic pain.

The disease is said to have a higher prevalence in Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Rajasthan which is referred to as the sickle cell belt.

This condition is most common in tribal communities in India but is gradually finding its way throughout because of migration into the cities, said Dr Tulika Seth, Professor of Hematology at All India



Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi.

She also felt that due to social stigma, people are reluctant to undergo pre-marital counseling so that it is understood and timely diagnosis is undertaken for appropriate management conditions. Hydroxyurea is an effective drug that reduces important

component care. Other therapies include prescription antibiotics to combat infections and vitamin supplements to help generate red blood cells. "Initiatives such as intensive prenatal and newborn screening must be mandatory along with providing Pneumococcal vaccination to adult patients under doctor's guidance.

UJVN LTD.
H.O.: 'UJJWAL', Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephone : 0135-2763808 & Fax : 0135- 2763507
CIN No. U40101UR20019SC025896, Website: www.ujvn.com

Letter No.345
Office of the EE(IC&CM) Ganga Bhawan, Yamuna Colony, Dehradun, invites online bids from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:
Tender No: 04/EE(IC&CM)/2022-23
Name of work :Procurement of new Transformer Oil for various Power Stations of UJVN Ltd. for the F.Y.2022-23
Estimated cost : 66.06,165.00 GST extra
Date of availability of bid documents on website : 18-06-2022 from 16:00Hrs.
Last date for submission of bids on website : 11-07-2022 up to 16:00 Hrs.
For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal <http://uktenders.gov.in>

e-Tender Notice
Dated 18.06.2022

EE(IC&CM)

"Avoid Wasteful use of Electricity"

4 ultras killed in separate encounters in Kashmir

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Ahead of the beginning of the Amarnath yatra from June 30, the security forces have further intensified their anti-terrorist operations across Kashmir valley to flush out foreign and local terrorists from their safe hideouts.

On Sunday, a joint team of security forces gunned down four more terrorists including a Pakistani in two separate encounters in North and South Kashmir districts of Kupwara and Kulgam respectively.

So far around 115 terrorists have been eliminated in sustained anti-terrorist operations since January 1, 2022.

To ensure peaceful conduct of the yatra additional companies of the para military forces have been rushed to the Kashmir valley to plug the gaps in the three tier security ring in and around base camps, shelter points, community centres, yatra trek etc.

Tensions prevailed as the region also witnessed a spike in

targeted killings of minority population and off duty security personnel. Despite this the traffic footfall this season touched new records.

Around two dozen incidents of targeted killings have been reported across different districts of Kashmir in which 23 personnel including Kashmiri pandit migrant employee,a bank manager from Rajasthan, non-local labourers, a scheduled caste lady teacher from Jammu, a famous TV from artist from Budgam and policemen were killed in cold blood by hybrid terrorists.

According to Vijay Kumar, Inspector General of Police (Kashmir), "A Pakistani terrorist affiliated with Lashkar-e-Toiba has been killed. Two to three terrorists along with arrested terrorist are trapped in an ongoing encounter in Kupwara border district of North Kashmir."

The identity of the second slain terrorist was yet to be ascertained. According to a police spokesman, the opera-



tion was launched in the area on the basis of inputs shared by an arrested terrorist Showket Ahmed Sheikh in Lolab area of Kupwara. "During search of hideouts, hiding terrorists fired upon joint search parties. In response the security forces also retaliated. Initially, one terrorist got killed. The arrested terrorist also got trapped. In a separate tweet, Kashmir Zone police said, "Another terrorist was eliminated while heavy

firing was going on in the area". In a separate encounter in DH Pora area of Kulgam, two terrorists one each belonging to Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorist outfit were gunned down on Sunday. Police has identified both the slain terrorists as Harris Sharief of Srinagar (LeT) & Zakir Padder of Kulgam (JeM). They were both categorised as 'C' category terrorists, police spokesman added.

No illegality in West Bengal Govt's Duare Ration scheme: Calcutta HC

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court has held that there is no illegality in the West Bengal Duare Ration scheme, under which the Mamata Banerjee Government delivers food-grains through the public distribution system at the doorsteps of beneficiaries.

Passing judgement on a plea challenging the state government's Duare Ration scheme, Justice Krishna Rao noted that on an earlier occasion, too, fair price shop dealers had filed petitions on similar issue, but the high court, even then, did not interfere with the Duare Ration Scheme.

Justice Rao, in the judgement passed on June 16, observed that as per provisions of the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, it is the obligation of the state government to ensure actual delivery or supply of the foodgrains to the entitled persons at prices specified. The court held that the state government's decision to deliver foodgrains at the doorsteps of the beneficiaries



"cannot be said to be in violation of any provision of the NFSA".

A writ application filed before the court prayed that a notification by the state government on September 13, 2021 which amended a clause of the West Bengal Public Distribution System (Maintenance and Control) Order, 2013, be declared as "unconstitutional and ultra vires (beyond powers) to

Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and National Food Security Act, 2013.

The petitioners' counsel submitted that the central government has authority for regulating and prohibiting the production, supply and distribution of essential commodities.

He said that the central government by way of notification delegates the power to

the state but in this case, it has not delegated any power to the State of West Bengal.

Advocate General S N Mookherjee, appearing for the state government, prayed that the Duare Ration Scheme is an administrative order under the purview of the NFSA, 2013 which makes the state government responsible for actual delivery of grains to the beneficiaries.

Presidential poll: Mamata unlikely to attend Opp meet convened by Pawar

PTI ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is unlikely to participate in the Opposition meeting convened by NCP chief Sharad Pawar on June 21 on the upcoming Presidential poll due to prior engagements, a TMC functionary said on Sunday.

A senior TMC leader will be present at the proposed meeting, he said.

"Mamata Banerjee will not be able to attend the meeting as she has some prior engagements. She has also conveyed it to Sharad Pawar ji. But a leader from our party will be present there," a senior TMC functionary said.

During the first such meeting called by Banerjee in Delhi on June 15 to formulate a



strategy for the upcoming Presidential poll, it has been decided that a common candidate, who will "uphold the democratic ethos of the country", will be chosen as the opposition nominee.

As many as 17 parties attended the meeting.

Leaders of the Congress, Samajwadi Party, NCP, DMK,

RJD and the Left parties attended the over two-hour-long meeting called by the Trinamool Congress supremo, while the AAP, SAD, AIMIM, Telangana Rashtra Samithi and Odisha's ruling BJD skipped it.

Leaders of Shiv Sena, CPI, CPI(M), CPI(ML), National Conference, PDP, JD(S), RSP, IUML, RLD and the JMM were among those present.

The Presidential election is conducted indirectly through an electoral college consisting of members of Parliament and the legislative assemblies of states and Union territories.

In an electoral college of around 10.86 lakh votes, the BJP-led alliance is estimated to have more than 48 per cent of the votes and is hopeful that non-aligned regional parties will support it.

Astrologers busy as Prez poll round the corner

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Ace astrologers in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are busy as election to the highest office in the country is round the corner. Interestingly, even persons who pontificate scientific temperament and exhort people

not to be carried away by the prophecies or predictions by astrologers are queuing up before the latter to know what the stars foretell about the possibilities of them making it to the Rashtrapathi Bhavan.

"A gentleman from Tamil Nadu calls me up on alternate nights to find out the chances of him being fielded as a can-

didate and the prospectus of him winning the election. Though I told him not to be carried away by what the political leaders tell, he is all set to taste defeat in the eventuality of a contest," a leading astrologer in Kerala told The Pioneer. He insisted that the name of the client should be kept as a secret.



The astrologer was reluctant to talk about the person

who would be sworn in as the next president. "The names of the candidates are yet to be announced. Once the name is announced, we have to study details like the date, time and place of birth of the candidate. Then only we can say with certainty whether the person would make it in the race," said the astrologer.

Maha MLC polls: CM Thackeray rules out chances of cross-voting

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday said the State Legislative Council elections to be held on Monday will show that there will be no split in his party-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) and ruled out chances of cross-voting.

"We have kept all our MLAs together for tomorrow's Legislative Council polls. This is called democracy in today's time," Thackeray said addressing the Sena Shiv MLAs and senior party leaders on the occasion of the Sena's 56th foundation day.

The party has to work hard to get more MLAs elected in future, said Thackeray, whose party shares power with the NCP and Congress in the state.

Thackeray also said he is not worried about Monday's MLC elections.

"The defeat in the Rajya Sabha polls (held on June 10 for



six seats in Maharashtra) was unfortunate. The Shiv Sena votes were

not split in the RS polls. We have an idea of what went wrong. Hence, there is no question of cross-voting tomorrow," he said.

The Shiv Sena doesn't have traitors in its midst, he asserted.

Tomorrow's election will show that there is no split among us," he said.

Thackeray expressed confidence that both the Shiv Sena candidates - Sachin Ahir and Amshya Padvi - in the MLC polls will emerge as new lead-

ers.

The CM also said he had spoken to sitting Sena MLCs and senior leaders Subhash Desai and Diwakar Raote, who readily agreed to step aside.

Thackeray said he has not re-nominated Desai and Raote for another term in the Legislative Council.

"But, they are completely committed to the Shiv Sena's cause since they belong to the original team of (late Sena supremo) Balasaheb Thackeray when they formed the party. I will not allow them to retire. I want them for strengthening the Shiv Sena," he said.

Owaisi seeks Nupur's arrest, says she will be projected as 'big leader'

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Chief of AIMIM (All-India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen) Asaduddin Owaisi has demanded that suspended BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma be arrested for her controversial remarks on Prophet Mohammad, and said she would be projected as a "big leader" and it is also possible she may also be made the Delhi Chief Ministerial candidate in the coming months.

"BJP is protecting Nupur Sharma. We are demanding the BJP and the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi), but he doesn't speak. We tell the Prime Minister to arrest her. We demand action against her and her arrest as per law," the Hyderabad MP said, addressing a public meeting organised by United Action Forum here on Saturday.

He further said, "I know that after six-seven

months Nupur Sharma will be projected as a very big leader. It is also possible that she will be made the Delhi Chief Minister candidate. This is the reality of our country. The more you abuse Muslims, higher the post you get."

Owaisi said a complaint was given and an FIR was registered in Hyderabad against Nupur Sharma.

"We would like to tell our (Hyderabad) Police Commissioner and the Chief Minister of this State (Telangana) to send police to Delhi and bring 'Mohtarma'. Do something. What will happen only with an FIR? At least say that you will be going (to Delhi). You should bring her (Nupur Sharma)," Owaisi demanded.

Owaisi said if someone says anything against Prime Minister Modi, (Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister) Yogi Adityanath, (West Bengal Chief Minister) Mamata Banerjee, it is immediate jail (one is arrested).

आत्मबल एवं साधना की शक्ति योग

हरियाणा सरकार

75
आज़ादी का
अमृत महोत्सव

अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय योग दिवस

की देशवासियों को शुभकामनाएं

'Yoga for Humanity'

“योग हमें स्ट्रेस से स्ट्रेंथ की ओर, नेगेटिविटी से क्रिएटिविटी का रास्ता दिखाता है। हमें खुद भी योग का संकल्प लेना है, और अपनों को भी इस संकल्प से जोड़ना है। 'योग से सहयोग तक' का ये मंत्र हमें एक नए भविष्य का मार्ग दिखाएगा, मानवता को सशक्त करेगा।”

- नरेन्द्र मोदी

राज्य स्तरीय समारोह

स्थान - भीम स्टेडियम, जिला भिवानी

दिनांक - मंगलवार, 21 जून, 2022

समय - प्रातः 6:15 बजे

मुख्य अतिथि

श्री मनोहर लाल

मुख्यमंत्री, हरियाणा

(इस कार्यक्रम में 25,000 प्रतिभागी लेंगे हिस्सा)

जिला व ब्लॉक स्तर पर भी होंगे कार्यक्रम

सूचना, जन सम्पर्क एवं भाषा विभाग, हरियाणा

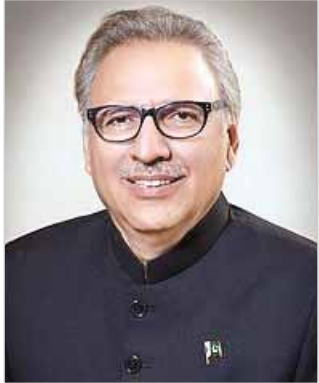
www.prharyana.gov.in | Follow us on [social media icons] @diprharyana


www.dailypioneer.com
facebook.com/dailypioneer | [@TheDailyPioneer](https://twitter.com/TheDailyPioneer) | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Back in favour?

The FATF comment is widely seen as a positive gesture towards Islamabad



Pakistan Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar recently claimed: "Pakistan is just one step away from exiting the grey list, God willing." Leaders from our western neighbour are not famous for being truthful, but her statement may be correct. The 'grey list' that Islamabad dreads is the "increased monitoring list", implying that the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has augmented a country's performance on measures against money laundering and terrorism financing. The FATF, set up in 1989, is an intergovernmental body to fight money laundering; today, combating terror finance is one of its major objectives. It sets international standards that aim to prevent these illegal activities and the harm they cause to society, the FATF website says. "As a policy-making body, the FATF works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas." Over 200 countries and jurisdictions are committed to implementing these reforms. It has developed the FATF Recommendations, or FATF Standards, which ensure a coordinated global response to prevent organised crime, corruption and terrorism. They help authorities go after the money of criminals dealing in illegal drugs, human trafficking and other crimes. The FATF also works to stop funding for weapons of mass destruction.

A recent FATF statement said that Pakistan has substantially completed its two action plans, though an onsite visit is necessary for verification. Further, it wants to ensure "that the necessary political commitment remains in place to sustain implementation and improvement in future". This is widely seen as a positive gesture towards Islamabad — and, concomitantly, negative *vis-à-vis* New Delhi. A couple of developments seem to have helped Pakistan. First is the ouster of Imran Khan as Prime Minister. He is known for his Islamist views and policies, earning him the moniker of 'Taliban Khan'. He has been especially critical of the United States. The Pakistani Army played a key role in removing him, thus earning Washington's gratitude. Given the US' power and influence worldwide, that gratitude may have translated into the softening of the FATF's stand. Secondly, India's neutralism and refusal to condemn Russian President Vladimir Putin's unprovoked war against Ukraine is a well-known fact. This angered the US-led West, which has not only denounced Putin's belligerence but also helped, and is helping, Ukraine in its resistance with military and humanitarian aid. While western nations haven't exactly taken any decisions to check or even slow down their various engagements with India — economic, technological, strategic and cultural — but the sharp divergence of views on this subject has cast its shadow on our ties with the US and the European Union. It appears that their displeasure has worked in Islamabad's favour. We hope that the FATF doesn't become more accommodating with Pakistan, for there it has done nothing to stop or scale down its aiding and abetting terror in India.

PICTALK



People enjoy a summer day at a bar at the river Spree in central Berlin, Germany

AP

Need for caution

Corona cases are rising again but there's no major concern of a deadly third wave

Coronavirus cases in India are again on the rise, though the number is still not alarmingly high. For the first time in months, the daily cases crossed the 10,000-mark this month and have remained over the 10k mark thereafter. The good news is that the fatality rate is still quite low and recoveries are showing significant improvement. Many reasons are being attributed to it by experts who feel that it is a new variant and the vaccine is not that effective against it. Besides, it happens to be a rainy season when immunity is generally low against all viruses, including the COVID variants. According to experts, the surge in the cases of Corona is due to Omicron sub-lineages. People have also started ignoring the COVID guidelines. They are behaving as if the pandemic is over once and for all. The experts feel that the dip in immunity, both natural as well as through vaccines, is reflected in the rise in the number of cases. Many reasons are being cited for vaccination not giving full protection against the virus — a higher gap in the second and third dose being a major reason.

Besides, the Government has also faltered on the policy front, like lack of clarity for the free third dose to below-60 population, no vaccination for below-12 children and a slow vaccination drive for the under-18. Experts, however, feel that there is no cause to panic even if the numbers rise. BA.4 and BA.5, which are now circulating, are known to have a marginally higher replication rate but the requirement for oxygen and hospitalisation is quite low. Moreover, they have an extremely low death rate. Also, the BA.1 and BA.2 variants, which caused the third wave in India, continue to be dominant. They account for over 30 per cent of the cases. The first case of BA.4 and BA.5 sub-variants of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 was first detected on May 22, less than a month ago. The good news, however, is that the current uptrend is losing steam as the weekly average growth in active cases has begun to decrease. The test positivity rate is also slowing down. There is no major concern of a deadly third wave but that is no reason to let the guard down!

The Chinese in a soup on Taiwan

To China, the Russian invasion is an excellent case study to understand the global appetite, tolerance and consequences of a belligerent action



BHOPINDER SINGH



The single-party regime of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has defied the hypothesis of American political scientist Barbara Geddes, who suggests that personalist regimes survive for about 15 years and single-party regimes, for about 25 years. CCP has reigned supreme (minor blip of 1989 Democracy Movement) and remained effectively unchallenged since October 1, 1949 (almost 73 years). Besides the infamous iron hand and other illiberal norms, pandering to majoritarian Han supremacism with 91 per cent populace (brazenly attacking minorities like Uyghur etc), controlling the elites (Jack Ma saga), the governance of CCP remains most effective with the unique art of staying ahead of the events, by learning from global events and others' mistakes. Chinese professionally dissect and imagine the impact of global turbulence towards their bearings and posturing.

Chinese famously undertook a decade-long study of the Soviet Union implosion and recalibrated their own curriculum and governance imperatives to avoid the same. They did the same towards Gulf Wars, Arab Spring, the War on Terror and would surely be doing the same on Ukraine for direct lessons towards their expansionist agenda, especially in Taiwan. Ukraine would be an excellent case study for understanding the global appetite, tolerance and consequences of a belligerent action. So far, the reputation-sensitive China has offered a qualified defence of a clearly vilified Russia, driven by its own beef with the US, yet pretending a plausible pretense of morality and reason by not offering a *carte blanche* to Vladimir Putin's position. But the Taiwanese who may have had good reasons to fear an openly called invasion (under the garb of 'reunification' of One-China Principle) in the early days of the Ukraine War may just be breathing easier with the imminent cost of invasion, reputation and other consequences besetting Russia and, consequently, potentially for China in Taiwan.

The ensuing humanitarian disaster in Ukraine has inadvertently worsened the Chinese position of intimidation on Taiwan as invariably parallels are drawn immediately. Tellingly, China undertook a 'stress test' or dry run to study possible implications of a global reaction following a potential invasion of Taiwan. While sabre-rattling on Taiwan continues with the unofficial mouthpiece of the CCP, *Global Times*, alluding to the 'strongest warning to the US' by Chinese defence chief Wei Fenghe — the fine print also bore the inevitable sobering realisation, 'Although the Chinese mainland will continue to make the greatest efforts to seek peaceful reunification for the sake of the people on both sides of the Taiwan Straits...'. The Chinese more than anyone else would have calculated the debilitating impact of similar bravado on Taiwan, even if it cannot publicly renege its staged intransigence on the 'One-China Principle' as that too could fatally weaken the CCP's image.

Beleaguered Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy added to the Ukraine-Taiwan hyphenation at the 19th Asia Shangri-La Dialogue by calling for inter-



THE HUMANITARIAN DISASTER IN UKRAINE HAS INADVERTENTLY WORSENERD THE CHINESE POSITION OF INTIMIDATION ON TAIWAN. TELLINGLY, CHINA UNDERTOOK A DRY RUN TO STUDY POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS OF A GLOBAL REACTION FOLLOWING A POTENTIAL INVASION OF TAIWAN

national support for Taiwan against China, which embarrassingly made the Chinese delegation leave the hall. Zelenskyy's personal experience suggested that the 'world must use preemptive measures' before attacks on Taiwan, which willy-nilly justified the enhanced US support of Taiwan, which has led to much tension in recent times. While the US was made to lick its wounds humiliatingly in Afghanistan and trudge an equally difficult path in Ukraine — it has chanced upon the serendipitous opportunity by adding to China's own woes and discomfiture on Taiwan by upping the ante of 'Taiwan Independence'. China is now forced to play a difficult dual game of flexing its vocal muscles for internal consumption, whilst not committing itself to a Ukraine-like swamp.

Culturally and psychologically, the bog-down of Russian invasion despite its supposedly better trained soldiers, tactics and weaponry gives significant pointers to the Chinese PLA who suffered significant reverses in its last war, Vietnam in 1979, or even during the recent border standoff with India where it got a bloody nose. Topographically also, the densely populated and

urbanised Taiwan would be an urban battlefield, the Achilles heel of the Russian invasion in Ukraine. Even the hawkish domination of wolf-warrior pack amongst the Chinese diplomatic cadre and the overtly personalised cult of Xi Jinping (akin to Putinism) would require a relook in favour of more nuanced, moderate and deliberated form of diplomacy and leadership. The touchy issue of Xi's dictatorial moorings were triggered by Zelenskyy's indirect referencing of political leaders who were 'not content with the present level of their ambition'.

China risks further discrediting and disempowering the small minority of Taiwanese who do genuinely seek reunification, as recent tensions have strengthened Taiwan President Tsai Ing's anti-China stand. Tibet earlier, Hong Kong later and now with Taiwan on the boil, the Chinese leadership simply cannot continue with its expansionist agenda beyond words. Ukraine has shown the costs and the Chinese would surely know better, by now.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NO CONTEST, GO FOR CONSENSUS

Sir — The combined Opposition got another setback as Farooq Abdullah withdrew his name from the presidential election race (June 19). Just as Sharad Pawar was least interested in the race as he did not want to become a losing candidate in the presidential race, Farooq Abdullah wants to be active in politics to serve Jammu and Kashmir as, according to him, it is passing through a critical juncture and requires his efforts to navigate uncertain times and he does not desire to be confined to Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Now the joint Opposition led by Mamata Banerjee has to search for a statesman who is inactive in active politics as a candidate just to oppose the NDA. But instead of thinking of making a contest, why don't the Opposition parties discuss with the NDA for a consensus candidate for unanimous election in the larger interests of the country? As the President of the country has to follow and exactly implement what the Government says, according to the Constitution, nobody in active politics would be interested as holding the post means the end of active politics. Whatever be the reason, a unanimous choice would bring a healthy atmosphere in our democratic setup.

JP Reddy | Telangana

LAND DEGRADATION IS INCREASING

Sir — Land degradation is increasing day by day and has emerged as a major global issue. The current scale of degradation threatens half of our global GDP. Land degradation, which means desertification, has an impact on soil health and food production. India has about 160 million hectares of arable land of which 40 per cent soil is labelled as distressed soil. It is a wakeup call as soil is the basis of our livelihood. Soil adapts to climate change by decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, storing carbon dioxide and heat, trapping pollutants, give water infiltration, store rainwater, provide home to various

Changing perceptions



At a time when male superheroes are hitting the screens and gaining popularity, the entry of Pakistani-Canadian actor Iman Vellani, who plays the first South Asian superheroine, Kamala Khan, in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) marks a major shift in portraying a community confined to victims, criminals or terrorists. Ms Marvel is a story of an ambitious teenaged Muslim's ability to rise to greater heights irrespective of her background. It is through a family bangle that carries superpowers that she is able to save the world.

Considering the exclusion of Muslims in Hollywood for decades, more so after 9/11, their portrayal confined to bad guys or terrorists and white superiority complex gaining ground, this shift is a welcome sign.

This truly reflects the latest gains in the industry. If Black Panther introduced the world to a black superhero, Hidden Figures highlighted the true story of a women who played a central role in America's space programme, can Bollywood create a Dalit character as a superhero? Although more diversity in sports and other arenas does provide a positive outlook, it also signifies a society where power structure that governs major industries is controlled only by a few. Even though mass movements have been carried out throughout the world, racial and apartheid are real. Real and practical policies will give Muslims a fair chance to compete.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

microorganisms and provide various minerals and products.

If such behaviour towards soil continues, we will not have enough food in the coming years. Most of the farmers started using chemicals and fertilisers instead of organic manure to increase the production and to save it from pests, and it contributed in degrading soil quality. On the other hand, continuous deforestation leads to soil erosion. It takes around 1,000 years to form one cm of topsoil and few second of rainfall to lose it. Trees have soil-holding capacity and cutting them is dangerous for the environment.

Swati Pandey | Ujjain

TEAM INDIA MUST WIN

Sir — The Indian cricket team preparing for the T-20 World Cup is fighting hard to establish itself on a firm footing with various permutations and combinations. The two successive wins saw Team India establishing its home supremacy after two defeats. But the news around the cricket-

ing media is that the team is in a must-win situation. The two defeats early in the five-match series upset the plans and from there, we heard about do-or-die situations. Even after the recent wins, the position is the same with news going round for a must-win position.

We call ourselves number one in home conditions but let it slip away in no time. We go on changing captains from Rahul to Pant and to Hardik Pandya but the original captain is Rohit Sharma. We could not settle with a sound opening pair to last longer and the middle order is shaky all the time and depends on Dinesh Karthik to do the cameo scoring above 150. The bowling department looks wafer-thin and we solely depend on Chahal for our success. Leg spinners go for easy runs at the international level and that was our weakness at the ICC tournaments.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Shocked by the cowardly terror attack on the Karte Parwan Gurudwara in Kabul.



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



Chinese President — Xi Jinping

Alia (Ranbir Kapoor's wife) has given him a lot of love. I feel the change in him.



Actor — Neetu Kapoor



Chess player — Viswanathan Anand

The Agnipath scheme will thrust the youth of the country into a fire.



Congress leader — Kanhaiya Kumar

FIRST COLUMN

FROM A SHY HOUSEWIFE TO AN ENTREPRENEUR

There are not many women like Seema Jaiswal in Chapra



ARCHANA KISHORE

I used to rarely step out of my house. Whenever an unfamiliar guest would visit our house, I would go away from the living room. I was hesitant in meeting new people and strike a conversation and very uncomfortable in approaching a new situation,” said Seema Jaiswal. She is a leading clothing entrepreneur from Chapra district in Bihar. Jaiswal was born to a middle-class joint family in Muzaffarpur district’s Amnour block. In 2001, at the age of 24, she got married to Nilesh Kumar Jaiswal, a resident of Kathari Bagh in Chapra. In 2004, Nilesh inherited a small shop named Libas from his father situated in the city’s Sahebganj market.

Over the years with his dedication and persistent hard work, he converted the small shop into a mart. In 2014, as the business expanded, Nilesh turned towards Seema and sought her help, which became an opportunity to set off on her own journey as an entrepreneur.

“Entering the field of business was the turning point in my life. I grew up in a rural environment and knew nothing about banking and finance. With the hand-holding support of my husband I learnt all the nitty-gritty of running a business. He explained everything in detail. Now my entire focus is on business. It wouldn’t be wrong to say that my



shop and business are my soul,” expressed Seema while recollecting her transition.

Today, Seema regulates and manages the stock, inventory, and the accounts of the mart. Once hesitant to speak to new people, now she is required to deliver the best client services. She has been handling the mart so well that her husband has opened up another clothing shop which he looks after.

Seema has overcome a lot of challenges in establishing herself as a businesswoman. Her relatives and neighbors disapproved of her association with the shop. “It was not a regular thing for a daughter-in-law in a small town to step out of her house and take care of the business. There were times when I used to reach home at 11 pm in the night. Many friends and relatives of Nilesh taunted him that he was making a ‘woman of the house’ sit in the shop. But my father-in-law, and husband supported me thoroughly along the way,” Seema said.

She handles both the shop and the chores of the house. After a busy day at the shop, she also takes out time to cook and teach her children. Although simultaneously managing the business and doing the household chores adds up to the burden, she is determined to handle both.

Seema has a supportive family that motivates her to explore and learn. Talking about the support she provides, her husband said that, “I always wanted to run a big business in Chapra. There came a time when my brother, my manager, and my staff stopped supporting me and I thought of selling the mart. However, with Seema’s guidance and support I could convince and build a positive relation with my staff, and how to move ahead in business,” Nilesh said.

According to Seema, she has learnt a lot from business and also understood that giving up is not an option. She believes that it is difficult to solve a problem if we look at it as a challenge. If we consider it as a responsibility, the path will become easier and the problem will be solved. “Neither did I study much nor do I have any professional degree, yet I never gave up or got helpless in front of the narrow-minded and frustrated perspective of society,” Seema said. Her message to other women is: “If I can do it, why can’t you?”

The author is from Chapra, Bihar (Charkha Features)

What makes election of President important

VANAM JWALA
NARASIMHA RAO

The only really elected office is that of the President, elected by all the elected people’s representatives

With the lone exception when VV Giri contested as an independent candidate for the post of President, at the behest of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and defeated the official Congress candidate Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, the election to this highest office in India has never been so exciting as it is this time around.

A majority of Congress members had then voted for Reddy, the defeated candidate. Giri edged through with a minority of Congress votes and backing from a curious combination of opposition groups which included the Left. The appeal of Sanjiva Reddy’s supporters to the right-wing parties to cast their second preference votes to Reddy did not matter much.

Why Indira Gandhi was so determined at that time to have her nominee as President was clear. She knew that the so-called syndicate (a group in Congress opposed to Mrs Gandhi) had plans to unseat her through their choice of President because the Constitution of India vests enormous powers in the President if there is a strong person in the seat.

Similarly, with popular sentiment beginning to turn against the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the choice of President, who plays a key role in government formation, has become all-important. A section of BJP stalwarts who are opposed to Modi may like their choice of Presidential nominee as it happened during Indira Gandhi’s time.

According to the Constitution, the only really elected office is that of the President, and the rest of all are nominated or rather appointed in the way it is specified in the provisions. The President is elected by all the elected peoples’ representatives of Lok Sabha and State Legislatures as well as the Rajya Sabha. Thus, certainly, the President is more representative in character. The office of the Vice-President is also elected one.

The Prime Minister is appointed by the President of India, but he or she should enjoy the support of the majority of Lok Sabha members. This, however, is to be decided by the President in case of disputes. The Prime Minister is just the leader of the majority party in the Lok Sabha! Convention is that the President satisfies himself with the majority of his party in Lok Sabha before inviting him to take oath as Prime Minister.

Article 74 of the Constitution of India speaks about “Council of Ministers to aid and advise President.” It reads as: There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the President who shall, in the exercise of his “functions”, act as per such advice.



THE PRESIDENT MAY EXERCISE HIS DISCRETIONARY POWER, WHICH IS INHERENT IN THE CONSTITUTION, IN DISMISSING A PM EVEN IF HE OR SHE ENJOYS A MAJORITY IN LOK SABHA, THOUGH THERE IS NO PRECEDENT

The author is Chief Public Relations Officer, Telangana



The President of India is the head of state of the Republic of India. He is the formal head of the executive, legislature, and judiciary and is also the commander-in-chief of the Indian Armed Forces. Article 53 of the Constitution of India states that the President can exercise his or her powers either directly or by a subordinate authority to him as per the provisions of the Constitution. Thus, the President possesses enormous powers.

The powers and functions that have been vested in the President of India may be classified under the Executive powers, Legislative powers, Military powers, Diplomatic powers, judicial powers, financial powers, and Emergency powers.

The executive power includes the power to appoint and remove the high constitutional authority of the country. Under this power, he appoints the Prime Minister and other members of the Council of Ministers and distributes portfolios among them. He also enjoys the power to remove the Prime Minister and other ministers and all of those whom he gives appointments. In the Constitution of India, there are no special provisions specified to choose a Prime Minister. It is purely President’s discretion. The President is the head of the State, whereas the Prime Minister is the head of the Government only. Parliament cannot function without involving him.

The President shall, before entering upon his office, make and subscribe in the presence of the Chief Justice of India, an oath or affirmation saying that he or she will faithfully execute the

office of President (or discharge the function of the President) of India and will to the best of his or her ability preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the law and that he or she will devote himself or herself to the service and well-being of the people of India.

The Head of the State has the absolute right and absolute discretion to choose the Head of the Government and examples of this are plenty in Britain. In India, an occasion for the real exercise of the power to appoint a Prime Minister arose for the first time when Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was President. According to Michel Brecher, in his book Succession in India, the President exercised his discretion and appointed GL Nanda as PM even before the Congress Party could indicate its choice following Jawaharlal Nehru’s death.

Radhakrishnan again followed the same procedure and appointed GL Nanda when Lal Bahadur Shastri died.

After Indira Gandhi’s assassination President Zail Singh, even before Rajiv Gandhi was elected as Congress Party Parliamentary leader, appointed him as the PM. After the 1989 general elections, President Venkatraman, while inviting VP Singh after Congress refused to form a government, and then after VP Singh’s resignation in inviting first Rajiv Gandhi and then Chandrashekar, exercised his discretionary powers.

If in the above cases it was a discretionary role played by President, in 1979 it was the other way round. President N Sanjiva Reddy’s decision to invite YB

Chavan after Morarji’s resignation and later denying Morarji yet another chance for Charan Singh after checking the lists of supporting MPs of both of them could be termed as President playing a discretionary role.

Charan Singh, however, was asked to seek a vote of confidence of the House which happened for the first time in India. Within 25 days, Charan Singh resigned without facing Lok Sabha and recommended its dissolution. He was allowed to continue as caretaker PM and elections were held. Though the President became a target of attack from several corners, nothing could be done against him.

The President, in asking Charan Singh to continue as PM, rose above the Constitutional obligation that there shall be a council of ministers to aid and advise him in the exercise of his functions. Thus, it could be seen that during Sanjiva Reddy’s time the President exercised enormous power in appointing PM, dissolving Lok Sabha, and setting guidelines for the functioning of Charan Singh’s government.

This is sufficient to show that the Prime Minister and his council of ministers hold office at the pleasure of the President. The President may also exercise his discretionary power, which is inherent in the Constitution, in dismissing a PM even if he or she enjoys a majority in Lok Sabha, though there is no precedent and in the future also highly unlikely as it appears now.

If the President does not exercise his discretion when the situation demands, then it is a failure on his or her part to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the law.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

IN BIHAR, PEOPLE ASSOCIATED WITH THE BJP WERE TARGETED WHILE THE POLICE AND ADMINISTRATION WATCHED SILENTLY. —BIHAR BJP PRESIDENT SANJAY JAISWAL



NITISH KUMAR IS KNOWN FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE AND HE KNOWS HOW TO RUN THE GOVERNMENT. —JD(U) NATIONAL PRESIDENT RAJIV RANJAN SINGH

US helps Ukraine but ensures war doesn’t go nuclear

President Joe Biden’s prime duty is to keep the United States safe, not to put the Ukrainian border back where it used to be

How would we know if the United States is deliberately starving Ukraine of weapons in order to force it into a compromise peace settlement that leaves some Ukrainian territory—maybe even a lot—in Russian hands?

You can imagine the White House having such a strategy, though it would never admit it. After all, if Ukraine managed to drive the Russian army out of the whole country, Moscow might panic and escalate to nuclear weapons. President Joe Biden’s prime duty is to keep the United States safe, not to put the Ukrainian border back where it used to be.

For Ukraine, the war is literally existential. Russian leader Vladimir Putin wants not only to conquer Ukraine but to erase its very identity, so President

GWYNNE DYER

The author’s new book is The Shortest History of War

Volodymyr Zelensky would risk anything, including nuclear war, to prevent it.

For Russia it’s not existential at all, but Putin appears to have convinced himself that it is. Maybe he’s bluffing, but would you bet the world on it?

For President Biden and the United States, however, the ONLY existential threat is nuclear war. If he didn’t at least consider how he could put the Ukrainian government on a short leash, he would be remiss in his constitutional duty.

The obvious way to limit Zelensky’s freedom of action is by controlling the scale and speed with which ‘advanced’ weapons are delivered to Ukraine. (Not VERY advanced: there’s nothing less than 15 years old.) And there are some indications that Biden is doing

exactly that.

Since the Russian Army gave up trying to seize Kyiv and other northern Ukrainian cities ten weeks ago and concentrated its forces in the east (the Donbas), it has reverted to the style of warfare it does best: massive artillery bombardments followed by infantry assaults. It’s crude, bloody, and expensive, but it often works in the end.

It has become an artillery war, and although the Russians have a lot more artillery, the

Ukrainians used GPS, drones, and the like to level the playing field. It started to resemble a miniature version of the First World War, with the Russian army taking big casualties for small advances—but it kept grinding inexorably forward.

Both sides were mostly using old Soviet weapons, but in a war of attrition the Russians had more of everything: soldiers, guns, shells, the lot. Ukrainian losses went up to between one and two hundred killed a day, and they began running short of both guns and shells. Their pleas for more and better weapons mounted—and they got a curious response.

The US sent just eighteen 155mm howitzers to Ukraine in April, but stripped them of the advanced computer systems that improve the weapons’ efficiency

and accuracy. It then spent three weeks training crews for these guns abroad before they were deployed to the front. Only then did it send some more howitzers (also without computers). There are now 109 of those howitzers in Ukraine, but many thousands of Ukrainian soldiers have doubtless been killed or wounded in the meantime who might have been spared if the guns had arrived more promptly. It’s still far from enough—and now the same scenario is replaying with rocket artillery.

Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS) have twice the range of howitzers (80-90 km), and the Russians have been using them to pummel the Ukrainian lines mercilessly. Ukraine’s rocket launchers were old, few, and not very accurate,

so for many weeks it has been begging for comparable NATO weapons. The United States has now sent Ukraine four—count them, four—HIMARS rocket launchers. It could send additional HIMARS after the three-man crews of these four launchers have finished their three weeks of training abroad and “demonstrate that they can use them effectively,” said U.S. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian presidential adviser Mikhaylo Podolyak says his country needs 300 MLRS launch systems and a thousand 155mm guns to achieve “heavy weapons parity” with the Russians. We will see formations of pigs flying overhead before that happens. It’s striking that the United Kingdom announced that it is

sending similar rocket launchers at the same time, but there was no nonsense about three weeks of training outside Ukraine. The Ukrainian Army has one of the best artillery schools in Europe, so the UK is just sending along instruction manuals.

There is reason to suspect, therefore, that the very slow drip-feed of American weapons to Ukraine is deliberate, and is intended to keep the Ukrainian government from winning too soon or too big. Better that both sides exhaust themselves and arrive at some sort of compromise peace deal.

Of course, the Ukrainians might actually lose as a result of this policy, in which case Biden would have to choose whether to save them by direct military intervention or not. Ladies and gentlemen, place your bets.

MORALE IS CONCERN AS NATO CHIEF WARNS WAR COULD LAST 'YEARS'

AP ■ KYIV (UKRAINE)

Four months of brutal fighting in Ukraine appear to be straining the morale of troops on both sides, prompting desertions and rebellion against officers' orders, British defense officials said Sunday. NATO's chief warned the war could drag on for "years."

"Combat units from both sides are committed to intense combat in the Donbas and are likely experiencing variable morale," Britain's defense ministry said in its daily assessment of the war.

"Ukrainian forces have likely suffered desertions in recent weeks," the assessment said, but added that "Russian morale highly likely remains especially troubled."

It said "cases of whole Russian units refusing orders and armed stand-offs between officers and their troops continue to occur."

Separately, the Ukrainian Main Intelligence Directorate released what it said were intercepted phone calls in which Russian soldiers complained about frontline conditions, poor equipment, and overall lack of personnel, according to a report by the Institute for the Study of War.

In an interview published on Sunday in the German weekly Bild am Sonntag, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that "nobody knows" how long the war



could last. "We need to be prepared for it to last for years," he said.

He also urged allies "not to weaken support for Ukraine, even if the costs are high, not only in terms of military aid, but also because of the increase in energy and food goods prices."

In recent days, Gazprom, the Russian gas company, has reduced supplies to two major European clients - Germany and Italy. In Italy's case, energy officials are expected to huddle this week about the situation. The head of Italian energy giant ENI said on Saturday that with additional gas

purchased from other sources, Italy should make it through the coming winter, but he warned Italians that "restrictions" affecting gas use might be necessary.

Germany will limit the use of gas for electricity production amid concerns about possible shortages caused by a reduction in supplies from Russia, the country's economy minister said on Sunday. Germany has been trying to fill its gas storage facilities to capacity ahead of the cold winter months.

Economy Minister Robert Habeck said that Germany will try to compensate for the move by increasing the burning of coal, a

more polluting fossil fuel. "That's bitter, but it's simply necessary in this situation to lower gas usage," he said.

Stoltenberg stressed, though, that "the costs of food and fuel are nothing compared with those paid daily by the Ukrainians on the front line."

Stoltenberg added: What's more, if Russian President Vladimir Putin should reach his objectives in Ukraine, like when he annexed Crimea in 2014, "we would have to pay an even greater price."

Britain's defense ministry said that both Russia and Ukraine

have continued to conduct heavy artillery bombardments on axes to the north, east and south of the Sievierodonetsk pocket, but with little change in the front line.

Luhansk governor Serhiy Haidai said via Telegram on Sunday: "It is a very difficult situation in Sievierodonetsk, where the enemy in the middle of the city is conducting round-the-clock aerial reconnaissance with drones, adjusting fire, quickly adjusting to our changes."

Russia's defense ministry claimed on Sunday that Russian and separatist forces have taken control of Metolkin, a settlement just to the east of Sievierodonetsk.

On Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made a trip south from Kyiv to visit troops and hospital workers in the Mykolaiv and Odesa regions along the Black Sea. He handed out awards to dozens of people at every stop, shaking their hands and thanking them again and again for their service.

Some time after Zelenskyy left Mykolaiv, "the enemy carried out fire damage against units of the Defense Forces with cannon and rocket artillery in the areas of the settlements of Pravdyne, Posad-Pokrovskoe and Blahodatne," according to the Ukrainian army briefing on Sunday.

In other attacks in the south, Ukraine's southern military oper-

ational command said on Sunday that two people were killed in shelling of the Galitsyn community in the Mykolaiv region and that shelling of the Bashtansky district is continuing.

Russia's defense ministry said its sea-launched missiles destroyed a plant in Mykolaiv city where Western-supplied howitzers and armored vehicles were stored.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has expressed concerns "that a bit of Ukraine fatigue is starting to set in around the world" and has urged support for Ukrainian efforts to try to roll back the Russian invasion.

"It would be a catastrophe if Putin won. He'd love nothing more than to say, 'Let's freeze this conflict, let's have a cease-fire,'" Johnson said on Saturday, a day after a surprise visit to Kyiv, where he met with Zelenskyy and offered offer continued aid and military training. Western-supplied heavy weapons are reaching front lines. But Ukraine's leaders have insisted for weeks that they need more arms and they need them sooner.

On Sunday Pope Francis, despite having lamented arms build-ups, added his own admonition to those who might lose focus on Ukraine, which he has said deserves to defend itself.

"And let's not forget the martyred Ukrainian people in this moment," Francis told the public in St. Peter's Square.

Ukraine secures release of civilians captured by Russians in Kiev region



IANs ■ KYIV

Ukraine has secured the release of five civilians, of which four were captured by Russian forces in the Kiev region.

In a statement on Saturday, the Chief Intelligence Directorate under the Defence Ministry, said: "Today, the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War conducted another five-for-five exchange. Five citizens of Ukraine returned home."

All those released were civilians who had been illegally detained by the Russian occupying forces. Four of the civilians were taken prisoner by the occupiers during the fighting in Kiev Oblast, three of them during the occupation of Hostomel."

The body of one deceased Ukrainian security personnel was also returned, Ukrayinska Pravda quoted the statement as saying.

On Friday, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had announced that the Ukrainian paramedic Yulia Paievska, who was captured by the Russians in Mariupol in March, had been released from captivity.

Some of the bodies of security personnel of Mariupol from Azovstal have also been returned to Ukraine

Sri Lanka contacts Russian firm for crude oil: Minister



PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka has reached out to several companies suggested by Russia's embassy in Colombo to buy crude oil, Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekera said on Sunday, in an attempt by the debt-ridden island nation to get oil on credit to keep its only oil refinery running.

Wijesekera told the media that the Russian ambassador in Colombo "asked me to send the replies of the company, and he will also intervene in the process".

The minister said he had replies from the Russian companies suggested by the ambassador, Sri Lanka's Economy Next news portal reported. "Also we have sent the message to the Sri Lankan Ambassador in Russia, Janitha Liyanage," the minister said, adding that the process was taking time.

Sri Lanka has already bought one shipment of Siberian crude from Dubai-based Coral Energy in the international market, officials have said.

However, the Russian state companies are reportedly giving crude at lower prices to countries that can afford to pay.

Sri Lanka's sole refinery is now running with the last Siberian crude shipment.

Sri Lanka is currently facing its worst economic crisis since independence from Britain in 1948.

Due to monetary instability triggered by central bank money printing, Sri Lanka has forex shortages, making it difficult to find dollars at fixed prices for large import bills.

The economic crisis has prompted an acute shortage of essential items like food, medicine, cooking gas and other fuel, toilet paper, and even matches, with Sri Lankans being forced to wait in lines lasting hours outside stores to buy fuel and cooking gas.

Lanka is trying to get crude on credit as it had done during previous currency crises when the central bank printed money and triggered forex shortages.

Sri Lanka's oil bill has risen to USD 550 million a month by June 2022 and the energy ministry has been talking to the central bank to get dollars.

The central bank has run out of reserves after two years of money printing but the agency is yet to shift to a free float which will balance outflows to inflows.

Sri Lanka owes oil firms USD 730 million for oil imported on credit, and they are unwilling to supply fuel without upfront payments or deposits, Wijesekera said.

"For crude oil also we have contacted several countries," Wijesekera said, adding that he had discussions with embassies of several other countries.

"Even though we have requested firms, due to the financial situation and the ratings of the banks in the country most companies do not agree to get into loan schemes to get oil," he said.

India has helped Sri Lanka with thousands of tonnes of diesel and petrol, apart from food and medical supplies, to help ease the acute fuel shortage in the debt-ridden island nation.

Sri Lanka Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said on Wednesday no country except India is providing money to the crisis-hit island nation for fuel.

With the Sapugaskanda refinery being reopened, the available crude stock is being used in the minimum amount to continue the operations of the refinery.

Russia-West tensions inflame UN debate on Mali peacekeepers

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

Tensions between Russia and the West are aggravating talks about the future of one of the United Nations' biggest and most perilous peacekeeping operations, the force sent to help Mali resist a decade-long Islamic extremist insurgency.

The U.N.'s mission in the West African nation is up for renewal this month, at a volatile time when extremist attacks are intensifying. Three U.N. Peacekeepers have been killed this month alone. Mali's economy is choking on sanctions imposed by neighbouring countries after its military rulers postponed a promised election. France and the European Union are ending their own military operations in Mali amid souring relations with the governing junta.

U.N. Security Council members widely agree the peacekeeping mission, known as MINUSMA, needs to continue. But a council debate this week was laced with friction over France's future role in Mali and the presence of Russian military contractors.

"The situation has become very complex for negotiations," said Rama Yade, senior director

of the Africa Center at the Atlantic Council, a Washington-based think tank.

"The international context has a role, and Mali is part of the Russian game on the international stage," she said.

The peacekeeping mission began in 2013, after France led a military intervention to oust extremist rebels who had taken over cities and major towns in northern Mali the year before. MINUSMA now counts roughly 12,000 troops, plus about 2,000 police and other officers. More than 270 peacekeepers have died.

France is leading negotiations on extending the mission's mandate and is proposing to continue providing French aerial support. The U.N.'s top official for Mali, El-Ghassim Wane, said the force particularly needs the capabilities of attack helicopters.

But Mali strongly objects to a continued French air presence.

"We would call, therefore, for respect for our country's sovereignty," Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop told the council Monday.

Mali asked France, its one-time colonial ruler, for military help in 2013. The French military was credited with helping to boot the insurgents out of Timbuktu



and other northern centers, but they regrouped elsewhere, began attacking the Malian army and its allies and pushed farther south. The government now controls only 10% of the north and 21% of the central region, according to a U.N. Report this month.

Patience with the French military presence is waning, though, especially as extremist violence mounts. There have been a series of anti-French demonstrations in the capital, which some observers suggest have been promoted by

the government and a Russian mercenary outfit, the Wagner Group.

Mali has grown closer to Russia in recent years as Moscow has looked to build alliances and gain sway in Africa - and both countries are at odds with the West.

High-ranking Malian and Russian officials have been hit with European Union sanctions, sparked by Russia's actions in Ukraine since 2014 and by Mali's failure to hold elections that had

been pledged for this past February.

Against that backdrop, Security Council members squared off over the Wagner Group's presence in Mali. The Kremlin denies any connection to the company. But Western analysts say it's a tool of Russian President Vladimir Putin's campaign to gain influence in Africa.

The Wagner Group has committed serious human rights and international humanitarian law violations, according to allegations by the E.U. And human rights organizations. In Mali, Human Rights Watch has accused Russian fighters and Mali's army of killing hundreds of mostly civilian men in the town of Moura; Mali said those killed were "terrorists." The U.N. Peacekeeping force is investigating, as is the Malian government.

The recent U.N. Report on Mali remarked on "a significant surge" in reports of abuses committed by extremists and Malian forces, sometimes accompanied by "foreign security personnel."

It didn't name names, but British deputy U.N. Ambassador James Kariuki said council members "are under no illusions - this is the Russian-backed Wagner Group."

Guterres warns against discrimination, stigma fueled by internet, social media

IANs ■ UNITED NATIONS

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has warned against the stigma and discrimination fanned by the Internet and social media.

"The internet and social media have turbocharged hate speech, enabling it to spread like wildfire across borders," the UN chief said in his message for the International Day for Countering Hate Speech, which was marked the first time since the General Assembly adopted a related resolution last year.

"The spread of hate speech against minorities during the Covid-19 pandemic provides further evidence that many societies are highly vulnerable to the stigma, discrimination and conspiracies it promotes," the Secretary-General noted. Guterres underlined that "hate speech incites violence, undermines diversity and social cohesion, and threatens the common values and principles that bind us together".

"It promotes racism, xenophobia and misogyny; it dehumanizes



individuals and communities; and it has a serious impact on our efforts to promote peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development," he said.

"Words can be weaponized and cause physical harm and the escalation from hate speech to violence has played a significant role in the most horrific and tragic crimes of the modern age, from the antisemitism driving the Holocaust, to the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

"In response to this growing threat, three years ago, I launched the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech. This provides a framework for our support to member states to counter this scourge while respecting freedom of expression and opinion, in collaboration with civil society, the media, technology companies and social media platforms," said the UN chief.

He warned that hate speech is a danger to everyone and fighting it is a job for everyone.

"This first International Day to Counter Hate Speech is a call to action. Let us recommit to doing everything in our power to prevent and end hate speech by promoting respect for diversity and inclusivity," he added.

In July 2021, the UN General Assembly highlighted global concerns over "the exponential spread and proliferation of hate speech" around the world and adopted a resolution on "promoting inter-religious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech".

Russia to temporarily suspend gas supply via Turkish Stream pipeline

IANs ■ MOSCOW

Russian gas giant Gazprom has announced that it will stop gas delivery via both strings of the Turkish Stream pipeline from June 21 to June 28 due to scheduled annual maintenance. The suspension was agreed in advance by all interested parties, Xinhua news agency reported, citing a statement by Gazprom.

The Turkish Stream pipeline via the Black seabed consists of two strings, with one supplying gas to Turkish consumers and the other delivering energy to countries in southern and southeastern Europe. The pipeline began operation in Jan2020 with a total capacity of 31.5 bn cubic meters annually. Earlier this week, Gazprom said it would significantly reduce gas delivery to Europe via the Nord Stream 1 pipeline to no more than 67 mn cubic meters per day, citing the failure of Siemens, the manufacturer of the gas turbine engines.

West moving towards war in space: Russia space agency

IANs ■ MOSCOW

Western astronautics are "heading for war", Russian Space Agency (Roscosmos) said and claimed that the alleged collection of data for Ukraine by private Western companies proves this.

In an interview with Russia 24, Roscosmos Director Dmitry Rogozin claimed that private American companies such as Lockheed Martin, Boeing, SpaceX, and others are now tasked with "one specific goal, to ensure the collection of information in real time, both visual, through infrared radar devices, and through conventional surveillance", RT reported.

This data is collected for the Ukrainian forces to use "for ballistic missile guidance or multiple launch rocket system operation", he was quoted as saying.

This also applies to satel-

lite communication companies such as Starlink, the Roscosmos director added.

Asked if Russian satellites were able to monitor Ukrainian territory, Rogozin said, "of course".

Earlier this month, he claimed that private American space companies are "at best, trusted contractors of the Pentagon, at worst, agents of the Pentagon or the CIA under the guise of 'private independent companies'".

Rogozin's remarks came soon after the head of US Cyber Command, General Paul Nakasone, admitted for the first time that Washington was supporting Ukraine by conducting offensive hacking operations, RT reported.

"We've conducted a series of operations across the full spectrum; offensive, defensive, (and) information operations," he told Sky News.

39 ships from 14 countries blocked in Odesa

IANs ■ KIEV

A top Ukrainian official confirmed that 39 civilian ships sailing under the flags of 14 countries are currently blocked in the ports of Odesa as a result of the ongoing war.

The news was confirmed by Maksym Marchenko, head of the Odesa Oblast Military Administration, during a meeting with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the southern port city on Saturday, reports Ukrayinska Pravda.

During the meeting, discussions also took place on ways to organise a corridor for the export of agrarian and industrial products from the ports.

Marchenko also informed the President on the consequences of missile strikes by the Russian forces on the city.

According to reports, 55 people were killed in Odesa due to Russian shelling which also destroyed and damaged a number of infrastructure facilities.

Despite the grim developments, Marchenko expressed



confidence in "solving the difficult issues with the help of the head of the country" and in "deblockading our ports and ensuring they can resume their operations".

This was Zelenskyy's first trip to Ukraine's war-torn southern frontline, as his forces mount a slow-moving advance in the region, reports the BBC.

During a separate meeting with troops stationed in Odesa, he said: "It is important that you are alive. As long as you live there is a strong Ukrainian wall that

protects our country. I want to thank you from the people of Ukraine, from our state for the great work you are doing, for your impeccable service."

The President also visited Mykolaiv, about 132 km from Odesa, where he handed out medals to soldiers and urged them to "take care of Ukraine, the only thing we have. And take care of yourself, only you can do it".

The city has long been a key target for Russian forces and has been subject to heavy rocket and artillery bombardments.

‘Pak committed to follow int’l standards to exit FATF grey list’

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said on Sunday that his country was committed to follow international standards related to the counter-terrorism financing and anti-money laundering. The Paris-based global money-laundering and terror-financing watchdog said on Friday that Pakistan will continue to be on the 'Grey List' of countries under increased monitoring of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). It said Pakistan may be removed from the list after an on-site visit to verify the implementation of its reforms on countering terror-financing mechanisms. "Let me reiterate the Government of Pakistan's high-level commitment to continue aligning our AML/CFT regime with global standards," Bilawal said in a statement. He said that Pakistan is committed to continuing this positive trajectory of reforming



the financial sector as part of its larger strategic objective of strengthening its economy. The foreign minister also expressed hope that this 'good news' from FATF will restore confidence in Pakistan's economy and act as a catalyst for sustained growth and development. "I welcome FATF's unanimous acknowledgement of completion by Pakistan of its

2018 and 2021 Action Plans," he said, commending the hard work and efforts of Pakistan's FATF team. "This was the result of concerted national efforts and complete harmony of interests by all stakeholders," he said. Bilawal said Pakistan looked forward to the on-site visit and a successful and early culmination of the process leading to Pakistan's exit from

the grey list. Pakistan has been on the grey list of the FATF since June 2018 for failing to check money laundering, leading to terror financing, and was given a plan of action to complete the task by October 2019. With Pakistan's continuation on the grey list, it had increasingly become difficult for Islamabad to get financial aid from the IMF, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the European Union, thus further enhancing problems for the country. The FATF is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 to combat money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system. The FATF currently has 39 members including two regional organisations -- the European Commission and Gulf Cooperation Council. India is a member of the FATF consultations and its Asia Pacific Group. PTI

Afghan airport resumes civilian flights after 2 decades

IANs ■ KABUL

The Jalalabad Airport in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province has resumed civilian flights after two decades of serving as a base for the US military and other foreign troops. According to the Taliban-led government's Ministry of Transportation and Civil Aviation (MoTCA), there will be three to four flights each week, reports TOLO News. "The resumption of civilian flights from Nangarhar airport is a good step. It is a major resource for the eastern provinces of Laghman, Nuristan, Kunar and Nangarhar itself," said Imam Mohammad Warimach, Deputy Minister of Transportation and Civil Aviation. MoTCA said it will attempt to provide further facilities at the airport. "With the Islamic Emirate's coming to power, we reactivated this airport and provided it with all the necessary



equipment. The staff of the MoTCA have occupied their posts," said Imamuddin Warimach, a Ministry spokesman. Meanwhile, businesspeople have called for the resumption of international flights from Nangarhar province, saying that the international flights can help the country's economy. "I call on the Islamic Emirate's officials to facilitate international flights from this airport and air-corridor, thus we can export our goods from Afghanistan," TOLO News quoted Zalmay Azimi, a businessman, as saying. Earlier, the Jalalabad Airport was heavily used by the US Armed Forces and civilian contractors. They operated out of Forward Operating Base Fenty. Members of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Resolute Support Mission (RSM) also used the airport.

Boats collide in Florida, 2 dead, 10 rescued

AP ■ MIAMI

Two people were killed and 10 others had to be rescued when their boats collided at night near Key Biscayne in South Florida, the US Coast Guard and local authorities say. The Coast Guard said a person involved in the collision notified the agency of the crash around 10:30 pm (local time) Friday night. Two bodies were recovered in the ensuing rescue operation, one by the Coast Guard Station Miami Beach and another by Miami-Dade Fire Rescue, officials said. The Coast Guard said in a statement that one of its air crews in an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter played a key role in the emergency response. A rescue swimmer also was sent to assist two critically injured people, one of whom was transferred to Jackson Memorial Medical Center for care. Nine other survivors were sent to another hospital for treatment, authorities said.

20 Indian fishermen jailed in Pakistan for 5 yrs released

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan in a goodwill gesture on Sunday released 20 Indian fishermen who have been languishing in a jail here for the last five years for allegedly fishing illegally in the country's waters. The twenty fishermen were lodged at Malir district jail in the Landhi area of Karachi. They were sent to Lahore on their way to the Wagah border where they will be handed over to the Indian authorities. Jail superintendent Muhammad Irshad said the fishermen were released on the order of the federal government. "They were in jail for the last five years. Today, they were handed over to the Edhi trust which will be responsible for taking them to Lahore under police escort," he said.



Irshad said the fishermen were arrested by the Maritime Security Force in June 2018 and then jailed for fishing illegally in Pakistan's territorial waters. Faisal Edhi, who heads the welfare foundation, said all expenses and travelling of the

Indian fishermen were being taken care of by them. Edhi trust is a non-profit social welfare organisation. Pakistan and India regularly arrest rival fishermen for violating the maritime boundary which is poorly marked at some points.

French voters elect Parliamentarians, in test for Macron

AP ■ PARIS

French voters are going to the polls in the final round of key parliamentary elections that will demonstrate how much legroom President Emmanuel Macron's party will be given to implement his ambitious domestic agenda. In last week's first vote, the left, under firebrand Jean-Luc Melenchon, made a surprisingly strong showing, sending jitters through Macron's allies. They fear that a strong showing from Melenchon's coalition on Sunday could turn Macron into a shackled second term leader, one who spends his time bargaining with politicians and with major limits placed on his ability to rule. Elections are being held nationwide to select the 577 members of the National Assembly, the most powerful branch of France's Parliament. Though Macron's centrist alliance is projected to win the

most seats, observers predict that it could fall short of maintaining his majority - the golden number of 289 seats. In this case, a new coalition composed of the hard left, the Socialists and the Greens may be forged, one which could make Macron's political maneuvering harder since the lower house of parliament is key to voting in laws. Macron made a powerfully choreographed plea to voters earlier this week from the tarmac ahead of a trip to Romania and Ukraine, warning that an inconclusive election, or hung parliament, would put the nation in danger. "In these troubled times, the choice you'll make this Sunday is more crucial than ever," he said Tuesday, with the presidential plane waiting starkly in the background ahead of a visit to French troops stationed near Ukraine. "Nothing would be worse than adding French disorder to the



world's disorder," he said. Following Macron's reelection in May, his centrist coalition has been aiming for a parliamentary majority that would enable the president to implement his campaign promises, which include tax cuts and raising France's retirement age from 62 to 65. There's still hope for his camp: Polling agencies estimated that Macron's cen-

trists could ultimately win from 255 to over 300 seats, while the leftist coalition led by Melenchon could win more than 200 seats. Yet many acknowledge a less than desirable outcome for Macron's party thus far. "The disappointment was clear on the night of the first round for the presidential party leaders. Clearly, they want to have a new momentum now on the way to the second round," said Martin Quencez, political analyst at The German Marshall Fund of the United States. If Macron fails to get a majority, it will not simply affect France's domestic politics, it could have ramifications across Europe. Analysts predict that the French leader will have to spend the rest of his term focusing more on his domestic agenda rather than his foreign policy. It could spell the end of President Macron's continental statesman. If he loses his majority, "he would need to be more involved in domestic politics in the next five years than he was previously, so we could expect him to have less political capital to invest at the European level or international level... This may have an impact for European politics as a whole in European affairs," Quencez said.

Duterte's daughter takes oath as Philippine vice-president

AP ■ MANILA

Sara Duterte, the daughter of the outgoing populist president of the Philippines, took her oath on Sunday as vice president following a landslide electoral victory she clinched despite her father's human rights record that saw thousands of drug suspects gunned down. The inauguration in their southern hometown of Davao, where she's the outgoing mayor, comes two weeks before she assumes office on June 30 as specified in the Philippine Constitution. President-elect Ferdinand Marcos Jr., Duterte's running mate, will take his oath in Manila on June 30. "I'm not the best or the most intelligent person in the Philippines and the world but nobody can beat the toughness of my heart as a Filipino," Duterte, who wore a green traditional gown, said in a speech after she took her oath before a Supreme Court associate justice, her hand resting on a Bible held by her mother.

"The voice of 32.2 million Filipinos was loud and clear - with the message to serve our motherland," Duterte said, referring to the votes she got, to an applause from thousands of supporters. Fondly called by supporters as 'Inday Sara,' the mother of three called for national unity and devotion to God and asked Filipinos to emulate the patriotism of the country's national hero Jose Rizal. She cited long-standing social ills facing Filipino children, including poverty, broken families, illegal drugs, bullying and online misinformation and asked parents to ingrain in them the values of integrity, discipline, respect for others and compassion. President Rodrigo Duterte, 77, led the VIPs in the heavily guarded ceremony at a public square near city hall in the port city of Davao, where he had also served as a long-time mayor starting in the late 1980s. His family, hailing from modest middle-class

background, built a formidable political dynasty in the restive southern region long troubled by communist and Muslim insurgencies and violent political rivalries. Duterte's presidency has been marked by a brutal anti-drugs campaign that has left thousands of mostly petty suspects shot dead by police or vigilantes. The drug killings are being investigated by the International Criminal Court as a possible crime against humanity. The electoral triumph of Sara Duterte and Marcos Jr. Has alarmed left-wing and human rights groups because of their failure to acknowledge the massive human rights atrocities that took place under their fathers, including late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Marcos Jr. And Sara Duterte campaigned on a vague platform of national unity, without clearly addressing activists' calls for them to take steps to prosecute the elder Duterte when he retires from politics.

Singapore Deputy PM Heng catches Covid in Berlin

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat said on Sunday that he has tested positive for Covid-19 in Germany and cannot continue with his work trip across Europe as he is in isolation. Heng, 61, wrote in a Facebook post that he tested positive for the coronavirus on Saturday, despite donning a mask and avoiding crowds throughout his European trip. "Tested positive for COVID-19 in Berlin yesterday, despite keeping our masks on and avoiding crowds throughout the trip. I woke up with a sore throat. My symptoms are so far not serious, thankfully because I am vaccinated and boosted," he said. "Unfortunately, I will not be able to continue with my work trip as I am currently in isolation. My apologies to everyone involved in the rest of the trip, especially to the organisers of the inaugural Point Zero Forum," he said.

Firefighters in Spain battle wildfires across the country

AP ■ BARCELONA

Firefighters in Spain on Sunday struggled to contain wildfires in several parts of the country, which is suffering a heat wave unusual for this time of the year. The worst damage has been in the northwest province of Zamora where over 25,000 hectares (61,000 acres) have been consumed, regional authorities said. The blaze that started in Zamora's Sierra de la Culebra has forced the evacuation of at least 10 villages, although the drop in temperatures overnight has helped efforts somewhat. More than 500 firefighters are supported by water-dumping planes and helicopters in the sparsely populated area. Authorities have been on alert for an outbreak of intense wildfires, with Spain sweltering under record temperatures at many points in the country for June. Experts link the abnormally hot period for Europe to climate change. Thermometers have risen above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in many Spanish cities throughout the week — temperatures usually expected



in August. A lack of rainfall this year combined with gusting winds have produced the conditions for the fires. The spreading fire caused the high-speed train service from Madrid to Spain's northwest to be cut on Saturday. It was re-established on Sunday morning. Military firefighting units have been deployed in Zamora, Navarra and Lleida. There have been no reports of lives lost, but the flames reached the outskirts of some villages both in Zamora and in central Navarra. Videos shot by passengers in cars showed

Israeli forces kill Palestinian near separation barrier

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian man on Sunday, the Palestinian Health Ministry said, after the Israeli military said he tried to illegally cross the separation barrier that divides Israel and the occupied West Bank. In a statement, the military said soldiers saw the man 'sabotaging' the barrier outside the West Bank city of Qalqilya and "attempting to illegally cross into Israeli territory." Forces opened fire to get him to stop and shot him, the statement said. The Palestinian Health Ministry said forces killed the man, identified as Nabil Ahmed Salim Ghanem from the West Bank city of Nablus, near the barrier. The official Palestinian news agency Wafa said he was 53 years old. No other details were immediately available. Thousands of Palestinians cross into Israel from the West Bank illegally through holes in the barrier, much of which is a towering wall but is also made up of fences prone to being damaged. Many work as day laborers and earn salaries much higher than those in the West Bank. While incidents like Sunday's are relatively rare, Israeli forces killed a Palestinian man last month under similar circumstances. Israelis have been keenly focused on the illegal entry of Palestinians over recent months following a spate of attacks by Palestinians who snuck into Israel before carrying out killing sprees. Authorities, who have long turned a blind eye, have pledged to seal the breached parts and replace the fences with concrete walls. Tens of thousands of Palestinians also cross legally into Israel using hard to obtain permits.

Ex-Pence aide gets GOP nod to run for Secy of State

AP ■ INDIANAPOLIS (US)

Indiana Secretary of State Holli Sullivan failed to get the Republican Party's nomination to run in the fall election, losing to a challenger Saturday who has called for more voting restrictions and embraced former President Donald Trump's lie that the 2020 election was stolen. GOP delegates nominated Diego Morales, who worked in the governor's office when Mike Pence led the state. He overcame criticism about twice leaving jobs in the secretary of state office after being written up for poor performance. Morales defeated Sullivan and another candidate, get-



ting a majority of ballots during a second round of voting. The secretary of state oversees statewide policies for elections, which are run by county officials. Morales has called for cutting the state's 28-day early voting period in half, requiring

new voters to prove their U.S. Citizenship when registering and creating an "election task force" to investigate "shenanigans." Sullivan, a former state lawmaker from Evansville, was appointed secretary of state in March 2021 by Gov. Eric Holcomb after Connie Lawson resigned after nine years to focus on her health and family. In November, Morales will face Destiny Scott Wells, an Indianapolis attorney and Army Reserve intelligence officer who ran unopposed for the Democratic nomination. Libertarian candidate Jeff Maurer will also be on the ballot.

Europe faces unusual mid-June heatwave

IANs ■ PARIS

As Europe is facing an unusually early and intense heatwave coming from North Africa, governments of many countries have issued warnings and instructions to the public on how to 'survive' it. In France, monthly heat records were recorded in several cities, Xinhua news agency quoted local media as saying. According to French daily Le Figaro, an absolute record for the seaside city of Biarritz was recorded at 42.4 degrees Celsius, with an average of 35 degree in other regions in France. A total of 14 French departments were under a



heatwave red alert on Friday. About three-quarters of the French population are affected by the orange and red heatwave alert. On Saturday evening, the situation remained extreme, unprecedented, with exceptionally high temperatures

never before observed so early in the season, Le Figaro reported. The French government has also set up a 'heat' line to help people in need in case of emergency. Across the English Channel, Britain's Met Office

has issued a level-three warning, the second highest, for the heatwave in London, southeast and east England, as the temperature rose to 33 degrees Celsius, the highest since summer 2020. The UK Health Security Agency has issued a level-three heat-health alert across London, the southeast and east England, which requires social and healthcare services to target specific actions at high-risk groups. Stephen Dixon, a Met Office spokesperson, told the media that temperatures in the early 30s were "not unprecedented but it is unusual to see temperatures this high this early in the year".

India protected farmers' interest at WTO meet: Min

New Delhi: India has completely protected the interests of farmers and fishermen in the recently concluded ministerial conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva, commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday.

Goyal, who led the Indian delegation for the WTO talks, also said that the decisions taken in the conference will further strengthen the role of the multi-lateral body in promoting global trade and India championed the cause of the developing and under-developed countries.

Members of the Geneva-based WTO on June 17 secured a 'Geneva Package' which included agreements on curbing harmful fishing subsidies and temporary patent waiver for production of Covid-19 vaccines.

The four-day talks of the 164-member body, which started on June 12, ended on June 17 after hectic negotiations.

"In the WTO ministerial conference, we fully protected the interests of farmers, MSMEs, and fishermen. There will be no burden on them. We protected their interests," the



minister said here at an event where Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation the main tunnel and five underpasses of Pragati Maidan Integrated Transit Corridor Project.

The Integrated Transit Corridor project is an integral part of Pragati Maidan Redevelopment Project.

"Checks are being placed on illegal fishing in the high seas and our fishermen will have full freedom in our EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zones). Similarly, we have ensured the MSP (Minimum Support Price) stays and our farmers interests have been protected," he said.

Developed countries engaged in distant water fishing would not be able to pro-

vide subsidies for illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities, he added.

Further, the MSP operations for farmers are also protected and "farmers will not have any problem," he said.

The WTO formulates rules for global exports and imports and adjudicates disputes between two or more than two nations. As per its rules, all decisions are taken by consensus and a single member nation can veto a decision.

Talking about the Pragati Maidan Integrated Transit Corridor Project, Goyal said it would help in decongesting traffic at Bhairon Marg here near India Gate.

He said the tunnel is part of the redevelopment plan of ITPO site at Pragati Maidan and this state-of-the-art convention and exhibition centre will be ready in time for India's presidency of the G20 Summit in December next year.

Lamenting the Delhi government's callous attitude towards the Pragati Maidan corridor, Goyal said unfortunately the state government ignored repeated reminders to fulfill its share of just 20 per cent cost of the project. **PTI**

FM to meet heads of PSBs today to review performances

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to meet the heads of public sector banks (PSBs) on Monday to review the performance of the lenders and the progress made by them on various schemes launched by the government for the revival of the economy.

Banks would be urged to sanction loans for productive sectors to accelerate the revival of the economy facing headwinds including from the Russia-Ukraine war, sources said.

Last week during the Iconic Week celebration of the finance ministry, banks conducted outreach programs across the country where eligible borrowers have sanctioned loans on the spot.

The Finance Minister would take stock of credit growth, asset quality, and business growth plan of banks, sources said, adding non-performing assets (NPAs) of Rs 100 crore and the recovery status would also be discussed.

They said there would be a comprehensive review of various segments and progress in government schemes including the Kisan Credit Card, and

Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS).

In the Budget, ECLGS was extended by a year till March 2023. Further, the guarantee cover for the scheme was expanded by ₹50,000 crore to ₹5 lakh crore.

The coverage, scope, and extent of benefits under ECLGS 3.0 for hospitality, travel, tourism, and civil aviation sectors were expanded.

Also, the credit limit for eligible borrowers was increased to 50 per cent of their fund-based credit outstanding from 40 per cent earlier. The enhanced limit is subject to a maximum of ₹200 crore per borrower.

Besides, sources said, the review of capital requirements of banks and the financial inclusion drive would be reviewed during the meeting.

It is to be noted that the meeting is being held against the backdrop when all PSBs posted a profit in the second financial year in a row.

They have more than doubled their net profit to ₹66,539 crore in FY'22. The collective profit of 12 state-owned banks together was Rs 31,820 crore in FY21. **PTI**

'Normal monsoon, interest rate cut key to bringing down inflation by year end'

New Delhi: A combination of normal rainfalls aiding bumper agriculture output and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) further hiking interest rates to cut easy money in the system hold key to bringing down multi-year high inflation triggered by surging food and fuel prices, economists said.

Although the Government has room to further reduce excise duty on petroleum products to contain inflation from the fiscal side, emphasis will be on monetary policy to control price pressures, they added.

While retail inflation rose 7.04 per cent in May year-on-year, slightly down from 95-month high of 7.79 per cent in April, wholesale or WPI inflation rose to a record high of 15.88 per cent in May. Three-fourth of the price rise is coming from food items and a normal monsoon will help cool it down as it will boost production and replenish stockpiles.

The RBI has already raised interest rates by 90 basis points after inflation remained above its 2-6 per cent target band for a fifth straight month and is expected to hike interest rates by another 80 bps, they said.

For the common man, the



price hike is drilling a hole in pocket.

Edible oil prices, which had been a major factor contributing to the inflation, have started to ease a bit with leading players announcing some reduction.

"Petrol and diesel have become expensive but, in comparison, cab fares have not been raised that much. We have to pay cab companies also. We are left with quite a little," Sukhwinder Singh, a 47-year-old cab driver said.

A 40-year old vegetable seller said managing two meals a day has become difficult as peo-

ple opt for home deliveries rather than buying from vegetable vendors. "Medicines are becoming expensive. We cannot even afford to fall sick these days."

Economic affairs secretary Ajay Seth on June 16 said inflation in India is mainly because of high energy and food prices and hoped that it would moderate in the coming months. "We are all aware that summer months are difficult months in terms of vegetables and other items," he said. "High crude prices are certainly a challenge and whatever measures are needed and feasible are being taken." **PTI**

Coal stock at more than 52 MT; enough for about 24 days' requirement of power plants

New Delhi: The Government on Sunday said that coal stock at various coal mines is more than 52 million tonnes (MT), which is sufficient for about 24 days of fuel required for power plants in the country.

The statement came weeks after shortage of fuel crippled power generation at various power plants in the country.

"As on 16th June 22, coal stock at different domestic coal mines is more than 52 MT, which is sufficient for about 24 days requirement of power plants," the coal ministry said in a statement.

In addition to it, about 4.5 MT coal stock is available at various goods shed sidings, private washeries and ports and is awaiting to be transported to the power plants.

With increased production, the rake supply from Coal India Ltd (CIL) to power



sector has also been at all-time high. The rake loading to power sector increased from 215.8 rakes per day in 2020-21 to 271.9 rakes per day in 2021-22, registering a growth of 26 per cent.

In the current year also (till June 16, 2022), the rake supply from CIL to power sector has increased by 25 per cent as

compared to the same period of last year. At the same time, coal stocks at pit head power plants are much higher than distant plants.

The Domestic Coal Based (DCB) power plants have generated a record high power of 3.3 BU per day in June 2022 (till 16th).

"The coal stock at the

DCB power plants during this period, however, have not depleted, rather the same has increased from 21.85 MT (as on 01.06.22) to 22.64 MT (as on June 16)," the statement said.

This reflects the robust coal production and sufficient supply to keep up with the increasing demand. The coal stock is sufficient for more than 10 days requirement.

During the monsoons, despite having high coal stock at mine ends, the coal companies face problems in transporting coal to the sidings due to flooding of mines and the wet coal jamming the coal handling plants conveyor systems, it added.

Even by the end of second quarter, coal stocks remain high at CIL mines when stocks are low at thermal plant end. There domestic coal production is not an issue. **PTI**

Govt directs GENCOS to buy rakes for captive use to ensure smooth coal supply during monsoon

New Delhi: The Government has directed the power generation companies (GENCOS) to buy rakes for captive usage, a move which will ensure smooth supplies of coal during the monsoon season.

Each year during the monsoon season, the production of domestic coal also falls, Power Minister R K Singh told PTI.

When asked if the government is making rake arrangements anticipating production and supply issues during the approaching rainy season, he replied in the affirmative.

"That (rakes) is another problem," Singh said adding the Coal Ministry has been saying that there are locations where there is dry fuel but transportation is not happening to

the extent of availability.

He cited the shortage of rakes besides congestion on some routes as the main reasons for this problem.

There are actions which the Railways need to take to reduce the congestion on those lines so that more coal can be evacuated from these places. In some areas, the Coal Ministry will have to up the production where enough rakes are available, the Minister said.

Without sharing any details, he further said "the Indian Railways is buying more rakes. I have also asked the GENCOS to invest in rakes. "You can own rakes and you save on transport cost and that pays for itself in about 9-10 years and the rake itself runs for about 25-30 years. **PTI**

'RBI's 'Payments Vision 2025' aims to establish India as powerhouse of payments globally'



New Delhi: The Reserve Bank's 'Payments Vision 2025' document, which seeks a three-fold jump in the number of digital payments, is progressive and aims to establish India as a powerhouse of payments globally, opined industry players.

The RBI on Friday came out with its 'Payments Vision 2025' document which also talks about ring-fencing of domestic payment systems, including the need to mandate domestic processing of payment transactions, in view of the emerging geopolitical risks.

The core theme of the vision documents is 'E-Payments for Everyone, Everywhere, Everytime' (4Es), with an overall objective to provide every user with safe, secure, fast, convenient, accessible, and affordable e-payment options.

Commenting on the document, Rajesh Mirjankar, MD and CEO, Kiya.AI, said the Payments Vision 2025 is progressive and has an outlook to establish India as a powerhouse of payments globally.

"One of the most important forward-looking initiatives is the global outreach of UPI, RTGS, NEFT and RuPay cards with internationalisation, where bilateral treaties with nations especially cover-

ing the USD, GBP and Euro will hugely benefit Indian residents and their counterparties overseas with online realisation at lesser costs," said Mirjankar.

Dilip Modi, founder of Spice Money, said while the pandemic raged across the country, India was on a path to realising its payments vision, and digital payments grew phenomenally in volume and popularity, with a constant thrust from the government and the rise of rural fintechs.

It is heartening to note that the RBI takes measures that will further enhance safety and security for rural citizens, where digital and financial literacy continues to be core challenges, he said.

V Swaminathan, Executive Chairman, Andromeda Loans and Apnapaisa, said the RBI came out with its Payments Vision 2025 document to check the flow of cash in distribution and enhance the overall digital transactions in the country.

"Overall, the RBI seems to be pushing digital transactions and reducing the time taken in various settlements. With the UPI on its side, the momentum is on the rise and the nation looks forward to having multiple options to transact irrespective of the quantum of the amount to be transacted," he said. **PTI**

ESIC to cover entire India under ESI Scheme by year end

New Delhi: The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) on Sunday decided its health insurance scheme ESI will be implemented throughout the country by the end of 2022.

Presently, the Employees' State Insurance (ESI) Scheme is fully implemented in 443 districts and partially implemented in 153 districts. A total of 148 districts are not covered under the ESI Scheme.

The ESIC, under the chairmanship of Minister of Labour and Employment Bhupender Yadav, in its 188th meeting held on Sunday has taken significant decisions to augment the medical care and service delivery mechanism across the country, a labour ministry statement said.

It has been decided that the ESI Scheme will be implemented in the entire country by the end of 2022, it added. **PTI**

Sovereign Gold Bonds saw max traction in Covid-hit years; next SGBS tranche opens today

New Delhi: Investment in Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGBs) went up sharply during Covid impacted years as investors looked for safer options amid volatility in equity markets with 2020-21 and 2021-22 accounting for nearly 75 per cent of total sales of the bonds since the inception of the scheme in November 2015.

The next tranche of SGBs is scheduled to open for subscription for five days beginning Monday. The issue price has been fixed at ₹5,091 per gram of gold. It will be the first issuance of the current fiscal.

The government in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India has offered a discount of ₹50 per gram less than the nominal value to those investors applying online and the payment against the application is made through digital mode.

A total of ₹38,693 crore

(90 tonnes of gold) has been raised through the scheme since its inception in November 2015, as per a RBI data.

During 2021-22 and 2020-21, the two Covid-impacted financial years, investors bought the bonds for an aggregate amount of ₹29,040 crore or about 75 per cent of the total sales of the SGBs since its launch.

The Reserve Bank issued 10 tranches of SGBs during 2021-22 for an aggregate amount of ₹16,049 crores (32.35 tonnes).

A total of ₹9,652.78 crore (30.98 tonnes) were raised at the end of the fiscal 2019-20 through the scheme in 37 tranches since its inception in November 2015. **PTI**

428 infra projects show cost overruns of ₹4.98 lakh cr

New Delhi: As many as 428 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of ₹150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns of more than ₹4.98 lakh crore, as per a report.

According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, which monitors infrastructure projects of ₹150 crore and above, out of 1,559 projects, 428 projects reported cost overruns and as many as 647 projects were delayed.

"Total original cost of implementation of the 1559 projects was ₹21,73,907.11 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be ₹26,72,201.26 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of ₹4,98,294.15 crore (22.92% of original cost)," the ministry's latest report for April 2022 said. **PTI**

Market crash: Top 10 firms lose ₹3.91 lakh cr in m-cap; TCS, RIL biggest laggards

New Delhi: The market valuation of the top-10 most valued firms plunged by a whopping ₹3.91 lakh crore last week, in tandem with a steep sell-off in equities, with TCS and Reliance Industries taking the biggest hit.

Past week, the BSE Sensex plunged 2,943.02 points or 5.42 per cent, while the NSE Nifty declined 908.30 points or 5.61 per cent. Markets have been extremely bearish of late amid rate hikes by global central banks, unrelenting foreign fund outflows and jump in crude oil prices.

The market valuation of the 10 most valued domestic firms eroded by ₹3,91,620.01 crore last week. From the top-10 firms, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) was the top loser, as its market valuation tumbled ₹1,01,026.4 crore to stand at ₹11,30,372.45 crore. **PTI**

Canara Bank aims to improve bottom line further with balanced focus on retail, business lending

New Delhi: Recording two-fold jump in its net profit in fiscal year ended March 2022, Canara Bank aims to improve its bottom line further with balanced focus on advances to retail, big and small businesses, coupled with greater focus on digitisation.

During 2021-22, the state-owned lender recorded a robust growth of 122 per cent in its net profit at ₹5,678 crore, with operating profit rising by over 17 per cent to ₹23,089 crore.

It had earned a net profit of ₹2,558 crore in the preceding fiscal year ended March 2021.

The challenges emanating from the global macro scenario reflected on the domestic economy, leading to a slowing down of the growth momentum of the Indian economy. However, there are positive signals for aggregate demand with consumer and business confidence picking up, Canara Bank managing director L V Prabhakar said. **PTI**

Oil Min proposes higher age limit, shorter tenure for ONGC chairman

New Delhi: A year after the Government headhunter failed to find any suitable candidate for the top job at ONGC, the Oil Ministry has proposed raising of eligibility age as well as a shorter tenure for the new chairman and managing director of India's top oil and gas producer. The Ministry has proposed that any candidate to be eligible for consideration should not be more than 60 years of age on the date of occurrence of vacancy, according to the Ministry's office memorandum sent to the Department of Personnel and

Training (DoPT) on June 17.

The vacancy arose after Shashi Shanker superannuated on March 31, 2021. Presently, the minimum age prescribed for being eligible for the top job is 45 years. Besides, internal candidates need to have two years of residual service as on the date of vacancy and three years for external candidates. What the Ministry has proposed now is that any eligible candidate who is not more than 60 years of age at the time of occurrence of vacancy, which was April 1, 2021, should be considered eligible. **PTI**

Flight of FPIs continues; equities worth ₹31,430 crore sold in June so far

New Delhi: Aggressive rate hike by the US Federal Reserve, coupled with elevated inflation and high valuation of equities continued to keep foreign investors at bay from the Indian stock market as they pulled out ₹31,430 crore in this month so far. With this, net outflow by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) from equities reached ₹1.98 lakh crore so far in 2022, data with depositories showed.

Going forward, FPIs flow to remain volatile in the emerging markets on account of rising geopolitical risk, rising inflation, tightening of monetary policy by central banks, among others, Shrikant Chouhan, Head - Equity Research (Retail),

Kotak Securities, said.

According to the data, foreign investors withdrew a net amount of ₹31,430 crore from equities in the month of June (till 17th). The massive selling by FPIs continued in June too as they have been incessantly withdrawing money from Indian equities since October 2021. Shrikant attributed latest selling to rising inflation, tight monetary policy by global central banks and elevated crude oil prices. Global investors are reacting to increased risks of a global recession as the US Federal Reserve was forced to raise interest rates by 75 basis points. due to persistently elevated inflation. **PTI**

Selling diesel at ₹20-25/ltr loss, petrol at ₹14-18/ltr loss: Pvt retailers to Govt

New Delhi: Selling diesel at Rs 20-25 a litre below cost and petrol at Rs 14-18 per litre below cost, as a result of a price freeze despite soaring crude rates is unsustainable, an industry body representing private fuel retailers like Jio-bp and Nayara Energy has told the Oil Ministry and has sought its intervention to create a viable investment environment.

On June 10, the Federation of Indian Petroleum Industry (FIPI), which besides private fuel retailers also counts state-owned firms such as IOC, BPCL and HPCL as its mem-

bers, wrote to the Petroleum Ministry saying losses on petrol and diesel will limit further investments in retailing business. International crude oil and product prices have risen sharply to a decade high but state-owned fuel retailers, who control 90 per cent of the market, have frozen petrol and diesel prices at rates equivalent to two-third of the cost.

This has left private fuel retailers like Jio-bp, Rosneft-backed Nayara Energy and Shell to either raise prices and lose customers, or to curtail sales to cut losses. **PTI**

Global trends, foreign fund movement, oil prices to guide markets this week: Analysts

New Delhi: The equity markets focus is expected to shift to global trends in the absence of any major domestic event scheduled this week, while investors are likely to continue to keep a tab on foreign fund movement and crude oil prices, analysts said.

Progress of monsoon would also be monitored, they added. "Relentless selling by FIIs is a key concern for the Indian markets. Rupee movement and development of monsoon will be other important factors for the market," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd. "In absence of any major domestic event, global cues will continue to dictate the trend. Participants will also be eyeing Covid cases trend and progress of monsoon," Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Past week, the Sensex plunged 2,943.02 points or 5.42 per cent, while the Nifty declined 908.30 points or 5.61 per cent. Weak global cues, a sharp rate hike in the USA and aggressive selling by FIIs (Foreign Institutional Investors) were the key reasons for last week's turmoil, Meena added. **PTI**

NEERAJ CHOPRA READY FOR DIAMOND LEAGUE SEASON

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Allying fears of any injury during the Kuortane Games in Finland where he claimed his first win of the year, Olympic champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra said he is looking forward to starting his Diamond League season in Stockholm on June 30.

The 24-year-old Chopra slipped after his third attempt in Kuortane on Saturday. The conditions were treacherous for a javelin throw competition with a wet and slippery run-up due to rains. He lost his balance after releasing the spear in his third attempt and had a nasty fall with his left shoulder hitting the turf.

Chopra won the competition with his opening throw — his lone legal attempt — of 86.69m. He took only three attempts, just like second and third-place finishers — Trinidad and Tobago's 2012 Olympics champion Keshorn Walcott (86.64m) and reigning world champion Anderson Peters (84.75m) of Grenada.

"Tough conditions with the weather, but happy to get my first win of the season here at Kuortane," Chopra wrote in an Instagram post.

"I am feeling good and



looking forward to starting my Diamond League season at @bauhausgala (Stockholm Diamond League) on the 30th."

His throw was not as big as the 89.30m effort while finishing second in the Paavo Nurmi Games in Turku, Finland, in a star-studded field on Tuesday but the win will surely boost his confidence ahead of the Stockholm Diamond League.

Athletics Federation of India (AFI) also said that "all is well" with Chopra.

"News from Kuortane: All well with @Neeraj_chopra1 after that bad slip on his third attempt. Nothing to worry. Well done #NeerajChopra, congrats for one more top class performance," the AFI tweeted.

INDIA CONTINUE FINE RUN, BAG 8 MEDALS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hosts India scooped up eight medals at the Asian Track Cycling Championships, including 1 Gold, 3 Silver and 4 Bronze, on the second day of the competition here on Sunday.

The Indian athletes, so far, have won 18 medals in the 41st Senior, 28th Junior Asian Track, and 10th Para Track Cycling Championships.

The second day of the event also witnessed 12 final rounds, including four in para cycling events.

The Indians bagged 1 Gold, 1 Silver and 1 Bronze in the Para Cycling events while 2 Silver and 3 Bronze medals were won by the senior and junior athletes respectively.

Track cyclist Mayuri Lute won the Bronze medal in the 500m time trial event. This was Mayuri's second Bronze medal in as many days and her first individual medal in the senior category event. She clocked 36.481 seconds in time trial with a speed of 49.340 km/h to earn the honours.

India opened with Pooja Danole's Bronze medal in the individual pursuit women's junior category.

Pooja clocked 2:31.277 seconds to claim



the third position and went on to create a new national record, breaking her own previous record of 2:37.410 seconds.

In the men's junior category, Niraj Kumar lost an opportunity to win Gold and settled for Silver after he lost to Kazakhstan's Maxim Traskin in the 2000km race event.

In the senior men's individual pursuit category, Vishwajit Singh bagged Bronze by clocking 9 minutes in the 4 kilometre race event.

Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce storms to impressive 100m victory in Paris

AP ■ PARIS

Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce hammered home her status as world championship favourite on Saturday by equalling her world best time this year to win the 100m at the Paris Diamond League meeting.

The veteran Jamaican sprinter triumphed in 10.67sec, struggling off the crushing 30-degree heat at the city's Charlety stadium.

A two-time Olympic champion over 100m, the 35-year-old Fraser-Pryce equalled the 2022 best time she set in Nairobi in May.

The nine-time world champion's win illustrated her threat to reigning Olympic champion Elaine Thompson-Herah at next month's world championships in Eugene, Oregon.

Both will meet next week at the Jamaican trials.

"I feel very good, technically it was very good. The goal is always to be on top technically, then the lap times follow," said Fraser-Pryce.

"Physically I was good too. Running 10.6, only a few sprinters can achieve that," she added.

Fraser-Pryce has already qualified for the 100m in Eugene as she is the defending champion.



Indian women lose 2-3 to Argentina | Axelsen defends Indonesia title

PTI ■ ROTTERDAM

Avaliant Indian women's hockey team squandered a one-goal lead to lose 2-3 to Olympic silver medallist Argentina in the second match of the double-leg FIH Pro League tie here on Sunday.

Argentina won the FIH Pro League crown, finishing with 42 points from 16 games, 10 clear of second placed Netherlands, who still have two games remaining. The Indians continued to occupy the third position in the standings in their debut season with 24 points from 12 games.

In the first match on Saturday, the Indians had dished out a spirited performance to stun Argentina 2-1 in the shoot-out after a 3-3 stalemate in regulation time.

Their confidence on a high after the terrific win a day before, India continued in the same vein and put pressure on the Argentine defence early on.

Not just in attack, the Indians produced a brilliant



trying to show the fans what I've got," Ramsay said.

"Hopefully I can come in preseason, show everyone at the club, the staff, players what I've got and then we'll see what happens from there."

attack with Salima Tete showing her rapid speed by cutting through the Argentine defence before taking a shot that deflected in off opposition goalkeeper Belen Succi's stick.

After the change of ends, Argentina came out attacking and controlled the game for a major part of the third quarter.

The Indians struggled to match the pace of the Argentina players and play was mostly centred inside the Indian half.

In the 37th minute, Savita once again came to her side's rescue by denying Jankunas from close range.

But Argentina were not to be denied a minute later when Delfine Thome did enough to loop the ball over a stretched Savita after she was set up by

AP ■ JAKARTA

World badminton number one Viktor Axelsen triumphed in straight sets over underdog Zhao Jun Peng of China on Sunday, clinching the Indonesia Open championship for the second consecutive year.

The Danish ace took the first set at Jakarta's Istora Senayan arena on the back of superb defense against his left-handed opponent's heavy pressure.

Zhao's aggressive approach would ultimately cost him, leading to several errors in the second and final set as Axelsen took home the title with scores of 21-9 and 21-10.

The Olympic champion came into the match having won the Indonesia Masters 2022 just last week.

The back-to-back tournaments were highly anticipated by badminton fans after almost three years without live audiences in the Indonesian capital due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"Today, I just tried to come



in there and use my experience. I tried to control the drifts the best way I could. I tried to play at a high pace and it really paid off," he told journalists after the match.

The women's singles finals, meanwhile, ended with second-ranked Tai Tzu Ying of Taiwan securing victory over China's unseeded Wang Zhi Yi 21-23, 21-6, 21-15.

"Wang played with very good ball control. I put the burden on myself because of my own mistakes," Tai said via an interpreter after the match.

But after dropping the first set, Tai quickly bounced back in the second and dominated the rest of the way.

"I'm very happy that a lot of people cheered me on, as it became my motivation during the match today," she said.

Haddad wins Birmingham final

AP ■ BIRMINGHAM

Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia won her second title in seven days after Zhang Shuai retired in the final of the WTA Birmingham Classic on Sunday.

Haddad Mai was 5-4 up in the first when her Chinese opponent indicated she could no longer play on.

Both players had come through tough semi-finals earlier on Sunday after rain had washed out Saturday's play at the Edgbaston Priory Club in Birmingham, central England.

Haddad Maia has now won her last 10 grass-court matches, having lifted the trophy at the Nottingham Open on June 12.

The 26-year-old has yet to get beyond the third round at Wimbledon, but her recent form will leave Haddad Maia hopeful of an improved showing when the last of tennis's four majors played on grass starts in eight days' time.

JABEUR TAKES BERLIN TITLE

Top seed Ons Jabeur won the final of the WTA tournament in Berlin on Sunday after Olympic champion Belinda Bencic was forced to retire after twisting her left ankle.

Bencic slipped at the end of the first set and despite receiving treatment, she eventually retired



with Jabeur leading 6-3, 2-1.

Jabeur had raced into a 3-0 lead after just nine minutes before going on to win the third WTA title of her career after wins on grass last year in Birmingham and on clay in Madrid last month.

"From what I know of Belinda, she would have taken me to three sets today," said Jabeur, who wished her opponent a speedy recovery with Wimbledon due to start in a week's time.

"The most important thing for me is that she is okay."

AP ■ LONDON

Italy's Matteo Berrettini served notice of his intention to mount another strong challenge at Wimbledon after joining an elite group of players by retaining his ATP Queen's Club title on Sunday.

Berrettini defeated Serbia's Filip Krajinovic 7-5, 6-4 in the final of the Wimbledon warm-up event.

He will now be aiming to go one better at Wimbledon, the only one of tennis's four majors still played on grass, after losing to Novak Djokovic in last year's final.

Berrettini's victory meant he joined John McEnroe, Jimmy Connors, Boris Becker, Ivan Lendl, Lleyton Hewitt, Andy Roddick and Andy Murray as the only players in the Open era to win back-to-back Queen's titles.

The world number 10 has been in superb grass-court form this season following a return from hand surgery.

Berrettini, 26, has now won two tournaments in a row, after



beating Murray in Stuttgart last weekend, and Sunday's success was a further boost to his confidence just eight days before the start of Wimbledon.

Krajinovic, who prior to this week had never won a match on grass, was the first player in

Berrettini retains Queen's trophy

Hurkacz brushes aside Medvedev

AP ■ HALLE WESTFALEN

World number one Daniil Medvedev lost his second straight ATP grass-court final when he was brushed aside by Poland's Hubert Hurkacz in Halle on Sunday.

Medvedev had few answers as he crashed to defeat inside 64 minutes as Hurkacz offered no respite in a 6-1, 6-4 victory.

This was a second consecutive heavy defeat in a final for the Russian who also lost in straight sets to Tim van Rijthoven last Sunday at 's-Hertogenbosch in the Netherlands.

Hurkacz earned the fifth title of his career, but his first on grass having also reached the semi-finals of Wimbledon last year.

On his way to the final in Halle, the 25-year-old saw off Australian firebrand Nick Kyrgios in three sets before outclassing Medvedev.



PTI ■ BENGALURU

The BCCI has decided to give the Ireland-bound Indian T20 squad, led by Hardik Pandya, a three-day break before it leaves for the two-match series in Malahide.

While Rahul Dravid, Shreyas Iyer and Rishabh Pant will be taking an early morning flight on Monday for London, the BCCI wants its T20 specialists to take a short break.

"All the players selected for the Ireland T20s are going home for a three-day break. Although there is no bio-bubble they didn't have families with them for the series and some are playing non-stop since IPL.

"It's only fair that they spend some time at home," a BCCI source said.

It is understood that all the members of the Ireland-bound squad will assemble in Mumbai on June 23 along with NCA head VVS Laxman.

"Laxman and the players will be in Mumbai by 23rd and they will leave the next day for Dublin. Since they are already coming from a series, you don't need time to get into the groove. Also it's a two-match series, so you won't be needing a lot of time to acclimatise," he explained.

The T20I party, after playing the two games in Malahide on June 26 and 28, will move to the UK for T20 practice matches, which will coincide with the Test team's 'fifth' game from last year in Edgbaston from July 1-5.

However, it is understood that not all the players in the current T20I set-up will be retained for the England tour, as many regulars will be making a comeback in the team.

"By the time the England white-ball series starts, you will see all the stars playing till the T20 World Cup. There will be no break from thereon save smaller series like Zimbabwe.

"Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, Ravindra Jadeja will all be back in the mix. Only person missing out for the time being is KL Rahul. So a few of the current top-order players, fringe pacers or an odd spinner might miss out," he stated.

IRELAND-BOUND INDIAN SQUAD TO GET 3-DAY BREAK TO REJUVENATE



Fifth T20I called off due to rain, series shared

PTI ■ BENGALURU

India and South Africa shared honours in the five-match T20I series after the last game here on Sunday was called off due to rain with only 3.3 overs of play possible. India and South Africa were on level terms at 2-2 after four matches.

After being put into bat, a steady downpour delayed the game by 50 minutes. It started raining just when the game

was about to start.

The curtailed match did start at 7:50PM but was called off after only 16 minutes of play in which India managed 28 runs for the loss of two wickets.

Lungi Ngidi got both the wickets of Ishan Kishan and Rituraj Gaikwad with a couple of slower deliveries.

Kishan hit two sixes off Khehnav Maharaj's opening over but was undone by a loopy slower delivery from Ngidi as

he committed to the shot early and played all over it.

Gaikwad also failed to pick up a slower delivery and was holed out at mid-on before the heavens opened up again to stop the series decider.

The Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) later informed that they will refund 50 per cent of the ticket money to the spectators following the wash out.

Six captains in eight months wasn't planned but we have created more leaders: Dravid

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Six captains leading Indian Teams across formats in a span of eight months isn't something that head coach Rahul Dravid had planned but he isn't complaining as it provides an opportunity to create more leaders within the group.

Since Dravid took over in November after the T20 World Cup, India have had Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan, KL Rahul, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya (set to lead in Ireland) as national captains due to the COVID-19 related bubble breaks, simultaneous series held in countries, and injury-induced breaks.

"It's been challenging as well, we have got six captains in the last eight months, which actually wasn't the plan when I started, but it's the nature of the number of games we are playing," Dravid told *Star Sports*.

The 'Wall' accepted that that the times are such that one has to accept the situation.

"It's the nature of COVID,



so I have had to work with quite a few people. It has been great fun. A lot of other guys have got an opportunity to lead, we have got opportunities to create more leaders in the group," he looked at the positive side of the things.

The endeavour has been to get better in every aspect although losing the Test and ODI series in South Africa was disappointing. "We have constantly strived to get better, we have tried a lot of different people. In the last eight months, touring South Africa was a bit of a disappointment in terms

of Test cricket," he said.

Dravid is happy with the bowling talent that has emerged thanks to the IPL.

"Our white ball cricket has been good though, shows the character of the team. It was incredible to see the fast bowling talent we have (during the IPL), especially with few of the bowlers clocking such speed.

"A lot of youngsters got an opportunity to showcase their skills, and a lot of them came good, those are really good signs for Indian cricket, exciting times ahead," he sounded confident.

Wriddhi in talks for 'player-cum-mentor role' with Tripura

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Discarded Team India wicket-keeper Wriddhiman Saha, who also had a fallout with Cricket Association of Bengal, is in talks with Tripura for a potential player-cum-mentor role, an official said.

"He wants a role of being the player-cum-mentor for Tripura. He has been in talks with some Apex Council members in Tripura but nothing has been finalised yet," an official said.

"He has to first get a clearance (no-objection-certificate) from the CAB and then the BCCI and then it will be taken forward," he added. The 37-year-old had pulled out of the Bengal set-up after being rejected in the Indian Test team for Sri Lanka.

After that, CAB joint-secretary Debabrata Das made some unsavoury remarks about Saha's decision in the media, questioning his commitment, something that annoyed the seasoned wicketkeeper-batter.

Having made a mark in the IPL, Saha was named in Bengal's Ranji Trophy quarterfinal match squad against Jharkhand, but without his consent.

The veteran wicketkeeper took strong exception to it and reportedly sought an apology from Das. Later, he made it clear he's not going to play for Bengal again.

Having made his debut for Bengal in 2007, Saha has played 122 first-class matches.



Sri Lanka beat Australia by 6 wickets



AP ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka clinched an wicket-win in the third ODI against Australia on Sunday. The hosts now lead the five-match series by 2-1. Aaron Finch and Travis Head scored fifties each as Australia managed 291/6 in 50 overs. However, their knocks went in vain, with Lankan opener Pathum Nissanka (137) dishing out a scintillating ton. Sri

Lanka (292/4) won by six wickets.

Australia got off to a shaky start as they lost two wickets in 11 overs. The visitors fetched partnerships at frequent intervals to keep themselves afloat on what was a spinner-friendly wicket on offer. Later, Sri Lankan openers laid a decent exhibition. A century-plus stand between Nissanka and Mendis proved overpowering for the Aussies

as they faced a second successive defeat in the series.

Earlier, Australia won the toss and chose to bat first.

Travis Head smashed 70 as Australia braved a spin onslaught by Sri Lanka to reach 291-6.

Australian opener David Warner went for nine in the third over, top-edging a Dushmantha Chameera bouncer to Maheesh Theekshana at fine leg.

Back from injury, Mitchell Marsh struggled to get going and departed for 10 off 23 deliveries, caught at cover by Kusal Mendis after a slower delivery by Dunith Wellalage.

Marnus Labuschagne came in at number four ahead of Head and he and Aaron Finch added 69 before Labuschagne was stumped by Niroshan Dickwella off Jeffrey Vandersay for 29.

Two overs later, Vandersay bagged Finch too, with the Australian captain edging the spinner to a diving Dhananjaya de Silva at slip having made 62 off 85.

Head and Carey added 72 runs before de Silva trapped Carey leg-before on the front pad trying to sweep, having made a quick-fire 49 off 52 deliveries.

Glenn Maxwell did some damage, smashing 33 off 18 before giving Vandersay his third wicket, miscueing the spinner into the hands of Wellalage scurrying back from midwicket.

But Head stayed firm, reaching his half-century and smashing Wellalage for three sixes in the penultimate over and ending 70 not out off 65 deliveries, with Cameron Green unbeaten on 15.

Vandersay ended with figures of 3 for 49.



Indian women's team arrive in SL for white-ball series

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The Harmanpreet Kaur-led Indian women's cricket team arrived here on Sunday for its limited-over tour of Sri Lanka, beginning on June 23.

Without senior players like Mithali Raj, who has announced her retirement, and veteran pacer Jhulan Goswami, a young Indian team will play three ODIs and as many T20 Internationals at Pallekele and Dambulla respectively.

The Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) welcomed the visiting team, coached by Ramesh Powar, on its arrival and also posted pictures and visuals on its social media handles.

Prior to its departure, the Indian team underwent a camp at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru and also interacted with NCA head VVS Laxman.

According to Harmanpreet, the tour was a great opportunity to build the team.

"We are working hard on our team, we have great combinations. And for us, it is a good tour to start, because first-time we are going to play without our seniors and a great opportunity for all of us to build a team," Harmanpreet had said on Saturday.

The tour commences with the first T20I at Dambulla on June 23.

WI win 1st B'desh Test by 7 wickets, go 1-0 up

AP ■ ANTIGUA

John Campbell smashed the winning six as West Indies needed only seven more overs to beat Bangladesh by seven wickets in the first Test on Sunday.

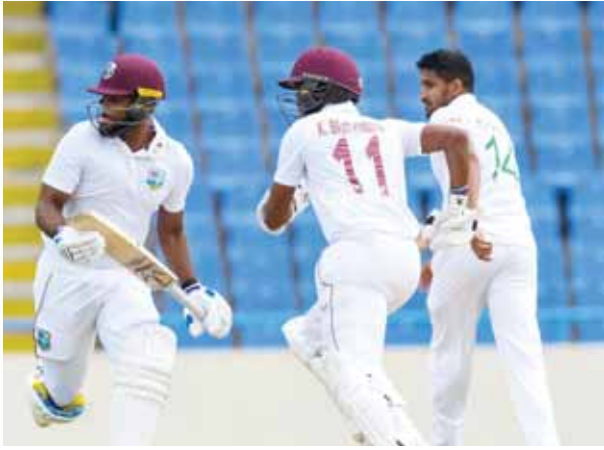
West Indies finished on 88-3 after resuming the fourth day on 49-3 in its second innings and needing 35 more runs to clinch the series opener.

Campbell accelerated his scoring rate on Sunday and finished the match with a six over long off against Najmul Hossain Shanto. He hit nine fours and one six in his 58 not out. Jermaine Blackwood at the other end was undefeated on 26 after the pair came to their team's rescue with a fourth-wicket partnership of 79.

Out-of-form Bangladesh had given the hosts a scare on Saturday, at one stage reducing the West Indies to 9-3 at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium.

West Indies scored 265 in its first innings. Bangladesh had 103 and 245.

Bangladesh medium-pacer Khaled Ahmed, who took three wickets in 11 balls on day three, was unable to break through again. He finished with 3-27 from eight overs.



England set 236 off 41 overs to win 2nd ODI

AP ■ AMSTELVEEN

England was set a target of 236 off 41 overs to win the second ODI against the Netherlands on Sunday and clinch the series with a match to spare.

Scott Edwards, filling in as captain in the absence of Pieter Seelaar, top-scored for the Dutch in their total of 235-7 at Amstelveen out-

side Amsterdam after they won the toss and opted to bat first.

They did the opposite in the first ODI on Friday and saw England smash a world-record 498-4 to set up a victory by 232 runs.

The second ODI was reduced to 41 overs per side because of overnight rain that led to a delayed start due to a wet outfield.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A country where sport is still not considered a viable career option, incidents of sexual harassment of female athletes by their coaches could discourage parents from sending their daughters to stadiums, fears India's sports fraternity.

Such issues must be handled wisely by the authorities, is the common refrain from current and former sports persons.

A female cyclist recently shared her harrowing experience in Slovenia, where the contingent's chief coach made attempts to sexually harass her.

The cyclist was flown back to the country by the Sports Authority of India (SAI), on her request, and the coach was sacked and is facing an investigation.

Many Indian athletes are still unaware of the incident but expressed angst when they were told about it.

The country's top archer Deepika Kumari urged the authorities to ensure female athletes' safety and exhorted her colleagues to bring to light such incidents without fear.

"This is utterly shocking. You should remove these persons. We have a free culture in sport where both boys and girls practice together, stay under one roof as they feel it is very safe," the world number 3 and three-time Olympian said.

Parents these days are reluctant to send their girl child to sport. If such

things keep coming up, then they will stop sending them. So it's for the authorities to remove the culprits far away from the sport. Safety is of utmost importance."

"As for athletes, they should always speak out with confidence. Maybe they fear for their career and reputation, and suppress the matter in some cases. But this way you are giving more freedom to these coaches."

The SAI has already made it mandatory for National Sports Federations (NSFs) to keep women coaches in the contingents if the female athletes are competing, both at home and abroad.

Shooter Manu Bhaker said before the instruction was issued, the practice was being followed in her sport.

"We always have a female coach or a manager accompanying us on tours. So I think every other discipline can also follow a similar practice to ensure the athletes are well taken care of," she said.

"Else these incidents can have a negative impact and affect the performance of athletes. I am sure they (coaches) are also briefed about this crucial aspect."

Former India captain and BCCI Apex Council member Shantha Rangaswamy advocated the need to have more women involved in running of the sport.

"In Karnataka cricket, we have female support staff for all the age groups. If we get more females into the game, not only it makes the environ-

ment safer it also helps them blossom in their coaching careers.

"At the national level, I hope in the next five years we have an all-women support staff in the Indian team. The head coach can be male but the rest of the support staff should definitely be female. If they can excel at the domestic level they can excel at the India level too," she said.

There are a few athletes who are still unaware that such an incident has happened.

"No, I have not heard about this incident. We are focussed on our training. And such things have not happened in wrestling," said Sarita Mor, the world championships bronze medallist.

Three-time Olympian Laishram Bombayla Devi says the process to appoint coaches should be made better so that such elements do not enter the system.

"We never faced such an issue in archery. It's hard to believe and feels bad. The solution to this problem is to screen the coaches properly before their appointments. The committee should do a proper background check before appointing someone."

"Most of the NIS coaches come out after participating in just one state meet or so. It has become very simple to become a coach, especially at the junior level. To keep a qualified coach is very important so the onus is on the authorities to be strict while appointing them," she said.

Sardar Singh, former India hockey skipper and now a coach with the national men's team, said such incidents "bring a bad name to Indian sports".

"The step taken by SAI to make it mandatory for a woman coach to accompany women athletes on tours and national camps is a welcome move.

"This should have been implemented earlier. The women athletes, particularly who are in individual sports, will feel safe now and share their problems with the lady coach."

"If you talk about hockey, the players always travel or camp in a big contingent. We always used to have a woman support staff with our women's team. Now the coach is also a woman (Janneke Schopman)."

Ravi Shankar, who was India coach at London 2012 Olympics and is the current chief archery coach at SAI centre in Kolkata, said the latest incident is "a big blot to our coaching fraternity".

"You also start feeling 'guilty' for being a coach. A coach is like a father figure to the ward. I've been coaching for 32 years now. I was with the men's team earlier and now looking after the women's team in different age groups. Deepika was also under me and toured with me for about 16 years.

"Till now she calls me 'Papa', that should be the relation, the mentality between a ward and the coach, then only you can become a successful coach. Trust and belief play a big role."