

OPINION 6

THE SILENCE OF
PAK CIVIL SOCIETY

WORLD 9

46 MIGRANTS FOUND DEAD IN
ABANDONED TRAILER IN SAN ANTONIO

MONEY 10

SENSEX, NIFTY CLOSE SLIGHT
UP AMID MARKETS RECOVERY

RANCHI, WEDNESDAY JUNE 29, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



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STOKES' ENG
SET SIGHTS
ON INDIA
12 SPORT

CAPSULE

18 KILLED IN MUMBAI
HOUSE COLLAPSE

Mumbai: As many as 18 persons were killed and 14 others injured after a ground-plus—three storey building collapsed at Kurla (East) in north-central Mumbai shortly before midnight on Monday. There were 32 residents at the building "Nayknagar Cooperative Co-operative Housing society" when the structure caved in at around 11.53 pm.

ONGC CHOPPER CRASHES
INTO ARABIAN SEA, 4 DEAD

New Delhi/Mumbai: A brand new Pawan Hans' Sikorsky chopper with 9 people on board crashed into the Arabian Sea, about 50 nautical miles from the Mumbai coast on Tuesday, killing four people -- including three ONGC employees.

COUNCIL OK'S GST RELIEF,
E-WAY BILL BY STATES

Chandigarh: The GST Council on Tuesday approved changes in tax rates on some goods and services while allowing states to issue an e-way bill for intra-state movement of gold and precious stones, officials said.

ED ISSUES FRESH
SUMMONS TO RAUT

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has issued fresh summons to Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut asking him to appear on July 1 for questioning in a money laundering case linked to alleged irregularities in the re-development of a Mumbai 'chawl' and related financial property transactions involving his wife and alleged associates.

Uddhav woos rebels,
son threatens them

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Not having lost all hopes about the possible return of a section of rebel Shiv Sena MLAs who are currently campaigning at Guwahati, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray once again appealed to them to come back to Mumbai and hold talks with him so that a solution could be found to tide over the political crisis within the Sena.

However, within hours after the chief minister held out an olive branch to the rebel MLAs, the breakaway faction leader of the Sena and former minister Eknath Shinde tweeted a reply: "On one hand, your son (Minister Aditya Thackeray) and Spokesperson (MP Sanjay Raut) called the revered Balasaheb Thackeray's Shiv Sainiks as pigs, gutter-muck, dogs, cattle, morons, zombies, and even brought in the names of their fathers, and on the other hand, he (Uddhav) is making a call to save the anti-Hindutva MVA government by making an appeal to the same MLAs to return... What does this mean?"

Talking to the media, Uddhav appealed to all Shiv Sena MLAs to return to the parent camp. He said that as the head of the Sena family, he respected their views and made it clear from his heart that till date "nobody is out of the party" though the (rebels) are stuck in Guwahati with all kinds of speculation.

"I appeal to you all... Come to me... Let's talk it out. Let's remove all the misconceptions among the minds of the people and the Shiv Sainiks," Thackeray appealed.

Uddhav said that the parent Sena would accord respect and dignity to the Sena rebels "Come in front of me and present your views, let's work out a solution," he said.

This is at least the third

direct appeal made by the CM to the rebels since the party crisis exploded on the night of June 21-22. "Many of you are in contact with us and are still emotionally connected with the Shiv Sena... The families of several have also got in touch with us and conveyed your sentiments to us," Uddhav said.

The ruling MVA was plunged into turmoil, when that night around 39 Sena MLAs and 11 others sneaked out to Gujarat and then to Assam to join the rebel faction herded by Shinde.

"Many of you are in contact with us and are still emotionally connected with the Shiv Sena... The families of several have also got in touch with us and conveyed your sentiments to us," Uddhav said.

The CM said, "If we all sit together, we can definitely come up with a solution to the political turmoil and cautioned them saying that the rebel group had fallen prey to any kinds of wrong measures, hinting at a possible tie-up with the Opposition BJP."



Rebel Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde arrives to address media at a hotel where he is staying with other supporting MLAs, in Guwahati on Tuesday

PTI

Fadnavis meets Shah, Nadda to
discuss plan for Govt formation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amidst the ongoing political turmoil in Maharashtra, former State Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president JP Nadda here on Tuesday to consult on the next step to bring back the BJP in power in the State with the help of the Shiv Sena rebels.

Fadnavis, who has met the top leadership at least three-times in the last seven days, was joined by BJP MP and senior

lawyer Mahesh Jethmalani in the meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

BJP leaders are understood to have deliberated on the options available with the party after the Supreme Court provided interim relief to Sena rebels. They focused on the legal steps to be taken ahead of the party's next possible political move to establish a BJP Government in the State backed by rebel Sena and independent MLAs.

After meeting Shah,

Fadnavis drove to Nadda's residence and briefed him about the unfolding political developments in the western State.

Notwithstanding BJP's repeated denial of any role in the Sena rebellion, Fadnavis is widely seen as making moves to re-establish a BJP Government and known to be in constant touch with Sena rebel Eknath Shinde. Shinde may be made deputy-Chief Minister in the new BJP-led dispensation, sources said.

Man beheads tailor for insult
to Islam, curfew in UdaipurKillers post
video, arrested

PTI ■ UDAIPUR

Two men with a cleaver murdered a tailor here, saying in a video post on social media that they are avenging an insult to Islam and triggering communal tension in the Rajasthan city, part of which was placed under curfew.

Within hours, prohibitory orders banning the assembly of people were imposed across the state for a month and mobile internet services suspended for the next 24 hours. At 8 pm, curfew was declared till further orders in seven police station areas of Udaipur city.

The men who allegedly carried out the daylight murder posted three videos online admitting to the crime and were soon arrested.

In a video clip, one of the purported assailants declared that they had "beheaded" the man and went on to threaten Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying their knife will get him as well.

Indirectly, the assailants also referred to Nupur Sharma, the BJP leader suspended from the party over a remark on Prophet Mohammad.

Kanhaiya Lal, the tailor, was recently arrested by the local police over some remarks made on social media by him. A BJP leader said the victim



Ghos Mohammad and Riyaz. Riyaz beheaded a tailor named Kanhaiya Lal in Udaipur, while Ghos filmed the crime, according to officials

PTI



feared for his life and had sought police protection, but the authorities did not act on his appeal.

The assailants entered his shop in the city's Dhan Mandi area posing as customers. As the tailor took the measurements, one of them — who later identified himself as Riaz Akhtari — attacked him with a cleaver, nearly severing his neck. The other man shot the brutal murder with his mobile phone.

The two men fled from the scene and later uploaded this clip on social media. In another video, the alleged assailant said they "beheaded" the tailor and threatened the Prime Minister for lighting "this fire".

Yet another provocative video was recorded on June 17, in which Akhtari said he will post it the day he carries out the

murder. He asked other members of the community to continue with similar attacks.

As the videos circulated on social media, tension escalated. Local shopkeepers downed shutters. Shopkeepers stopped police from taking away the body, saying they will allow the removal of the corpse only after the murderers are arrested and compensation — Rs 50 lakh and a government job — given to the victim's family.

On Twitter, CM Ashok Gehlot appealed for calm and asked people not to share the videos. "The guilty will not be spared. The entire police team is working on it with full alertness. I can imagine the anger which is there among people due to the murder. We are taking action accordingly," he told reporters in Jodhpur.

Alt News founder
sent to 4-day
police custody
for 2018 tweet

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi court on Tuesday remanded Alt News co-founder Mohammed Zubair in four-day police custody in the 2018 tweet case in which he had posted a derogatory message against a Hindu deity. The police had sought a five-day custody of Zubair.

During the hearing, advocate Vrinda Grover, appearing for Zubair, argued that Zubair was being "maliciously targeted" and that the entire case "borders on absurdity." He said the photo which the accused used in the tweets is of an old Hindi film from 1983 by Hrishikesh Mukherjee, "Kissi Se Na Kehna", and that the film was not banned.

Rebutting Zubair's counsel's arguments, the Delhi Police counsel argued that Zubair's "deliberate act of outrageous religious sentiments was on record" and therefore his police remand was required. The Delhi Police also told the court that Zubair allegedly "used controversial tweets to hurt religious feelings in an effort to get fame."

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Snigdha Sarvaria passed the order after hearing arguments. Zubair was produced before the court on the expiry of his one-day custodial interrogation.

Mukesh hands Jio
over to elder son
Akash in Reliance
succession planPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Setting in place the succession plan in India's most valuable company, Reliance Group chairman Mukesh Ambani stepped down from the board of Reliance Jio and handed over the firm's reins to elder son Akash. Reliance Jio is valued at \$217 billion and is a unit of Reliance Industries Ltd, whose business spans from oil refining and petrochemicals to retail, media and new energy.

In a stock exchange filing, Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd on Tuesday said the company's board at a meeting on June 27, "approved the appointment of Akash M Ambani, non-executive director, as chairman of the board of directors of the company."

Modi, UAE President
discuss bilateral tiesIn spl gesture,
UAE President
receives Indian
PM at airportPIONEER NEWS
SERVICE/AGENCIES ■
NEW DELHI/ABU DHABI

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Tuesday reviewed the entire spectrum of their bilateral ties in the sphere of security, education and investment during the talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Signifying the robust relations with India, the UAE President in a special gesture personally received and then gave a warm send-off to



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with UAE President and Abu Dhabi Ruler Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan upon his arrival, in Abu Dhabi

PTI

Modi at the Abu Dhabi airport.

Expressing gratitude, Modi tweeted, "I am touched by the special gesture of my

brother, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, of coming to welcome me at Abu Dhabi airport. My gratitude to him."

87% Indians trust social media posts: Study

PIONEER NEWS
SERVICE/AGENCIES ■
NEW DELHI

Despite concerns around misinformation and false claims, social media users around the world continue to believe that the information they read and share on platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook is factually correct, with levels of trust highest in emerging economies. The study by Oxford University Press (OUP) has mentioned about 54 per cent of people in India turn to social media looking for factual information. Further, as many as 87 per

cent of people in India who share information from social media are confident in its truthfulness, slightly above the global average of three quarters, OUP research has suggested. OUP India MD Sumanta Datta said with over 87 per cent of Indians placing their trust and confidence in information circulating on social media, there is a need to understand the potential impact of factual inaccuracies and misinformation.

"We hope to continue to provide and increase access to tools that allow individuals to be more confident to engage in debates and discussions in

their pursuit of knowledge. In a country like India, with a large young population, it is imperative to build processes and policies that help raise a well-informed, intelligent and perceptive future generation," he said.

The research-led campaign "The Matter of Fact" looked at the level of understanding of how truths are identified and sources validated. The findings show that when looking for factual information, 37 per cent turn to social media, rising to 43 per cent of Mexicans and South Africans and 54 per cent of Indians. Britons were less likely to look for facts using

social media, with only 16 per cent describing it as a preferred source, compared to nearly three in 10 (29 per cent) Americans.

Overall, most of us rely heavily on Google and other search engines for information, with two thirds (67 per cent) worldwide and 62 per cent in the UK finding facts this way. Three-quarters of people are confident information they share from social media is accurate.

The study takes a broad look at how people across the world seek out information and judge its accuracy, drawing on a pool of evi-

dence bolstered by survey data collected from 5,000 people across the UK, the US, South Africa, India, and Mexico.

It found that more than half (52 per cent) said that when it came to distinguishing fact from fiction, sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram play an important role.

At the same time, reliance on books and more traditional means of gathering accurate information has declined. For example, less than a third cited non-fiction books and encyclopedias as sources when seeking facts.



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Special Olympics Badminton National coaching camp begins at BSL



RAHUL SHARMA ■ BOKARO

Children with intellectual disabilities of India will also take part in the Special Olympics to be held in Germany in June 2023 to bring laurels to the country. Bokaro Steel City which has already been

declared as the first Global Active Partner City in the country marked the beginning with the inauguration of the National Selection cum Coaching Camp for Badminton on 27th June at BSL's Sports Complex, Sector-4F in Bokaro Steel City.

It is noteworthy that for the first time, a selection cum coaching camp for Badminton for mentally challenged children is being organized in Bokaro Steel City in association with Special Olympics India under CSR of Bokaro Steel Plant.

DIC BSL congratulates Bokaro player for international feat

PNS ■ BOKARO

Bokaro's daughter Bipasha Singh has re-inscribed Bokaro's name on the sports map by winning three gold and one silver medals for India in the Asian Powerlifting Championship. On her return to Bokaro, Bipasha shared her experience by meeting Amarendra Prakash, Director-in-Charge, BSL.

DIC Prakash congratulated Bipasha on this achievement and wished her good luck for the future endeavors.

It is noteworthy that in the Asian Powerlifting Championship held in



Coimbatore from June 17 to June 21, Bipasha has achieved golden success by defeating players from China, Taipei, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan,

Oman, Mongolia, Iran, Iraq, Nepal, Bhutan etc. Bipasha has won three-gold and one silver medal in the 52 kg weight category by lifting 375 kg.

Narendran bestowed with 'Best CEO Award'

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

T V Narendran, CEO and managing director, Tata Steel, has received the 'Best CEO Award - Metals & Mining' at the 10th edition of Business Today's MindRush. The award was presented to Narendran by Piyush Goyal, Union Minister of Textiles, Minister of Commerce & Industry, and Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Dis-



tribution. The winners were based on Business Today-PwC In-

dia's Best CEOs ranking. The study used a robust methodology to assess the top 500 most valuable companies in the country by market capitalisation for growth in revenues, profits, EBITDA, and total shareholder returns. After applying further stringent filters, the names of the top three CEOs in each group - overall and sector-wise - were placed before the jury, who chose the final winners.

Anand Krishna: Exploring to redefine versatility

Former corporate executive ventures into acting world

PARVINDER BHATIA ■ JAMSHEDPUR

A multifaceted charisma Anand Krishna is known for his unwavering contribution to multiple domains, which include corporate, event management, and now he is fascinating his audiences through film making.

Anand Krishna has progressed from being a senior executive at The Tinplate Company of India Limited (TCL) to becoming a film actor. Born in Jamshedpur, Krishna, who as a secretary of the Golmuri Club, was known as 'The Event Man', is now busy with his modelling and film assignments.

In his hometown, he was known for organising cultural events in the club and other places. He is a keen and enthusiastic golfer. He was also the local manager of Team India in one of the ODI's held in Jamshedpur.



While the city has given him enough opportunities to grow, Anand has taken challenges as opportunities, and that has been the secret of his success and popularity.

He has also served various corporates in senior positions and has travelled abroad extensively. Anand is now taking a "U turn" from his managerial positions. He is now into acting and is pursuing his further career in advertising and

modelling in Uttarakhand. For any new launch, he is actively there for ad modelling and is also into music videos and movies.

Questioned him about his life's success mantra, he said: "In my entire life, I have always taken decisions from my heart and I believe that this made me different as a person." I start my day with the same enthusiasm as if it was my first day. "

In his message to the youths, he says: "My advice to the youngsters and the society at large is to always be positive, think positive, and act positively." It is mostly the fear of failure inherent in the self rather than any externality that is stopping the individual from realising his or her true potential. The individual should never allow this fear to rule their life. As long as we are socially responsible and legally bound, one must fear none and just follow his passion; only that will take the individual to new heights. "

Health Minister inaugurates Pvt hospital

PNS ■ DHANBAD :

Health minister Banna Gupta who is minister-in-charge for Dhanbad was on inauguration and launch spree here today. Incidentally, the minister also participated in an honouring programme of newly elected congress supported members of district board

and other panchayat elections that was held at circuit house premises.

Gupta inaugurated a private hospital that was built by congress leader Ranvijay Singh near Topchanchi lake in GT Road. Later in the evening launched tomato sauce produced by the firm of another congress leader Ashok Singh at a separate

function. Minister hailed the launch of products and hoped that would be preferred by people of Jharkhand. The Minister asked the newly elected members of the panchayat to work hard for development of the respective areas.

He also held close door meetings with DC and SSP besides other officials too.

Hazaribag police seize 500 gram brown sugar

Market value of the seized items is Rs 50 lakhs, two persons arrested

PNS ■ HAZARIBAG

The Pelawal police of Hazaribag district have seized 500 gram brown sugar from drug peddlers. Police have seized the used car and arrested two suppliers who are involved in the trading of the brown sugar. In the International market the value of the seized items is Rs 50 lakhs.

Hazaribag Superintendent of Police Manoj Rattan

Chothey said that the pelawal police got secret information that two persons are carrying brown sugar in a white colour maruti car.

After getting the information a team was formed in the leadership of DySP of rural areas. The team started to search the vehicles on the Hazaribag Chatra road.

As the car saw the police checking on the road they tried to escape from there. The police team chased the car and caught the car half a kilometre from the checking point.

The arrested persons said to the police that they were coming from Giddhor to



show the sample of the items. They have also confessed that in this racket so many people are involved, including white collared

persons also. Police have arrested Ravikant Kumar of Giddhor of Chatra district and Rahul Kumar of the resident of

Lohsinghna of the Hazaribag town.

Police have also seized four mobiles from the arrested persons.

RPF rescues 9-month-old child abandoned by parents

PANKAJ KUMAR ■ DHANBAD

In a bizarre incident, the parents of a nine month old girl abandoned her here today.

The child was found in a railway coach on seat number 46 of D6 coach of train no 13304 Dhanbad - Ranchi intercity express parked in a coaching complex at Dhanbad.

The train was under preparation for being taken to the station while coaching staff saw the abandoned child on the seat and called the RPF.

RPF ASI SD Singh who reached there with consta-

ble Parveen took possession of the child. She was taken to the railway hospital for a medical examination.

Singh said, there was no one around the child when they took possession of the child.

The child was handed over to the Child Helpline after being declared healthy and fine by railway doctor KC Prasad.

ASI Singh said that no one had come to claim the child till formalities of handing over to the child helpline were going on. "We cannot say when the child was brought in and kept in the coach," he added.

Civic body decides to solve problems of common man

SHAILESH SHARMA ■ HAZARIBAG

The Hazaribag municipal corporation has decided to solve the civic problems of common men in the municipal areas. The town commissioner has formed a team to solve the problems related to supply of drinking, cleanliness, illegal use of municipal property and others. Town commissioner of Hazaribag municipal corporation Pre-rana Dixit said that the office is daily receiving complaints regarding the problems which are facing the general public of the town. If any one comes to the office to lodge a complaint, no one tries to listen to the problems in the office.

The Town commissioner said that she has formed a team with a nodal officer. In the team Tahseledar and field staff along with concerned department engineers

have been included.

"We have also issued a WhatsApp number 9471381245 for residents of Hazaribag town. Everyone can send the problems to the whatsapp no.. the team members will reach there and solve the problem immediately.

The team will also monitor the light arrangement, use of plastic by the shopkeepers and the consumers, to collect the holding tax, to check the encroachment in the town. We have prepared the roster for the team.

Dixit further said that the team will also check that the proper drinking water through the pipelines are reaching every house of the town. She said that with this service the public of the town will not face any routine problems. This will certainly increase the revenue of the corporation.

Avoid misuse of social media: SP

VINOD PRASAD ■ LOHARDAGA

A meeting of the District Level Peace Committee was held on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Superintendent of Police R Ramkumar at Naya Nagar Bhawan, Lohardaga. In the meeting, the SP, while addressing the members from different blocks, said that meetings of peace committees are being held regularly at village level and in police stations. All

of you members should also participate in the the meetings. If there is any problem, you can place those problems in the above meetings, the district administration will solve those problems.

He said that many activities/programmes are being organized by Yuva Sadbhavna Manch even at the block level; all of you should register your presence in it. What is needed for the betterment of the

youth of your society, what are their needs, what cooperation is needed from the district administration to make a career, keep these things? The SP said that the youth should avoid misuse of social media.

"Do not broadcast any such message, audio-video through WhatsApp group, Facebook, Instagram or any other social media app, which may hurt anyone's sentiments and violate the



college, Nisha Kumari has been asked to arrange the signature campaign.

On Monday former minister K N Tripathy and others of the Congress had sat on dharna protesting against the Agnipath scheme.

Sources said there is a mute anger against the 4 years service in the Army but it is equally true hundreds of jobless eligible youths are making online applications for the Agnipath scheme also.

NSUI launches signature campaign against Agneepath

M FAIZAHMAD ■ DALTONGANJ

A signature campaign against the Agnipath scheme was today launched by the activists of the NSUI in Daltonganj based GLA college.

A senior youth leader of the Congress party here Abhishek Tiwary said the signature campaign against the Agnipath scheme was an instant success.

On the very first day more than 100 students signed in protest against the Agnipath scheme, said Abhishek.

There will be a similar signature campaign against the Agnipath scheme in the Y S N Mahila college in Daltonganj.

Abhishek said the NSUI college head of this Mahila



law," he said.

The SSP directed all the station in-charges to form a WhatsApp group at the village level and at the police station level and keep the problems faced in their area in that group. Go to the station in-charge ground level.

Make sure to install CCTV in sensitive places under the police station. The members of the District Level Peace Committee, who came from all the blocks, apprised the Superintendent of Police about the basic problems of their respective areas.

Union Coal Minister releases book on CIL's contribution to help fight Covid-19

PNS ■ RANCHI

Union Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi on Tuesday released the book titled 'Coal India Wins Over Covid' in New Delhi. The book showcases the initiatives taken by national miner Coal India Limited (CIL) and its subsidiaries to help fight unprecedented challenges of global pandemic Covid-19.

Secretary, Govt of India, Ministry of Coal, Anil Kumar Jain, Additional Secretary, Govt of India, Ministry of Coal, Vinod Kumar Tiwari, Chairman - CIL Pramod Agrawal, Director (Personnel & IR) - CIL Vinay Ranjan, Director (Technical) - CIL B. Veera Reddy and senior officials of the Ministry of Coal & CIL were present on the occasion either physically or through video conferencing.



The book enumerates the contribution of CIL and its subsidiaries as first movers for Covid assistance, steps taken to strengthen medical infrastructure including setting up oxygen plants through 'Mission Pranvayu', monetary contribution, providing food to migrants, steps taken for ease of doing business, statistical overview of community initiatives and other measures taken by CIL to help fight this global pandemic.

DPS Bokaro students bag 9 medals in Jharkhand Swimming Championship

PNS ■ BOKARO

DPS Bokaro swimmers won 9 bronze medals in different categories in 12 Jharkhand Junior and Sub-Junior Swimming Championship. The team comprised 13 students. The championship was held on 25th and 26th June at Bir Budhu Bhagat Aquatic Stadium, Khelgaon Ranchi. Around 205 swimmers of 17 districts of the state participated in the championship.

The students who brought laurels to their alma mater are: Pragyan Kumar - Bronze medal in 100 meter Backstroke, Aarav Kumar - Bronze medal in 50 meter backstroke and 200 meter freestyle, Anushka Yashi - Bronze medal in 4 x 50 meter medley relay & 4 x 50 meter Freestyle relay, Ridhi Rajput-



Bronze medal in 4 x 50 meter medley relay & 4 x 50 meter Freestyle relay, Shaili Priya- Bronze medal in 4 x 50 meter medley relay & 4 x 50 meter Freestyle relay.

Congratulating the students, A.S. Gangwar Principal DPS Bokaro said, "It is indeed encouraging to see students develop holistically bringing laurels to their school not only in the field of academics but also in co-curricular activities." I hope they will continue to work hard and perform better in the future.

Has CCL connived with supplier to install sub-standard oxygen plants at its hospitals?

Bonafide manufacturer sends legal notice and gearing up to lodge an online FIR

ANUPAM SHESHANK ■ RANCHI

The lifesaving oxygen generation plants commissioned last year at Central Coalfields Limited (CCL) hospitals at Gandhi Nagar and Nai Sarai for a whopping Rs 2.3 crore are of unknown origin and sub-standard. But, despite knowing the supplier committed a fraud in installing the “Delhi-made” equipment instead of the specified ones, the CCL mandarins are taking no action!

The role of the Ranchi-based PSU has become doubtful since it is sitting over the complaints of the bungling even after its sister concern, the Dhanbad-head-

quartered Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL), immediately cancelled the order to the same supplier after it came to know of its modus-operandi of obtaining orders in the name of an Ahmedabad-based company Airshuddhi Engineers, but supplying sub-standard products of unknown origins.

Incidentally, the same supplier, Ranchi-based Galaxy Agencies, had won the bid of supplying two sets of 1,000 litres per minute oxygen plants to CCL for Rs 2.28 crore whereas it had quoted much lower Rs 2.19 crore for supplying two sets of the same plants along with booster pumps to the BCCL for just Rs 2.19 crore.

Talking to **The Pioneer** on phone from Ahmedabad, Airshuddhi Engineers man-



A view of Oxygen generation plant at Central Coalfields Limited (CCL) hospital in Ranchi on Tuesday. Pix by Vinay Murmu

aging director Neeraj Kumar Singh said they have already sent a legal notice to the CCL and are in the process of filing an online FIR. “We

are a well-established oxygen generation plant manufacturer. Our company was established in 2014. During covid many hospitals across

India were installing oxygen plants and we got a query from Ranchi-based Galaxy Agencies that wanted to resell our plants, which we im-

mediately approved. The necessary paper work was done. The supplier used our credentials to bag the order on the GEM portal, but didn’t procure our products and instead supplied some obscure oxygen plants to the CCL,” Singh said.

Singh further said, “Whenever we enquired from the seller, he parried giving one excuse or the other citing delay in the supply. Since, I am basically from Jharkhand and my relatives are working with BCCL, I came to know that the machines have already been commissioned in Ranchi and in the process of being supplied to Dhanbad. I found out that the supplier has procured the machines from some company in Noida. I immediately brought this to the notice of the CCL and BCCL officials. The BCCL

Tomorrow if any untoward incident happens, who will be responsible? My company’s credentials have been used, but fake plants have been installed.

**AIRSHUDDHI ENGINEERS
MANAGING DIRECTOR**

immediately cancelled the order, but the CCL is sitting over our complaints.”

The Airshuddhi managing director said he went to Ranchi 6-7 months back and personally met the CCL chairman cum managing director (CMD) PM Prasad, but no action has been taken so far despite many reminders. “I have been forced to send a legal notice, he said and added, “Soon I am going to file an online FIR against CCL and the supplier. “Instead of taking

action, the CCL asks queries from us. This is certainly a case of connivance. Else, how is it possible that no action is being taken despite the blatant misrepresentation of facts being brought to their notice,” he added.

Singh said he had also requested the coal companies to cancel the order to the supplier and instead give the order directly to them, but it went unheeded. “Tomorrow if any untoward incident happens, who will be responsible? My company’s credentials have been used, but fake plants have been installed,” he said.

The mobile number of the supplier provided on the GEM portal was “currently not available,” while the CCL CMD did not take the call on his mobile phone and did not respond to WhatsApp queries.

Bus carrying 22 St Xavier’s students overturns in Sikkim

PNS ■ RANCHI

Twenty six people including 22 students and two teachers of St. Xavier’s College Ranchi sustained injuries on Tuesday when the bus in which they were travelling turned turtle on the outskirts of Gangtok in Himalayan State Sikkim. However, in the accident there were no casualties as students and teachers sustained injuries. Sources said that the accident occurred as the bus’ brakes, in which they were travelling, failed.

Governor Ramesh Bais, Chief Minister Hemant Soren, Education Minister Jagamath Mah-to, BJP legislative party leader and former chief minister Babulal Marandi and others have expressed their concern over the road accident and have urged the Sikkim government to provide all help and assistance to the students.

Soren tweeted that he had spoken to Sikkim chief minister Prem Singh Tamang in connection with the accident. “I’ve spoken with the Sikkim CM. Adequate arrangements are being made for medical treatment of the children. I’ve directed RC to be ready to airlift the children. We are unable to airlift them right now due to inclement weather. So arrangements have been made there,” tweeted Soren.

The incident happened in front of Seven Mile Tadong of Orange village of Sikkim. Apart from the students, the driver, a teacher and the Khalasi also sustained injuries in the incident. The injured have been admitted to a nearby hospital. The students had gone to Sikkim for an excursion. A total of 25 people including the driver were boarding the bus when the incident took place.

The principal of the college Father Nabor confirmed the accident saying information coming to him suggests that the accident took place after the brake of the bus failed.



Local residents and rescue workers gather at the site of a bus accident in Gangtok, Sikkim on Tuesday. PNS

Sources said that sixty nine students from the college were on an excursion. They reached Sikkim on June 23. On Tuesday, the students were en route to Siliguri in West Bengal in three buses. They were scheduled to board a Jharkhand-bound train from New Jalpaiguri station in the evening.

One of the buses, carrying 21 students and two teachers, skidded off the road and landed on one side near the administrative building of the Sikkim Central University at Ranipool. The injured people were rushed to a local hospital. The doctors told the police that some of them needed medical tests as they may have sustained internal injuries.

The Sikkim Government as directed by Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang is providing all necessary help and assistance. The Sikkim Chief Minister is personally monitoring the situation.

KMEH becomes national level training institute for retina surgery

PNS ■ RANCHI

Kashyap Memorial Eye Hospital became the first educational institution in eastern India to be recognized by the country’s National Board of Examinations for fellowship studies in vitreo retinal surgery. The information was given by Dr. BP Kashyap, Director of the hospital and well-known ophthalmologist of the city. Dr. Bibbhu Kashyap, a retina specialist of the hospital, said that this recognition has been achieved after going through many parameters.

Kashyap Memorial Eye Hospital also has the credit for the initiative of retina surgery in the state. The surgery of the retina of the eyes is considered to be the most complex surgery of the



Dr. Bibbhu Kashyap performing complex retinal surgery of a patient at Kashyap Memorial Eye Hospital in Ranchi. PNS

eyes. This is the longest lasting operation of the eyes. The state’s highest number of blind patients has been cured in this hospital. Now the retina department of the hospital is run under the su-

pervision of Dr. Bibbhu Kashyap, who is the only AI-IMS trained double F. R. C. S. Retinal Surgeon.

Three years ago, the facility of electrophysiology examination of retina and nerves of eyes was also started for the first time at Kashyap Memorial Eye Hospital in Jharkhand, Bihar. This test is currently available only in Kashyap Memorial Eye Hospital in Jharkhand Bihar. It’s like a heart’s ECG and no dye is used in this test. This test is very safe for patients of heart disease, kidney disease, diabetes, and blood pressure.

Kashyap Memorial Eye Hospital has rapidly emerged on the national map by becoming the only nationally recognized training institute for retinal surgery in Eastern India.

ECI hearing of Soren’s case deferred to July 14

PNS ■ RANCHI

The bench of Chief Election Commissioner of India Rajiv Kumar and Election Commissioner Anup Chandra Pandey on Tuesday started hearing the office of the profit case against chief minister Hemant Soren.

The next date of the hearing has been fixed to July 14 and hearing of a similar case against his brother Basant Soren has been fixed to July 15. His lawyers namely S.K. Mendiarrata and Meenakshi Arora were present during the hearing.

Maninder Singh and Shidarth Dave argued for the BJP for around two hours.



They claimed that Hemant Soren as chief minister of Jharkhand secured a stone mining lease in his name. By this, he has violated section 9A of the People’s Representation Act 1951 hence his membership of the Assembly should be terminat-

ed as he obtained a contract with the government.

A lawyer who appeared for the BJP said that Meenakshi Arora sought more time and she requested the ECI to defer the hearing to any next date. The lawyer said that ECI was unhappy with Hemant Soren seeking an extension of the hearing.

On June 14, the ECI gave him a final date of June 28 to file his reply. On that date, Hemant Soren pleaded that his lawyer is not available. Earlier on May 30, the ECI gave him another date June 14 as his mother Rupri Soren was under treatment in Hyderabad.

The BJP is the com-

plaintant in this matter and sent a petition to Jharkhand governor Ramesh Bais to demand his disqualification. The Governor under section 192 (2) of the Constitution of India, referred this matter to the ECI which sent him a

notice to reply whether his membership in the Jharkhand assembly should be terminated.

A PIL 727/2022 filed by Shiv Shankar Sharma is being heard by the Jharkhand High Court.

Hearing on Pooja Singhal’s bail petition deferred till July 4

PNS ■ RANCHI

The Special PMLA Court of Prabhat Kumar Sharma on Tuesday deferred hearing of bail petition of suspended IAS officer Pooja Singhal till July 4.

Pooja Singhal is under judicial custody at Birsa Munda Central Jail in Ranchi under the charges of money laundering. She was the secretary of the mining department when the ED arrested her on May 11 in a case related to the MGNREGA scheme scam in Khunti district during 2009 and 2010 when she was the DC here.

Pooja Singhal filed a bail petition on Monday through her lawyer Bishwajit Mukherjee. The matter was taken up for hearing on Tuesday. But the ED sought time to file a counter reply to her bail petition. The court agreed and extended the hearing on July 4.

According to sources Pooja Singhal has sought bail on the ground of her health. Currently lodged at Birsa Munda Central



Jail in Ranchi she has urged before the court that she is not keeping a good health and she needs better treatment. Hence she should be granted bail. She has also questioned her custody. She has maintained that ED implicated her with fabricated evidence.

The ED on May 6 carried out a massive raid at 25 places in five states including the residential premise of Pooja Singhal in Ranchi as well as her chartered accountant Suman Singh. The directorate seized Rs 19.31 crore from the office and residence of Suman Kumar Singh. It is alleged that Suman Kumar Singh used to handle the cash of Pooja Singhal.

INBRIEF

Bond replaced for protection of electrified equipment

Ranchi Railway Division is always striving to provide more and better facilities to the passengers, there is a continuous increase in passenger safety and facilities in the division. Operations are being made easier and safer than before through advanced technology and modern plants. About 22000 bonds of 25 KV are attached for the protection of the electrified equipment and safety of people in Ranchi Railway Division. In the financial year 2022-23 from 1st April 2022 to the present time, 351 new bonds have been installed in place of damaged bonds by the Division’s Electricity (Traction-Distribution) Department in order to prevent accidents and protect passengers when they come in contact with electrified equipment. Simultaneously, in view of the arrival of the rainy season, many steps are being taken to run the trains on regular time, under which, 4667 tree branches near the railway tracks were pruned. There has been a reduction in the hindrance of traffic and inconvenience to the passengers.

Nuvoco Vistas solidifies its position in North India

City-based leading cement company in the east, Nuvoco Vistas Corp Ltd has expanded its presence in the North region with the introduction of its premium cement portfolio. Revenue in the north region specifically Haryana, Western UP, Punjab, Delhi, and Madhya Pradesh focus on trade channels and brand building through a strong dealer network. To address the growing needs of the infrastructure sector, Nuvoco Vistas Corp Ltd plans to set up a grinding unit with a 1.2 million tonnes per annum capacity at its existing Plant at Bhiwani, Haryana. This is the first step towards the company’s expansion in the North region. This grinding unit will aid full utilization of the clinker production in the region. Currently Nuvoco’s product portfolio addresses to the complete spectrum of customers with Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC), Portland Slag Cement (PSC), Portland Pozzolana Cement (PPC) and Portland Composite Cement (PCC), which are among the best in the industry based on BIS standards and premium raw material quality.

Atal Vendor Market shopkeepers call of strike

PNS ■ RANCHI

The shopkeepers of Atal Vendor Market of the State Capital have called off their strike on Tuesday. A meeting was held with Additional Municipal Commissioner, Kunwar Singh Pahan and members of the Town Vending Committee, after which the shopkeepers took this decision.

The shopkeepers said that in the meeting, orders have been received to put up banners hanging on both the sides of the shops. After this the strike was called off. On Wednesday, Additional Municipal Commissioner, Kunwar Singh Pahan himself will come and inspect.

On Monday, after reaching the vendor market, the municipal body team started cutting fines from the shopkeepers, when the shopkeepers protested fiercely. After this the shopkeepers



went on indefinite strike. It may be mentioned here that the shopkeepers of the vendor market have gone on strike even a week ago in support of their demands. About 400 shops are located in the vendor market.

The shopkeepers had also accused the enforcement team of the civic body of illegal recovery from the shopkeepers. The shopkeepers say that the employee of the corporation, Abdul makes illegal recovery from the shopkeepers and complains about the shopkeepers who do not give money to the corporation.

Akhtar, a member of the

Town Vending Committee, said that the corporation has given shops to run a livelihood. “The shops have been open for three years in the vendor market but the Municipal Corporation never received any complaint. Now only some shopkeepers have complained. Clothes are such a thing that what is seen is sold. The shops will not run if the hanging banner is not installed. The municipal corporation has given permission to put up banners on both sides of the shop, after which the shopkeepers of the vendor market withdrew their strike,” he added.

FORM NO. 22
(See Regulation 37(1))

SALE PROCLAMATION
OFFICE OF THE RECOVERY OFFICER IN THE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL,
JHARKHAND AT RANCHI
RECOVERY PROCEEDING No. 438 of 2018
IN CASE NO. O.A. Case No. 78 of 2018
PROCLAMATION OF SALE UNDER RULES 38, 52(2) OF SECOND SCHEDULE TO THE INCOME TAX ACT, 1961
READ WITH THE RECOVERY OF DEBTS DUE TO BANKS AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS ACT 1993
Union Bank of India, Argora Chowk, Argora, Ranchi Vs. M/s Shiv Shankar Enterprises & Others
To,
1. M/s Shiv Shankar Enterprises, through its Proprietor Niraj Kumar Gupta at Teachers Colony, Dimna Road, Mango, Jamshedpur - 832110, District:- East Singhbhum
2. Niraj Kumar Gupta, R/o Teachers Colony, Dimna Road, Mango, Jamshedpur - 832110, District:- East Singhbhum
3. Sarita Devi, R/o Teachers Colony, Dimna Road, Mango, Jamshedpur - 832110, District - East Singhbhum
1. Whereas you have failed to pay the sum of **Rs. 15,40,263.05 (Rupees Fifteen Lacs Forty Thousand Two Hundred Sixty Three and Five Paise Only)** payable by you in respect of Recovery Certificate in O.A. Case No. 78 of 2018 issued by the **Presiding Officer, Debts Recovery Tribunal, Ranchi** along with the interest and costs payable, as per the certificate.
2. And whereas the undersigned has ordered the sale of the attached property mentioned in the Schedule below in satisfaction of the said certificate.
3. And whereas as on the **13.06.2022** there will be due there under a sum of **Rs. 15,40,263.05 (Rupees Fifteen Lacs Forty Thousand Two Hundred Sixty Three and Five Paise Only)** along with pendente lite and future interest @ 10% per annum simple from 04.02.2018 till full and final realization of the claim besides cost of Rs. 18,000.00 (Rupees Eighteen Thousand Only), as per the certificate.
4. Notice is hereby given that, in the absence of any order of postponement, the said property shall be sold by **e-auction and bidding shall take place through "Online Electronic Bidding" through the website https://drt.auctiontiger.net of M/s E-Procurement Technologies Ltd. on 05.08.2022 between 11:00 AM to 12:00 Noon with extension of 5 minutes duration after 12 noon if required.**
For further detail contact: Office of the Recovery Officer, Debts Recovery Tribunal, Ranchi. Contact No. 0651-2214021, Mobile no. 9431106777 and for property inspection contact Branch Manager, Union Bank Of India, Argora Colony, Argora, Ranchi
4.1 The sale will be of the property of the certificate debtors above named as mentioned in the schedule below and the liabilities and claims attaching to the said property, so far as they have been ascertained, are those specified in the schedule against each lot.
4.2 The property will be put up for the sale in the lots specified in the schedule. If the amount to be realized is satisfied by the sale of a portion of the property, the sale shall immediately stopped with respect to the remainder. The sale also be stopped if, before any lot is knocked down, the arrears mentioned in the said certificate, interest costs (including cost of the sale) are tendered to the Officer conducting the sale or proof is given to his satisfaction that the amount of such certificate, interest and costs have been paid to the undersigned.
4.3 No Officer of other person, having any duty to perform in connection with sale, however, either directly or indirectly bid for, acquire or attempt to acquire any interest in the property sold. The sale shall be subject to the conditions prescribed in the Second schedule of the Income Tax Act, 1961 and the rules made there under and to the further following conditions.
4.4 The particulars specified in the annexed schedule have been stated to the best of the information of the undersigned, but the undersigned shall not be answerable for any error, misstatement or omission in this proclamation.
5. (a) The reserve price below which the property shall not be sold is **as per details below.**

Details of Immovable Properties	Reserve Price	EMD
Land & Budding standing in the name of Certificate Debtor No. 3, Santa Devi, vide Sale Deed No 6878 dated 14.12.2012 for land measuring Area- 1 Katha with Residential Building Plot No 3307, under Khata No. 348, Mouza - Mango, Ward No 10, Thana No 1642, Mango, District - East Singhbhum. Boundaries : North - Land of Santa Devi, South - Samudri Devi, East - 12' wide Road, West - Portion of Plot No 3308	Rs. 8,26,000.00	Rs. 82,600.00

6. The interested bidders are required to deposit EMD along with documents PAN Card, Identity Proof, Address Proof etc. and in the case of company, copy of resolution passed by the Board Members of the Company or any other documents claiming representation/ attorney of the company also, latest by 03.08.2022 before 4:00 PM in the office of the Recovery Officer, DRT, Ranchi and thereafter they shall be eligible to participate in the e-auction to be held from 11:00 AM to 12:00 Noon on 05.08.2022. In case, bid is placed in the last 5 minutes of the closing time of the auction, the closing time will automatically get extended for 5 minutes.
7. The EMD shall be deposited in terms of Demand Draft only favouring "Recovery Officer, DRT, Ranchi", before the Office of the Recovery Officer, Debts Recovery Tribunal, 5th Floor, RRDA Building, Kutchery Chowk, Ranchi
8. The amount by which the biddings are to be increased shall be **Rs. 50,000/-** in the event of any dispute arising as to the amount of bid, or as to the bidder the lot shall at once be again put up to auction.
9. The unsuccessful bidder shall take EMD directly from the Office of the Recovery Officer, DRT, Ranchi immediately on closure of the e-auction sale proceeds.
10. The successful/ highest bidder shall have to prepare Demand Draft/ Pay Order for 25% of the bid/sale amount after adjusting the EMD, favouring "Recovery Officer, DRT, Ranchi" or through RTGS to Current Account No. 31598921087, State Bank Of India, Indrapuri Branch, Ranchi, in R.C. No. 438 of 2018, by next bank working day i.e. by 04:00 PM with this Tribunal failing which the EMD shall be forfeited.
11. The successful/highest bidder shall deposit through Demand Draft/ Pay Order favouring "Recovery Officer, DRT, Ranchi" or through RTGS to Current Account No. 31598921087, State Bank Of India, Indrapuri Branch, Ranchi, in R.C. No. 438 of 2018, the balance 75% of the sale proceed before the Recovery Officer, DRT, Ranchi on or before 15th day from the date of auction of the property exclusive of such day or if the 15th day be Sunday or other holiday, then on the first office day after the 15th day along with poundage @ 2% upto Rs. 1,000/- and @1% on the excess of such gross amount over Rs. 1,000/- in favour of Registrar, DRT, Ranchi. (In case of deposit of balance amount of 75% through post, the same should reach the Recovery Officer as above).
12. In case of default of payment within the prescribed period, the property shall be re-sold, after the issue of fresh Proclamation of Sale. The deposit, after defraying the expenses of the sale, may, if the undersigned thinks fit be forfeited to the Government and the defaulting purchaser shall forfeited all claims to the property of to any part of the sum for which it may subsequently be sold.
13. The highest bidder shall be declared to be the purchaser of any lot provided that further that the amount bid by him is not less than the Reserve Price. It shall be in the discretion of the undersigned to decline/ acceptance of the highest bid when the price offered appears so clearly inadequate as to make it inadvisable to do so.
14. The property is being sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS".
15. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids if found unreasonable or postpone the auction at anytime without assigning any reason.
Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal at Ranchi on this 13th day of June, 2022.

(KANHAIYA KUMAR)
RECOVERY OFFICER

ED issues fresh summons to Sanjay Raut under PMLA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has issued fresh summons to Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut asking him to appear on July 1 for questioning in a money laundering case linked to alleged irregularities in the re-development of a Mumbai 'chawl' and related financial property transactions involving his wife and alleged associates.

The Rajya Sabha member was issued the first summons for Tuesday, but he sought more time citing official commitments and a meeting he was supposed to attend at Alibaug in Raigad district of the State during the day.

Raut's lawyers met ED officials at the agency's office in Mumbai on Tuesday and sought about two weeks' time for his appearance. However, the agency granted him relief only till this month-end.

"The ED summons was served late Monday afternoon, so we made an application to seek time because the ED has demanded a few documents," Raut's lawyer told reporters after meeting agency officials



at their regional office in south Mumbai. Through Raut's questioning, the agency is seeking to record his statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The agency is also seeking to know Raut's 'business and other links' with Pravin Raut and Patkar and also about the property deals involving his wife.

The development comes as the Shiv Sena battles rebellion from a group of its MLAs, leading to a question mark on the future of Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) Government in Maharashtra. In April, the ED provisionally attached

assets worth over Rs 11.15 crore of Raut's wife Varsha Raut and two of his associates as part of this investigation.

The attached properties are in the form of land held by Pravin M Raut, Sanjay Raut's aide and a former director of Guru Ashish Construction Pvt Ltd, at Palghar, Saphale (town in Palghar) and Padgha (in Thane district).

The attached properties also include a flat in Mumbai's suburb Dadar held by Varsha Raut and eight plots at Kihim beach in Alibaug jointly held by Varsha Raut and Swapna Patkar, wife of Sujit Patkar, a "close associate" of Sanjay Raut, the ED had earlier said.

Centre to go ahead with single use plastic ban

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India is all set to go ahead with its notification banning identified 19 single use plastic (SUP) items from July 1, 2022. The Centre on Tuesday said there was no plans to postpone the notification as sufficient time was given to the industry. The Government warned that violators will invite punitive action, including a fine or a jail term.

Single-use plastics are those items that are used only once and discarded. "The ban aims to curb pollution caused by single use plastic items which have low utility, high littering potential. We had given enough time to the industry to prepare for the implementation of ban," Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav told reporters on Tuesday two days ahead of the enforcement of the notification. The Minister's statement comes in the wake of



several representations made by various industries either seeking more time or urging the Government to impose the ban in a phased manner.

A senior official from the Central Pollution Control Board said that while directions have already been issued to all states to curb the supply of banned items, petrochemical industries have been asked to stop the supply of plastic raw materials to those engaged in the production of the banned items. As per the notification, the manufacture, import,

stocking, distribution, sale and use of single-use plastic, including polystyrene and expanded polystyrene commodities will be banned from July 1, 2022.

Other prohibited items include plastic sticks that are used in ear buds, balloons, candy, ice-cream; cutlery items such as plates, cups, glasses, forks, spoons, knives, trays; packaging / wrapping films such as that used for sweet box, invitation cards, cigarette packets, and other items such as plastic flags, PVC banners of less than 100 microns, poly-

31% RS MPs declared criminal cases against them, says ADR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

About 31 per cent of sitting Rajya Sabha MPs have declared criminal cases against them, according to a report released by ADR-National Election Watch. As per the report, while the average assets of the Upper House members are Rs 79.54 crore,

Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and National Election Watch have analyzed the criminal, financial and other background details of 226 out of 233 sitting MPs.

In the current Rajya Sabha, one seat is vacant. Two MPs have not been analysed as their affidavits were unavailable and four seats of Jammu and Kashmir are undefined, the report said. Of the 226 sitting Rajya Sabha MPs, 197 (87 per cent) are 'crorepatis' and the average assets per Rajya Sabha MP are Rs 79.54 crore, the report said.

Of 226 Rajya Sabha members, 71 (31 per cent) have declared criminal cases against

themselves and 37 (16 per cent) have declared serious criminal cases. According to the report, two Rajya Sabha MPs have declared cases related to murder (IPC Section 302) and four MPs have declared cases related to attempt to murder (IPC Section 307).

Four Rajya Sabha MPs have declared cases related to crimes against women and out of these four MPs, one namely K C Venugopal (Congress) from Rajasthan has declared case related to rape (IPC Section 376), the report said. According to the report, 20 (24 per cent) out of 85 Rajya Sabha MPs from BJP, 12 (39 per cent) out of 31 MPs from Congress, three (23 per cent) out of 13 from AITC, five (83 per cent) out of six from RJD, four (80 per cent) out of five from CPI(M), three (30 per cent) out of 10 from AAP, three (33 per cent) out of nine from YSRCP and two (50 per cent) out of four Rajya Sabha MPs from NCP have declared criminal cases against themselves in

their affidavits.

The report said nine (11 per cent) out of 85 Rajya Sabha MPs from BJP, eight (26 per cent) out of 31 MPs from Congress, one (8 per cent) out of 13 Rajya Sabha MPs from AITC, three (50 per cent) out of six MPs from RJD, two (40 per cent) out of five from CPI (M), one (10 per cent) out of 10 from AAP, three (33 per cent) out of nine from YSRCP and one (25 per cent) out of four Rajya Sabha MPs from NCP have declared serious criminal cases against themselves in their affidavits.

Giving state-wise details, the report said that seven (23 per cent) out of 31 Rajya Sabha MPs from Uttar Pradesh, 12 (63 per cent) out of 19 MPs from Maharashtra, six (33 per cent) out of 18 from Tamil Nadu, three (19 per cent) out of 16 from West Bengal, six (67 per cent) out of nine from Kerala and 10 (63 per cent) out of 16 Rajya Sabha MPs from Bihar have declared criminal cases against themselves in their affidavits.

SC miffed over registry not listing matters

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed its dismay over the registry not listing matters despite orders from its vacation benches and said that cases will be listed as per the set procedure. A vacation bench of Justices Surya Kant and JB Pardiwala said that it has on Monday directed a matter to be listed for Tuesday but the registry has said that it will not be listed.

"We didn't want to say it in open court but it's a fact. Yesterday, we made an exception. We had directed a matter to be listed for today but the registry said that it will not list the case. We don't want to say anything more", the bench told senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, who was seeking urgent listing of a plea filed

by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (Adani) against the Bombay High Court order.

The bench said that there is a set procedure in place for the listing of matters during vacations and asked Singhvi to approach the mentioning registrar for urgent listing and if the request is denied then it could look into it. Singhvi said that the court's discretion cannot be circumscribed by the registry and it can make an exception for urgent listing of the matter.

Significantly, the same vacation bench on Monday had ordered the listing of the Centre's petition for hearing on Tuesday against the Tripura High Court order passed on a PIL challenging the grant of security cover to industrialist Mukesh Ambani and his fam-

ily members in Mumbai. Despite the order of the bench passed after the matter was mentioned by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, the matter was not listed for Tuesday.

Singhvi urged the bench to list the matter saying the Bombay High Court order was given to them on Monday in which it had dismissed a plea filed by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (Adani) challenging the disqualification of its bid in a tender issued by the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) for up-gradation of a container terminal in Navi Mumbai. The Bombay High Court has on Monday directed Adani to pay a cost of Rs five lakh for bringing to court an "unmeritorious case." Of this, Adani already deposited Rs 4,24,800 with JNPA at the time of submitting its bid.

Govt seems keen to sell off PSUs to its cronies: Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Tuesday accused the BJP Government of reckless privatisation of public sector assets and alleged that its plan is to hand over land parcels of strategic PSUs to its select crony capitalist friends.

Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinat said going by its plans the Government seems keen to completely sell off all public sector banks to private hands which would have serious consequences for the economy.

She also dubbed the BJP as "Beche Jao Party" and accused it of "double-speak". On the one hand, it was talking of providing jobs to 'Agniveers' in defence PSUs. and on the other, it was privatising them, she said.

She also claimed that the Congress has helped stall privatisation of four PSUs including Bharat Petroleum Corporation, Container Corporation of India, Pawan Hans and Central Electricals Limited. "The Narendra Modi government's reckless privatisation and its plans to put India on sale now poses huge risks to the Indian economy and our people.

The Modi government is now all set to completely exit public sector banks being privatised - an ill thought out strategy with dangerous repercussions," she said at AICC Press conference. "Given its sinister plans to put India on sale BJP should now be called the 'Beche Jao Party' - but the Congress will oppose this reckless sale of strategic profit making assets including the complete exit from public sector banks being sold," she claimed. Shrinat said after listing LIC at a wrong time, it led to loss of nearly USD 18 billion (one-third of its valuation) and the

government has been forced to stop its 'reckless privatisation' of four PSUs in last two months.

She said BPCL sale was called off after two of the three investors withdrew, deterred by faulty fuel pricing policies and uncertainties, and sale of Pawan Hans now on hold after 51 percent stake was sold to a company that had failed to honour a previous bid for an insolvent company, and the NCLT Kolkata had ruled against it.

The Congress leader claimed that Central Electronics Limited is a Ministry of Science and Technology PSU that provides it critical materials and services for strategic sectors such as defence, railways and energy.

It was severely undervalued and 100 per cent equity was sold to a financial company with no scientific background that had links to BJP politicians, she claimed, adding that it is now on hold.

The sale of Container Corporation of India (Concor), a unit of Indian Railways, was put on hold over Congress party's charges of how the government was using "backdoor arrangement" to hand over railway land acquired from farmers at a concessional rate or free of cost to a private party for commercial use, she alleged. "The privatisation of three PSUs has been delayed because of issues over the valuation of land.

CONCOR has land around railway stations, Shipping Corporation of India has land in Maharashtra (especially Mumbai) while Bharat Earth Movers (land in WB and Karnataka).

It is clear the single minded objective is to hand over these ventures and the lakhs of acres of land they hold to Mr Modi's chosen few crony capitalist friends," she alleged.

BJP raps Congress for protesting against arrest of Teesta Setalvad

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP on Tuesday alleged a nexus between the Congress party and behind-the-scenes hate-mongers against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The party hit out at the Congress for protesting against the arrest of activist Teesta Setalvad saying they were working as part of a 'poisonous ecosystem' where one offender protects another if anyone is caught.

Taking a dig at Congress and asking "Ye rista kya kahla-ta hain" for the opposition party joining the protest against Setalvad's arrest, BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia accused it of opposing judicial actions as per its convenience.

In the backdrop of the Supreme Court's clean-chit to Modi and 62 others in the 2002 Gujarat riots case, he asked if the opposition party has any faith in the judiciary or not. He said Setalvad did not know the content of "false affidavits" she filed in Gujarat riot cases as

they were tailored to suit the designs of the political masters. Attacking Setalvad, Bhatia said despite objections by NCERT, the Congress-led- UPA government gave Rs 1.40 crore to Setalvad's trust which she allegedly used for her own comforts and foreign travels.

Pointing out that the Gujarat Police action against Setalvad was following the Supreme Court's strong denunciation of her and others for "keeping the pot boiling" and levelling false charges against people, including Prime Minister, over the 2002 riots in the state, Bhatia alleged that she had been acting at the behest of the Congress to end Modi's political career. "Setalvad was a small branch for fanning communal hate.

Its headquarters was in the Congress and its president Sonia Gandhi was the CEO," he told a press conference. Citing the recent agitation of the Congress against its leader Rahul Gandhi's questioning by the Enforcement Directorate in the National Herald case, he

said for some people Gandhi is innocent until proven guilty but their standard for Modi is that he is guilty even if proven innocent.

"This hypocrisy will not be tolerated," he said. To questions about journalist Zubair Ahmed's arrest and opposition leaders' protest against it, he said one cannot become a fact-checker only by proclaiming himself to be one.

He has a chequered past and has posted tweets which have hurt religious feelings of a large section of Hindu society, Bhatia said. All major opposition parties and media organisations have condemned Zubair's arrest on Monday by the Delhi Police for allegedly hurting religious sentiments through one of his tweets, officials said.

The Editors Guild of India on Tuesday termed it "extremely disturbing" and demanded his immediate release. Criticising Zubair, Bhatia said if somebody is doing fact-checking, then he can't be selective.

‘Ensure people at gatherings are vaccinated for Covid’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As Covid case counts show fluctuating trends in the past few days, the Centre has asked States and Union Territories to ensure that people taking part in mass gatherings and undertaking pilgrimage are asymptomatic and preferably fully vaccinated against Covid-19 as such con-gregation may facilitate transmission of the infectious disease

In a letter to States and UTs on Tuesday, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said mass gatherings in context of various festivities as well as yatras are likely to be held in different parts of the country in the coming months, and that such congregations may poten-

tially facilitate transmission of infectious diseases, including Covid-19. While trajectory of Covid-19 cases has declined significantly from levels that were observed in earlier part of this year, a few States and UTs across country are witnessing a sustained upswing in the cases currently. On Tuesday, till 8 A.M. India recorded 11,793 new coronavirus infections, pushing country's tally to 4,34,18,839, while the active cases rose to 96,700.

The death toll climbed to 5,25,047 with 27 new fatalities. India on Monday had logged 17,073 new coronavirus infections, a 45% jump from Sunday when 11,739 people tested positive for Covid. The Ministry fears that upcoming religious

events may spike Covid cases as usually people do not follow Covid norms during such gatherings. "During many such events/yatras lakhs of individuals undertake intra- and inter-state journeys spanning hundreds of kilometres with halting points arranged by volunteers and community-based social/religious organisations.

Such congregations may potentially facilitate transmission of infectious diseases, including Covid-19," Bhushan said. "All states and UTs where such mass gatherings are proposed to be held should widely publicise that all individuals planning to participate in such gatherings/events are asymptomatic and preferably fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

NIA arrests two for terror funding in J&K

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday said it has arrested two accused in Jammu and Kashmir in the cross-LoC trade and terror funding case.

The agency arrested the two accused persons—Tanveer Ahmad Wani of Achagoza under Rajpora police station of Pulwama district and Peer Arshad Iqbal alias Ashu of Khwaja Bagh, Baramulla in the 2016 cases linked to terror funding via cross-LoC trade.

The case pertains to the generation of extra profits through cross-LoC (Line of Control) trade mechanism between Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK) and using those funds for fomenting terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir, the agency said in a statement.

The said trade was started in the year 2008 via two Trade Facilitation Centres (TFCs)

located at Salamabad, Uri in Baramulla District and Chakan-da-Bagh in Poonch District. As per the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) of the trade mechanism, 21 articles were allowed to be traded between POK and Jammu and Kashmir and were based on a barter system.

"During investigation, it has been revealed that extra profit was generated by over-invoicing of export articles and under-invoicing of import articles by the traders," the NIA said.

The arrested accused are cross-border LoC traders and were handling several cross-LoC trade firms registered in their own names or in the names of their friends, family members and relatives.

They used to provide funds to the members of various terrorist organisations, over ground workers (OGWs) and stone-pelters. Further investigation in the case is continuing, it added.

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ongoing for 26 BOs, 29 producers (Ps) and 48 Is, while 76 BOs, 17 Ps and 38 Is have submitted their applications for registration. The EPR, i.e. the Extended Producer Responsibility, means responsibility of a producer for environmentally sound management of the product until the end of its life.

The Union Environment Ministry had notified the EPR guidelines vide Fourth Amendment to Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016 on February 16.

SUP ban aims to make wildlife sanctuaries plastic-free: DGF&SS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With rampant littering of plastic along the National Highways passing through tiger reserves in the country posing a threat to wildlife, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), an autonomous body under the Union Environment Ministry is banking on the eco development committees composed of locals among others to keep the regions plastic-free.

Chandra Prakash Goyal, Director-General of Forests & Special Secretary (DGF&SS) from the Ministry said that the move aims to make the habitat of the big cats and other wildlife free from plastic which is negatively impacting wildlife.

There have been instances where wild animals have been found eating plastic waste thrown by the tourists. A few of them also died. Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav, too, expressed concern at growing piles of plastic garbage in protected forest areas and shared how during his visit to Sariska Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan recently, he was shocked to see a black buck chewing a plastic bag.

He said this at a press conference held on Tuesday while talking about the ban on single use plastic items being imposed nationwide from July 1. Later, NTCA member secretary and Addl DG(Project Tiger) SP YADAV



explained that the ETC members have been deployed in at least 50 tiger regions or sanctuaries where National Highways are passing through to keep a check on plastic menace. "It is difficult to keep a check on commuters of the vehicles who casually throw away plastics items such as bags or plastic straws on the roads. This harms the health of the animals who ingest them, thinking it as food," he said.

Apart from the National Highways, there are temples inside many forest areas including Sariska Tiger Reserve, Ranthambore National Park and Jhalana Forest Reserve where efforts to keep the regions plastic-free is not so easy.

Yadav said that the ETC members are asked to recycle the collected plastic waste. "This provides livelihood to the locals as well as keeps the tiger reserves, sanctuaries and reserve forest areas plastic free particularly at a time when our focus is on banning the single use plastic items.

In tiger reserves where no National Highways exist, the visitors are provided a textile bag to carry their non-plastic items for which they have to deposit Rs 50 at entry gate.

KK Venugopal may get another term as India's Attorney-General

New Delhi: Senior advocate KK Venugopal may get a fresh term as Attorney General of India, sources in the Government said on Tuesday. Venugopal's current one year term ends on June 30.

The Attorney General usually has a tenure of three years. When Venugopal's first term as AG was to end in 2020, he had requested the Government to give him a one-year tenure keeping in mind his advanced age. He is 91. Last year too, Venugopal was reappointed for one year. In view of high-profile cases Venugopal is handling in the Supreme Court and his experience at the Bar, the government may reappoint him again. The Law Ministry has informed government that his term ends on June 30 and the post needs to be filled. He first took over as Attorney General, the top law officer of the Union Government, on July 1, 2017, succeeding Mukul Rohatgi.

Middle-aged, elderly Indians are more susceptible to Covid: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Covid-related hospitalisations claimed lives of middle-aged to elderly Indians more frequently than people of the same age groups in other regions of the world, according to a study conducted on 5,313 patients in 40 hospitals from 23 countries.

The study, led by the World Heart Federation in association with the Public Health Foundation of India, also revealed that a higher prevalence of diabetes and hypertension among Indians are the major drivers of the increased mortality. The findings, published in the journal

Global Heart, showed that during the pandemic Indians had nearly three times higher mortality due to Covid hospitalisation, than the European population. However, the number was less than the Hispanics and Blacks.

"South Asians (Indians) in the middle-aged to elderly group died more frequently than other regions due to Covid hospitalisations, owing to significantly greater background prevalence of diabetes and hypertension," D. Prabhakaran from the PHFI, told a news agency.

The study demonstrated that patients were relatively younger as compared to previous research (where the aver-

age age was 57 years), predominantly middle aged men, with high prevalence of cardiovascular risk factors such as hypertension diabetes and high mortality up to 30 days.

Patients of Asian, Hispanic or Black ethnicities had higher death rates both within the hospital and after discharge as compared to white Caucasians, Prabhakaran said, as per the agency report.

Another finding was that patients with HIV had increased death at 30 days but not during hospitalisation.

Various studies have shown that Covid pandemic increased death among patients with heart disease or their risk factors.

18 people killed, 14 hurt in Mumbai building collapse

T N RAGHUNATHA ■
MUMBAI

As many as 18 people were killed and 14 others injured after a ground-plus—three storey building collapsed at Kurla (East) in north-central Mumbai shortly before midnight on Monday.

There were 32 residents at the building “Nayaknagar Cooperative Co-operative Housing society” when the structure caved in at around 11.53 pm.

The rescue and relief operation that began immediately after the mishap continued till late on Tuesday. Of the 14 injured, nine were treated and allowed to go, while the remaining five persons are undergoing treatment at The injured were rushed to Rajawadi Hospital at Ghatkopar and LTMG Hospital at Sion, both located in north-central Mumbai.

The building that collapsed was old and it was in a dilapidated condition. Today’s was the first building collapse in the metropolis during the current year.

The teams of State Disaster Management Authority, Mumbai Fire Brigade, police



officials and besides local volunteers, who joined the rescue efforts there had expressed a potential risk to the adjoining second wing of the same building which could also collapse anytime.

The fire brigade personnel identified eight of those killed in the mishap Ajayy M. Pasnor (28) Ajinkya Gaikwad (34) Kumar Prajapati(20) Sikandar Rajbhor (21) Anoop Rajbhor

(18). Arvind R. Bharti (19) Anil Yadav (21) Shyam Prajapati (18) while ten other deceased had not been identified till late on Tuesday evening. Meanwhile, chief minister Uddhav Thackeray announced an assistance of Rs 5 lakh to each of the bereaved families.

Maharashtra Minister Aaditya Thackeray visited the mishap site twice – once immediately after the mishap on

Tuesday night and second time on Tuesday. Industry Minister Subhash Desai, senior officials of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and police officials visited the mishap site. In all 15 residents were rescued from the debris of the building Two pigeons have been rescued alive from the debris at the Kurla crash site. Two pigeons were rescued alive from under the debris.

Post 2 bypoll losses SP allies question Akhilesh’s leadership

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Trouble is brewing for the Samajwadi Party as its allies have started questioning the political competence of Akhilesh Yadav following the debacle in the Rampur and Azamgarh bypolls.

“The Samajwadi Party cannot afford to lose Azamgarh. Chaudhary Charan used to call Azamgarh as the centre of Samajwadi politics and that he could afford to lose Baghpat, but Azamgarh never,” Om Prakash Rajbhar, president of Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party, an ally of the SP.

“Akhilesh Yadav should come out of the comfort of air-conditioned rooms and hit the ground running. For the BJP, politics is a 24X 7 engagement and the SP chief should also borrow the idea from the ruling party — take the plunge and catch the bull of electoral politics by its horn,” Rajbhar said.

“Akhilesh Yadav must have campaigned in Rampur and Azamgarh. If the engine remains stationary, how will the train move? Akhilesh visited Azamgarh nine times during the recent assembly elections and conducted 13 public meetings. But in the Lok Sabha



bypolls, he did not visit the two constituencies even once. The debacle in Rampur and Azamgarh will have ramifications for the SP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Akhilesh should be more accessible to his party cadre and focus on strengthening the organisation at the grassroots level,” Rajbhar added.

He said that the SP owes an explanation to its rank and file and the allies as to why its candidates fared poorly in Rampur and Azamgarh.

Shivpal Yadav, the estranged uncle of Akhilesh Yadav, advised the SP president to honour the mandate given by the people of Rampur and Azamgarh.

“Nobody from the

“The SP owes an explanation to its rank and file and the allies as to why its candidates fared poorly in Rampur and Azamgarh bypolls.”

— OP Rajbhar

Samajwadi party contacted me for the Rampur and Azamgarh byelections and I have been sitting idle since UP assembly elections concluded in March,” he said.

Sanjay Chauhan of Janwadi Socialist Party also slammed the SP chief. Questioning the style of functioning of Akhilesh, he said: “Akhilesh Yadav prefers to conduct his politics through social media, particularly through Twitter. He should respond to the need of the hour and hit the ground running. Instead of relying on a kitchen cabinet comprising rootless wonders, he should rely more on people who have their ears close to the ground.”

Chauhan also criticised Akhilesh for nominating Swami Prasad Maurya to the UP Legislative Council.

“It was an imprudent move by Akhilesh Yadav to oblige a turncoat who defected to the SP from BJP ahead of the UP assembly elections and lost from Kushinagar, and yet nominated to the council. As long

as the non-Yadav OBCs are firmly mobilised behind the BJP, the SP can never win the UP assembly elections. Akhilesh has failed to comprehend this ground reality of UP’s electoral politics,” Chauhan said. President of Mahan Dal and former ally of the Samajwadi Party Keshav Dev Maurya said: “The electoral strategy of the SP for Rampur and Azamgarh was full of loopholes without addressing which the party can never win any election.”

Maurya added: “Akhilesh Yadav is a reluctant leader and is shy of hard work. How can he win an election?”

Dismissing the charges leveled by Akhilesh against the BJP government about the misuse of official machinery in Rampur and Azamgarh, Maurya said: “During the 2017 UP assembly elections. The SP was in power, yet the BJP and its allies won 325 out of 403 seats. Such allegations lack conviction are only for public consumption.”

Two associates of terrorists gunned down in Keran sector

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
JAMMU

Ahead of the flag off ceremony of the first batch of Amarnath-bound pilgrims from the Jammu-based *yatri niwas* troops of the Indian Army, deployed along the Line of Control in the Keran sector of North Kashmir’s Kupwara district, on Tuesday gunned down two terrorist associates while they were waiting to receive a consignment of arms and ammunition besides facilitating group of infiltrators inside the Indian territory.

The duo have been identified by the police as Majid Chechi and Samsudin Beigh.

In a written statement a police spokesman said, “It is believed they had come to receive a cache of arms and narcotics and to facilitate infiltration of terrorists in the general area of Rauta Nar at fence”.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha is scheduled to flag off the first batch of pilgrims from Jammu on Wednesday. The registered pilgrims have been provided with Radio frequency



Identification tags to ensure their safety. The first batch will be escorted to the base camps in Baltal and Pahalgam under tight security arrangements.

Sharing details of the incident, police spokesman said, “alert troops of the Indian army had reported suspicious movement around 12.15 a.m close to the fence in general area India Gate – Bichu in Keran sector of Kupwara”.

“The suspected movement was challenged by the Army’s patrol party. On being challenged, fire was drawn on the troops from the fence side which was retaliated. On search, two individuals were

found dead near the fence (inside the Indian territory). According to a police spokesman, “04 AK rifles, 08 Magazines and 02 packets of narcotics were recovered from their possession whereas 02 more AK rifles along with magazines and 04 grenades were found on the other side of fence”. “War like stores have been recovered in the operation which include AK 47 & 56 rifles - 05, AK rifle Shotgun – 01, Magazines-15, 7.62mm API rds – 128 rounds, 7.62mm Ball rounds - 177 rounds, Grenades- 04 and Narcotics - 2 packets”, police spokesman added.

Assam flood situation improves as rivers start receding

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The overall flood situation in Assam showed signs of improvement on Tuesday with most of the rivers showing a receding trend even though 21 lakh people remained affected by the deluge and most localities of Silchar town in Cachar district were still under water, officials said.

The death toll due to this year’s floods have increased to 134 with five more deaths recorded in the last 24 hours, while one person was missing, as per a bulletin issued by Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA).

Most of the rivers were showing a receding trend, except for Kopili and Barak, which were flowing above the danger level in Nagaon and Barak Valley respectively.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma visited an embankment breach spot at Kuwara in Bajali district to take stock of the flood situation.

“Visited Kuwara at Patacharkuchi, Bajali to understand the current flood situation and damage caused by overflowing of Kaldia river along with my Cabinet col-

league Shri @RanjeetkrDass,” Sarma tweeted.

He also interacted with the affected people and assured all possible assistance to them.

Silchar remained under water for more than a week, with efforts underway to air-drop essential items to people who are yet to be reached.

Deputy Commissioner Keerthi Jalli said the ASDMA has initiated drone survey in Silchar for damage assessment of areas such as Dudh Patil, Chamra Gudam, Silchar Railway station and other places.

She said the district administration along with Silchar Municipal Board and others are working to clean up the city’s garbage, but people are dumping filth on the streets after cleaning their houses and shops.

Jalli requested people to refrain from throwing garbage on streets that have been cleaned to avoid spread of diseases. Medical personnel have been deployed in 28 wards of the town.

Water packets and water purifying tablets have been distributed

among the affected people and temporary toilets set up in



two relief camps.

Meanwhile, work is underway to repair damaged portions of the dyke at Bethukandi that led to the flooding in the town.

Chief Secretary Jishnu Barua held a virtual meeting with deputy commissioners of three flood-affected districts in Barak Valley and Dima Hasao and other stakeholders to take stock of restoration of communication.

He said assessment of all rehabilitation grants in Cachar

district must be completed before July 10.

A total of 2,254 villages in 61 revenue circles remain affected by floods, while 1,91,194 people have taken shelter in 538 relief camps.

Floodwaters have damaged 79 roads and five bridges while six embankments have been breached.

A total of 349 houses have been fully damaged while 573 have been partially damaged due to the floods. Farmlands

over 74,656 hectares are under water, while 2,774 animals have been washed away.

Large scale erosion was reported in Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Chirang, Hailakandi, Morigaon, Nalbari, Sonitpur, and Udalguri districts.

A landslide has been reported in a tea garden in Hailakandi district, while urban flooding continued in Cachar and Morigaon districts.

Didi slams Teesta’s arrest, says Nupur won’t be spared

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday launched a scathing attack on the BJP Government saying the powers that be in Delhi was destroying democracy by suppressing the voices of opposition.

“They are gagging the popular voice ... they are suppressing the voice of dissent ... What wrong Teesta Sitalvad and Md Zubair had done so

that they had to be arrested ... couldn’t this Government give some space to democracy ... what is happening to the hailed democratic culture of India,” Banerjee told a large audience at Asansol.

Banerjee’s remark came a day after Sitalvad a social activist and Zuvair a journalist were arrested by an anti terror squad of the Gujarat Police for fighting the cases for the victims of the Gujarat riots.

Without naming the top

saffron politicians Banerjee said peddlers of hatred were roaming free whereas “those who tried to bring forth the truth are being arrested ... is it a crime to tell the truth ... is it an offence to expose facts... those who speak out against the Government are harassed by the ED and CBI” she said in an apparent reference to the Gujarat riot cases in which the Supreme Court gave a clean chit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Incidentally a galaxy of TMC leaders including the Chief Minister’s own nephew and party national secretary Abhishek Banerjee and his wife Rujira Narula Banerjee have been under the ED and CBI scanner for their alleged roles in the money laundering cases which had reported links to cattle and coal smuggling.

Attacking the Centre for dishing out yet another “Jumla” in the name of Agnipath scheme Banerjee said “they

are dangling lollipops before the country’s youth Banerjee said “it is a big scam and another example of Jumla politics ... after the 2024 elections every such recruitment jumla will go and the youth will be left with nothing in their hands.”

Saying that she had recently received a communication where “I was requested to offer jobs to the Agniveers after four years ... but why we should clear the mess created by the Centre ... it is their mess

and they will have to clean it. We will not take the onus,” she said.

Banerjee had earlier suggested that the retirement age of Agniveer soldiers be extended to 60 years. Speaking before an audience with a sizeable population from the minority communities Banerjee attacked the Centre for doing nothing to BJP leader Nupur Sharma for her remarks on Prophet Mohammad.

“Those who are spreading

hatred and creating animosity among communities in the country are let off ... they are not being touched and even getting protection whereas those who are criticizing such acts are being arrested,” she said apparently in reference to Nupur Sharma case and warned her Government would never let her go free.

“Our Government has taken action and registered cases against these people and we will not spare them ... our

police have summoned them and they will have to face the music.”

Banerjee whose party won the Asansol parliamentary seat for the first time --- thanks to the presence of a large number of minority votes --- reminded how “the TMC has made the BJP Khamosh (silent) from Asansol because the people of this place have understood their real character.” Cine star Shatrughna Sinha recently won the seat for her party.

Suvendu promises Maha encore in Bengal; TMC speaks to Guv

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress has raised strong views against Bengal Opposition Leader Suvendu Adhikari’s suggestions that after Maharashtra it was the turn of Jharkhand and Bengal where the Governments would be toppled through ‘operation lotus’.

Even as the TMC leadership continued sustained movement in the State demanding the arrest of Adhikari named in a number of scams including Sharada chit fund and Narada pay-off cases the BJP leader earlier said that his party was going to do a Maharashtra in Bengal. “Just it is a matter of time that Bengal too will fall by 2024,” Adhikari who had joined

the BJP just ahead of the 2021 Assembly elections said.

A former powerful TMC Minister and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s points-man in Nandigram movement that catapulted her to power had recently been facing a tirade from the Bengal ruling outfit which had been agitating at various ED and CBI offices demanding his arrest.

In an apparent reaction to the recent developments Adhikari said, “The Uddhav Thackeray Government is almost on the verge of collapse and it is a matter of time that Maharashtra will go into the hands of the BJP ... it is almost certain ... now the next target is Jharkhand and then Bengal ... by 2024 Bengal will fall,” to

operation lotus he said.

The TMC reacted sharply with its spokesperson Kunal Ghosh saying if what Adhikari was saying was true and if they were really up to playing the Maharashtra game in Bengal then it was dangerous for democracy. “What Suvendu Adhikari has said is dangerous the democratic-federal structure of the country... they are spending hundreds of crores to topple Governments in various states ... as they are now doing in Maharashtra ... the statement is itself dangerous,” Ghosh said adding however that getting Bengal would remain a pipedream for the BJP.

“Today he is Suvendu Dada (brother) ... he is dreaming of getting Bengal through opera-

tion lotus ... let his bosses try it ... I can assure you they will not get Bengal even in 2056 ... by when he will become a Dadu (a grandfather).”

Meanwhile, in a related development a group of Trinamool leaders led by Bengal Education Minister Bratya Basu on Tuesday met Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar urging him to recommend the arrest of Adhikari who had been named in the FIRs in Sharada and Narada cases.

“He is an FIR-named person and the main accused in the Sharada case Sudipto Sen has written a letter to the agencies that Adhikari had blackmailed him and squeezed crores from him ... so why the CBI is not arresting him,” Basu said.



Construction of chariots in the final stages for the annual ‘Rath Yatra’ festival of Lord Jagannath, in Puri on Tuesday.

(PTI Photo)



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PAPER WITH PASSION

G7 & the war

The grouping must act swiftly and effectively against Russia's barbaric invasion of Ukraine

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has rightly accused Russia of war crimes after a missile strike on a crowded shopping centre in Ukraine which killed 18 people and wounded over 59. He lashed out at Russian President Vladimir Putin's "cruelty and barbarism". In a joint statement issued on Monday, G7 leaders also remained "steadfast in our solidarity with Ukraine, and reaffirm our unwavering commitment to support the Government and people of Ukraine in their courageous defence of their country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and in their fight for a peaceful, prosperous and democratic future". This will enthuse Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy who, along with other Ukrainians, has been fighting valiantly against the much bigger and more powerful Russia. The US-led West's support for the besieged eastern European nation has been admirable; so also is the way they weaponised their financial dominance and used it against Moscow. Besides, their support to Ukraine by way of arming it with the latest arms and armaments is praiseworthy. The same, however, cannot be said about its effectiveness. Despite months of debilitating sanctions against Russia, its war machine is still buzzing. After over a century, Russia has defaulted over a \$100-million payment — not because it doesn't have money but because it is not allowed to pay its creditors. The default is likely to hurt the creditors rather than

Moscow; it won't surely hurt Putin enough to force him to call off the war.

G7 leaders are deploying other means to augment pressure on the Kremlin. They have agreed to study placing global price caps on imports of Russian energy to curb Moscow's ability to fund its invasion of Ukraine and to contribute up to \$5 billion to address global food insecurity, according to a *Reuters* report. However, they cannot be absolved of their role, though indirect, of enriching and thus emboldening Putin to such an extent that he could dare to attack Ukraine. Rich nations, swayed by the rhetoric of climate activists, became so obsessed with checking the use of fossil fuels that they discouraged production in their own jurisdictions. Under US President Joe Biden, for instance, the US has become a net energy importer, though his predecessor Donald Trump had ensured energy independence. This happened because Biden's Democratic Party has increasingly been influenced by the radical Left. Last year, Biden had also allowed Russia to sell oil to Europe. This is not to say that concerns about the environment should be ignored, but the action should be calibrated, not rash. Developed nations didn't realise that though climate change can end the world in a century, a nuclear war can do that in a day. Yes, that's a possibility! Frustrated that a small nation is not surrendering, Putin may decide to escalate his war. That may have calamitous consequences, not just for Ukraine and Europe but the entire world. G7 must ensure that its actions against Russia are not just effective but also non-escalatory.

PICTALK



A reveller at the annual NYC Pride March, in New York.

AP

Disintegrating?

The power tussle in the AIADMK threatens to break up the party and thrust it into oblivion

Modern-day politics in Tamil Nadu is intertwined with its films and cine stars. Starting with first DMK Chief Minister CN Annadurai to AIADMK's J Jayalalithaa and reigning CM MK Stalin, all had their moorings in films. The script and storylines of politics have a lot of similarities with films "assembled" in the studios of Kollywood. The tussle for power in the AIADMK, which is in a state of chaos following the demise of Jayalalithaa in 2016, resembles a comedy film. It has three leaders pulling the party in different directions and all of them are on a State-wide tour to drum up support. Last week's general council meeting in Chennai had a funny end with the participants unanimously shouting down the 23 resolutions introduced by party coordinator O Panneerselvam, who is out to take control of the AIADMK. Edappadi Palaniswami, leader of the Opposition and the party coordinator, wants a single leader to head the party and end the existing dual leadership system since it has not done the party any good since being introduced in August 2017. The AIADMK has not won any election since 2019, substantiating Palaniswami's reservations on dual leadership.

EPS, who was the CM from 2017 to 2021, has proved his mettle and capability. Panneerselvam's liaising with VK Sasikala, the former interim general secretary who was eased out of the AIADMK along with her family members in 2017 to facilitate unity between EPS and OPS, is being viewed with suspicion by party leaders. Sasikala, a close aide

to late Jayalalithaa who was convicted with four-year imprisonment in a disproportionate assets case, is out to hijack the 50-year-old AIADMK. Sasikala is on a *Puratchi Payanam* (revolutionary journey) to influence party cadres and bring them over to her side. Chinnamma, as she is called by acolytes, had declared in 2012 that she would never aspire for any position or power in the party. In 2017, she was about to be sworn in as the CM but the Supreme Court verdict upholding her four-year term saved Tamil Nadu from that predicament. If these leaders fail to sail together, the golden jubilee year of the party could see the burial of the AIADMK. *The Pioneer* had forecast as early as December 11, 2016, that the AIADMK would disintegrate into fragments faster than it was formed. Is the AIADMK leadership reading this?

Stop messing with our military

It is the one institution the nation trusts; any efforts to tinker with its soul & ethos will certainly not go down well with the aspirants, the regulars or even the veterans



ASHOK K MEHTA

Thank the Almighty for minor mercies on Agniveer. After five days of avoidable all-India arson and damage (railways alone suffered losses of ₹1,000 crore), the Government has backpedalled. Some concessions have been made to Agnipath Yojana: One-time age waiver (21 to 23 years); unwritten reservation in Government jobs; promises of public and private sector employment for demobilised Agniveers, and skilling and higher education schemes — in short, they've been promised the moon when it is a distant crescent. The anger among youth is understandable as many have passed physical and medical tests. For IAF, aspirants had cleared even written examinations but were not called up. The charade of COVID was used to suspend regular recruitment and replaced with Agnipath. The youth were cheated.

Now that Agnipath has become irreversible, the merit of the scheme as youthful infusion into an aging Army was marked by colossal criticism including masking the real reason for its imposition, ie reduction of salary and pension bills. Hundreds of veterans including Param Vir Chakra winner, Capt Bana Singh, denigrated the project. He tweeted: 'save the country from Agnipath scheme as it would badly damage the youth'. Later, it seems he was forced to delete the tweet. Most former service Chiefs adopted *maun vrat*. Only former Naval Chief, Adm Arun Prakash, had the temerity to expose its infirmities. These days, it is dangerous to speak out or speak up lest you're targeted by one or the other public/private agencies. Not many veterans detected or objected to forcing down All India All Class (AIAC) recruitment on single class/caste regiments. But those who did made passionate appeals to spare the high-value regimental system in the fighting arms.

In final briefings to media by Additional Secretary (Department of Military Affairs) Lt Gen Anil Puri and Vice Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen BS Raju, and NSA Ajit Doval allayed concerns about dismantling the reg-



imental system. This seems to be one more concession by the Government after the uproar. Lt Gen Raju told newspapers that Agnipath is in fact a pilot project and in response to pleas that it should be test-bedded, he said in four years Agniveer would be tweaked. This means the four year-engagement could be increased and the number of re-enlisted could also be increased. The pay package offered to Agniveers is in fact less than what regular soldiers receive after enlistment. There are other anomalies, including severance package, which need to be scrutinised. Listening to youth on social media and TV, it is clear they cannot be duped as they are questioning all aspects of the project, including why not Agniveers for officers also?

In his briefing, Lt Gen Puri let the cat out of the bag. He said: "In the last two years, we got an opportunity and we stopped the recruitment process." So COVID was used as a pretext to stop recruitment when in fact Agnipath was being prepared. He also said: "The AIAC recruitment model will remain unchanged. 75 per cent of the Army is already AIAC except single-class regiments like Sikh, Dogra, Garhwal, Gorkha, Jat and the like. The regimentation (pre-



THE PAY PACKAGE OFFERED TO AGNIVEERS IS IN FACT LESS THAN WHAT REGULAR SOLDIERS RECEIVE. IT IS CLEAR THE YOUTH CANNOT BE DUPED AS THEY ARE QUESTIONING ALL ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT, INCLUDING WHY NOT AGNIVEERS FOR OFFICERS ALSO?

sumably meaning regimental system) will remain unchanged."

Doval said: "The policy on the recruitment will not affect the current regimental system. The concept of regiments, nobody is tinkering with. The regimental system has not ended." Doval insisted there will be no rollback of Agniveer. The good news is that a few single-class regiments which in 2032 will have 50 per cent Agniveer and 50 per cent regulars will continue and be exempt from AIAC. Doval is the highest-ranking Government official to confirm this and put worries of regimental dihedrals at rest.

In the future, when Agniveers are enlisted to full capacity of 125,000 annually and 100,000 will be demobilised, second careers will have to be found for the latter. Current assurances by all and sundry are unreliable. The problem is: Agniveers will not only be competing among themselves for re-enlistment, they will also be competing with fulltime regulars. Sporting their Agniveer badges (some are calling it a new rank?), singling out this group will create bad blood creating different types of soldiers. This is a bad idea and should be dropped.

As in the British military from whose sinews the Indian

system is derived, a military covenant is necessary between soldiers and the nation. The country should commit to taking care of them and their families through thick and thin as they put their lives on the block. Will the Agniveers qualify for this as the regulars do? The biggest challenge for Agniveers is their effective integration into the military system and assimilation into combat units imbued with regimental ethos, tradition and motivation which underline the ultimate test on the battlefield.

Varun Gandhi is the only parliamentarian who is deriding the new scheme. One has not seen such an enormous upheaval against what is ostensibly a transformative defence reform. Agnipath Yojana requires a transformation to ensure defence of the realm is not compromised. Given the backlash to Agnipath, Government is unlikely to pick a CDS anytime soon. It has turned it into a modern *swayamvar* with 150 people in the contest.

(The writer, a retired Lt Gen, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

US APEX COURT'S REGRESSIVE RULING

Sir — The US Supreme Court's ruling that abortion is no longer a constitutional right is a backward step. It represents an infringement of liberty to make personal choices; it strikes a blow against women's reproductive and physical autonomy. No wonder popular opinion in America is overwhelmingly against the ruling. US President Joe Biden has termed it a 'tragic error' and warned that it risks the 'health and life of women'. Alas, American women are being denied the basic freedom to end a pregnancy. It is not explicitly stated if pregnancies resulting from rape and incest and detection of life-threatening or incurable deformities put no bar on women to seek an abortion.

Sometimes pregnancy poses a health risk to the mother and abortion is needed to save her life. There is also the danger of abortion going underground. The issue is far more complex and complicated than the six court justices have assumed it to be. Liberals look at the anti-abortion ruling as the beginning of a rightward shift in judicial pronouncements on issues that significantly affect the lives of millions. Laws governing modern societies need not be commensurate with religious fundamentalism or obscurantism.

G David Milton | *Kanyakumari*

NEXT STEP FOR SHINDE & CO.?

Sir — The question is being asked that why were the Shiv Sena rebels taken away to Assam and not to the BJP-ruled States of Goa, Karnataka or Madhya Pradesh? Why couldn't they stay in the BJP's citadel of Gujarat? And, finally why is Eknath Shinde still reluctant to return and demand a floor test? With parts of Assam reeling under floods, these MLAs in a five-star hotel come across as insensitive. The longer they stay there, the more the distance grows between them and their constituents. With Shinde facing much loss of face and capital, there is also the suspicion that many of the rebel MLAs may actually vote with Uddhav Thackeray in the House.

A bridge to development



The Padma Bridge inaugurated by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is the country's biggest development project since the country's birth in 1971. It symbolises the country's transition from a poor country to a progressing one and substantiates Sheikh Hasina's commitment to public welfare and the country's development. The bridge, connecting India directly to Dhaka, will definitely boost Bangladesh's development. It is expected to impact the lives of 30 million people. What is so special about the bridge is that it was built entirely with domestic financing. It is a symbol

of the country's capacity, strength and dignity. Over the years, Bangladesh has made significant progress in different sectors.

Industrialisation, less poverty, improvement in human development, measures for gender equality, empowerment of women — all these achievements have changed the country. The opening of the Padma Bridge signifies the country's economic development. Bangladesh is smaller than India. On the other hand, the country is ahead of India in several development domains. India must take a leaf out of Bangladesh and take measures for her overall progress. One may argue that the construction of a bridge is only a small part of progress. However, the country's index of development substantiates the progress it has made. The success of Bangladesh shows that by focusing on infrastructure, education, gender equality, manufacturing and exports, a country can make great progress.

Venu GS | *Kollam*

The political drama enters the second week, possibly a decisive week, with time running out for the rebels. And with Sharad Pawar saying openly that it is his duty to protect his friend Bal Thackeray's son and political heir, emotions on the street are running high, something that the rebels will have to contend with. With this, it is sure that their political career is finished and they have become the enemy of the people of Maharashtra. Seemingly, they have dug their own grave.

Bhagwan Thadani | *Mumbai*

HISTORIC WIN FOR MADHYA PRADESH

Sir — History doesn't just happen by itself. The passion and drive of history makers write their own script. June 26, 2022 ... This date has become historic for cricket in Madhya Pradesh. For the first time, the Ranji team of Madhya Pradesh State has won the prestigious Ranji Trophy. The meaning of this achievement is even bigger because this team entered the field

without its five key players. Come to think of it, there was no famous player in the team. The final match was against a much stronger team like Mumbai, who have won the Ranji Trophy multiple times.

However, as they say, who can stand in front of an indomitable spirit? The passion to play the best, the will to win and the resulting stubbornness make players great. The team of Madhya Pradesh has proved this. Be it bowling or batting, the players proved their superiority on both fronts. The Madhya Pradesh cricket team has made a dream come true by winning the Ranji Trophy, which has been seen in the eyes of our State continuously for many years. After this victory, it is now expected that cricket will be taken more seriously in the State. This victory is historic.

Divyansha Sharma | *Ujjain*

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

I would reach out to my former colleagues in the BJP seeking their support (in the presidential poll).



Joint Opposition candidate —Yashwant Sinha



French President —Emmanuel Macron

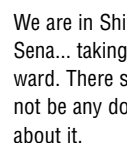
Nothing has got delayed. No one needs to pick anyone up. I am a woman, not a parcel.



Actor —Alia Bhatt



Canadian tennis player —Rebecca Marino



Maharashtra rebel —Eknath Shinde

FIRST COLUMN

LOT NEEDS TO BE DONE FOR EASE OF LIVING

Challenge of living is a superset of ease of living



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

Life is in a continuous dynamic mode. Among the more significant elements in the dynamic flow, there is the physical and the cognitive system. The periodic changes inside and outside the body are obvious indicators of change. Simultaneously, the intellectual and the emotional systems undergo a change. As it happens, most communities have little or no formal systems in assisting people to transit through this change.

Thus, the role of an individual in their own growth is a critical aspect of their coping with reality. This they learn through informal processes and from the environment in which they are embedded. This is an important element to keep in mind in studying how formal education through schools and colleges and informal learning from the context and the environment mutually support each other.

Thus, it is that learning that becomes a very important attribute of the act of living. The changes which one goes through physically, intellectually, and emotionally are significant to the very art of survival. This process is embedded in other features.

One grows up and gets married. Children are born out of marriage and the unit of reference changes. Like everything else, this too is a passing phase; children grow up and parents become again a unit of two.

All this is enmeshed in a dynamic social environment. The external governance systems evolve. This raises two important questions in the creation of civil society. One is access to resources and the other is opportunities for growth.



If there are too many moving parts then the challenge of living becomes bigger.

The challenge of living is a superset of the ease of living. Ease of living has to do, among other things, about forms and formats, screenings and verifications. The challenge of living has to do with the very act of availability of inputs such as energy, water, and security. In all this, the act of healthcare is fundamental.

Once this distinction between the challenge of living and ease of living is recognised, progress becomes simpler and therefore amenable to solutions to a higher degree.

Both the above issues, the challenge and the ease of living, cannot be handled without understanding the unit of reference. The unit of reference is often undefined. It can vary from community to community.

Consider the basic act of garbage collection. It is so basic that most people take it for granted. This is an oversimplification. In an upmarket colony of New Delhi, a little over a decade ago it was found that the sewerage pipe was laid parallel to the water pipe and during the monsoons, contamination of the flow in the water pipe took place from the flow in the sewerage pipe. Illness flowed.

Then proper garbage collection was started. One was the segregation of garbage, between the biomass type and the non-biodegradable type. Disposal of segregated garbage was recommended. This practice is yet to take root in many colonies of even the more evolved cities.

This recognition has to go hand in hand with which agency is charged with the level of collection of what type of garbage.

Illustrations can be many. The solutions will have to do with the recognition of the unit of reference: How is the agency for garbage collection decided? Who will be responsible for ensuring the fair distribution of energy, say, electricity? How will water supply be ensured? Put simply, there is a need to focus on identifying the basic unit of reference of understanding and operation of all systems at a local level, just as much as at any other level. Some work has begun, much more is needed.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal.)

Control mindset hurts privatisation process

The strategic sale of BPCL couldn't be carried out because the Government wants to regulate fuel prices



UTTAM GUPTA

After over three years of having initiated the sale of its entire 53.29 per cent shareholding in Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL)—a Central public sector undertaking (PSU) in the sector of refining and marketing of petroleum products—the Government has decided to put it on hold. What could be the reason behind this move?

Adopted a big-bang approach to privatisation (when government sells its majority stake in a PSU and transfers control to a private entity) in the Budget for 2021-22, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had divided Central PSUs in two broad categories—i.e. strategic and non-strategic.

The former is subsumed under four subgroups: atomic energy, space and defense; transport and telecommunications; power, petroleum, coal and other minerals; and banking, insurance and financial services. The non-strategic category includes all other sectors such as hotel and tourist services, industrial and consumer goods, trading, and marketing.

As per the plan, the government's intent was to privatise all undertakings in non-strategic sectors (all loss-making enterprises in this category will be closed). In the case of CPSUs in the strategic sector, it would undertake privatisation with the caveat that at least one (and a maximum of four) will be retained in the public sector.

BPCL being an undertaking in the subgroup 'power, petroleum, coal and other minerals'—considered vital for maintaining the country's energy security—the Government might be contemplating to retain it in sync with energy security. But this was at variance with the decision of BPCL privatisation in 2019-20, much before the 2021-22 Budget announcement. Perhaps there was a retrospective change of policy.

A second major reason could be the lengthy and cumbersome process of approvals and red tape. Under the extant procedures for granting approval, the Niti Aayog identifies companies for strategic disinvestment which are then considered by the Core Group of Secretaries on Divestment (CGD), a long-drawn process by itself. It then goes to the Alternative Mechanism (AM)—a group of ministers including those of Finance and Road Transport & Highways—for approval.

After the AM's approval, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam) moves a proposal for in-principle approval of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA).

In short, strategic divestment involves around 12 steps, which inevitably lead to delays in starting the process. And when the Government enters the market, the conditions may not be favorable.

In a case like BPCL, the challenge is even bigger as it needs bidders with deep pockets. For instance, during 2019-20, it needed a strategic investor who could pay

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PRIVATE PLAYERS CAN'T MATCH THE PRICES OFFERED BY HPCL, IOCL AND BPCL. EVEN THE LATTER WON'T BE ABLE TO ABSORB THE UNDER-RECOVERIES BEYOND A POINT, WHICH WILL MANIFEST IN REDUCED SUPPLIES FROM THEM SOONER RATHER THAN LATER

The author is a policy analyst. (www.uttamgupta.com)



around Rs 60,000 crore (prevailing share price multiplied by the number of shares corresponding to 53.29 per cent holding).

In that year, the market environment was favorable even as the international price of crude oil (fortunes of oil companies went in tandem with it) was hovering around \$70 per barrel. The Government could have got strategic investors willing to put the required sum for buying its entire stake. But the bureaucrats were not ready.

During 2020-21, thanks to the Covid pandemic causing large-scale destruction of demand globally, the average price of crude declined to just about \$40 per barrel (in April 2020, it had plummeted to a low of \$20 per barrel). This made the market environment highly unfavorable.

That apart, the entire Government machinery was too preoccupied with mitigating the consequences of the pandemic—protecting both lives and livelihoods of people.

During 2021-22, the price recovered and ruled above \$70 per barrel, most of the time leading to significant improvement in the market environment. But the officials were not ready yet again, leading to deferment of the sale to 2022-23.

During the current fiscal, the international crude price has zoomed because of the Ukraine war, economic sanctions imposed by the US and the European Union on Russia, and the resulting disruption in supplies of oil and gas. With crude price hovering around \$120 per barrel (at one point, it had even touched \$140 per barrel) and substantially higher valuations of oil

companies, this was a propitious time for carrying out the sale. But it was not to be.

The Government's decision to put BPCL sale on hold at this juncture—when market conditions are favorable and all procedures needed to conduct the sale already in place—may sound a bit puzzling. To unravel the puzzle, let us look at the following:

In theory, petrol and diesel prices were deregulated in June 2010 and November 2014, respectively, as the oil companies were given the freedom to fix their retail price, using a formula that combines their respective import parity price (IPP) and export parity price (EPP) in the ratio of 80:20.

But, in practice, political control over the retail prices of petroleum products is still there. The Government can do this because of the three oil marketing Central PSUs—Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), and BPCL—which account for around 90 per cent of the domestic fuel retail network. Well, technically HPCL is a subsidiary of the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), but then ONGC is itself a Central PSU.

The managements of ONGC/HPCL, IOCL, and BPCL receive tacit instructions from their bosses to maintain the prices at the desired levels—that is, the levels that top politicians desire. These are often unrelated to the market determined-prices. For instance, the current pump price of petrol in Delhi is Rs 97 per liter which corresponds to a crude benchmark of \$90 per barrel—as against the current crude price of \$115 per barrel for the Indian basket. If these

undertakings were really free to fix the price based on the formula (linked to \$115 per barrel), the pump price would have been Rs 110 per liter.

Against this backdrop, if one of these oil PSUs (that is, BPCL), accounting for about 25 per cent of the retail outlets, goes into private hands, the Government's ability to influence fuel prices will be diminished significantly.

In the current scenario, when the international oil price is projected to remain high, Prime Minister Narendra Modi can't afford to allow an unrestrained hike in the retail prices of fuels—especially in view of a number of impending state elections. He would like to keep the leverage to influence fuel prices. Hence the decision to put the sale of BPCL on the backburner.

But this is a patently unwise move. Already, an artificial cap on retail prices has led to a drastic cut in fuel supplies from private firms such as RIL and Nayara Energy. They can't match the prices offered by HPCL, IOCL, and BPCL. Even the latter won't be able to absorb the under-recoveries beyond a point, which will manifest in reduced supplies from them sooner rather than later.

Besides, it will impact the valuation of BPCL as and when it is taken up for strategic sale in the future.

A big bottleneck that comes in the way of strategic sales is the desire of the establishment to remain in the driver's seat eternally. Until there is a change in the mindset, privatisation of BPCL or, for that matter, of any other PSU won't happen. And if it happens, it won't fetch a good price.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

WE SHOULD NEVER FORGET THAT DREADFUL PERIOD OF EMERGENCY.... WE MOVE FORWARD, LEARNING FROM EVERY IMPORTANT STAGE OF HISTORY. —PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI



THERE'S COMPETITION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE RUPEE AS TO WHOSE VALUE IS FALLING FASTER? ATTENTION MUST BE PAID TO GOVERNANCE. —CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI

Agnipath good for modernisation but needs relook

The scheme is advantageous for youth and national defence but it should be changed with inputs from armed forces

The Government announced on June 14 that all soldiers below the officer ranks of the three wings of the military would be recruited through the Agnipath Scheme. The Government has taken this decision to keep the armed forces young, making the youth disciplined, and rendering them highly skilled after four years of service, besides of course saving money for the modernisation.

The Scheme has been praised by a large number of experts and veterans, but many in the defence community and also the Opposition parties and political observers have expressed their reservations about the scheme, resulting in protests and violent demonstrations all over the



PK VASUDEVA

(The author is a retired senior professor, International Trade.)

country. It is sad that the government property like railways, buses and cars have been burnt by the youth who should be debarred from the recruitment at one and made to pay for the damage to the public property. Nobody can be allowed to indulge in arson whatever the cause.

As opposed to the existing 15 plus years' service, followed by a lifelong pension, the new recruits, Agniveers, will have a four-year tenure, including six months' training. On completion of four years of service, 25 per cent of them will get the permanent cadre, while the rest will be given opportunities in other organisations at the national and state levels.

They will exit with a tax-free purse of approximately Rs

11.71 lakh and return to civil life. Excellent army training, food, clothing, boarding and lodging, a regimented life of four years, a disciplined lifestyle, and a matured mindset will be the hallmarks for the Agniveers.

Over the years, Agniveers would emerge as a strong second line of defence in the country.

The government has announced 10 per cent reservation packages for the retiree Agniveers in Police, Central Armed Police Forces (CARF), Ministry of Defence Undertakings, and Railways after the completion of four years term.

Overall, the scheme is excellent for nation building. It will help build a younger, healthier, and fitter defence military, high-

ly skilled in the changing technological environment. It will also inculcate military discipline, ethos and skilling as a value addition, improving the prospects for those who return to civil society. It will encourage youth to become entrepreneurs for the economic growth of the country.

Yet, it seems that the Centre was not thorough in its homework before launching this scheme. A study known as 'Tour of Duty' (TOD) was carried out about two years ago at the Training Command; all stakeholders gave their inputs.

The scheme needed to be launched as India is emerging as a major pivot in the global order, being a key nation in two security arrangements—one in the Indo-Pacific and another with the US, the UAE,

and Israel. The Indian military has to adapt to the changing strategic interests keeping in view the threat perception from across the borders.

The presentations were made at the Ministry of Defence (MoD) level; the blueprint of the Agnipath Scheme was drawn out for implementation at a suitable time. The army recruitment methodology of leading military nations was kept in mind while framing it. The main planners of this scheme were Training Command, the late CDS General Bipin Rawat, NSA Ajit Doval, Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh, and Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar, along with the Finance Ministry.

The three service Chiefs had a very limited role to play in formulating the scheme. The committee so constituted

was bureaucratic in nature, which gave the recommendations for a younger and leaner force with reduced financial liability for modernisation.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approved this Scheme. However, it was not put up in Parliament. The NSA, who is highly capable in security issues may not be well-versed with the nuances of the armed forces, represented the three services and CDS.

The whole scheme needs to be refurbished by an expert committee which must have members from the armed forces too. The government is making amends to the scheme in a piecemeal manner. The youth of the country is completely confused.

Instead of strengthening the armed forces, the scheme

will weaken their strength if not implemented properly. The committee must go through the pensions of the defence civilians who get one-third of the total defence pensions. They need to be replaced by armed forces personnel.

Politician's pensions have a serious flaw. These also need to be looked into and pruned.

The violent reactions by the youth in the country could have been avoided and a number of lives saved if had been passed by Parliament and discussed at length at the Armed Forces Commanders Conference, before announcing it piecemeal.

The interest of the armed forces cannot be compromised at any cost.

18 KILLED AS RUSSIAN MISSILE HITS CROWDED SHOPPING MALL IN UKRAINE

AP ■ KREMENCHUK

Rescuers searched through charred rubble of a shopping mall on Tuesday looking for more victims of a Russian missile strike that killed at least 18 and wounded scores in what Ukraine's president called "one of the most daring terrorist attacks in European history."

President Volodymyr Zelensky said many of the more than 1,000 afternoon shoppers and workers inside the mall in the city of Kremenchuk managed to escape. Giant plumes of black smoke, dust and orange flames billowed from the wreckage as emergency crews combed through broken metal and concrete for victims. Drones whirled above, clouds of dark smoke still emanating from the ruins several hours after the fire was extinguished.

Casualty figures rose as rescuers sifted through the smoldering rubble. The regional governor, Dmytro Lunin, said at least 18 people were killed and 59 others sought medical assistance, of whom 25 were hospitalised. The region declared a day of mourning Tuesday for the victims of the attack.

"We are working to dismantle the construction so that it is possible to get machinery in there since the metal elements are very heavy and big, and disassembling them by hand is impossible," said Volodymyr Hychkan, an emergency services official.

At Ukraine's request, the UN Security Council scheduled an emergency meeting in New York on Tuesday to discuss the attack.

In the first Russian government comment on the missile strike, the country's first deputy permanent representative to the United Nations, Dmitry Polyansky, alleged multiple inconsistencies that he didn't specify, claiming on Twitter that the incident was a provocation by Ukraine.

Russia has repeatedly denied it targets civilian infrastructure, even though Russian attacks have hit other shopping malls, theaters, hospitals, kindergartens and apartment buildings in the four-month war.



Ukrainian State Emergency Service firefighters work to take away debris at a shopping center burned after a rocket attack in Kremenchuk, Ukraine, Tuesday, June 28
AP Photo | Efrem Lukatsky

On Tuesday, Russian forces struck the Black Sea city of Ochakiv in the Mykolaiv region, damaging apartment buildings and killing two, including a 6-year-old child. A further six people, four of them children, were wounded. One of them, a 3-month-old baby, is in a coma, according to local officials.

The missile strike on Kremenchuk occurred as Western leaders pledged continued support for Ukraine and the world's major economies prepared new sanctions against Russia, including a price cap on oil and higher tariffs on goods.

Meanwhile, the US appeared ready to respond to Zelenskyy's call for more air defense systems, and NATO planned to increase the size of its rapid-reaction forces nearly eightfold - to 300,000 troops.

Zelenskyy said the mall presented "no tpthreat to the Russian army" and

had "no strategic value." He accused Russia of sabotaging "people's attempts to live a normal life, which make the occupiers so angry."

In his nightly address, he said it appeared Russian forces had intentionally targeted the shopping center and added, "Today's Russian strike at a shopping mall in Kremenchuk is one of the most daring terrorist attacks in European history."

He said Russia "has become the largest terrorist organisation in the world."

Russia has increasingly used long-range bombers in the war. Ukrainian officials said Russian Tu-22M3 long-range bombers flying over Russia's western Kursk region fired the missiles, one of which hit the shopping center and another that struck a sports arena in Kremenchuk.

The Russian strike echoed earlier-

attacks that caused large numbers of civilian casualties - such as one in March on a Mariupol theater where many civilians had holed up, killing an estimated 600, and another in April on a train station in eastern Krramatorsk that killed at least 59 people.

"Russia continues to take out its impotence on ordinary civilians. It is useless to hope for decency and humanity on its part," Zelenskyy said.

The United Nations called the strike "deplorable," stressing that civilian infrastructure "should never ever be targeted," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

Group of Seven leaders condemned the attack in a statement late Monday saying "indiscriminate attacks on innocent civilians constitute a war crime. Russian President Putin and those responsible will be held to account."

G-7 leaders pledge to hurt Russia economically



AP ■ ELMAU, GERMANY

Leaders of the world's wealthiest democracies struck a united stance to support Ukraine for "as long as it takes" as Russia's invasion grinds on, and said they would explore far-reaching steps to cap Kremlin income from oil sales that are financing the war.

The final statement Tuesday from the Group of Seven summit in Germany underlined their intent to impose "severe and immediate economic costs" on Russia.

It left out key details on how the fossil fuel price caps would work in practice, setting up more discussion in the weeks ahead to "explore" measures to bar imports of Russian oil above a certain level.

That would hit a key Russian source of income and, in theory, help relieve the energy price spikes and inflation afflicting the global economy as a result of the war.

"We remain steadfast in our commitment to our unprecedented coordination on sanctions for as long as necessary, acting in unison at every stage," the leaders said.

Leaders also agreed on a ban on imports of Russian gold and to step up aid to countries hit with food shortages by the blockade on Ukraine grain shipments through the Black Sea.

The price cap would in theory work by barring service providers such as shippers or insurers from dealing with oil priced above a fixed level. That could work because the service providers are mostly located in the European Union or the U.K. and thus within reach of sanctions.

To be effective, however, it would have to involve as many consuming countries as possible, in particular India, where refiners have been snapping up cheap Russian oil shunned by Western traders. Details on how the proposal would be implemented were left for continuing talks in coming weeks.

The U.S. has already blocked Russian oil imports, which were small in any case. The European Union has decided to impose a ban on the 90% of Russian oil that comes by sea, but that does not take effect until the end of the year, meaning Europe continues to send money to Russia for energy even while condemning the war.

Meanwhile, higher global oil prices have softened the blow to Russia's income, even as Western traders shun Russian oil.

Energy themes were front and center at the summit throughout. Europe is scrambling to find new sources of oil

and fresh supplies of gas as Russia dials back gas supplies in what leaders say is a political move. Meanwhile high energy prices are a headache for G-7 countries' consumers.

The summit host, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz defended the G-7's decision to soften commitments to end public support for fossil fuel investments, saying the war in Ukraine means time-limited support for new natural gas extraction projects may be necessary.

The G-7 nations said in a statement Tuesday at the end of their three-day summit that "in these exceptional circumstances, publicly supported investment in the gas sector can be appropriate as a temporary response."

Before the summit's close, leaders joined in condemning what they called the "abominable" Russian attack on a shopping mall in the town of Kremenchuk, calling it a war crime and vowing that President Vladimir Putin and others involved "will be held to account."

The leaders of the U.S., Germany, France, Italy, the U.K., Canada and Japan on Monday pledged to support Ukraine "for as long as it takes" after conferring by video link with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Macron: Russia cannot, should not win Ukraine war

AP ■ KREMENCHUK (UKRAINE)

French President Emmanuel Macron said Tuesday that Russia "cannot and should not win" the war in Ukraine, as its terrible toll was on full view the day after a Russian missile strike hit a shopping mall, killing 18 people.

Speaking at the end of the Group of Seven summit in Germany, Macron said the seven industrialised democracies would support Ukraine and maintain sanctions against Russia "as long as necessary, and with the necessary intensity."

He added: "Russia cannot and should not win."

His comments came as rescuers searched through the charred rubble of the shopping mall, looking for more victims of what Ukraine's president called "one of the most daring terrorist attacks in European history."



President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said more than 1,000 afternoon shoppers and workers were inside the mall in the city of Kremenchuk. Giant plumes of black smoke, dust and orange flames billowed from the wreckage as emergency crews combed through broken metal and concrete for victims.

Officials: US sending advanced missile systems to Ukraine

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The US is planning to buy and send more medium- to long-range missile systems to Ukraine, a move officials hope will help Ukrainian forces hold onto the last remaining segments of land in the eastern Donbas that Russia has not yet been able to capture.

A senior defense official said Monday that Ukrainian forces are already effectively using advanced rocket systems, and that more of those will go into Ukraine with trained troops soon. A new plan for the U.S.

To buy and send NASAMS, an advanced surface-to-air missile system, to Ukraine, is also in the works and would add to its longer-range rocket and missile strike capabilities.

President Joe Biden is expected to announce soon that the U.S. is purchasing NASAMS, a Norwegian-developed anti-aircraft system, to provide medium- to long-range

defense for Ukraine, according to an administration official familiar with the matter.

NASAMS is the same system used by the U.S. To protect the airspace around the White House and Capitol in Washington.

Both the defense official and the administration official

spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss U.S. Military assessments and plans that have yet to be announced.

Russia has been mounting an all-out assault on the last Ukrainian stronghold in the eastern Luhansk region - the city of Lysychansk - from the



ground and air, the local governor said Monday.

Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai said Russian forces were pummeling Lysychansk after capturing the neighboring city of Sievierodonetsk in recent days.

It's part of a stepped-up Russian offensive to wrest the broader Donbas region from Ukrainian government control in what Western experts say has become the new main goal of President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine, now in its fifth month.

The defense official said the U.S. Continues to see morale and other command and control problems among the Russian forces, and that some local Russian officials in Ukraine have been assassinated in recent days.

The U.S. Has sent four High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS, into Ukraine, which already are being used. Four more will go in soon.

Russia bans Biden's wife, daughter from entry

SAP ■ MOSCOW

Russia on Tuesday announced that it was banning the wife and daughter of US President Joe Biden from entering the country, in response to widening sanctions against Russia.

The Foreign Ministry said 25 names were being added to the country's "stop list" including Biden's wife Jill and daughter Ashley.

It also banned entry to four senators whom it identified as "responsible for the formation of the (US)



Russophobic course." Republicans Mitch McConnell, Susan Collins and Ben Sasse and Democrat Kirstin Gillibrand.

The list also includes prominent academics including Francis Fukuyama, noted for his book "The End of History and the Last Man" that posited the spread of liberal democracies could mark the ultimate development of society.

NATO holds Summit with gaze on Russia and China

AP ■ MADRID

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shocked NATO back to first principles.

Seven decades after it was founded, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is meeting in Madrid this week with an urgent need to reassert its original mission: preventing Russian aggression against Western allies.

Leaders of the world's most powerful military alliance are aiming to increase support for Ukraine's fight against Russian invasion, boost forces on NATO's eastern flank and set priorities for the coming decade - with a new emphasis on checking China's growing international ambitions.

But the gathering will also showcase the difficulties in keeping 30 nations - from tiny Iceland and Luxembourg to huge Turkey and the United States - aligned in an organisation that must make decisions by consensus.

FOCUS ON UKRAINE

NATO was formed after World War II to counter the threat from the Soviet Union and foster cooperation in a shattered Europe. In the years after the

collapse of the USSR, the alliance recast Russia not as an adversary but as a "strategic partner."

No longer.

Russia is NATO's dominant issue and main adversary, and the Madrid summit will be dominated by how to support Ukraine and bolster defences along the bloc's eastern borders, where countries from Romania to the Baltic states worry they may be next in Russian President Vladimir Putin's sights.

Until late last year, only around 5,000 NATO troops were deployed in the Baltic states and Poland on a rotational basis. Now hundreds of thousands of troops are on heightened alert, with 100,000 US troops in Europe, and 40,000 under direct NATO command, supported by air and naval power.

The summit is set to agree to stockpile weapons and equipment in eastern Europe and to dramatically increase the number of troops based in the region or on standby in their own countries as a rapid-reaction force. There will also be more support for Ukraine to upgrade its military, still reliant on Soviet-era equipment, to modern NATO-standard gear.

The alliance is trying to strike a



delicate balance, letting its member nations arm Ukraine without sparking a direct confrontation between NATO and nuclear-armed Russia.

That's one reason Ukraine will not be joining NATO in the foreseeable future, despite being put on the pathway to membership, along with Georgia, in 2008.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is scheduled to address the summit by video, but he has acknowledged joining NATO is a distant prospect and is instead focusing on

seeking European Union membership.

Expansion of the alliance is on the cards, however. Finland and Sweden have both abandoned their nonaligned status and asked to join NATO as protection from Russia.

TURKEY AS SPOILER?

But Turkey, which has NATO's second-largest army after the US, is set to play spoiler to the aspirations of Sweden and Finland - at least for now.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has insisted that he will only allow the Nordic pair to enter NATO if they change their stance on Kurdish rebel groups that Turkey considers terrorists.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg hosted talks with Turkey, Sweden and Finland last week to work toward a breakthrough, and will meet with the three countries' leaders on Tuesday, but there's no guarantee the breakthrough will come in Madrid.

"Turkey has legitimate security concerns over terrorism that we need to address," Stoltenberg said. "So we will continue our talks on Finland and Sweden's applications for NATO membership, and I look forward to finding a way forward as soon as possible."



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46 MIGRANTS FOUND DEAD IN ABANDONED TRAILER IN SAN ANTONIO

AP ■ SAN ANTONIO

Forty-six people were found dead after being abandoned in a tractor-trailer on a remote back road in San Antonio in the latest tragedy to claim the lives of migrants smuggled across the border from Mexico to the U.S. Sixteen people were hospitalized, including four children.

A city worker heard a cry for help from the truck shortly before 6 p.m. Monday and discovered the gruesome scene, Police Chief William McManus said. Hours later, body bags lay spread on the ground near the trailer and bodies remained inside as authorities responded to the calamity.

San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg said the 46 who died had "families who were likely trying to find a better life."

"This is nothing short of a horrific human tragedy," Nirenberg said. It's among the deadliest of the tragedies that have claimed thousands of lives in recent decades as people attempt to cross the U.S. border from Mexico. Ten migrants died in 2017 after being trapped inside a truck parked at a Walmart in San Antonio. In 2003, the bodies of 19 migrants were found in a sweltering

truck southeast of San Antonio.

The home countries of all of the migrants and how long they were abandoned on the side of the road were not immediately known.

Among them, 22 are from Mexico, seven are from Guatemala and two are from Honduras, Roberto Velasco Álvarez, head of the North America department in Mexico's Foreign Relations Department, said on Twitter.

"Our condolences," he tweeted. "All responsible will be brought to justice."

South Texas has long been the busiest area for illegal border crossings. Migrants ride in vehicles through Border Patrol checkpoints to San Antonio, the closest major city, from which point they disperse across the United States.

Officers arrived to find a body on the ground outside the trailer and a partially opened gate to the trailer. Three people were taken into custody, but it was unclear if they were definitively connected with human trafficking, McManus said. The trailer was gone Tuesday morning, but access to the area where it was found remained blocked.

Of the 16 taken to hospitals with heat-related illnesses, 12 were adults and four were children, said Fire



Chief Charles Hood. The patients were hot to the touch and dehydrated, and no water was found in the trailer, he said.

"They were suffering from heat stroke and exhaustion," Hood said. "It was a refrigerated tractor-trailer, but there was no visible working AC unit on that rig."

Those in the trailer were part of a presumed migrant smuggling attempt into the United States, and the investigation was being led by U.S. Homeland Security Investigations, McManus said.

Big rigs emerged as a popular smuggling method in the early 1990s amid a surge in U.S. border enforce-

ment in San Diego and El Paso, Texas, which were then the busiest corridors for illegal crossings.

Before that, people paid small fees to mom-and-pop operators to get them across a largely unguarded border. As crossing became exponentially more difficult after the 2001 terror attacks in the U.S.,

migrants were led through more perilous terrain and paid thousands of dollars more.

Heat poses a serious danger, particularly when temperatures can rise severely inside vehicles. Weather in the San Antonio area was mostly cloudy Monday, but temperatures approached 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius).

Some advocates drew a link to the Biden administration's border policies. Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, policy director at the American Immigration Council, wrote that he had been dreading such a tragedy for months.

"With the border shut as tightly as it is today for migrants from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, people have been pushed into more and more dangerous routes. Truck smuggling is a way up," he wrote on Twitter.

Stephen Miller, a chief architect of former President Donald Trump's immigration policies, said, "Human smugglers and traffickers are wicked and evil" and that the administration's approach to border security rewards their actions.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican running for reelection, was blunt in a tweet about the Democratic president: "These deaths

are on Biden. They are a result of his deadly open border policies."

Migrants - largely from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador - have been expelled more than 2 million times under a pandemic-era rule in effect since March 2020 that denies them a chance to seek asylum but encourages repeat attempts because there are no legal consequences for getting caught. People from other countries, notably Cuba, Nicaragua and Colombia, are subject to Title 42 authority less frequently due to higher costs of sending them home, strained diplomatic relations and other considerations.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection reported 557 deaths on the southwest border in the 12-month period ending Sept. 30, more than double the 247 deaths reported in the previous year and the highest since it began keeping track in 1998. Most are related to heat exposure.

CBP has not published a death tally for this year but said that the Border Patrol performed 14,278 "search-and-rescue missions" in a seven-month period through May, exceeding the 12,833 missions performed during the previous 12-month period and up from 5,071 the year before.

Abortion battles in State courts after US Supreme Court ruling

AP ■ NEW ORLEANS

Abortion bans were temporarily blocked in Louisiana and Utah, while a federal court in South Carolina said a law sharply restricting the procedure would take effect there immediately as the battle over whether women may end pregnancies shifted from the nation's highest court to courthouses around the country.

The US Supreme Court's decision on Friday to end constitutional protection for abortion opened the gates for a wave of litigation. One side sought quickly to put statewide bans into effect, and the other tried to stop or at least delay such measures.

Much of the initial court activity focused on "trigger laws," adopted in 13 states that were designed to take effect swiftly upon last week's ruling. Additional lawsuits could also target old anti-abortion laws that were left on the books in some states and went unenforced under Roe. Newer abortion restrictions that were put on hold pending the Supreme Court ruling are also coming



back into play.

"We'll be back in court tomorrow and the next day and the next day," Nancy Northup, president and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights, which argued the case that resulted in the high court ruling, said Friday.

Rulings to put trigger laws on hold came swiftly in Utah and Louisiana on Monday, and a hearing was scheduled for Tuesday as Texas clinics seek assurances they can resume services for at least a few more

weeks without risking prosecution.

A Utah judge Monday blocked that state's near-total abortion ban from going into effect for 14 days, to allow time for the court to hear challenges to the state's trigger law. Planned Parenthood had challenged the law, which contains narrow exceptions for rape, incest or the mother's health, saying the law violates the equal protection and privacy provisions in the state constitution.

"I think the immediate effects that will occur outweigh any policy interest of the state in stopping abortions," Utah Judge Andrew Stone said.

In Louisiana, a judge in New Orleans, a liberal city in a conservative state, temporarily blocked enforcement of that state's trigger-law ban on abortion, after abortion rights activists argued that it is unclear. The ruling is in effect pending a July 8 hearing.

At least one of the state's three abortion clinics said it would resume performing procedures on Tuesday.

"We're going to do what we can," said Kathaleen Pittman, administrator of Hope Medical Group for Women, in Shreveport. "It could all come to a screeching halt."

Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry, a Republican and staunch abortion opponent, vowed to fight the judge's ruling and enforce the law.

"We would remind everyone that the laws that are now in place were enacted by the people through State Constitutional Amendments

and the LA Legislature," Landry tweeted Monday.

In South Carolina, a federal court lifted its prior hold on an abortion restriction there, allowing the state to ban abortions after an ultrasound detects a heartbeat, usually around six weeks into a pregnancy, before many women know they are pregnant. There are exceptions if the woman's life is in danger, or if the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest.

Planned Parenthood said after the ruling that it will continue to perform abortions at its South Carolina clinics within the parameters of the new law.

Also Monday, abortion rights advocates asked a Florida judge to block a new law there that bans the procedure after 15 weeks with some exceptions to save a mother's life or if the fetus has a fatal abnormality, but no exceptions for rape, incest or human trafficking. The ACLU of Florida argued that the law violates the Florida Constitution. A ruling on that is expected Thursday - a day before the law is scheduled to take effect.



UN: More than 3 lakh civilians killed in Syria's conflict

AP ■ GENEVA

The first 10 years of Syria's conflict, which began in 2011, killed more than 300,000 civilians, the United Nations said Tuesday - the highest official estimate to date of conflict-related civilian deaths in the country.

Syria's conflict began with anti-government protests that broke out in March 2011 in different parts of the country, demanding democratic reforms following Arab Spring protests in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Libya and Bahrain that removed some Arab leaders who had been in power for decades.

However, it quickly turned into a full-blown civil war that has killed hundreds of thousands and destroyed large parts of the country.

Tuesday's report published by the UN Human Rights Office followed what it said were rigorous assessment and statistical analysis of available data on civilian casualties.

According to the report, 306,887 civilians are estimated to have been killed in Syria between March 1, 2011, and March 31, 2021, because of the conflict.

The figures released by the UN do not include soldiers and insurgents killed in the conflict; their numbers are believed to be in the tens of thousands. The numbers also do not include

people who were killed and buried by their families without notifying authorities.

"These are the people killed as a direct result of war operations. This does not include the many, many more civilians who died due to the loss of access to healthcare, to food, to clean water and other essential human rights," said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet.

The report, mandated by the UN Human Rights Council, cited 143,350 civilian deaths individually documented by various sources with detailed information, including at least their full name, date and location of death.

Also, statistical estimation techniques were used to connect the dots where there were missing elements of information. Using these techniques, a further 163,537 civilian deaths were estimated to have occurred.

"The conflict-related casualty figures in this report are not simply a set of abstract numbers, but represent individual human beings," Bachelet said.

She added that the work of civil society organisations and the UN in monitoring and documenting conflict-related deaths is key in helping families and communities establish the truth, seek accountability and pursue effective remedies.

Germany: Former Nazi guard, 101, jailed for aiding murder

AP ■ BERLIN

A 101-year-old man was convicted in Germany of 3,518 counts of accessory to murder on Tuesday for serving at the Nazis' Sachsenhausen concentration camp during World War II.

The Neuruppin Regional Court sentenced him to five years in prison.

The man, who was identified by local media as Josef S., had denied working as an SS guard at the camp and aiding and abetting the murder of thousands of prisoners.

In the trial, which opened in October, the man said that he had worked as a farm labourer near Pasewalk in northeastern Germany during the period in question.

However, the court considered it proven that he worked at the camp on the outskirts of Berlin between 1942 and 1945 as an enlisted member of the Nazi Party's paramilitary wing, the German news agency dpa reported.

"The court has come to the conclusion that, contrary to what you



claim, you worked in the concentration camp as a guard for about three years," presiding Judge Udo Lechtermann said, according to dpa, adding that in doing so, the defendant had assisted in the terror and murder machinery of the Nazis.

"You willingly supported this mass extermination with your activity," Lechtermann said. Prosecutors had based their case on documents relating to an SS guard with the man's name, date and place of birth, as well as other documents. The five-year prison sentence was in line with the prosecution's demand. However, the defendant can appeal the court's ruling.

New Yorker convicted of importing illegal controlled substances from India

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A federal grand jury on Monday convicted a New Yorker of importing illegal controlled substances from India and money laundering, a US attorney said.

Ezhil Sezhan Kamaloss, from Queens in New York, faces up to 50 years of imprisonment.

"The defendant is now a convicted drug dealer. He lined his pockets off the black-market sales of millions of illegal opioids and misbranded prescription pills without regard for the harm caused by the abuse of these highly addictive and dangerous drugs," United States Attorney Breon Peace stated.

"With today's verdict, the defendant is held accountable for having a hand in every aspect of his pill mill, from the importing of unapproved medications from India to personally filling orders for these drugs for customers throughout the country," he said.

According to federal prosecutors, between May 2018 and August 2019,

Kamaloss participated with others in a transnational drug-trafficking conspiracy, which involved the importation of misbranded prescription drugs, including Tramadol, a synthetic opioid, into the US from India, repackaging the drugs at a pill mill operating out of a warehouse in Jamaica, Queens, and shipping the drugs via the United States mail to customers throughout the US.

During the course of the charged conspiracy, Kamaloss and the men who worked for him distributed millions of Tramadol pills, sometimes purchasing hundreds of thousands of pills at a time.

Additionally, Kamaloss conspired to launder the proceeds of the drug-trafficking operation by using the illicit profits to reinvest in the business, including by paying shipping costs incurred by his co-conspirators - including nearly USD 200,000 in Federal Express costs paid off in exchange for additional pills, it said.

Jordan promises inquiry into deadly blast at Red Sea port

AP ■ AQABA (JORDAN)

Jordan's prime minister on Tuesday said he has instructed authorities to launch an investigation into the deadly blast the previous day at the Red Sea port of Aqaba that killed at least 13 people.

A crane loading chlorine tanks onto a ship on Monday dropped one of them, causing an explosion of toxic yellow smoke. Along with those killed, some 250 were sickened, authorities said.

Prime Minister Bisher al-Khasawneh visited the site on Tuesday and, citing civil defence and environmental authorities, said the gas concentration in the area had returned to normal.

He said that most movement at the port has resumed, except for the exact site of the incident which was being cleaned and inspected.

Al-Khasawneh said "other nationalities" were among the

dead, without elaborating. He said many of those in hospitals were being discharged.

Video carried on state TV showed the moment the tank exploded, sending dockworkers scrambling to escape the toxic cloud. Some 200 people were hospitalised.

The Public Security Directorate, which initially described it as a gas leak, said authorities sealed off the area after evacuating the injured and sent specialists in to address the situation.

State-run Jordan TV said 13 people were killed. Al-Mamlaka TV, another official outlet, said 199 were still being treated in hospitals.

The Public Security Directorate said a total of 251 people were injured.

Aqaba is on the northern tip of the Red Sea, next to the Israeli city of Eilat, which is just across the border. Both are popular beach and diving destinations.

Navalny appeal rejected; another Kremlin critic jailed



AP ■ MOSCOW

A Russian court has rejected an appeal by imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who contended that prison authorities illegally prevented his lawyers from bringing necessary equipment including voice recorders and laptop computers to a court session held in a prison.

Navalny testified at the Tuesday session by video, the first time he has been seen since being moved to a maximum-security prison. A lower court had previously rejected his complaint about the recording devices ban.

Close associates of Navalny have faced criminal charges and many have left Russia. Authorities shut down his group's political infrastructure - an anti-corruption foundation and a nationwide network of offices - by labeling it extremist.

On Tuesday, prominent opposition politician Ilya Yashin was sentenced to 15 days in jail on charges of failing to obey police.

He was detained late Monday while walking in a park, and police said he had grabbed one officer by the uniform and vulgarly insulted them.

Germany: Over 2,700 antisemitic incidents reported in 2021

AP ■ BERLIN

A group tracking antisemitism in Germany said on Tuesday it documented more than 2,700 incidents in the country last year, including 63 attacks and six cases of extreme violence.

In a report, the Department for Research and Information on Anti-Semitism (RIAS) said the coronavirus pandemic with its anti-Jewish conspiracy narratives and the Middle East conflict with antisemitic criticism of Israel were

the main drivers of the 2,738 incidents it documented.

The incidents include both criminal and non-criminal incidents, the group said.

The German government's commissioner to combat antisemitism, Felix Klein, called the number of incidents - more than seven per day - frightening, but also said that "at the same time, each of the reported incidents is also a step toward reducing the dark figures".

Right-wing extremists were responsible for 17 per cent of

the incidents, but more than half of all the antisemitic incidents could not be assigned to a specific political view, the report said.

Among cases of "extreme violence," RIAS included an attack on a Jewish participant in a vigil for Israel in Hamburg and a shooting at a Jewish community centre in Berlin.

Altogether, 964 people - both Jews and non-Jews - were directly affected by antisemitic incidents, Benjamin Steinitz, the head of RIAS, told reporters in Berlin.

Scottish leader to give route map to new independence vote

AP ■ LONDON

Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon is set to deliver a statement on Tuesday setting out how she believes a new referendum on Scottish independence could be held.

Scottish voters rejected independence in a 2014 referendum, with 55 per cent of voters saying they wanted to remain part of the United Kingdom.

But Sturgeon, who leads the Scottish National Party and the devolved government

in Scotland, has said it's time to revisit the matter because of changes brought about by Brexit. She wants a new vote on independence before the end of 2023.

That would need a green light from the UK-wide government of Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who opposes a new referendum and has said the issue was settled in the 2014 vote. Sturgeon maintains that her party's success in local elections last year gives her a mandate for a fresh referendum.

Hinckley says he's sorry for shooting that wounded Reagan

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The man who wounded President Ronald Reagan in 1981 apologised for his actions Tuesday and said he doesn't remember what he was feeling when he fired the shots that also wounded three others.

John Hinckley Jr. Told CBS Mornings in his first televised interview since he was freed from all court oversight this month that he feels sorry for all the lives his actions affected.

"I feel badly for all of them. I have true remorse for what I

did," Hinckley said. "I know that they probably can't forgive me now, but I just want them to know that I am sorry for what I did."

Asked about what feelings led him to commit the act, Hinckley said he can't remember those emotions and doesn't want to.

"It's such another lifetime ago. I can't tell you now the emotion I had right as (Reagan) came walking out. I can't tell you that," he said, later adding: "It's something I don't want to remember."

Council OK's GST relief, e-way bill by States

Chandigarh:The GST Council on Tuesday approved changes in tax rates on some goods and services while allowing states to issue an e-way bill for intra-state movement of gold and precious stones, officials said.

The Council, chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising state counterparts, also cleared a host of compliance procedures for GST-registered businesses along with a GoM report on high-risk tax payers to check evasion.

The discussion on the crucial issues of extension of compensation to states beyond June 2022 and the imposition of 28 per cent GST on casinos, online gaming and horse racing, will take place on Wednesday.

Opposition-ruled states have been pressing for either extension of the GST compensation regime or increasing states' share in revenue from the current 50 per cent.

In the meeting on Tuesday, the Council accepted the interim report of the group of state finance ministers, headed by Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj S Bommai, on rate rationalisation, including correction of inverted duty structure and removing tax exemption on some items, to simplify the rate structure.

The GoM had suggested withdrawal of GST exemption on a host of services including on hotel accommodation or less



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman chairs the 47th meeting of Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, in Chandigarh on Tuesday

than ₹1,000 per day and replacing it with a 12 per cent tax. It also recommended a levy of 5 per cent GST on room rent (excluding ICU) charged for hospitalised patients where the hospital room charges are above ₹5,000 per day.

It wanted all post office services other than postcards and inland letters, book post and envelopes weighing less than 10 gm, to be taxed. Also, cheques, loose or in book form should be taxed at 18 per cent, the GoM recommended. **PTI**

Opp States for continuation of GST compensation

Chandigarh: States ruled by Opposition parties have demanded that either the revenue sharing formula under the GST regime should be changed or the compensation period should be extended by five years, amid concerns over revenue losses.

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) was introduced on July 1, 2017, and states were assured of compensation for the rev-

enue loss till June 2022, arising on account of the GST rollout.

As the GST Council commenced here on Tuesday, the states have also cited a recent Supreme Court ruling that decisions made by the Council are not binding and states need not stick to them.

The ruling by the court has been seen by some as states having powers to determine taxation. **PTI**

Credit card spend crosses ₹1.13 L cr in May: RBI data

Mumbai: Credit card spending has crossed ₹1.13 lakh crore in May compared to ₹1.05 lakh crore in the previous month according to official data.

The month-on-month rise in spending through cards indicates a pick-up in economic activity.

The latest data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) showed that 7.68 crore credit card holders spent about ₹71,429 crore for buying online, while the amount was spent through swipes at Point of Sale (PoS) machines stood at ₹42,266 crore in May.

In terms of the number of transactions, credit card payments were marginally lower online at 11.5 crore against 12.2 crore offline or at PoS machines.

The trend also indicates that cardholders are making higher value transactions online on an average than through offline means.

Credit card holders spent ₹65,652 crore for buying online, while the amount spent through Point of Sale (PoS) machines was ₹39,806 crore in April.

As far as the debit card is concerned, the spending through PoS and online together was ₹65,957 crore during the month.

The spending through PoS was ₹44,305 crore against e-commerce spending of ₹21,104 crore through the debit card in



May. During the month, there has been an addition of about 20 lakh credit cards. The number of the card was 7.51 crore in April.

HDFC Bank had the highest number of credit cards at 1.72 crore in May as the RBI lifted the ban on the issuance of new credit cards in March.

In terms of credit cards, HDFC Bank was followed by the State Bank of India (1.41 crore) and ICICI Bank (1.33 crore) at the end of May 2022. The RBI had imposed a ban on HDFC Bank in December 2020, asking the lender to stop all launches of its upcoming digital business-generating activities and sourcing of new credit card customers after repeated outages at its data centre, which impacted operations.

The ban was partially lifted in August last year and fully in March this year. **PTI**

Sensex, Nifty close slight up amid markets recovery

Mumbai: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded from early lows to close marginally up on Tuesday following lag-end buying in oil and gas, IT and auto stocks amid a recovery in global equities.

Posting gains for a fourth session in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled up 16.17 points or 0.03 per cent at 53,177.45. The index opened lower and dropped nearly 390 points to hit a low of 52,771.53 points due to persistent FII selling and weak global trends.

However, a late recovery in Asian markets and early gains in European exchanges helped the index cut losses. The index recovered by nearly 405 points from the day's low to end with gains.

The NSE Nifty gained 18.15 points or 0.11 per cent to 15,850.20. It hit a low of 15,710.15 and a high of 15,892.10 during the day. As many as 32 of its constituents advanced while 17 declined.

"After a gap down opening, domestic indices were lifted by positive global peers while oil prices rose over renewed supply concerns," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services said.

The weakened rupee and rising bond yields limited domestic investors' risk appetite, Nair said, adding that gains in commodity-linked stocks and optimism over easing Covid restrictions in China



TOP GAINERS

Stock	Change
M&M	2.78
Reliance	1.49
Dr Reddy's Lab	1.41
Tech Mahindra	1.40
Tata Steel	1.34

TOP LOSERS

Stock	Change
Titan	-3.54
Asian Paints	-3.25
Bajaj Finserv	-1.94
Kotak Mahindra	-1.32
ICICI Bank	-1.02



TOP GAINERS

Stock	Change
ONGC	5.55
Hindalco	4.12
M&M	2.71
Coal India	2.39
HDFC Life	1.42

TOP LOSERS

Stock	Change
Titan	-3.54
Asian Paints	-3.35
Bajaj Finserv	-1.99
Divis Labs	-1.63
Adani Ports	-1.41

aided the global up-move.

Among Sensex stocks, Mahindra & Mahindra rose the most by 2.78 per cent, followed by index heavyweight Reliance Industries which advanced 1.49 per cent. Dr Reddy's rose by 1.41 per cent, Tata Steel by 1.34 per cent, and Tech Mahindra by 1.26 per cent.

Gains in Larsen & Toubro, Infosys, ITC, Axis Bank, SBI, and HCL Tech helped the index close in green.

On the other hand, Titan fell the most by 3.54 per cent, Asian Paints by 3.25 per cent, Bajaj Finserv by 1.94 per cent and Kotak Bank by 1.32 per cent.

ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance, IndusInd Bank, HDFC, Bharti Airtel and HDFC Bank also retreated.

Global Surfaces files IPO draft papers with Sebi



New Delhi: Global Surfaces Ltd, which is engaged in the business of processing natural stones and manufacturing engineered quartz, has filed preliminary papers with Sebi to mop up funds through an initial public offering (IPO).

The IPO comprises fresh issuance of 85.20 lakh equity shares and an offer-for-sale (OFS) of up to 25.5 lakh equity shares by promoters --- Mayank Shah and Sweta Shah, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP).

Funds raised through fresh issuance of equity shares will be used for setting up the company's proposed facility -- Global Surfaces FZE-- in Dubai.

For FY22, the company posted a profit after tax of Rs 35.63 crore as compared to Rs 33.93 crore in FY21 and its total income was at Rs 198.35 crore as against Rs 179 crore in FY21. Unistone Capital is the sole book running lead manager to the issue. The equity shares of the company will be listed on the BSE and NSE. **PTI**

'Slowing exports, rising cost likely to limit home textile cos' profitability to 13% 2023'

Mumbai: Lower export demand and a sharp increase in raw material and transportation costs are likely to result in moderate operating profitability for home textile makers at around 13 per cent in this financial year, according to a report.

"Slowing exports growth and high cotton prices will hit the operating margins of home textile exporters by 150-200 bps or around 13 per cent this fiscal.

The rupee's depreciation against the dollar and sustenance of the China+1 policy by global buyers will cushion the hit on profitability to some extent," Crisil Ratings Senior Director Mohit Makhiya said.

The second half of this fiscal should gradually restore demand momentum and market share for Indian home textile exporters as freight and raw

cotton costs moderate, and ease pressure on profitability, he added.

Exports account for 60-70 per cent of the Indian home textile industry's revenue, of which over 58 per cent shipments are sent to the US, according to the Crisil Ratings report.

The report stated that global demand for home textiles is expected to be impacted in the near-term by inflationary headwinds, with big-box retailers pruning inventory and consumers cutting down on discretionary spends.

A slowdown in the sales of key US retailers in the past 3-6 months has led to an on-year decline of 5-6 per cent in overall home textile exports from India between January and April 2022, it noted.

Adding to the demand challenge, the price of raw cot-

ton, a key input in home textiles, has more than doubled year-on-year in May to Rs 1,00,000 per candy (about 356 kg), it said.

This will remain a challenge for exporters till the new cotton crop arrives starting October, the report said.

Supply-chain disruptions leading to volatility in ocean freight rates will also impact profitability, it added.

Overall, the report said that the Indian home textile industry's revenue is expected to grow 11-12 per cent this fiscal, primarily because of higher price realisations.

Domestic demand (comprising 30-40 per cent of Indian home textile industry's revenue) is expected to grow at a healthy 13 per cent, driven by sharp demand recovery in the domestic hospitality industry and continued focus on health and hygiene, it said. **PTI**

PTC completes consulting assignment for HPCL

New Delhi: Power trading solution provider PTC India on Tuesday said it has completed a consulting assignment for HPCL for the latter's Visakh Refinery Modernization Project.

HPCL intends to expand the refining capacity from 8.5 mmtpa to 15 mmtpa under the project, a company statement said. Mmtpa refers to Million Metric Tonne per Annum.

PTC has completed the transmission and GIS (geographic information system) consulting assignment for HPCL, it said.

To facilitate the new units, for a reliable grid power supply at 220kV level, HPCL intends to evacuate 220kV power sup-

ply from the nearest grid pooling substation at Kalapaka, Andhra Pradesh, it said.

PTC was involved in this project since conceptualization, carrying out the feasibility study, detailed engineering and estimation, package designing, bid process management and subsequently providing project management advisory services to HPCL.

PTC along with its consortium partner WAPCOS has jointly taken up project management consultant works. It is involved in supervision of survey works, detailed engineering, drawing review and approvals, inspection of equipment/material and issuing dispatch clearances, among others. **PTI**

Rupee tanks 46 paise to close at record low of 78.83 against USD

Mumbai: The rupee plunged by 46 paise to close at record low of 78.83 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, weighed down by persistent foreign capital outflows and a surge in crude oil prices.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened lower at 78.53 against the greenback and finally settled at 78.83, down 46 paise over its previous close.

During the session, the rupee touched an all-time low of 78.85 against the American currency.

"The Indian rupee touched an all-time low against



the US Dollar amid weak domestic equities and a surge in crude oil prices. Sustained selling by foreign investors also put downside pressure on Rupee," Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas said.

The rupee is expected to

trade on a negative note on risk aversion in domestic markets and continued selling pressure from foreign institutional investors (FIIs). Elevated oil prices may also weigh on the domestic currency, Choudhary said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.01 per cent higher at 103.95.

Markets are reassessing their expectations of Fed rate hike. Traders may also take cues from the US consumer confidence data, which is expected to worsen from the previous month. **PTI**

ONGC chopper crashes into Arabian Sea, 4 dead

New Delhi/Mumbai: A brand new Pawan Hans' Sikorsky chopper with 9 people on board crashed into the Arabian Sea, about 50 nautical miles from the Mumbai coast on Tuesday, killing four people -- including three ONGC employees.

The helicopter, was about 4-5 minutes away from its destination - ONGC's Sagar Kiran rig - when the incident took place, company officials with direct knowledge of the matter said.

The chopper went down around 1145 hrs, just 1 nautical mile away from Sagar Kiran, but managed to stay afloat with the help of the attached

floaters, helping rescuers pull out all the nine, including two pilots, after ONGC and Navy/Coast Guard scrambled in one of the fastest rescue missions in the western offshore.

Four of the nine pulled out were unconscious and airlifted in a Navy chopper to a hospital in Mumbai, where they were declared dead, an official said.

Three of the dead are employees of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), the state-owned firm which had hired helicopter service from Pawan Hans to support its oil and gas exploration and production operations in the western offshore.

The fourth person belongs to a contractor working for ONGC. The circumstances that led to the incident were not immediately known but western offshore had inclement weather and there was a swell in the sea.

Officials said ONGC has already instituted an inquiry into the incident.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is also likely to order a separate inquiry. Detailing sequence, officials said the chopper took off from Juhu helibase this morning just like any other day but 1 or 1.5 km from the landing zone on the rig, it went down into the sea.



Rescue operation underway after an ONGC helicopter carrying nine persons, including two pilots, fell into the Arabian Sea off the Mumbai coast

SRM IHM records 100% placement for its 2021- 22 batch

Kattankulathur:SRM Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) at SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), Kattankulathur is proud to announce that the 2021-22 outgoing batch has been 100% placed.

IHM recently conducted the Cruise Lines Campus Recruitment Drive 2022 for the present and previous batches. Over 100 students took part in this exciting job offer. Of those place, one alumni Mr. Rathinavel Pandian (2020-21 batch) has received a job offer with the highest package of 845 US\$ per month.

This was announced at a press meet organized at SRM



Hotel. The meet was chaired by SRMIST's Vice Chancellor C. Muthamizhchelvan, Registrar S. Ponnusamy and IHM Director D. Antony Ashok Kumar.

Speaking at the press con-

ference, Antony said, "This year we have done 100% placement along with the highest package offered. We not just prepare our students for hotels, they are simultaneously prepared for cruises and airlines

among other things.

Addressing the media, C. Muthamizhchelvan said, "Students always look for Colleges that offer placements. This is our specialty. Good Health and wellbeing is one of the UNESCO's eight Sustainable Development Goals. And we at IHM promote this.

Students have been placed under various cadres like Junior Sous Chef, Sous Chef, CDP, Assistant CDP, Pastry Bakery Chefs, Galley Utility, Housekeeping, and Restaurant utility. This recruitment drive remained as a great source of job and experience provider to the candidates. **PNS**

Swiatek wins 36th match in a row

AP ■ LONDON

From the red clay of the French Open to the green grass of Wimbledon, the wins keep coming for Iga Swiatek.

The top-seeded Pole won her opening match on Centre Court on Tuesday, beating Croatian qualifier Jana Fett 6-0, 6-3.

The victory was Swiatek's 36th in row and includes all seven matches she played at this year's French Open in winning her second title at Roland Garros. It's the longest winning streak on the women's tour since 1997, when Martina Hingis won 37.

"It's my first match on grass this season, so I knew it's going to be tricky," Swiatek said on court.

"I'm just figuring out how to play here and trying to implement all the stuff that we were practicing on."

Even with seven-time champion Serena Williams in the draw at the All England Club, Swiatek is the woman to beat. She won five tournaments before heading to Paris in May, earning consecutive titles in Doha, Indian Wells, Miami, Stuttgart and Rome.

Swiatek, again wearing a pin with the colors of Ukraine on her hat, started out like she left off in her last match at the French Open. But she went down 3-1 in the second set before recovering.

"The second set, at the beginning I lost my focus a little bit and she used that pretty



well," Swiatek said.

Coco Gauff, who lost to Swiatek in this year's French Open final, also won her opening match. The 11th-seeded American beat Elena-Gabriela Ruse of Romania 2-6, 6-3, 7-5.

Gauff got the go-ahead break in the third set at 5-5 on her sixth break point of the game when Ruse double-faulted.

In her two previous appearances at the All England Club, Gauff reached the fourth round.

Barbora Krejickova, who won the French Open in 2021 to split Swiatek's two titles there, also advanced to the second round. The 13th-seeded Czech defeated Maryna Zanevska of Belgium 7-6 (4), 6-3.

No. 4 Paula Badosa, No. 5 Maria Sakkari, No. 12 Jelena Ostapenko and No. 33 Shuai Zhang of China also advanced.

Among the seeded player to lose was Olympic champion Belinda Bencic. The 14th-seeded Swiss player lost to Qiang

Wang of China 6-4, 5-7, 6-2.

No. 18 Jil Teichmann of Switzerland, No. 20 Amanda Anisimova of the United States and No. 27 Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan also lost.

In the men's draw, No. 18 Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria retired from his match with an apparent injury. He was leading Steve Johnson of the United States 6-4, 2-5 when he stopped.

No. 15 Reilly Opelka of the United States, No. 19 Alex De Minaur of Australia, No. 29

Jenson Brooksby of the United States, No. 31 Sebastian Baez of Argentina and unseeded Nick Kyrgios of Australia also won.

'THAT ONE'S FOR YOU'

Nick Kyrgios came out on top in a fiery Wimbledon five-setter on Tuesday and told rowdy critics in the crowd: "That one's for you — you know who you are."

The Australian defeated British wildcard Paul Jubb 3-6, 6-1, 7-5, 6-7 (3/7), 7-5 on the

Berrettini out due to Covid

AP ■ LONDON

Italy's Matteo Berrettini, the 2021 Wimbledon runner-up and a title favourite this year, pulled out of the tournament on Tuesday after testing positive for coronavirus.

"I am heartbroken to announce that I need to withdraw from Wimbledon due to a positive COVID-19 test result," the 26-year-old Italian wrote on Instagram.

Berrettini was widely regarded as one of the biggest threats to defending champion Novak Djokovic at the All England Club, having captured back-to-back grass-court titles in Stuttgart and Queen's.

He is the second man to withdraw from Wimbledon with Covid in two days after 2017 runner-up Marin Cilic of Croatia also tested positive.

"I have had flu symptoms and been isolating the last few days," Berrettini said in his statement.

"Despite symptoms not being severe, I decided it was important to take another test



this morning to protect the health and safety of my fellow competitors and everyone else involved in the tournament.

"I have no words to describe the extreme disappointment I feel. The dream is over for this year, but I will be

back stronger."

Berrettini was a potential semi-final opponent of two-time champion Rafael Nadal.

Instead his place in the Wimbledon first round will be taken by Sweden's Elias Ymer, a lucky loser from qualifying.

However, he was out of sorts in the first set.

As well as his displeasure with a section of the crowd, he also called a line judge "a snitch with no fans".

"The crowd was pretty rowdy," said Kyrgios. "He was a local wildcard with nothing to lose. But it was a lot of fun."

Mumbai Indians organise 3-week UK exposure trip for Indian domestic players

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

After a disastrous IPL-15 campaign, the Mumbai Indians are all set to start their preparations in earnest for the next edition, with a three-week exposure tour of England in July for their uncapped Indian players.

Apart from enjoying training at various state-of-the-art facilities, the Indian youngsters of MI will be playing at least 10 T20 games against top club sides across multiple counties.

"NT Tilak Varma, Kumar Kartikeya, Ramandeep Singh, Hrithik Shokeen are some of the players who will get exposure playing against top T20 club sides in trying conditions.

"Arjun Tendulkar, who is also in UK and South African youngster Dewald Brevis are also likely to join the touring party," an IPL insider privy to the development said.

The MI support staff headed by chief coach Mahela Jayawardene will be in England to oversee the progress of the Indian players.

"Look, the Indian domestic season has come to an end. While the top players like skipper Rohit Sharma, premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah will be now on the road with the

national team, our international stars will also be busy with their respective commitments," the source indicated.

"The ones who need to be monitored are our younger crop of players as they won't be having any match practice for three and half months before the next domestic season starts.

"So effectively, we can't call it a pre-season trip as IPL is still nine months away. But it is trying to monitor the progress of our core group of youngsters going forward," he added.

For this trip though, MI doesn't need any BCCI permission unless the team is playing exhibition games against other franchises or overseas T20 sides.

"This trip isn't a commercial one where there will be tickets sold or the match will be broadcast on a particular channel or streamed on some app. Since the trip isn't a revenue generator, we don't need to apply for any permission from BCCI," he informed.

"We are only taking those players to UK who are not associated with any national team activities or have been summoned for any of the BCCI conducted camps or playing in any league (like TNPL)."

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

India's HS Prannoy faced stiff resistance before prevailing against local hero Daren Liew as the Indian shuttler progressed to the men's singles second round of the Malaysia Open, here on Tuesday.

A former top-10 player, Prannoy, who had reached the semifinals of Indonesia Open Super 1000 earlier this month, emerged a 21-14, 17-21, 21-18 winner in 62 minutes.

The 29-year-old from Kerala, ranked 21st currently, will face fourth seeded Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei next at the Super 750 badminton tournament.

Prannoy's win brought some cheers to the Indian camp after B Sai Praneeth and Sameer Verma made early exits.

While Praneeth went down to world number six Anthony Sinisuka Ginting of Indonesia, Sameer lost to world number 8 Jonatan Christie, also from Indonesia.

The 30-year-old Praneeth, currently ranked world number 19, lost 15-21, 21-19, 9-21 to Ginting in a 50-minute men's single match.

This was eight meeting between the two players with the Indonesian now leading the head-to-head record 5-3. They last played at the 2020 Asian Team championships where Ginting won the contest after Praneeth retired due to an injury.

Sameer, who is making a comeback from injury, fought for 49 minutes before losing 14-

Prannoy advances as Sameer, Praneeth exit Malaysia Open



21, 21-13, 7-21 in another match.

In doubles, women's pairing of Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy also bowed out of the tournament after losing 15-

21, 11-21 to Japanese duo of Nami Matsuyama and Chiharu Shida, seeded sixth.

Prannoy was slow off the mark but opened up a healthy

11-7 lead at the break. His strokes penetrated the defence of his opponent, who looked little passive as Prannoy was rewarded for his alertness and better control in the rallies.



Olympic medallist hockey player Varinder Singh dies

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic and World Cup medallist Varinder Singh, who was an integral part of some of India's memorable victories in the 1970s, died in Jalandhar on Tuesday morning.

He was 75. Singh was part of the Gold-medal winning Indian team at the 1975 men's Hockey World Cup in Kuala Lumpur. This remains India's only Gold medal at the prestigious tournament where the country had beaten arch-rivals Pakistan 2-1 in the final.

Singh was also part of the Bronze medal-winning team at the 1972 Munich Olympics and Silver medal at 1973 World Cup in Amsterdam.

He also had to his credit a Silver medal at the 1974 and 1978 Asian Games, respectively. The Indian hockey stalwart also featured in the 1976 Montreal Olympics.

LAFC confirms 12-month Bale deal

AP ■ LOS ANGELES

Wales captain Gareth Bale has signed a 12-month contract with Los Angeles FC that features options through 2024, the Major League Soccer squad announced on Monday.

Bale confirmed his plans on social media over the weekend after his departure from Spanish giants Real Madrid.

"I am extremely excited for this move to LAFC," Bale said.

"This is the right place for me and my family and the right time in my career and I cannot wait to get started working with the team and getting ready to win more trophies in Los Angeles."

The 32-year-old forward, a five-time UEFA Champions League winner, spent nine years with Real Madrid. "Gareth is one of the most dynamic and exciting players of his generation," LAFC co-president and general manager John Thornington said. "Adding a player who brings his talent and experience at the highest levels is an incredible opportunity to improve our club."

"It's clear that Gareth is highly motivated to continue to win trophies and we are elated that he has made the choice to join LAFC and help lead us in our ultimate goal of winning championships."

Bale has made 105 appearances for Wales since 2006, scoring 28 goals and contributing 22 assists. He sparked Wales into this year's Qatar World Cup, their first appearance in 64 years.



The Cardiff native made his professional debut at age 16 in 2006 for Southampton in the English Championship before joining Premier League side Tottenham Hotspur in 2007, scoring 42 goals in 146 appearances through 2013, when he joined Real Madrid.

With the La Liga club, Bale scored 106 goals and assisted on 67 others in 258 appearances as Real Madrid made a stunning trophy haul, collecting hardware 19 times.

Bale is expected to attend an LAFC home match on Wednesday against Dallas and a likely debut match would be the Black and Gold's July 8 home game against the Los Angeles Galaxy in the local derby.

Fernandinho returns to Brazil with Athletico Paranaense

AP ■ SAO PAULO

Former Manchester City captain Fernandinho has returned to his first club and signed for Athletico Paranaense, the Brazilian club said on Monday.

The 37-year-old midfielder, who left City at the end of last season following a trophy-laden nine-year stint in England, signed a two-and-a-half year contract.

"It is with great satisfaction that I return home... Knowing that I can apply a little bit of everything I achieved in these years playing in Europe," said Fernandinho in a press conference to unveil his arrival in the southern city of Curitiba.

Born in Parana state, whose capital is Curitiba, Fernandinho began his career at Athletico as a teenager in 2002 before moving to Ukraine to join Shakhtar Donetsk in 2005.

After eight years in Donetsk that saw him win six Ukrainian league titles, four Ukrainian cups and the UEFA Cup, the precursor to the Europa League, in 2009, Fernandinho



caught the eye of City scouts.

By then he was already a Brazil international and would go on to win more than 50 caps, helping the Selecao lift the 2019 Copa America and playing in two World Cups.

At City he won five Premier League titles, the FA Cup, six League Cups and played in the 2021 Champions League final.

Was extremely keen to go up against Tentoglou in Diamond League, says M Sreeshankar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's premier long jumper M Sreeshankar on Tuesday rued his withdrawal from the upcoming Diamond League owing to visa-related issues, saying he was "extremely keen" to go up against Olympic champion Miltiadis Tentoglou in Stockholm.

Sreeshankar was forced to pull out of the prestigious tournament, starting June 30 in Sweden, as his passport was held up at the US Embassy in New Delhi for visa processing for next month's World Championship at Oregon.

The national record holder has said that while participation in the Diamond League would have allowed him to fine-tune his preparations for the World Championships, not being there wouldn't necessarily affect him, since the Worlds is his first priority. "Unfortunately, the visa situation meant that I had to withdraw from the upcoming Diamond League in Stockholm. I was extremely keen on taking part in that event, especially against the



current Olympic champion Miltiadis 'Tentoglou,' Sreeshankar said.

Interestingly, both Sreeshankar and Tentoglou achieved a jump of 8.36m this year.

"Participation in the Diamond League would have definitely placed me in a better position before the World Championships in July. That said, on the flip side, I am now going to get more time for preparing myself for the World Championships which has always been my first priority and also the Commonwealth Games," he added.

The 23-year-old Kerala athlete had won a Gold medal earlier this month with a sen-

sational jump of 7.95m at Venizeleia-Chania 2022 Athletics Meet in Greece. He said that the focus right now is to better his personal record and give his absolute best at the World Championship.

"Despite the fact that I had to withdraw from the Diamond League, I have been working hard and I am extremely confident of bettering my own personal record at the World Championship. The event will have several high-profile athletes but I am ready to give my best," Sreeshankar said.

The 18th edition of the World Championship is scheduled to be held from July 15-24.

STOKES' ENG SET SIGHTS ON INDIA

AP ■ LEEDS

England captain Ben Stokes has insisted there will be no let-up from his side when they face India just days after whitewashing Test world champions New Zealand.

A first series under the new leadership duo of Stokes and red-ball head coach Brendon McCullum, a former New Zealand captain, ended with an emphatic seven-wicket win in Leeds on Monday that sealed a 3-0 triumph over the Black Caps.

For the third time in as many matches, England made light of a potentially tricky run chase, with Jonny Bairstow ending a pursuit of 296 by smashing a six on his Headingley home ground.

England, however, have just a few days to savour their success before facing India at Edgbaston in a match starting Friday.

The fifth Test was rescheduled after the fixture was postponed last September following a Covid outbreak in the India camp.

India are currently 2-1 up in a five-match series following a 157-run win at the Oval but are now set to face a revitalised England side likely to feature only four survivors at most from that match — Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Bairstow and James Anderson — later this week.

"Regardless of the opposition, we're still going to have the same mindset," Stokes told reporters after stumps in Leeds on Monday.

The dynamic all-rounder, on a mental health break from cricket at the time of the fourth Test against India, added: "Obviously, it's going to be a completely different... different."



ent opposition, with their attack and players as well.

"We'll be concentrating on what we've done well over these last three games and look to continue that against India on Friday."

England had won just once in 17 Tests prior to the New Zealand series, albeit many of those matches were played under mentally-draining coronavirus restrictions that no longer apply.

'NEW MENTALITY'

But the shackles have been lifted in an exhilarating start to life under McCullum, one of the most attacking players of his generation.

"I knew that everyone would buy into the new mentality me and Brendon set out, but I didn't think it would go this well to be honest," said kindred spirit Stokes.

In the space of just over a week, Bairstow struck two remarkable Test hundreds, his 136 in a run chase at Trent Bridge was followed by an astounding 162 which rescued England from the depths of 55-6 in the first innings at Headingley.

Monday witnessed more blazing hitting from Bairstow, who struck England's second-quickest Test fifty of all time, off just 30 balls, on his way to an unbeaten 71.

Former England captain Joe Root

played second fiddle while making 86 not out as he shared an unbroken stand of 111 with his Yorkshire teammate.

Root was named England's player of the series after scoring 396 runs at an average of 99, in a continuation of the form that has taken him top of the Test batting rankings.

McCullum, however, has had a more immediate impact upon Bairstow.

"I've never heard a bloke get 130-odd off 90 balls like he did at Trent Bridge and then ask his head coach how to go out and play," said Stokes.

"Baz McCullum basically just said, 'Go and get your Sudoku book, sit next to me and shut up. Whatever you did last week, go out and do it again.'"

"With Jonny, it's just about making sure he knows what he's in the team to do."

New Zealand arrived in England with questions over how they would replace the retiring Ross Taylor and BJ Watling only for their effective replacements — Daryl Mitchell and Tom Blundell — to share four century partnerships.

But omitting frontline spinner Ajaz Patel — who in December became only the third bowler in Test history to take all 10 wickets in an innings, against India in his birthplace of Mumbai — for the last two matches of this series proved costly, with off-break bowler Michael Bracewell thrashed for 109 runs in 15.2 overs during England's run-chase at Headingley.

"We opted for the balance of the side to go with three seamers," said New Zealand captain Kane Williamson. "We were curious to whether it would turn but it's just one of those things."



India to tour NZ for limited overs series after T20 WC

PTI ■ WELLINGTON

India will be touring New Zealand for a white-ball series comprising three T20Is and as many ODIs after the World T20 in Australia, New Zealand Cricket (NZC) said on Tuesday.

The series will be held between November 18 to 30 and New Zealand will return to India for a white-ball series in January next year.

"India will arrive in New Zealand at the conclusion of the world cup to play the Black Caps in three T20s at Wellington, Tauranga and Napier, and three ODIs at Auckland, Hamilton and Christchurch," NZC said in a release.

"The Black Caps will then depart for the sub-continent for a tour of Pakistan and a short form series in India, before returning in early February to

prepare for the two Tests against England — at Tauranga (D/N) and Wellington."

India will be playing a rescheduled one-off fifth Test against England beginning on Friday, besides featuring in three T20Is and as many ODIs at the Old Blighty.

India will then tour the West Indies for a white-ball series comprising three ODIs and five T20Is in July-August in the run-up to the T20 World Cup.

In a jam-packed international schedule, New Zealand will also play a day-night Test against England, while six teams will be touring the country in the 2022-23 home summer.

Besides India, the other touring teams include Pakistan, Bangladesh, England and Sri Lanka men's teams, and Bangladesh women.

FIXTURES		
DATE	GAME	VENUE
November 18	1st T20	Sky Stadium, Wellington
November 20	2nd T20	Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui
November 22	3rd T20	McLean Park, Napier
November 25	1st ODI	Eden Park, Auckland
November 27	2nd ODI	Seddon Park, Hamilton
November 30	3rd ODI	Hagley Oval, Christchurch.

Radha Yadav moves up in Women's T20 rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

On the back of her splendid performance in the just-concluded T20 series against Sri Lanka, India's left-arm spinner Radha Yadav has moved up to the 13th spot in the ICC Women's T20 players rankings.

As per the latest rankings released by the ICC, Yadav has progressed seven places to the 13th among bowlers after bagging four wickets in the series against Sri Lanka, which India won 2-1.

In batting chart, Sri Lanka captain Chamari Athapaththu has moved up one place to a career-best seventh position after aggregating 139 runs in three matches. She had struck a match-winning 80 not out in the final T20I in Dambulla.

Athapaththu has also gained two slots to reach seventh in the all-rounders' list.

Indian batters Smriti Mandhana (fourth), Jemimah Rodrigues (14th) and captain Harmanpreet Kaur (18th) have retained their places in the batting list.

The other Indian bowlers who have advanced



in rankings are Pooja Vastrakar, who has moved up 30 places to the 32nd spot, and Renuka Thakur, who has jumped 83 places to reach the 97th spot.

Vastrakar clinched only two wickets in the T20 series, while she also scored 27 runs. Thakur was also able to clinch only two wickets in the three-match T20 series.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's Anushka Sanjeevani has moved up four places to 60th among batters.

Sri Lanka spinners Oshadi Ranasinghe (up 11 places to 26th), Sugandika Kumari (up nine places to 40th) and Inoka Ranaweera (up 16 places to 47th) have also improved their rankings.

Hooda's 105 takes India to 227-7



PTI ■ MALAHIDE

Deepak Hooda produced a master-class knock, becoming only the fourth Indian to hit a T20 International century, as the visiting side posted a mammoth 227 for 7 against Ireland in the second and final match here on Tuesday.

During his maiden T20I ton (104 off 57 balls), Hooda showed he belonged to the big stage with his scintillating stroke play, both off the front and backfoot.

While Hooda was elegant and at ease on the frontfoot, he was equally good on the backfoot, dispatching the ball over the midwicket boundary for a

few sixes.

Hooda decorated his knock with nine fours and six hits over the fence.

He was ably supported by Sanju Samson, who, opening the batting in place of injured Ruturaj Gaikwad, played second fiddle but grabbed his opportunity with both hands.

Samson made 77 off 42 balls with the help of nine boundaries and four sixes.

Both Hooda and Samson's strokeplay down the ground were a treat for the eyes.

But India did not have the best of starts as they lost Ishan Kishan (3) early. The left-handed opener once again wasted an

opportunity, nicking a Mark Adair delivery to Lorcan Tucker behind the stumps in the third over.

Hooda and Samson joined hands and the duo batted effortlessly, albeit handing two difficult chances, to share 176 runs off just 85 balls to lay the foundation for India's huge total.

It was a one-way traffic after Kishan's dismissal as Hooda and Samson toyed with the Irish bowlers and did not let them settle down.

Except for a difficult chance which Paul Stirling dropped at extra off in the eighth over, Hooda played a perfect knock.

Samson too was handed a life in the ninth over when leg-spinner Gareth Delany dropped a difficult caught-and-bowled chance.

Samson too played some delightful strokes, particularly off the backfoot during his half-century knock. He, however, was cleaned up by Adair in the 17th over.

Hooda brought up his maiden T20I century off 55 balls with a single to join the likes of Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul and Suresh Raina in the elite club of only four Indian centurions in the format.

Once Hooda departed at the team score of 212, Surya Kumar Yadav (15) and skipper Hardik Pandya (15) tried to accelerate the scoring but failed as India lost three wickets for the addition of just 14 runs in the last two overs.

England World Cup-winning skipper Morgan retires from int'l cricket

AP ■ LONDON

Eoin Morgan may be England's all-time leading run scorer in one-day and Twenty20 cricket, but the World Cup's winner game-changing impact on the team was measured in more than just figures.

Morgan, 35, announced his international retirement on Tuesday at Lord's, where he captained England to their memorable World Cup final win against New Zealand in 2019.

That thrilling victory was the culmination of Morgan's white-ball revolution as he oversaw a complete change in attitude towards the limited-over game in his adopted country.

Always his own man, the Dublin-born Morgan rose rapidly through the ranks of Ireland cricket, becoming known for his unorthodox shot-making.

But with Ireland not then a Test nation, he made no secret of his desire to qualify for England and made his debut for Middlesex a week after his 19th birthday.

The left-hander was equally decisive when he stood down from Test cricket after playing the last of 16 matches in the longer format in 2012 when he realised there was no chance of a red-ball recall.

By concentrating on limited-overs internationals, Morgan became England's all-time leading scorer in ODI and T20 cricket with 6,957 and 2,458 runs respectively.

His tally of 225 ODI appearances and 115 T20Is is another England record, but it was as a ground-breaking captain that Morgan had his greatest impact.

Appointed on the eve of the 2015 World Cup after the selectors dispensed with Alastair Cook, he led England to a miserable first-round exit sealed with a woeful defeat by Bangladesh.

But inspired by the attacking approach of New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum, who



recently became England's red-ball coach, Morgan oversaw a remarkable revival.

Just under three months after being thrashed by New Zealand at the World Cup in a match where McCullum hit 77 from only 25 balls, England turned the tables on the Black Caps by smashing 408-9 in a 210-run win at Edgbaston.

Morgan, with the support of coach Trevor Bayliss — the Australian was drafted into the England set-up after the 2015 debacle — presided over 16 wins from 20 bilateral series during the four years between World Cups.

England in that time climbed to number one in the rankings, with the likes of Jos Buttler, Jason Roy, Jonny Bairstow and Ben Stokes buying into Morgan's policy of fearless attacking cricket.

Morgan was also adept in the field, his sensitive captaincy allowing leg-spinner Adil Rashid to flourish.

The skipper also wisely had a calming word with Jofra Archer after the fast bowler sent down a wide at the start of a Super Over that ended with England beating New Zealand in the World Cup final.

West Indies win by 10 wickets, seal series 2-0

AP ■ GROS ISLET

West Indies beat Bangladesh by 10 wickets in the second Test and took a one-sided series 2-0 at Daren Sammy Stadium.

Both Tests were won well inside four days.

A wet field washed out the first two sessions on Monday, but when Bangladesh resumed on 132-6, needing 42 more runs to make West Indies bat again, play lasted less than 12 overs.

Bangladesh's second innings extended nine more overs and 54 more runs before it was all over on 186. Nurul Hasan was stranded on 60 not out from 50 balls.

Needing 13 runs to win, West Indies openers John Campbell and captain Kraigg Brathwaite took 17 balls.

Bangladesh's 100th Test loss came after it scored 234 and 186 and West Indies 408 and 13 not out.



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When the day's play got underway, Mehidy Hasan Miraz got off with a mark with a boundary then was out next ball trying to block an Alzarri Joseph bouncer and edging behind.

Jayden Seales bagged in the one over Ebadot Hossain and Shoriful Islam for ducks.

Seales, Joseph and Kemar Roach each took three wickets.

Khaled Ahmed was run out for a duck from the non-striker's end when Nurul wasn't looking for a run.

Nurul resumed from 16 overnight and blasted two sixes and five boundaries for his third Test fifty — all against West Indies — and four runs short of his career best.

They start three T20Is and three ODIs from Saturday.

Oz pick Swepson for Sri Lanka spin battle

AP ■ GALLE

Australia's Mitchell Swepson will play the opening Test against Sri Lanka, with touring skipper Pat Cummins on Tuesday calling the leg-spinner an "important cog" in their bowling attack.

The 28-year-old Swepson will partner premier spinner Nathan Lyon at the start of the two-match series on Wednesday in Galle, where the pitch is expected to be a turner.

Cummins stopped short of disclosing the full Australian XI, with doubts over batsman Travis Head, who injured his hamstring during the team's loss in the one-day international series.

"Just want to see how Travis gets through, so we'll give him bit more time. But yes, Mitchell Swepson will be the second spinner in the Test match," Cummins told reporters.

Swepson made his debut in Pakistan earlier this year and was part of the visiting team's 1-0 Test triumph there. He took two wickets in two matches.

But Cummins insists the up-and-coming wrist spinner is ready for the Sri Lankan challenge as Australia look to avenge their 3-0 loss to the



hosts in 2016.

"We're really happy with Swepo. I think he is bowling beautifully and really ready for this one," said Cummins.

"I think his role here might be slightly different as well. Pakistan we knew was going to be a slow grind and I thought he did his job despite not

taking the wickets he would like. He was a really important cog in that bowling engine."

Sri Lanka skipper Dimuth Karunaratne said leg-spinners were a wicket-taking option and the hosts could hand a Test debut to wrist spinner Jeffrey Vandersay.

"Wrist spinner has more control

on these tracks," he said.

SPIN TO WIN

Veteran spinner Rangana Herath was the wrecker-in-chief with his 28 wickets in Sri Lanka's series sweep of the Australians six years ago.

Karunaratne insists the team's present spin group of Lasith Embuldeniya, Ramesh Mendis, Praveen Jayawickrama and Vandersay can match Herath's exploits.

"There are three spinners who can play that role, so whoever comes and bowls well he can do the job," said Karunaratne.

"Embuldeniya has good experience on these wickets, Mendis, Praveen and Vandersay also there. I think those are capable of doing Rangana Herath's job".

Cummins admitted Sri Lanka are a tough side to beat on home soil.

"I think Sri Lanka play really well over here, it's quite different from what we experience in Australia," said Cummins.

"They are going to pose a challenge but we are up for it."

All-rounder Glenn Maxwell could return to the Test team after a gap of five years since he last played a five-day game.