

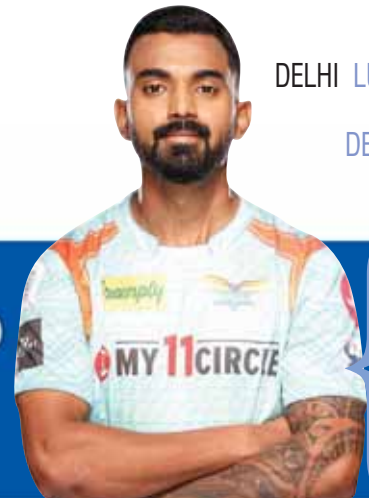
OPINION 6
HURDLE IN EXCELLENCE
IN HIGHER EDUCATION**WORLD 9**
MAY DAY RALLIES IN EUROPE
HONOUR WORKERS**MONEY 10**
AS PRICES RISE, FUEL SALES GROWTH
MODERATES, LPG CONSUMPTION FALLS

NEW DELHI, MONDAY MAY 2, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



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WICKETS
12 SPORT

Relief in sight after hottest Apr in 122 yrs

Heatwave likely to abate over Delhi, northwest and central India from today: IMD

Cities	Maximum temperature on Sunday (degree Celsius)
Bikaner	47.1
Ganganagar	46.9
Barmer	48.8
Phalodi	46.6
Jaisalmer	46.7
Chandrapur	46
Churu	46

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday said that the current heatwave that has been making life tough for people and animals alike, is likely to abate over Delhi and adjoining parts of northwest and central India from Monday.

The IMD predicted a partly cloudy sky with the possibility of thunder development at isolated places over Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana-Chandigarh, east



Women carrying buckets walk to collect drinking water from a well, at Padal village in Samba district on Sunday. India is facing a brutal heatwave, which has led to water shortages in many parts of the country

PTI

Rajasthan and parts of Uttar Pradesh on Monday.

This is likely to give some respite to residents from the scorching heat as the IMD had on Saturday informed that northwest and central India had recorded the highest temperatures in April in 122 years. March was also the hottest month in 122 years.

Meanwhile, the World Meteorological Organisation has announced that maximum temperatures in widespread

areas hit 43-46 degrees Celsius on April 28 and that the extreme heat will last until May 2.

The IMD data showed that Bikaner in Rajasthan was the hottest city on Sunday recording 47 degrees Celsius, followed by Ganganagar at 46.9 degrees Celsius.

At least 30 cities across India recorded the maximum temperature above 44 degrees Celsius.

Continued on Page 2

Delhi simmers at 2 notches above season's average

New Delhi: The maximum temperature in Delhi on Sunday settled at 40.5 degrees Celsius, two notches above the season's average, as the city continued to reel under heatwave conditions.

Debt-ridden Pak gets \$8bn package from Saudi Arabia

ANI ■ ISLAMABAD

In a huge relief to Pakistan, which is grappling with a major economic slump, the beleaguered nation has secured a "sizeable package" of around \$8 billion from Saudi Arabia during the visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, reported local media.

The generous \$8 billion package from Saudi Arabia includes a doubling of the oil financing facility, additional money either through deposits or Sukuks, and rolling over of the existing \$4.2 billion facilities, reported *The News International*.

"However, technical details are being worked out and will take a couple of weeks to get all documents ready and signed," the media outlet quoted some top official sources privy to the development as saying. *Continued on Page 2*

Zomato staffer, 2 teens die in horrific car-bike crash

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Three persons, including two teenagers and a Zomato delivery boy, died and two others suffered major injuries in a high-impact crash involving a car and a motorcycle in East Delhi's Shakarpur area on Sunday. The car turned turtle following the collision, trapping its occupants. Two of the deceased have been identified by the police as sisters Jyoti (17) and Bharti (19) who were inside the car, while the third victim is the motorbike rider wearing a Zomato T-shirt, who is yet to be identified.

After the accident, all the seven car occupants — members of a family — were taken out of the vehicle by the police. According to police, the bike was in front of the car but the sequence of events that led to the accident is yet to be established. The CCTV cameras are being scanned to ascertain its

cause. Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Priyanka Kashyap said, "On May 1, around 1 a.m., a PCR call about an accident involving a car and a bike on Vikas Marg was received at Shakarpur police station. The staff immediately reached the spot and found one damaged motorcycle and one Wagon R car turned upside down." Both the vehicles were severely damaged in the crash.

The motorcycle rider was taken to the hospital and the people stuck in the car were rescued, she said.

Four of the injured were taken to Hedgewar Hospital where two of them — Jyoti and Bharti — were declared brought dead. The remaining two suffered minor injuries, while the motorcyclist was declared brought dead at Guru Teg Bahadur (GTB) Hospital, the DCP added. *Continued on Page 2*

GST revenues touch all-time high of ₹1.68 L cr in April on improved compliance

New Delhi: Amid rising inflation and growing joblessness, there is some good news for the Indian economy. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection in April touched the highest-ever level of about ₹1.68 lakh crore, up 20 per cent from the period a year-ago, on improved compliance, the Finance Ministry said on Sunday. In April this year, 1.06 crore returns in GSTR-3B were filed.

The gross GST collection in April is ₹25,000 crore more than the previous highest collection of ₹1.42 lakh crore recorded in March. The gross GST revenue collected in April is ₹1,67,540 crore, of which CGST is ₹33,159 crore, SGST is ₹41,793 crore, IGST is ₹81,939 crore (including ₹36,705 crore collected on import of goods) and cess is ₹10,649 crore (including ₹857 crore collected on import of goods), the Ministry said. *Continued on Page 2*

Bengal BJP MP threatens stir against Centre's raw jute price cap

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Hours after meeting Union Textile Minister Piyush Goyal and demanding a roll-back of the Centre's decision to cap the price of raw jute at ₹6,500 per quintal, Bengal BJP MP Arjun Singh threatened to agitate against his own Government "even if it means supporting Mamata Banerjee."

Goyal had called Singh to Delhi and after the meeting, he referred the matter to the Textile Secretary for a solution.

The Union Minister's assurance for a solution notwithstanding, Singh would not stop attacking the Centre. He said his struggle and discussions would continue till the matter was solved. "There has been an assurance from the Minister, but I will not stop my agitation till any fruitful result comes," the BJP strongman said. *Continued on Page 2*

Global warming could cause next pandemic, warns study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The world, which is reeling under the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, just got some more bad news. As the Earth heats up, researchers have predicted that wild animals will be forced to relocate their habitats — likely to regions with large human populations — dramatically increasing the risk of a viral jump to humans that could lead to the next pandemic.

Climate change could drive over 15,000 new cases of mammals transmitting viruses to other mammals, say researchers who have studied the link between climate change and viral transmission.

The study conducted by the research team led by scientists at Georgetown University and published in *Nature*, is one of the first to predict how global warming will shift wildlife habitats, increase



encounters among species capable of swapping pathogens, and quantify how many times viruses will jump between species.

The study is "a critical first step in understanding the future risk of climate and land-

use change in the next pandemic," says Kate Jones, who models interactions between ecosystems and human health at University College London, and who was not involved in the study. *Continued on Page 2*

PM Modi sets off on three-nation tour

Europe trip coming at time when region is facing many challenges, says Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said his three-nation visit to Europe, starting Monday, comes at a time when the region faces many challenges and choices. He also said he intends to strengthen the spirit of cooperation with European partners. The visit comes in the backdrop of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and several nations in Europe are now against Russia.

It will be the Prime Minister's first overseas visit this year and Modi will tour Germany, Denmark and France. In a statement, the Prime Minister said he would be visiting Berlin on May 2 at the invitation of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, following which he will travel to Copenhagen on May 3-4 at the invitation of his Danish counterpart Mette Frederiksen to hold bilateral engagements and also participate in the Second India-Nordic Summit.

On the way back to India, Modi said, he will make a



brief stopover in Paris for a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron. "My visit to Europe comes at a time when the region faces many challenges and choices," Modi said.

"Through my engagements, I intend to strengthen the spirit of cooperation with our European partners, who are important companions in India's quest for peace and prosperity," the Prime Minister said in his departure statement. Detailing his engagements, Modi said his visit to Berlin will be an opportunity to hold detailed bilateral discussions with Chancellor Scholz, whom he met at G-20 last year in his previous capacity as Vice-Chancellor and Finance Minister.

"We will co-chair the 6th India-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC), a unique biennial format which India conducts only with Germany. Several Indian Ministers will also travel to

Germany and hold consultations with their German counterparts," Modi said.

The Prime Minister said he sees this IGC as an early engagement with the new Government in Germany, within six months of its formation, which will be helpful to identify priorities for the medium and long term.

In 2021, India and Germany commemorated 70 years of the establishment of diplomatic relations and have been strategic partners since 2000, he noted.

Underlining the long-standing commercial ties between India and Germany that form one of the pillars of their strategic partnership, Modi said Chancellor Scholz and he would also jointly address a Business Roundtable with the goal of energising industry-to-industry cooperation, which will help strengthen the post-Covid economic recovery of both countries. *Continued on Page 2*

CAPSULE

PAK EX-PM IMRAN BOOKED FOR HOUNDING SHARIF

Lahore: Pakistan's Punjab police have booked ousted Prime Minister Imran Khan and 150 others in connection with the hounding of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his delegation at Masjid-e-Nabwi in Saudi Arabia, officials said.

'INDIA BIGGEST TARGET OF EDU CYBER THREATS'

New Delhi: India is the biggest target of cyber threats to educational institutions and online platforms followed by the USA, the UK, Indonesia and Brazil, according to a report.

MOON NOT SIGHTED, EID TO BE CELEBRATED ON TUE

New Delhi: Muslims observing fasts during the holy month of Ramadan will have to wait a bit longer as Eid-ul-Fitr, which marks the culmination of the fasting month, will be celebrated in the country on Tuesday as the moon was not sighted on Sunday evening.

PC GEORGE HELD FOR HIS HATE QUIPS, GETS BAIL

Thiruvananthapuram: Senior Kerala politician PC George who was arrested by police on Sunday for his alleged controversial remarks against Muslims was granted bail by a Magisterial court here.

'MAHA SET TO BECOME \$1 TRILLION ECONOMY'

Mumbai: Maharashtra is all set to become a one trillion-dollar economy and it will be the first State in the country to do so, Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari said here on Sunday.



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SC junks PIL seeking ‘cooling off period’ for babus to contest polls

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has refused to entertain a PIL to impose restrictions to prevent civil servants from contesting elections immediately after retirement or resignation from service, by imposing a “cooling off period”, saying it cannot direct the legislature to enact a law.

A bench of Justices Indira Banerjee and A S Bopanna said whether there should be any “cooling off period” for civil servants for them to contest elections or not is best left to the legislature concerned.

“In this case, there is no complaint of violation of any fundamental right of the petitioner or any group of persons represented by the petitioner. Nobody has the fundamental right to get a mandatory order of this court directing the appropriate legislature to enact law or the executive to frame rules imposing restrictions on the eligibility of civil servants to contest elections. This writ petition cannot, therefore, be entertained by this court,” the bench said.

The top court said a mandamus cannot be issued to direct the respondents to enact law and/or to frame rules even

under the wider powers conferred under Article 226 of the Constitution.

“A mandamus lies for enforcement of a fundamental right or a statutory right, or the enforcement of a fundamental duty related to enforcement of a fundamental right or a statutory right.

“In exceptional cases, a writ may even lie for enforcement of an equitable right. The breach or threat to breach a fundamental, statutory or may be enforceable equitable right, is the sine qua non for issuance of a writ of mandamus,” the bench said.

The apex court said this court or a high court cannot direct the legislature to enact a particular legislation or the executive to frame rules.

“This court, and/or the high court, does not give any direction to the State to enforce an Act passed by the legislature. Nor does the court enforce instructions in a departmental manual not having statutory force, any non-statutory scheme or concession which does not give rise to any legal right in favour of the petitioner, far less, any recommendation made by an authority such as the Election Commission.

“It is for the Union of India

to take a decision on the recommendation of the Election Commission, in accordance with law. It is not for this Court to decide what should be the policy of the government. Policy matters are never interfered with, unless patently arbitrary, unreasonable or violative of Article 14 of the Constitution,” the bench said.

The top court said it cannot even issue a mandamus to the government for enforcement of a Cabinet decision. “It is only when an administrative order confers rights or creates estoppel against the government, that mandamus can be issued to enforce the circular. Similarly a mandamus may be issued to cancel an administrative order, which violates the rules of fairness,” the bench said.

The apex court said there can be no doubt that law may be enacted, laying down the norms and qualifications for contesting specific elections.

“There can be no doubt that civil servants should maintain the highest ethical standards of integrity and honesty; political neutrality; fairness and impartiality in the discharge of duties, courtesy, accountability and transparency.” Integrity, impartiality, neu-

trality, transparency and honesty are non-negotiable. Ethical standards necessarily have to be enforced and stringent action taken against the officer concerned whenever there is any breach of ethical standards as laid down in the All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968.

It is not for this court to interfere in matters relating to framing of law, rules or policy, the bench said.

“Whether there should be any ‘cooling off period’ for civil servants for them to contest elections or not is best left to the legislature concerned. The allegations of bureaucrats deviating from strict norms of political neutrality with a view to obtaining party tickets to contest elections, is vague, devoid of particulars and unsupported by any materials which could justify intervention of this court.

“No particulars have been given of the number and/or percentage of erstwhile bureaucrats, who have contested elections on the ticket of a political party, not to speak of any act on their part, prior to their retirement, in deviation of the standards required of bureaucrats,” the bench said while dismissing a plea filed by one Vivek Krishna.

Kashmiri youths travelling to Pakistan on valid visas sneak back in with terrorists

17 killed so far

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

Seventeen Kashmiri youths who had travelled to Pakistan on valid travel documents but sneaked back into the valley have been killed in anti-terror operations, with officials raising concerns that the ISI has adopted a new modus operandi to paint the militancy here as an indigenous movement.

Since 2015, a large number of youngsters procured travel documents to visit Pakistan to pursue higher studies, meet relatives or for marriage purposes, officials said. Recently, the University Grants Commission and the All India Council for Technical Education, the higher and technical education regulators of the country, had issued a statement, advising students not to travel to Pakistan for pursuing higher education.

Indian national/Overseas Citizen of India who intends to take admission in any degree college/educational institution of Pakistan shall not be eligible for seeking employment or higher studies in India on the

basis of such educational qualifications (in any subject) acquired in Pakistan,” the UGC and the AICTE had said in a joint statement.

The reason, the officials said, was that these youths were brainwashed across the border and some of them were imparted with arms training or used for money laundering.

The State Investigation Agency (SIA) of Jammu and Kashmir Police has filed a charge sheet against a Hurriyat leader and others for selling MBBS seats in Pakistani colleges and using the proceeds for terror activities.

Hundreds of students from Jammu and Kashmir have travelled to Pakistan in recent years for higher studies and a few of them were brainwashed, provided arms training or recruited in sleeper cells with a motive to gather information to be shared with the handlers sitting across the border, the officials said. They said a well-oiled separatist lobby would arrange recommendation letters from Hurriyat leaders and other valid travel documents from the Pakistan Embassy to facilitate their visit to Pakistan for admission.



All the arrangements of parents as well as students in Pakistan were usually done by the separatists under a well-planned conspiracy with their co-conspirators based in Pakistan.

The students were made to appear in the National Talent Search (NTS) test at Hurriyat office in Pakistan as a stealth tactic to make them believe that they were writing a pre-qualifying test which would lead to their admission in professional colleges in Pakistan. Such tests were mostly facilitated by Kashmiri separatists and their relatives who had gone to Pakistan in the 1990s to get illegal arms training and had settled in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and other areas there.

After the test, some of the students were brainwashed and taken for arms training and later pushed into Jammu and Kashmir along with infil-

trating terrorists.

The officials said that as many as 17 youths who had gone on valid travel documents to Pakistan and were believed to be in that country receiving education were killed either at the Line of Control or during encounters, leaving their parents in disbelief. Security officials have been tracking the youths who travelled to Pakistan on valid visas for short durations and disappeared after their return as they believe that they could be possible sleeper cells of terror groups operating from across the border.

Security agencies believe that there was a six weeks’ training course for new terror recruits and intelligence inputs suggest that some of the youths were provided a quick module of fabrication of improvised explosive devices using easily available explosive material within a week’s time.

‘BJP creating artificial issues like Hindi national language debate, hijab controversy to divide Indians’

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Senior Congress leader S Abhishek Manu Singhvi has alleged that the BJP was creating “artificial issues” such as the debate over “Hindi as the national language” or hijab controversy to divide Indians and cautioned people against fighting amongst themselves “on the saffron party’s terms”.

Singhvi, in an interview with PTI, called West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee a “vital and indispensable” part of the anti-BJP space but refused to acknowledge her as the only opposition face.

On Congress-TMC relations, the Rajya Sabha member from West Bengal said that the

Trinamool Congress’s attack on the Congress was in the context of assembly elections in Goa and other states, and “we will have to wait for the whole thing to pan out for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls”.

He said that reforms are needed in the Congress but it doesn’t necessarily have to take place holding the hand of poll strategist Prashant Kishor, who did not join the grand old party after negotiations between the two sides failed.

“BJP is fishing in troubled waters, it is creating Frankenstein monsters... They want to divide, scare, provoke and antagonise people. Someday they bring up hijab, someday they find language. These are artificially created issues. They draw you into the



debate because it suits them... Don’t fight on their terms,” he said on the sidelines of the annual awards ceremony of the Ladies Study Group Charitable Trust in Kolkata on Saturday.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah’s statement in April that Hindi should be accepted

as an alternative to English and not to local languages evoked a controversy.

Presiding over the 37th Parliamentary Official Language Committee meeting in Delhi, Shah had said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has decided that the medium of running the gov-

ernment is in the official language and this would definitely increase the importance of Hindi.

Shah’s statement has sparked a debate over whether Hindi is the national language or not, with several cine stars from Bollywood and southern film industries expressing their opinions on the matter.

Singhvi, however, batted for the 1968 three-language formula first incorporated into the National Education Policy by the Indira Gandhi government.

“We have a three-language formula – English, Hindi and the local language. It has stood the test of time for the last 60 years. But the BJP is trying to destabilise it as per their political gameplan,” he said.

The three-language formula calls for study of Hindi, English and a modern Indian language (preferably from the South) in Hindi-speaking states and Hindi, English and a regional language in non-Hindi speaking regions.

On Banerjee, Singhvi said, “I have been repeatedly saying that Mamataji is a vital and indispensable part of the non-BJP space. But to say that she is the only opposition face, this exclusively monopolising approach is wrong. But nobody can deny she is a pillar of strength for the entire non-BJP space.”

Noting that the TMC’s approach of attacking the Congress and stressing on the importance of regional parties was limited to assembly elec-

tions in Goa and other states, he said, “We will have to wait for the whole thing to pan out for the 2024 general elections. Who knows what will happen then?”

He said that the sooner all opposition parties realise that their strength lies in preventing a split in anti-BJP votes the better.

On Banerjee repeatedly calling for more space for regional parties in national politics in place of Congress, Singhvi asserted, “It is very clear that no party can ignore or devalue Congress in any non-BJP formation. But we also need regional parties. Congress and regional parties must coalesce in the non-BJP space.” Singhvi, who has recently been made the chairperson

of Parliamentary Committee for Home Affairs, however, dismissed allegations of TMC having a “secret understanding” with the BJP.

“It is completely wrong and devoid of facts,” he said.

On BJP demanding the imposition of President’s Rule in West Bengal following the Birbhum killings and incidents of gangrape, the senior lawyer alleged that the saffron party was only playing politics.

“These are law and order situations, and any such incident is condemnable. The TMC government has taken strictest action and we demand stronger action but we don’t support BJP’s allegation that such incidents are state-sponsored. The BJP is only playing politics,” he said.

2 hybrid terrorists arrested in J&K

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

Security forces on Sunday arrested two ‘hybrid’ terrorists in Kulgam and Sringar districts of Jammu and Kashmir, police said.

“#KulgamPolice & Army (34 RR) arrested one #hybrid terrorist of proscribed terror outfit LeT namely Yamin Yousaf Bhat of Gadihama Kulgam,” the Kashmir Zone Police said on its Twitter handle.

The police said incriminating material, arms and ammunition, including a pistol, two grenades and 51 pistol rounds were recovered from his possession.

Another ‘hybrid’ terrorist was arrested from Nowgam

area of the city here, the police said.

“On a specific input, Srinagar Police & (50 RR) arrested a hybrid terrorist namely Sheikh Sahid Gulzar of Muchhwa, Badgam from Nowgam, Srinagar,” the Srinagar Police said in a tweet.

Incriminating material including a pistol and live ammunition was recovered from him, they said.

A case has been registered under relevant sections, they added.

Officials had earlier explained that a ‘hybrid’ terrorist carries out a task given to him by his handlers and then goes back to his normal work, waiting for the next assignment.

12 passengers injured in SpiceJet flight due to severe turbulence

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At least 12 passengers were on Sunday injured due to severe turbulence on a SpiceJet Mumbai-Durgapur flight descent. The aircraft landed safely at Durgapur. However, the injured passengers were provided with immediate medical assistance upon arrival in Durgapur.

According to the airline, the Boeing B737 aircraft managed to land safely and those injured were given medical assistance.

In a statement, Spicejet said, “Today, SpiceJet Boeing B737 aircraft operating flight SG-945 from Mumbai to Durgapur encountered severe



turbulence during descent which unfortunately resulted in injuries to a few passengers”.

“SpiceJet expresses its regret at this unfortunate incident and is providing all possible medical help to the injured,” it stated.

Global warming could cause next...

From Page 1

The research predicts that much of the new virus transmission will happen when species end up together in cooler locales as temperatures rise. And it projects that this will occur in species-rich ecosystems at high elevations, particularly in areas of Africa and Asia that are densely populated by humans, including the Sahel, India and Indonesia. Assuming that the planet warms no more than 2 °C above pre-industrial

temperatures this century - a future predicted by some climate analyses - the number of first-time meetings between species will double by 2070, creating virus transmission hotspots, the study says. “This work provides us with more incontrovertible evidence that the coming decades will not only be hotter, but sicker,” says Gregory Albery, a disease ecologist at Georgetown University in Washington DC and a co-author of the study.

To make their predictions,

Albery and his colleagues developed and tested models, and ran simulations over a five-year period. They combined models of virus transmission and species distribution under various climate-change scenarios, focusing on mammals because of their relevance to human health.

The team built the species distribution model to predict where mammals would move to find more livable habitats as the planet warms. The virus transmission model predicts the prob-

ability of a virus jumping between species for the first time by taking into account where species might meet as their habitats shift, and how closely related they are evolutionarily (viruses are more likely to transmit from related species).

Many factors could lessen the risk to human health, including increased investment in health care or a virus being surprisingly unable to infect humans, she adds.

Birbhum massacre: Woman succumbs to burn injuries, toll rises to 10

PTI ■ RAMPURHAT

A woman, who suffered burn injuries in the Rampurhat massacre in West Bengal’s Birbhum district in March, died on Sunday morning while undergoing treatment, police said.

With this, 10 people have died of burn injuries after their houses in Bogtui village were allegedly firebombed following the murder of local TMC leader Bhadu Sheikh.

The woman was admitted to the hospital with 27 per cent burn injuries, a police officer told PTI.

“She was discharged after her condition improved. But,



she was again admitted to the Rampurhat Medical College and Hospital after her health condition started deteriorating. She died early Sunday morning,” he said.

The CBI took over the investigation of the incident, which happened on March 20, from the state police on the direction of the Calcutta High Court.

Relief in sight after...

From Page 1

The weather department on Sunday predicted formation of a low pressure area over south Andaman Sea around May 6.

A low pressure area which may or may not turn into a cyclonic storm causes rainfall. In its daily bulletin, the weather forecast agency on Sunday said that a cyclonic circulation is likely to form over the South Andaman Sea and its neighbourhood around May 4. “Under its influence, a Low Pressure Area is likely to form over the same region around May 6. It is likely to become more marked during the subsequent 24 hours,” the bulletin said. Large swathes of the country are reeling under severe heatwaves with temperatures in some parts touching 47 degrees Celsius. On

Sunday, the IMD said that heatwave conditions will continue over northwest and central India for the next two days. Heatwave to severe heatwave conditions continued in some parts of West Rajasthan on Sunday and gradually these are expected to decrease to heatwave conditions in isolated pockets on May 2 and 3. Heatwave conditions will continue in isolated pockets over West Madhya Pradesh from till May 3, whereas in East MP, Telangana, Jammu and Vidarbha they will be on till May 2. Under the influence of an east-west oriented trough across north and northeast India in the lower tropospheric levels, widespread rainfall with lightning and gusty winds are very likely over north-east India and the sub-Himalayan West Bengal.

PM Modi sets off on...

From Page 1

Modi said from Berlin he would travel to Copenhagen for a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Frederiksen which will provide an opportunity to review the progress in ‘our unique ‘Green Strategic Partnership’ with Denmark, as well as other aspects of our bilateral relations. I will also participate in the India-Denmark Business Roundtable as well as interact with the Indian community in Denmark.”

Apart from the bilateral engagements with Denmark, Modi will also take part in the Second India-Nordic Summit along with Prime Ministers of Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Sweden and Norway where “we will take stock of our cooperation since the First India-Nordic Summit in 2018. The Summit will focus on subjects like post-pandemic economic recovery, climate change, innovation and technology, renewable energy, the evolving global security scenario and India-Nordic cooperation in the Arctic region,” he said.

Debt-ridden Pak gets \$8bn...

From Page 1

Notably, Shehbaz Sharif and his official entourage have left Saudi Arabia but Pakistan Finance Minister Miftah Ismail is still staying there to finalize the modalities of the increased financial package.

“Just said goodbye to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and other colleagues at Jeddah Airport, who are on their way to Islamabad after a brief stopover

in Abu Dhabi to meet Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Zayed. I remain in SA to meet Saudi officials and start technical-level talks,” tweeted Ismail.

According to the official, Pakistan’s proposal of doubling the oil facility from \$1.2 billion to \$2.4 billion was accepted by Saudi Arabia, which also agreed that the existing deposits of \$3 billion would be rolled over for an extended period up to June

2023.

“Pakistan and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia discussed an additional package of over USD 2 billion either through deposits or Sukuk and it is likely that even more money will be provided to Islamabad,” the media outlet quoted the official sources which added that the size of the total package would be determined after additional money was finalized.

Bengal...

From Page 1

He had left the Trinamool Congress to join the saffron outfit before the 2019 general elections and he defeated the sitting TMC MP Dinesh Trivedi.

On whether he would join Bengal Chief Minister Mamata in her anti-Centre move on the jute issue, Singh said he would “because it is not the question of which party you belong to ... it is the question of the issue that is at hand ... and here the issue relates to the survival of not only jute industry workers but also lakhs of farmers associated with jute farming in Bengal”.

GST revenues at all-time high...

From Page 1

In a statement, the Ministry said that there is a “clear improvement in the compliance behaviour, which has been a result of various measures taken by the tax administration. This included nudging taxpayers to file returns timely, to making compliance easier and strict enforcement action against errant taxpayers identified based on data analytics and Artificial Intelligence.”

Zomato staffer...

From Page 1

“We have registered a case under Indian Penal Code (IPC) Sections 279 (rash driving or riding on a public way), 337 (causing hurt by act endangering life or personal safety of others) and 304A (causing death by negligence) and an investigation has been taken up. Efforts are still on to establish the identity of the motorcycle rider,” Kashyap said.

77-yr-old builder found dead with throat slit

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a shocking incident, a 77-year-old builder was brutally murdered by unknown persons in his home in north Delhi's posh Civil Lines area on Sunday morning. According to police, the victim, identified as Ram Kishore Agrawal, was sleeping alone when the unknown attackers broke into his house, robbed a large amount of cash from the room and attacked him with a weapon. Police said some cardboard boxes containing cash were also found missing from the room of the deceased and robbery is suspected to be the motive behind the killing.

Agrawal, a resident of Kothi number 1, Ram Kishore Agarwal Marg of the Civil Lines area, used to live on the ground floor of his two-storey house while his son and family lived on the first floor.

The entire family was inside the house when the incident took place. The builder's wife had passed away last year due to coronavirus.



They have four-five servants in their house, police said.

According to Sagar Singh Kalsi, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), North district, on May 1, at 6:52 am a police control room (PCR) call was received at Civil Lines police station from a person informing about the death of his father.

"He told police that his father had been found with his throat slit and was taken to hospital," said the DCP adding that Agrawal was declared brought dead at Sushrut Trauma Centre Civil Lines.

"During initial investigation, it has been revealed that at around 6:40 am, Agrawal's

son had found him lying on his bed with four knife injuries on his body and some cardboard boxes containing cash were also found missing from the room. Though the exact amount of cash is yet to be ascertained," said the DCP.

"However, a security guard told police that he had spotted two persons trying to flee from the house in the early morning hours," said the DCP.

"Police have registered a case under section 302 (murder), 397 (Robbery, or dacoity, with attempt to cause death or grievous hurt) and 34 (common intention) of Indian Penal Code (IPC) at Civil Lines police station and an investigation has been taken up," said the DCP. "The spot was inspected by the crime team and multiple teams have been formed from across the district to nab the culprits at the earliest," said the DCP.

Meanwhile, police teams are also scanning CCTV cameras in the area to identify the accused and to ascertain the crime sequence, said police.

India wants its leaders to guide global family: Naidu

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu has said India wants its leaders to guide the global family. Naidu said it should come from the universities with different innovative ideas. The Vice President also said early education of a child must be in mother tongue.

He was speaking at Delhi University's Centenary Celebration at University's North Campus on Sunday. Naidu said the Indian education system must also focus on "our culture". "If the early education is given to a child in mother tongue they will be able to grasp it. If given in another language, first they have to learn the language and then they will understand," he said.

Naidu emphasised that children must learn their mother tongue first and then other languages. "One must have proficiency in their languages and have original ideas," he added. Vice President Naidu, who is the chancellor of the university, was the chief guest at the event and Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Education, was the guest of honour.

The Vice President



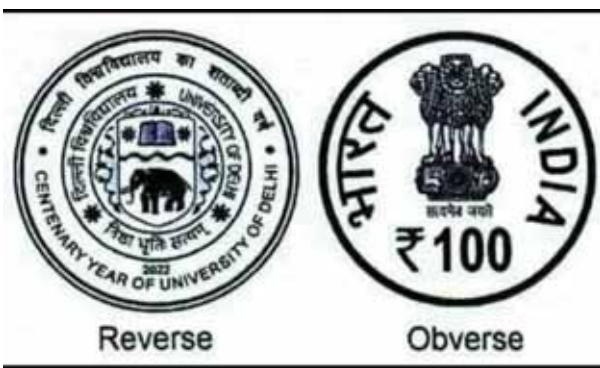
launched a commemorative coin of hundred-rupee denomination, a commemorative centenary stamp, and a commemorative centenary volume (booklet) — a pictorial representation of the journey of the university. Delhi University was established on May 1, 1922.

Naidu also said when Nature and Culture come together the future becomes bright. He pointed out to the students who go abroad for higher education or employment that they need to return to their motherland and do something for their land. He added that whatever they have achieved, it should be shared with the motherland.

Naidu also invoked Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks at an event on Saturday where the latter underlined the need to encourage the use of local language in courts. "Yesterday PM Modi also talked about the need for local languages in courts. Why courts alone, it should be implemented everywhere," he added. He congratulated Delhi University for completing 100 years.

"I would like to congratulate all the people for the growth, development and progress of this university and for making this one of the prestigious institutions," he added.

Naidu also launched Undergraduate Curricular



Framework (UGCF) 2022 (Hindi version), Undergraduate Curricular Framework (UGCF) 2022 (Sanskrit version), and a brochure, University of Delhi: A Glimpse - a reservoir of the historical landmarks achieved by the University.

Speaking at the event, Pradhan said the promotion of local languages will help in channelling students' creativity.

"The national education policy emphasised the importance of local language. The local language help in channelling the creativity of a student," Pradhan noted. Pradhan said that in future we will have to become job creators and not

job seekers and Delhi University will play an important role in this. He said that DU is celebrating its centenary year in the Amrit Mahotsav of the country. When the country celebrates 100 years of its independence, DU will be celebrating 125 years of its establishment. DU will have to do a lot in the field of research in the next 25 years.

He also congratulated Delhi University for releasing brochures in three languages: English, Hindi, and Telugu. Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Singh said, "We have completed 100 years of academic excellence. DU is doing very well. We will continue to make our contribution to the life of Indians."

Relief as city's maximum temperature settled at 40.5 degrees Celsius

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital has recorded a slight dip in the maximum temperature as compared to Saturday, as Delhi's maximum temperature on Sunday settled at 40.5 degrees Celsius, which is two notches warmer than the normal temperature for this time of the year, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The minimum temperature in the city settled at 25.8 degrees Celsius, which was one notch above the normal temperature for this time of the season. Meanwhile, the national Capital's peak power demand on Sunday clocked 5996 megawatt.

The IMD data showed that the relative humidity recorded at the Safdarjung observatory, in the morning at 8:30 am was 61 per cent and 36 per cent in the evening at 5:30 pm.

The weather stations at Ridge, Ayanagar, Mungeshpur, Najafgarh, Pitampura, Palam, and Lodhi Road recorded maximum temperatures of 40.4 degrees Celsius, 44.6 degrees Celsius, 41.4 degrees Celsius, 42.1 degrees Celsius, 41.1 degrees Celsius, 40.2 degrees Celsius and 39.6 degrees Celsius respectively, stated the IMD data.

On Saturday, Delhi witnessed a maximum temperature of 43.5 degrees Celsius which was five notches higher than the normal temperature of the year.

The IMD on Sunday predicted that the heat wave conditions to continue over Northwest India and over Central India during the next two days and abate thereafter.

While informing about the thunderstorm, the IMD said that the thunderstorm activity was very likely over Northwest

and East India till 04th May and over Northeast India till 03rd May, 2022.

"Heatwave to severe heat-wave conditions prevailed over some parts of Delhi; in isolated pockets over Gurgaon, Chandigarh, and Himachal Pradesh," IMD said in a statement. The weather station advised the general public to avoid heat exposure and keep cool, avoid dehydration, drink sufficient water even if not thirsty, avoid heat exposure, wear lightweight, light-colored, loose, cotton clothes and cover the head by use of cloth, hat or umbrella, etc, use ORS, homemade drinks like lassi, Torani (rice water), lemon water, buttermilk, etc, to keep yourself hydrated to avoid any health issue.

The national capital recorded a maximum temperature of 43.7 degrees Celsius on April 18, 2010.

The all-time high temper-

ature for the month is 45.6 degrees Celsius, which was recorded on April 29, 1941.

Meanwhile, according to the sources in discoms, the capital's peak power demand on Sunday clocked 5996 MW.

"On six occasions in April 2022, Delhi's peak power demand has clocked the highest ever in April, each breaking the previous record in quick succession. On April 19, it was 5735 MW, 5761 MW on April 20, 5781 MW on August 21, 5786 MW on April 27, 6050 MW on April 28, and 6197 on April 29," said sources.

"Delhi's peak power demand had breached the 7000 MW for the first time - peaking at 7016 MW in 2018. This expected peak power demand of around 8200 MW is an increase of around 285 per cent over the peak power demand of 2879 MW in 2002," sources stated.

Excessive summer heat can cause infections, damage eyes

AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI

Eye conditions like allergies and infections are quite prevalent in summers due to scorching heat and industry experts are of the view that this time of the year is crucial to take care of ocular health.

"Allergies, infections such as conjunctivitis and dry eye are some of the conditions. We need to be extra careful as these conditions can worsen if timely medical advice is not followed," says Dr. Tushar Grover, Medical Director, Vision Eye Centre, New Delhi.

High level of pollutants and irritants in the air pose another challenge. The symptoms may include itchiness, redness of the eyes or experiencing a burning sensation.

"Our eyes become sensitive during summer, so it is essential to protect them. Even if you are wearing contact lenses, wearing eyeglasses can protect your eyes,"

says Dr Chikirsha Jain, Senior Consultant, Retina and Ophthalmology, Ujala Cygnus Rainbow Hospital, Agra.

In case one does not use proper eye protection, he/she can also develop dry eyes as the tear film in the eye can evaporate more quickly. If left untreated, the condition may lead to eye inflammation.

"Exposure to sun's ultraviolet rays during the summer months can increase the risk of various eye conditions, reiterating the imperative need of regular eye examinations. As schools have reopened now, eye examination must be considered as a mandate in school readiness.

"Studies show that the pandemic has increased the number of children who may be identified with myopia and those who have refractive error may further need correction," says Dr. Rishi Raj Borah, Country Director, Orbis India.

Give data on health of transplanted trees: Rai to Depts

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai has asked various departments to provide data on trees transplanted by them in the Capital and their health status.

The Minister will chair a meeting on Monday where this data will be analysed to ascertain the impact of the 'Tree Transplantation Policy' notified by the Government in December 2020. "All agencies concerned, including the Delhi Jal Board, municipal corporations, Delhi Development Authority, Railways, Public Works Department etc, have been asked to provide data on trees transplanted by them. This is being done to ascertain the impact of the policy," an official said.

Rai will also take a call on appointing a common agency for all departments for a tree transplantation audit.

According to the 'Tree Transplantation Policy', agencies concerned are required to transplant a minimum of 80 percent of the trees affected by their development works. The benchmark tree survival rate at the end of one year of tree transplantation is 80 percent. Last year, the Dehradun-based Forest Research Institute (FRI) had conducted an audit of annual sapling plantations undertaken in Delhi from 2016 to 2019. According to the audit report released earlier this month, 72 percent to 81 percent of the saplings planted in Delhi between 2016 and 2019 have survived.

Capital reports 1,485 new Covid cases

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital on Sunday reported 1,485 fresh Covid-19 cases and no deaths. According to data released by the Delhi health Department, in the past 24 hours, the national capital's positivity rate was recorded at 4.89 per cent. On Saturday, the city had logged 1,520 cases and one death. The total tally of active cases has risen to 5,997 and 1,204 people have recovered in the past 24 hours.

The new cases pushed the coronavirus infection tally in the national capital to 18,84,560, while the death count stood at 26,175. On Friday, it saw 1,607 COVID-19 cases and two deaths with a positivity rate of 5.28 per cent.

HC directs Govt to decide complaint against pvt school

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed the Delhi Government to decide within six weeks a complaint against a private school here for allegedly charging an excessive fine on delayed payment of tuition fees.

Hearing a petition by Ajay Aggarwal, father of two students studying in classes 12 and 8 in the school, Justice Rekha Palli directed the department of education to decide the petitioner's complaint by passing a reasoned and speaking order in accordance with the laid down procedure and principles of natural justice.

In case the petitioner is aggrieved by any order passed by the authorities, it will be open to the petitioner to seek legal recourse as permissible in

law, the judge said.

"The writ petition... is accordingly disposed of by directing the respondent no. 2 (DoE) to decide the petitioner's complaint dated 22.12.2021 by passing a reasoned and speaking order within a period of six weeks in accordance with the laid down procedure and by following principles of natural justice," the court said in its order dated April 27.

The counsel for the Delhi Government told the court that the authorities will examine the petitioner's complaint and expeditiously pass an order. The petitioner claimed that the private school in question indulged in unethical practices, including levying excessive late fines on delayed payment of tuition fees, which was in utter violation of the Delhi School Education Rules.

Kejriwal should visit RSS HQ in Nagpur: BJP MP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after the AAP announced the formation of 10,000 'tiranga shakhas' in Uttar Pradesh, BJP MP Parvesh Verma on Sunday said Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal should visit the RSS headquarters in Nagpur and attend its three-year course to learn about nationalism. One does not become a nationalist by simply holding the national flag, the BJP leader said.

On Saturday, Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) in-charge of Uttar Pradesh affairs Sanjay Singh said the party will open 10,000 'tiranga shakhas' in the state in the next six months to educate people about the BJP's "divide and rule" policy. The party will begin appointing 'pramukhs' to the 'tiranga shakhas' from July 1, Singh said.

"I invite Kejriwal ji to visit the RSS office in Jhandewalan (in Delhi) and Nagpur and attend the three-year course of the RSS to learn about nationalism," Verma told reporters at the Delhi BJP office. The West Delhi MP said Kejriwal will become a "good human being" if he follows the spirit of the RSS ideology.

Verma asked how Kejriwal can become a nationalist after questioning India's surgical strikes and 'The Kashmir Files' movie. "Nationalism lies in the heart and mind of a person. This is fake nationalism of the AAP and Kejriwal after the drubbing in the recent Assembly polls in UP, Goa and Uttarakhand," he said. The BJP leader also said he will soon write a letter to Delhi Lt Governor Anil Bajjal for the removal of "illegal" loudspeakers from mosques.

SDMC chalks out plan for waste management

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As the Landfill fires are making headlines for quite sometime, the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) on Sunday has chalked out a proper plan for garbage management to ensure 100 per cent scientific disposal of waste materials. This move will also help in reducing the garbage pileup from the existing landfill sites. According to a senior SDMC official, with the inception of several measures such as setting up of an 'engineered landfill site', a new waste to energy plant, material recovery facility, etc, the civic agency is rapidly achieving its goal of proper waste management.

While informing the details of the plan for the Okhla landfill site, he said that this landfill site is spread over an area of about 47 acres and the land has been allotted to the civic agency

for setting up a new landfill site. "South Corporation has planned to close the existing landfill site in a phased manner and for segregation of traditional and legacy waste at this site, 25 trommel machines of 2500 tons per day capacity have also been deployed. The traditional method of segregation of 51 lakh metric tonnes of garbage at this landfill site is expected to be completed by December 2023," he informed.

"The civic body has also planned to construct a new waste to energy plant in Tehkhand," said a senior official adding that the work to set up a new waste to energy plant is going on in a speedy manner. Once operational, the facility will be able to dispose of 2000 tons of garbage every day and generate 25 MW of electricity. Construction work of this plant is likely to be completed by September this year.

BJP leaders in MCD operating NGOs like mafia nexus: AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday alleged that Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders in Municipal Corporation of Delhi are operating NGOs like a mafia nexus to squander money and these NGOs are more registered in the name of the relatives of BJP leaders and their associates. Senior AAP leader and MCD in-charge, Durgesh Pathak said that until now these NGOs were collecting their funds themselves but now the BJP has put out a proper order directing MCD officials to go to every trader, every industrialist and any other person they can find to extort money in the name of donation into these NGOs.

"In April, they circulated an entire list of NGOs by region with their bank account details. I am certain this is the first instance of such brazen corruption. The BJP

has put government officials on the job of collecting funds for their loot. These NGOs were first awarded tenders for various works then government officials were asked to collect funds for them," alleged Pathak.

"A tender was awarded for school upkeep work to a non-existent NGO by the MCD. The first question that arises out of this mess is why was the NGO awarded the tender in the first place? Then we investigated further to discover more details about the NGO, which is registered in Ashok Vihar with no trace of an office or anyone in-charge," said Pathak.

"This so-called NGO was blindly handed over all the work for MCD schools and the BJP further directed its officers to extort as much money as possible from every single shop in the area in the name of fundraising," said Pathak.

Eid-ul-Fitr to be celebrated on Tuesday

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Eid-ul-Fitr, which marks the culmination of the fasting month of Ramzan, will be celebrated in the country on Tuesday as the moon was not sighted on Sunday evening. Fatehpuri Masjid Imam Mufti Mukarram Ahmad told PTI that the Ruat-e-Hilal Committee of the mosque contacted many places in New Delhi, West

Bengal, Bihar and other parts of the country to establish that the moon had not been sighted anywhere. "Therefore, Monday will be the last day of Ramzan and Eid will be celebrated on Tuesday," he said.

Markazi Chand Committee head Khalid Rasheed Firangi Mahali also announced that the Shawwal moon had not been sighted and therefore Eid would be celebrated on May 3. Muslim socio-religious organisation Edara-e-Sharia, Patna, announced that Eid would be celebrated on May 3 as the moon had not been sighted in the evening.

For the past two years, Muslims have been observing the fasting month and celebrating Eid in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year, many of the Covid curbs have been lifted following a dip in cases and vaccination of people.

Vijay Goel, NMC lead cleanliness drive around Jama Masjid ahead of Eid

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the festival of Eid, former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP from Chandni Chowk Vijay Goel on Sunday led a cleanliness drive around the Jama Masjid, in the national Capital.

Raising the slogan "Swachhata Se Sadbhavna" (harmony through cleanliness), Goel said cleanliness is necessary before festivals, including Eid. Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas', he said, "Everyone is participating in this cleanliness drive."

Goel, the vice chairman of the Gandhi Smriti Evam Darshan Samiti, represented Chandni Chowk twice in Lok

Sabha. He was also a Union minister in the governments led by Modi and Atal Bihari Vajpayee. "I have helped in the development of a heritage park in the Jama Masjid area. Two days later Eid will be celebrated and I believe cleanliness should be there before the festival," Goel said.

The North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NMC) helped in the cleanliness drive.

Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid Syed Ahmed Bukhari lauded Goel for his initiative.

"It's very good. He has also been active in ensuring that the area is free from encroachments," Bukhari said. The festival of Eid is to be celebrated after sighting of the moon, expectedly on Tuesday.

Cong questions BJP over move to disinvest in Pawan Hans

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Sunday continued its attack on the Modi Government over its "surreptitious" move to disinvest several PSUs including the latest move the sell off the stakes in State owned Pawan Hans Ltd by fraudulent means. Raising questions and elaborating on the loopholes over the deal to sell Centre's 51 per cent stake in helicopter services provider Pawan Hans Ltd (PHL). The party sought to know why the government did not explore merging the firm with ONGC instead of deciding to hand it over to a consortium that is just six-months-old.

The Finance Ministry on Friday said Star9 Mobility Pvt Ltd will buy the government's 51 per cent stake in helicopter services provider Pawan Hans Ltd (PHL), along with the

transfer of management control, for Rs 211.14 crore.

The reserve price for the strategic sale, which comes after three unsuccessful attempts, was fixed at Rs 199.92 crore based on the valuation carried out by the transaction adviser and asset valuer.

Attacking the government over the decision, Congress spokesperson Gourav Vallabh said that in the series of miscalculated and injudicious disinvestment decisions to justify their financial policies, "they are committing a series of blunders".

The reserve price for the sale of this 51 per cent majority stake was fixed at Rs 199.92 crores and the other two bidders that participated made bids of Rs 181.05 crore and Rs 153.15 crore respectively, Vallabh pointed out.

Vallabh said while this may seem like a normal disinvestment, there are several

things that raise eyebrows such as the the Star9 Mobility Private Ltd, a consortium of Big Charter Private Limited, Maharaja Aviation Private Limited and Almas Global Opportunity Fund SPC, set-up just six months ago on October 29, 2021.

Star9 Mobility Private Ltd doesn't have any helicopters of its own while Big Charter Private Limited has just 3 helicopters in its fleet, he said. Also, Almas Global Opportunity Fund SPC is set up under the jurisdiction of Cayman Islands and has no correlation or experience in this sector, he said.

Vallabh also claimed that there is a court case ongoing between Big Charter Private Limited and Ezen Aviation Private Limited in the Delhi High court He pointed out that Pawan Hans employee union expressed interest in participating in the disinvestment

process and had also recommended that Pawan Hans be merged with ONGC or made a subsidiary company but the government "brushed it off".

"Pawan Hans made a net profit of Rs. 242.78 crore in 2016-17 but has gone downhill since 2018-19 making losses of Rs 63.67 crores in 2018-19 and Rs 33.15 crores in 2019-20," he said.

Posing questions for the Modi Government over the decision, Vallabh said that with details available about the bidders and their consortium there are red flags, and how did the government agree to such a deal.

"There were three bidders that participated in the disinvestment process but only one bidder bid over the reserve price. What was the government's reason to go ahead with just one proper bid?" Vallabh said.

Did the government

explore merging Pawan Hans with ONGC, keeping in mind they already have 49 per cent stake and Pawan Hans playing a very strategic role with ONGC, HAL etc., he asked.

Pointing out that a company that has been consistently making net profits suddenly starts making losses since 2018-19 around the same time when the disinvestment was first processed, Vallabh asked is this again an attempt to lower the valuation to ease sale to someone who would benefit.

Vallabh pointed out that Pawan Hans is South-East Asia's largest helicopter company with a fleet of 42 Helicopters Off shore operations, connecting inaccessible areas, charter services, search and rescue work, VIP transportation, corporate and special charter flights, hotline washing of insulators and Helipilgrims such to Kedarnath,



Badrinath, Amarnath, Maa Vaishno Devi, are some of its major services Loss-making PHL is a 51:49 joint venture of the government and ONGC. ONGC had earlier decided to offer its entire shareholding to the successful bidder identified in the government strategic disinvestment transaction, on

the same price and terms as the government.

The government in December last year received three financial bids for buying the company.Vallabh accused the BJP of inept handling of the economy and said after eight years of disastrous financial management, the economy is

reeling. He had earlier questioned the disinvestment move over Central Electronics Limited and the Concor following which the government put on hold the sale of both the units.

The BJP government has forced sectors to the end of their tethers that needed support and have magically made good companies and sectors struggle, he alleged.They are violating all prudence and common logic to find a way out of the financial mismanagement caused in the last 8 years, Vallabh said.Pawan Hans has been incurring losses in the last three years (FY-19, FY-20 and FY-21). It has a fleet of 42 helicopters of which 41 are owned by the company.The owned helicopters have an average age of over 20 years and three-fourths of them are presently not being manufactured by the original equipment manufacturer.

Army chief Pande: Operational readiness to deal with any challenge our top priority



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Army Chief General Manoj Pande on Sunday said his top priority will be to make sure operational readiness of the force to deal with any challenge. He also said the Army will not allow any loss of territory in the backdrop of ongoing stand-offs with China at the border in Eastern Ladakh.

Pande also said the global geopolitical situation is changing rapidly "as a result of which we have multiple challenges ahead", asserting that the Army, in "coordination and cooperation" with the Indian Air Force and the Navy, will unitedly deal

with any situation. He was apparently referring to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Interacting with media after inspecting Guard of Honour here on Sunday, the new Army chief said he will focus on the ongoing reforms, restructuring and transformation of the Army to enhance its operational and functional efficiency besides giving importance to achieving self-reliance in defence.

He said his "utmost and foremost" priority would be to ensure very high standards of operational preparedness to face current, contemporary and future security challenges

across the entire spectrum of conflict.

On the situation at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, Pande said in an interview to ANI, the Indian troops are holding important physical positions and will not permit any change in the status quo or any loss of territory.

Calling the situation at the LAC normal, he said the Indian Army has given an adequate response to unilateral and provocative actions by China to change the status quo by force.

On the India-China border talks, the new Army chief said the process is ongoing. "We believe this is the way forward. We are confident that as we continue to talk with the other side we will find a resolution to the ongoing issues," he said.

Highlighting the preparedness of the Indian security forces, the Army Chief said additional equipment and troops have been inducted in the border areas. Our focus has also been on infrastructure development to match logistic and operation requirements, he added.

On the situation with

Pakistan, Pande said the DGMOs of the two armies arrived at an understanding a year ago that helped in improving the situation for the civilian population on the ground on both sides of the Line of Control (LOC).

The Army chief said he will take forward the "good works" of his predecessors, and assured the soldiers and officers of the Army that ensuring their welfare will be his key priority.

Pande on Saturday took charge as the 29th Chief of the Army Staff after incumbent General M M Naravane retired. Pande, who was serving as the Vice Chief, became the first-ever officer from the Corps of Engineers to rise to the top job.

Before taking charge as Vice Chief of Army Staff on February 1, Pande was heading the Eastern Army Command that takes care of the LAC in Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh sectors.

"I am aware of the big responsibility and I am praying to God that I am given strength, capability and wisdom so that I can carry on with the responsibility," Pande said.

NIA conducts searches in Assam in Maoist case of Cachar district

NIA claimed to have recovered incriminating documents. Further investigation in the case is continuing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has conducted searches in Assam in connection with Maoist case of Cachar district of the State.

The NIA conducted the search operations at two locations in Kamrup district of Assam on Friday.

The case relates to the arrest of Maoist leader Arun Kumar Bhattacharjee alias Kanchan Da, a member of Central Committee of banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) along with his associate Akash Orang alias Kajal, a member of the outfit's Assam State Organizing



Committee by Assam Police.

The duo was arrested under Patimara Tea Garden under Udarband police station of Cachar district on March 6, 2022."These accused persons along with their other associates were involved in spreading the network of CPI(Maoist) in Assam and North-East region," the NIA said in a statement.

The case was initially registered vide FIR No. 02/2022 at Crime Branch Police Station, Panbazar, Guwahati, district Kamrup and subsequently re-registered by NIA on March 16.

During the searches, the NIA claimed to have recovered incriminating documents. Further investigation in the case is continuing, it

added. On April 3, the agency had conducted searches at 17 locations in Assam and arrested a member of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) for allegedly spreading its network in the northeast region of the country.

The searches were carried out in places in Cachar, Karimganj, Dibrugarh and Dhubri districts.

During searches conducted then, digital devices and incriminating documents of the CPI (Maoist) were seized.

The outfit and its associates arrested in the case were allegedly involved in spreading the network of the CPI (Maoist) in Assam and other parts of the northeast region of the country in the face of continued reverses in the traditional hotbeds of Maoist movement in the affected States.As part of the initial organizational buildup, the outfit is known to seek traction among the peasantry class and the workers union by organizing protests and demonstrations.

Pak MBBS degree not valid in India, NMC cautions aspirants

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Medical Commission (NMC) has cautioned medical aspirants in India against travelling to Pakistan for an MBBS degree, BDS or any other equivalent medical degree, making it clear that such degrees will not be valid.

The NMC, top medical education regulator body said that such students shall not be eligible to appear for FMGE or seek employment in India on the basis of the educational qualifications gained from universities in the neighbouring country.

"Any Indian national or overseas citizen of India who intends to take admission in Bachelor of Medicine Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) or Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) or equivalent medical course in any medical college of Pakistan shall not be eligible for appearing in Foreign Medical

Graduates Examination (FMGE) or seeking employment in India on the basis of educational qualifications (in any subject) acquired in Pakistan except those who had joined Pakistan degree colleges before December 2018 or later after obtaining security clearance from Ministry of Home Affairs till date," stated Dr Sandhya Bhullar, secretary, NMC in a circular on April 28, 2022.

However, the Commission has also clarified that migrants and their children who acquired higher education or medical degree in Pakistan but have been awarded Indian citizenship will still be eligible to appear for FMGE/NEXT and seek employment in India, after obtaining Security Clearance from the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

This notice from the NMC comes a days after a similar notice was issued by UGC and AICTE. In the notice, which was issued on April 22, the UGC and the AICTE said that any Indian national or overseas citizen of the

country who intends to take admission in any degree college or educational institution of Pakistan "shall not be eligible for seeking employment or higher studies in India".

Sources said that higher education regulatory bodies have taken the step following consultations among the Union Home Affairs Ministry, Union Ministry of External Affairs and NMC officials in view of continuation of terrorist funding activities from the neighbouring country.

The NMC had earlier issued a warning against the online medical courses being offered by several Chinese universities. Students aiming to pursue medical or any other courses from foreign universities have been advised to "exercise due diligence," said the Apex medical regulator.

The commission has also already clarified that it does not approve any medical course which is conducted only in online mode.

2 new Omicron sub-lineages can dodge antibodies from previous infection: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Two new sub-lineages of the Omicron coronavirus variant can dodge antibodies from earlier infection well enough to trigger a new wave, but are far less able to thrive in the blood of people vaccinated against COVID-19, South African scientists have found.

The scientists from multiple institutions were examining omicron's BA.4 and BA.5 sub-lineages - which the World Health Organization last month added to its monitoring list. They took blood samples from 39 participants previously infected by omicron when it first showed up at the end of last year.

Fifteen were vaccinated - eight with Pfizer's shot; seven with J&J's -- while the other 24 were not.

"The vaccinated group

showed about a five-fold higher neutralization capacity ... and should be better protected," said the study, a pre-print of which was released over the weekend.

In the unvaccinated samples, there was an almost eightfold decrease in antibody production when exposed to BA.4 and BA.5, compared with the original BA.1 omicron lineage. Blood from the vaccinated people showed a threefold decrease.

South Africa may be entering a fifth COVID-19 wave earlier than expected, officials and scientists said on Friday, blaming a sustained rise in infections that seems to be driven by the BA.4 and BA.5 omicron sub-variants.Only about 30 percent of South Africa's population of 60 million is fully vaccinated.

"Based on neutralization escape, BA.4 and BA.5 have potential to result in a new infection wave," the study said.

India has enough stock of edible oils, says Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the ban on the export of palm oil by Indonesia, the Government on Sunday claimed that India has optimum stock of all edible oils. Quoting industry sources, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs has said that the present stock of all edible oils in the country is around 21 LMT (lakh metric tonne) while another 12 LMT is in transit, arriving in May 2022 in the country.

On the oilseeds front, the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare's second advance estimate released in February 2022 shows a positive picture of soyabean production for the year 2022-22 at 126.10 LMT, which is higher than last year's production of 112 LMT, the ministry said.

As a result of the higher sowing of Mustard seeds by 37 per cent in all major producing states including Rajasthan in comparison with last year, the production may rise to 114 LMT in the 2021-22 season.

Palm oil (Crude + Refined) constitutes roughly around 62% of the total edible oils imported and are imported mainly from Indonesia and Malaysia, while Soyabean oil (22%) is imported from Argentina and Brazil and Sunflower oil (15%) is imported mainly from Ukraine and Russia.

In a statement, the ministry said that a close watch is being kept on day to day basis on prices of Edible oils so that appropriate measures can be taken to keep a check on the prices of edible oil for ensuring that the prices remain stable and interest of

consumers are protected.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee held weekly on Agri-Commodities chaired by Secretary (Food) closely monitors the prices and availability of agricultural commodities including edible oil keeping in view the interest of the farmers, industry and consumers.

The committee reviews price situation on weekly basis, consider relevant measures in relation to edible oils and other food items depending on the domestic production, demand, domestic and international prices and international trade volumes. Special teams have also been constituted by both Central & State Governments to prevent hoarding and profiteering under the Essential Commodities Act. These surprise checks shall continue to check unscrupulous elements.

Indian education sector biggest target of cyber threats, remote learning among key triggers: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is the biggest target of cyber threats to educational institutions and online platforms followed by the USA, the UK, Indonesia and Brazil, according to a report.

The report also says that the adoption of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, digitisation of education, and prevalence of online learning platforms are key triggers that enlarged the attack surface.

The report, titled "Cyber Threats Targeting the Global Education Sector", also claimed that data shows a 20 per cent increase in cyber threats to the global education sector in the first three months of 2022 when compared to the corresponding period of 2021.

The report has been compiled by the Threat Research and Information Analytics Division of CloudSEK, a Singapore-based AI-driven Digital Risk Management Enterprise.

CloudSEK's XVigil platform scours thousands of sources (across the surface, deep and dark web) to detect cyber threats, data leaks, brand threats and identity thefts.

"Of the threats detected in Asia and Pacific last year, 58 per cent of them were targeted at Indian or India based educational institutions and online platform. Indonesia was distant second being the target of 10 per cent cyber threats. This included attacks on BYJU'S, IIM Kojhikode and Tamil Nadu's Directorate of Technical Education," the report said.

"Overall, the USA was the second most affected country across the globe with a total of 19 recorded incidents, accounting for 86 per cent of the threats in North America. These include ransomware attacks on prestigious institutions such as Howard University and University of California. In addition, high-risk API vulnerabilities were uncovered in Coursera, the massive open online course provider," it added.

According to Darshit Ashara, Principal Threat Researcher at CloudSEK, the growing global education and training market both online and offline, is expected to reach USD 7.3 trillion by 2025.

"This promising outlook is predicated on the expanding education technology market,

population growth and increasing digital penetration in developing countries. Hence, it's no surprise that cybercriminals are gravitating towards entities and institutions in the sector," he said.

Adoption of remote learning by schools, universities and related entities to combat the disruption caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic; large-scale digitisation of educational content material, student data and documents and online learning platforms catering to the needs of everybody ranging from preschool children to retired professionals are among the reasons listed in the report, behind the trend.

The report findings indicate that several cybercriminals are actively leaking databases,



accesses, vulnerabilities and exploits, and other information belonging to educational institutions, on cybercrime forums.

"Databases and accesses are the most commonly sought after data types. The databases leaked from educational

institutions primarily contain information Personally Identifiable Information (PII) of students and their families, including name, date of birth, email address, phone number, and physical address; website user records and credentials

and examination results and scores," it said.

The experts have asserted in the report that given the size and impact of the education sector, it is critical for institutions, students, parents, teachers, and the government to ensure that the information gathered and stored is not leaked and exploited by cybercriminals.

Creating awareness among users regarding cyber-attacks, online scams, and phishing campaigns; enacting strong password policies and enable multi-factor authentication (MFA); updating and patching software, systems, and networks on a regular basis; maintaining multiple backups, both online and offline, in separate and secure locations; monitoring logs for unusual traffic

and activity to websites and other applications are among the recommendations made in the report.

"The institutions should block illegitimate IP addresses and deactivate port forwarding using network firewalls. They should perform real-time monitoring of the internet to identify and mitigate low-hanging threats, such as misconfigured apps, exposed data, and leaked accesses, that are leveraged by cybercriminals to carry out large scale attacks.

"The students, parents, faculty, and staff should avoid clicking on suspicious emails, messages and links; not download or install unverified apps; use strong passwords and enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) across accounts," the report added.

PC George held over hate speech; gets bail

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Kerala woke up to a tumultuous Sunday morning as a heavy posse of policemen drove down from Thiruvananthapuram to Eerattupetta in Kottayam district and arrested P C George, seven-term MLA, from his residence in connection with a complaint filed by the youth wing of the Muslim League.

George who was slapped with charges under Sections 153A and 295A of the Indian Penal Code by the police was granted conditional bail by the Judicial Magistrate Court, Thiruvananthapuram within hours of his arrest. By that time, the BJP and various Sangh Parivar outfits had staged demonstrations across the State condemning the arrest.

Leaders of Muslim League and some Islamic outfits had complained to the State Police Chief that George while addressing a public meeting at the capital city on April 29 had demanded that India should be

declared as a Hindu Republic and he had blamed the Muslim youths for the organized Love Jihad. They also accused that George's speech was likely to create hatred between various communities in the State.

Speaking to reporters after he was released on bail, George said that he stood by what he disclosed at the April 29 public meeting. "I did not blame the Muslim community in general for terrorism activities. But it is a universal truth that there are many Islamic outfits which were on a mission to annihilate non-believers. Who can deny the practice of Love Jihad?" asked the septuagenarian leader.

George also said that his arrest was a Ramadan Gift to the Islamic terrorists by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Activists of DYFI, the youth wing of the CPI(M) held



demonstrations across Kerala expressing solidarity with the chief minister and the police for arresting George.

The Armed Reserve Police Camp at Thiruvananthapuram witnessed tense moments as union minister of State for external affairs V Muraliedharan was denied permission by the police to meet George. Valsan Thillankeri, the president of Hindu Aikya Vaidi, while addressing a media meet later in the day declared that the Hindus in the State would stand with George in this hour of crisis.

Maha set to be become \$1 trillion economy, says Governor Koshyari

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra is all set to become a one trillion-dollar economy and it will be the first state in the country to do so, Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari said here on Sunday on the occasion of 62nd anniversary of the State's formation.

Koshyari addressed an event held at the Shivaji Park in Mumbai's Dadar area where he unfurled the national flag.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray was also present on the occasion and the two, who have in the past criticised each other on various issues, were seen exchanging greetings. Koshyari said Maharashtra has set an example before the nation while combating the three waves of COVID-19 in a well-planned manner. More than 92 per cent of the state's adult population has been administered at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, he said.

"Though we were passing through the COVID-19 pandemic, the state did not allow any impediment to affect its



progress and development. Maharashtra is all set to become a one trillion dollar economy and it will be the first state in the country to do so," he said.

Koshyari said he felt happy to note that Maharashtra stands second in the country in the export preparedness index, released by the Niti Aayog. Maharashtra also ranks second in the Centre's 'Good Governance Index report - 2021', he added.

"The policy regarding electric vehicles made by my government is comprehensive and its implementation has also started in the state. As compared to the previous year, the registration of EVs in Maharashtra has increased by

157 per cent," the governor said.

The state government has also decided to give rebates in property tax to citizens and housing societies which will start EV charging stations, he said.

The VAT on CNG has been reduced from 13.5 per cent to 3 per cent in order to give a boost to the use of environment-friendly natural gas. "This will provide relief to the citizens," the governor said. He said the government has planned a bulk drug park in Raigad district along the Delhi-Mumbai corridor and it will be erected over an area of 2,500 acres.

Besides, a medical equipment park has also been planned at the Auric Smart City in Aurangabad over 350 acres of land, he said.

The government is promoting waterways for passengers to reduce stress on roads and railway lines, he said, adding that a water taxi service has been started from Belapur in Navi Mumbai to Mumbai, Elephanta and JNPT.

53,942 unauthorised loudspeakers removed from religious places across UP

Volume of 60,295 loudspeakers set within permissible limits

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Nearly 54,000 unauthorised loudspeakers were removed from religious places and the volume of over 60,000 was set to permissible limits across Uttar Pradesh following a Government order, a senior police official said on Sunday.

A statewide drive undertaken to remove unauthorised loudspeakers from religious places and set the volume of others within permissible limits began on April 25. Under this exercise, a total of 53,942 loudspeakers were removed and volume of 60,295 loudspeakers was set within permissible limits till Sunday morning, Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar said.

The drive will continue in the coming days, confirmed a senior home department offi-

cial. The ADGP said that the loudspeakers are being removed from all religious places without any discrimination.

Explaining further about the action, Kumar said, "The loudspeakers which are being removed are unauthorised."

Those loudspeakers which have been placed without taking due permission from the district administration or the ones which are placed in excess of the permitted numbers are categorised as unauthorised, he added.

He said, "Orders of the high court regarding loudspeakers are also being considered during the exercise."

As per the said 2017 order, the High court had asked the UP government if the loudspeakers at religious and public places were installed after taking permission in writing from authorities referring to the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000. The recent drive against loudspeakers followed after Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, during a review meeting, in April, said that people have the freedom to perform their religious practices according to their faith.

To attract tourists, UP to develop Mahabharata circuit, Bundelkhand

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Government has embarked upon a mission to tap the immense tourism potential of its abundant historical heritage sites dating from the Mahabharata period to the struggle for Independence.

The Government is developing the Mahabharata Circuit and Bundelkhand as part of this mission.

The Government's motive behind this move is to increase people's awareness of UP's rich historical heritage and remind them of the lost and forgotten saga of its heroes such as Maharani Laxmibai and Maharaja Suheldev.

Principal Secretary (Tourism) Mukesh Meshram said that on the directions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, efforts were being made to improve infrastructure and other facilities for tourists in a phased manner at all the

significant historical sites, as pledged in Bharatiya Janata Party's 2022 poll manifesto, for the convenience and safety of tourists.

The Government is also trying to promote the sites as brands in order to attract visitors, he added.

"Work is underway to build a grand bronze statue of Maharaja Suheldev riding a 400foot high horse in Bahraich at a cost of about Rs 45 crore. Similarly, the preparation of the detailed project report (DPR) for the proposed Light and Sound Show at Maharaja Bijli Pasi Fort in Lucknow is in progress," Meshram remarked.

The Yogi Government 2.0 aims at carrying forward its 2018 policy to develop places of historical significance in Bundelkhand and Mahabharata circuits. The land of Bundelkhand is synonymous with bravery and culture in itself.

Labour Day brings no hope for 1 lakh workers employed in Aligarh's lock industry

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

The observance of May 1 as Labour Day brings no hope for betterment to about 1 lakh labourers employed in Aligarh's lock and hardware units when seminars, conferences and rallies were organized in different parts of the city to mark Labour Day. Getting education for their children aged 8 to 14 years is a mirage. For earning little sums, they pay a heavy price in terms of their health by working in closed room under unhygienic conditions.

Busy in searching rags from the garbage container of Nagar Nigam kept at the road-sides in Aligarh Development Colony of Marris Road, Labour Day meant another day for Suneeta and RajKumari, labourers engaged in Brick kiln in the unorganized sector. Aligarh district ranking second in the state for labours engaged in both the organized and unorganized sectors. The offices of district magistrate and deputy labour commissioner have not come out with a single plan or project which

can act as a silver lining in the process of welfare of labour. Although government has introduced more than 17 welfare scheme for labour but they are running on papers as out of 1 lakh, only 8000 labour are registered in labour department.

Belonging to large families, Suneeta work with her three sisters, all aged below 20 years and involved in rags picking business, to provide evening meals for her family. Raj Kumari is the eldest among her six brothers and sisters. Her other brothers are also engaged in a polishing locks factory.

Not only this, several poor and street girls holding a sack on their back bigger than the children's height do their duty of collecting useful rags in front of convents schools on Ramghat Road at the same time when children of rich families come out with joys after finishing their day studies by schooling and none notices the yawning gap between the two.

The labour department conducts raids just to achieve



the given target and then what happens to the like Suneeta and Raj Kumari Seema after that, the department is not concerned with.

These labours do not have any roof. They do not get any support from any non government organizations. Life for them is hard but they do not complain of harsh realities of

daily life. They appear to be as satisfied as a moneyed person. They do not leave others to think of their wretched condition. So this labour Day has no meaning to life.

Not only this, ninety three percent of the one-lakh-strong unorganized workers in Aligarh work as bonded labourers. And 85 percent of

them cannot avail weekly offs without pay cuts, while 0.5 percent workers succeeded in drawing additional wages for additional works. These are the findings in study conducted by Bonded Labour Liberation Organization, an NGO from Delhi.

Aligarh administration including Labour Department is apathic to the blatant violation by Private Employers of the Supreme Court Verdict regarding mandatory weekly, closure of all shops and factories thus depriving the workers a weekly rest day.

According to Labaour Act, weekly closure is compulsory for everyone whether concerned under the Shop and Commercial Establishment Act or Factory Act. These Acts stipulate that the employers are bound to give four days rest without any pay deduction in a month to their employees.

Besides this, not a single migrants workers from other states like Bihar, Bengal and Orissa has received benefits entitled under the Inter-State migrant Workman's Act 1979.

It is learnt that out of 2 lakh unorganized workers, 36 percent are migrant workers from Bihar, Bengal and Orissa.

The main markets of Aligarh like Railway Road, Mahavirganj, Centre Point, Ramghat Road and Sudamapuri are scheduled to be closed on Tuesday. Similarly markets in Muslim areas like Amir Nishan, Dodhpur and Upper Kot should remain closed on Friday. But these markets operate throughout the week due to the negligent attitude of the labour department. The employees are also forced to slog for long hours in the shops and factories, stretching beyond the statutory 10 AM to 8 PM.

Not only this, these labours are also deprived of minimum wages and SC/ST workers are the worst off. Study says that 96 percent of labourers have no knowledge of minimum wages, holidays act. SC and ST workers are the worst sufferers. 96 per cent of SC and ST workers do not receive their minimum wages.

Yogi launches e-Pension portal

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

On the occasion of Labour Day, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath rolled out a new platform — e-Pension portal — to ensure transparent and hassle-free disbursement of pension to the retired Government employees. During the launch of the portal on Sunday, the Chief Minister said, "Labour Day marks the hard work and contribution of each worker towards the growth of the state. The e-Pension portal will end the struggles of those receiving pensions and will make the process transparent, paperless, contactless and cashless."

Taking note of complaints and grievances of the state government employees who superannuate from services, the portal will track the status of their applications (PPO) and will ease the lives of lakhs of people who will benefit from it. "Through technology, Uttar Pradesh, in the last five

years, has brought revolutionary changes in the lives of its 25 crore people. The government is making consistent efforts to introduce technology in every field," the chief minister said.

Speaking about the portal, Yogi said that it was the effort of the Finance department to end the pain and agony of the senior citizens. "This end to end online pension portal has been developed to make the process of receiving pension simpler and it will eliminate the need for pensioners to go anywhere physically," he added.

On the occasion, Yogi stressed on making good use of knowledge, experience and efforts of the retired employees which could help in value addition towards the progress and development of the state.

Praising the services of the workers, Yogi said, "Each worker's hard work matters and has contributed to the progress of the state. You will be recognised

as 'Pension-Yogi' not 'Pension-Bhogi' as you are a 'Karm-Yogi', he remarked.

Working on the guidelines provided by the Union government, the state Finance department has created the portal which will have the option of tracking the status of employees who attain the age of 59years six months. It will benefit around 11.5 lakh pensioners in the state. This system has been implemented for the state government employees and soon other departments will also join the process which will benefit lakhs of people and no one will have to run for pension, the chief minister said.

Listing the efforts of the government towards providing social and economic security to the labourers, Yogi said that every worker, whether migrant or resident, had been provided an insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh and health insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh.

Speeding truck mows down four in Aligarh

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

A major accident happened in Aligarh, UP on Sunday when an uncontrolled truck coming from Anupshahar trampled many passers-by on the Nagla Patwari road adjacent to the city at around 12 noon. After that it collided with the tree. Four passers-by died in the accident, while four people were injured.

The driver is absconding after the accident. Among the dead is Sabir, a technician in the Department of Ophthalmology, Aligarh Muslim University. His posting is in the office of the department located at Gandhi Eye Hospital. In relation to the incident, it has been told by Municipal Magistrate Pradeep Kumar Verma that 4 persons have died in this unpleasant accident. Along with this, four other people have been injured.

In which 3 injured are being given medical treatment at District Malkhan Singh Hospital and 1 injured person in Medical College.

Sabir, a technician in the Department of Ophthalmology of Aligarh Muslim University, was going to his house in Firdous Nagar on bike along with his wife Praveen. The truck hit them from behind. Praveen's condition is critical. After this the truck went for two kilometers hitting several vehicles. Due to this, 13-year-old Faran of Firdaus Nagar has died. Four people including another person Munir have died in the accident. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem.

The uncontrollable truck also damaged the roadside tappers. At the same time, the handcarts of those selling fruits on the handcart were also damaged.

India's leading legal luminary Soli Sorabjee's biography hits stands

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The first ever authorized biography of Soli Sorabjee, one of the leading legal wizards of modern times, who played a prominent role in many Constitutional issues in post-independence has hit book shelves across India. "Soli Sorabjee: Life and Times" authored by Abhinav Chandrachud, takes readers through the most tumultuous period of India marked by many communal riots, Ram Janmabhumi Temple issue and Constitutionals crisis.

Sorabjee, who was keeping good health, was claimed by the pandemic Covid-19 on April 30, 2021. The biography has been released on April 30, the first anniversary of Sorabjee. Besides being a widely respected lawyer, Sorabjee

was a western classical musician of good standing.

Soli Sorabjee, a name synonymous with Indian judicial system, holds many distinctions which may not have many parallels in the country's history. A contemporary of the legendary Nani Palkhivala, Sorabjee was highly critical of the Hindutva forces when they demolished the structure by name Babri Masjid. But that does not prevent Atal Bihari Vajpayee from appointing him as the Attorney General of India when the BJP formed a government at the Centre for the first time in 1998.

At the age of 47, Sorabjee appeared in the supreme Court to defend the Morarji Desai Government's decision to dissolve the Congress-led legislatures in the country. The arguments put forward by Sorabjee

occupies a prominent position in the annals of Indian judicial history. Chandrachud chronicles how Sorabjee who was an admirer of Jawaharlal Nehru had criticised the BJP 'for being obsessed with demolishing mosques' had advised them to replace 'Hindutva' with 'Bharatva' or 'Indianness', was chosen by Prime Minister Vajpayee to represent the government in the Supreme Court in many cases including the Ayodhya case.

The authorised biography recounts how a lawyer with a humdrum customs and excise law practice, whose grandfather sold horse-drawn carriages in Bombay, became a U.N. human rights rapporteur, and repeatedly defend the fundamental right to free speech and expression in the Supreme Court of India.

Woman gangraped in UP's Shahjahanpur

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A 30-year-old woman was gangraped by five men who also recorded the act and made the video viral in Shahjahanpur, police said on Sunday.

The woman, in her complaint, alleged that on April 22, five men dragged her into a hut outside her house and took turns to rape her.

Additional Superintendent of Police (CITY) Sanjay Kumar said that an FIR of gang rape was registered on Saturday based on the complaint of the woman, a resident of a village in Madanapur police station area, and a probe into the matter was on. The accused, the woman alleged, also filmed

the act and made the video viral a week after the incident. The accused are absconding and attempts are on to nab them, the ASP said.

Meanwhile in a separate incident in Bareilly, a 19-year-old jilted lover shot himself dead after killing another man and injuring his family members, police said on Sunday.

Senior Superintendent of Police in Bareilly Dinesh Prabhu said as per the preliminary investigation, it was a case of a failed love affair.

According to police, Rinku Gangwar, a resident of Bareilly district, was allegedly in a relationship with Parchna Gangwar (22), but her parents had fixed her marriage with another person.

NSA invoked against school principal in UP English paper leak case

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Charges under the stringent National Security Act (NSA) have been slapped against the principal of a school in the Uttar Pradesh Board of Secondary Education's Intermediate English question paper leak case, police said on Sunday.

Three other prime accused already face action under NSA in the case.

Ubhaon Station House Officer Avinash Singh said that NSA had been invoked against Akshay Lal Yadav, the principal of Ma Lachhiyapur Yadav Higher Secondary School.

Earlier, NSA was invoked against three other accused in the paper leak case -- mastermind Nirbhay Narain Singh, Bhimpura Maharaji Devi Memorial Inter College manager Raju Prajapati and Ravindra Singh.

Police have so far arrested over 52 people, including three journalists, six school managers and five school principals, in connection with the leak of Class 12 English question paper on March 30.

Ballia District Inspector of Schools Brijesh Mishra is also among those arrested in the case. The three journalists arrested in the case were recently released on bail.

UP tops in making use of e-Prosecution portal

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Government's Prosecution department has remained in the top position in the entire country in terms of the number of entries of the all-India e-Prosecution portal.

The number of entries of UP this year is more than 77 lakh, followed by Madhya Pradesh at 20 lakh and Gujarat with 4.4 lakh.

The E-Prosecution portal is managed by the Government of India under the Digital India Mission. UP is also at the number one position in terms of display of disposal of online cases on this portal with about four lakh entries, followed by 1.3 lakh for MP and 1.2 lakh for Gujarat.

The state's Prosecution

department is first in the country in providing online legal opinion to all police stations in the state with 1.5 lakh entries. Rajasthan and West Bengal follow with 88,000 and 35,000 entries, respectively.

The department also holds the privilege of being first in the country for digitisation of all prosecution related work in courts and feeding them on the e-Prosecution portal. The number of entries for UP was 25 lakh, followed by MP (3.8 lakh) and Gujarat (2.2 lakh).

The five districts with commendable performance on the e-Prosecution portal are Lucknow, Agra, Ghaziabad, Moradabad and Gautam Buddha Nagar.

UP also holds the distinction of being first in India for ensuring prosecution in

crimes against women with 55.2 per cent success in 2019 and 61 per cent success in the year 2020.

Under the Gangsters Act, UP recorded successful prosecution in 77 per cent cases in the year 2021. In cases under POCOA Act and crimes against women, the Prosecution department succeeded in getting capital punishment to five convicts.

In the next 100 days, the department aims at securing conviction of 1,000 convicts under POCOA Act and crimes against women. It is also planned to ensure conviction in crimes under POCOA Act within one month, and ensure punishment in at least 90 per cent of the decided cases under the Arms Act.

The e-Prosecution Mobile app is also being developed

which will incorporate digitisation of all judicial procedures of prosecutors in courts.

According to Additional Director General of Police Ashutosh Pandey, the Prosecution department is conducting a 100-day special campaign under the Mission Shakti for women empowerment.

Specific formats had been designed for providing monthly information on action taken against 25 listed mafia groups in UP; cases underway and decided under the POCOA Act; cases pertaining to illicit liquor and the Arms Act.

The objective is to monitor the progress of officials in all districts in maintaining a steady progress in prosecution of important cases and thus instill a sense of confidence among the people.

Language of justice

It is a long-standing tussle between link language and common language

Language is an emotive issue in India. It was the basis of the reorganisation of the Indian states. The logic was that people who spoke the same language are better off living in the same State. However, there are places where people cannot speak their languages. The Supreme Court and the High Courts are examples where even linguistic chauvinists are expected to follow the court language - English. Early this year, such a case came before the Gujarat High Court. A journalist, facing contempt proceedings, addressed the bench in Gujarati. The court asked him to speak only in English. The contemnor insisted on speaking in the local language, arguing everyone in Gujarat speaks Gujarati. The bench offered him the services of an interpreter and refused to accept his submissions when he did not speak English. In its order, the court said “we will not permit the contemnor to address the court in the language which is not understood by this court”. Article 348(1)(a) provides that the proceedings before the Supreme Court and High Courts should be conducted in English unless the law provides otherwise. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh are authorised to use Hindi in their High Courts. Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Karnataka have sought permission to use their respective local languages. In 2012 and in 2016, the Chief Justice of India after extensive deliberations disapproved of the proposals. The official website of the Department of Justice says “the Government has abided by the decision of the Supreme Court”.



On Saturday, the Prime Minister told a joint conference of Chief Ministers and High Court Chief Justices that local languages must be used in the courts because “unless the common man understands the basis of the justice, there is no difference between justice and a Government order”. The Chief Justice of India said it would happen over some time. Both the Executive and the Judiciary are aware of two facts. One, under Article 348(2), the Governor of a state may “authorise” the use of “any other language” in the proceedings of the High Court. Two, the CJI can permit the use of a local language in a High Court. The problem is that the High Court judges are at present seamlessly transferred to various states because the language of the courts is English and not the local language which they may not understand. Secondly, the language of the court, used for articulation and writing judgements, must be precise, certain and understood by all officers of the courts. Thirdly, the current system of the higher judiciary is unified by a link language which would stand disrupted by the use of local languages. And yet, the fact remains that the litigant, the ordinary citizen, has the fundamental right to “understand” and participate in court proceedings and the judgement delivered. The question is how to reconcile these issues without either emotion or politics creeping in.

PICTALK



Smoke billows from a forest fire in the Tutikandi area of Shimla

Hurdle in excellence in higher education

We all understand why Vice-chancellors in some states work under tremendous political pressure

Great institutions the world over owe their credibility and acceptability to academic leaders, who get respect and admiration for generations. Recall the creation of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. He could persuade Dr. S. Radhakrishnan to accept its Vice-Chancellorship. It would be impossible now. There are set rules, regulations, and laid-down procedures to select a VC. The VC presides over considerable funds and makes a considerable number of academic and non-academic appointments. He too has to follow clearly articulated rules, regulations, and procedures. We all understand why VCs in some states work under tremendous political pressure. In the majority of the States, the Governor is also the Chancellor of state-funded universities. He has the statutory authority to oversee the process and procedure for the appointment of VCs and holds the power to select the person he considers best from among the panel of three/five names prepared by the search committee. In the ancient Indian tradition of knowledge quest, which led to the creation of great global centers like Taxila, Nalanda, Vikramshila, and others, the Kulapati - now VC - is supposed to be an embodiment of knowledge, scholarship, values, compassion, empathy, and an outstanding luminary of eminence. He is the ultimate Acharya, his conduct and behavior have to be exemplary. That is why, independent India put such appointments within the authority of the Governor, who is supposed to be a non-partisan person. There are ample instances - again, exceptions apart - that we had and have - Governors/ Chancellors who strictly adhered to values and principles in appointing university leaders. Of course, some Chief Ministers, who want total control of the universities, do not relish such independent assertion of authority in the selection of VCs.

It was in early December 2021 when the Kerala Governor, Arif Mohammad Khan, deeply peeved by the blatant interference of the state government, offered



to transfer the powers of Chancellor to the Chief Minister. The CM had given another term to his favorite VC, without any concurrence of the Chancellor, the legally stipulated appointing authority. It was done against his wishes. The Governor of West Bengal, Jagdeep Dhankhar, tweeted on December 30, 2021, on how State government officials had issued appointment orders to the new VCs of 24 universities without bringing him in the picture. He is the Chancellor of State-funded universities as well Visitor of the private universities and the appointing authority in all these cases. Probably, taking a cue from Kerala and West Bengal, and some other similar attempts to dilute the authority of the Governor as Chancellor, the Tamil Nadu Government has passed two legislations, formally transferring the powers of the Chancellor to the Chief Minister! The reason was that the Governor was not listening to the State government! As appointing authority, the CM will also hold the power to sack the VC. The appointed luminary has to consistently remain conscious of the sword of sudden ouster ever hanging over his head. Several politicians, who give preference to ideological attachments far more than national interests or the aspirations of



THE KERALA AND TAMIL NADU GOVERNMENTS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE WORKING ON THEIR OWN EDUCATION POLICY, REJECTING THE NEP-2020. IF IT HAPPENS, IT WOULD DAMAGE THE INTERESTS OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THESE STATES PERMANENTLY, ON THE NATIONAL AND ALSO INTERNATIONAL STAGE

the young, firmly believe that all talk about University autonomy; and it is being headed by an outstanding individual are 'meant only for academic discussions, nothing more. They are worried about the recommendations in the National Education Policy - NEP-2020 - which proposes the constitution of a strong Board of Governors -BoG -and shall become the appointing authority of the VCs and other heads of the Higher Education Institutions -HEIs. The NEP-2020 mentions: "It is envisaged that all HEIs will be incentivized, supported and mentored during this process, and shall aim to become autonomous and have such an empowered BoG by 2035." Some politicians in power are disturbed about it. The Kerala and Tamil Nadu Governments are supposed to be working on their own education policy, rejecting the NEP-2020. If it happens, it would damage the interests of the young people from these states permanently, on the national and also international stage.

Despite impediments being thrown in the well-initiated implementation of the NEP-2020, the nation must move ahead with the policy mandate, which said, "It is effective governance and leadership that enables the creation of a culture of excellence and innovation in higher edu-



J S RAJPUT

cation institutions. The common feature of all world-class institutions globally including India has indeed been the existence of strong self-governance and outstanding merit-based appointment of institutional leaders."

In the third decade of the 21st century, several luminaries have predicted that the time of decimation of the era of imperialism that 'future empires shall be empires of knowledge. This has already come true. Nations that fail to realize its import shall certainly lag behind others. However, it is encouraging that Indian academia and scholarship accept the new outlook, and its finds reflection in the resolve made at the national level —

"All leadership positions and Heads of institutions shall be offered to persons with high academic qualifications and demonstrated administrative and leadership capabilities along with abilities to manage complex situations. Leaders of an HEI will demonstrate strong alignment to constitutional values and the overall vision of the Institution, along with attributes such as a strong social commitment, belief in teamwork, pluralism, ability to work with diverse people, and a positive outlook. The selection shall be carried out by the BOG through a rigorous, impartial, merit-based, and competency-based process by an Eminent Expert committee constituted by the BOG."

Some politicians need to be reoriented on what India needs to better the lot of its generations ahead. The task is to bring education out of and away from political interference; the uninitiated must be brought to the fold in light of the words of Mahatma Gandhi: "To me political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life."

(The author works in education, social cohesion and religious amity. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A WELCOME MOVE

Sir — Congratulations to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for this historical initiative to set up ultra-modern Cancer-care facilities in Assam and in other parts of the state. The PM personally inaugurated the hospital at Dibrugarh and 'virtually' launched six cancer hospitals in Barpeta, Tezpur, Jorhat, Darrang, Kokrajhar, and Lakhimpur. It will be South Asia's single largest affordable cancer care network and will give a big boost to affordable cancer treatment in Assam and the Northeast. Such widespread and specialized cancer care networks in Assam were badly needed as the state and the rest of the northeast have witnessed an alarming rise in the number of cancer cases. As many as 34,000 new cancer cases are detected every year in Assam alone.

These new hospitals are all equipped with the latest Hi-tech equipment for chemotherapy, robotic surgery, bone marrow transplant, diagnostic and advanced imaging, nuclear medicine, and stem-cell research. Earlier patients from poor and middle-class families had to go outside the state for treatment mostly to Mumbai. Though Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, is a cost-effective hospital, everyone couldn't travel to the metropolis for treatment. Now, this new network of cancer-care hospitals will greatly benefit the patient, especially from the economically weaker section of the society. These new hospitals will further augment the healthcare capacity in Assam and in the Northeast.

Ramesh G Jethwani | Bangalore

CJ'S CALL

Sir — In the 11th Chief Minister and Chief Justices' Conference held at Vigyan Bhawan, Delhi, on Saturday, Chief Justice of India, NV Ramanna indirectly, took a kind of class of the top leaders of the country. The arrows of his words hit the right target. The leaders understood that when the Chief Justice is saying that the responsibilities of the legislature, judiciary, and executive have been divided in detail in

A cricketing jewel



Fast bowling sensation Umrans Malik has taken the cricket world by storm in this year's IPL. The speed gun from Jammu & Kashmir, which is consistently clocking 150-plus kmph, has been scaring even the best of batsmen and rattling the timber quite often with sheer pace. Despite Sunrisers Hyderabad losing a thriller against Gujarat Titans in their

last encounter, the tear-away pacer has picked 5 wickets, conceding just 25 runs from his quota of 4 overs. England's former fast-bowling great Fred Trueman, who was widely known as "Fiery Fred", once said: "A fast bowler must have a genuine pace before anything else. When my length and direction were a bit off the target, I still took wickets with sheer speed, and it is a weapon in itself." True to the words of Trueman, Umrans Malik has this quality as his chief artillery. Keeping in mind the forthcoming T20 world cup to be held in Australia, the selectors will be looking to enhance India's pace bowling strength, and they would do well to include this young fast bowler from J&K. An explosion of a different kind has been unearthed in Jammu & Kashmir, which is all set to fire in international cricket

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

the constitution, we should take care of our 'Lakshman Rekha'. If the working of governance is in accordance with the law, then the judiciary will never come in its way. Another thing he said is that "court decisions are not implemented by the Government for years and years. Despite judicial pronouncements, there is deliberate inaction on the part of the government which is not good for the country. For example, in a landmark judgment in September 2006, the Supreme Court had directed all states and union territories to bring in police reforms. But what happened to that order? They didn't do anything because politicians need police on their side. The police will become independent as soon as this law is implemented. That's why no government would ever implement the police reform bill."

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

HEATWAVES ARE A MAJOR CONCERN

Sir — The scorching heat this year has crossed all previous records. This March has been declared the hottest March in the last 122 years. The South Asia region is

facing a severe heat wave this summer which has also led to a shortage in electric supply. According to experts, the whole world has been hotter this year as compared to previous years.

This is due to human activities and the danger of climate change predicted by experts. According to experts, the earth will witness more such heatwaves in the coming years. The carbon emission from reckless industrial activities is a major region behind the warming of the earth. The governments of developed countries need to step up their resolve to tackle this issue and work on decreasing dependence on carbon. Scientists around the world with the help of governments should execute plans in an emergency mode to stop global warming. Every political force around the world should prioritize this major issue on their agenda. This global concern should be addressed immediately for the betterment of humankind and future generation.

Deba Prasad Nayak | Odisha

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Make police accountable

If the police cannot nab criminals, at least they should not make scapegoats of innocent citizens

The shocking report of a Police inspector getting a body massage from the mother of a rape accused in a police outpost in Saharasa district has once again underlined the grim reality that the difference between the criminal and police is fast getting blurred. The Inspector has been placed under suspension after the video went viral. But everyone knows what happens in cases of such suspension. An inquiry held, bribe paid, and the culprit exonerated. By then the media forgets the epoxide and the victims are terrorized to remain silent. Such police atrocity does not take place only in far-flung places of states like Bihar. But Delhi, which takes pride in its policing, has its own black sheep. A fortnight ago, the Delhi High court sought a status report on a vigilance inquiry in a case of police atrocity that led to spinal injury to a victim. The inquiry found that the charges of police atrocity were true. The police actively frame innocent citizens to brush up their own records, too. Take the infamous case of Liaqat. The 46-year-old Liaqat Shah of frontier district Kupwara in Jammu and Kashmir was arrested on March 23, 2013, at the Indo-Nepal border as a "suspected" Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) terrorist. Later, it was established that the police had created fake documents and shown fake seizures of weapons from him to frame him up. Liaqat was returning home from across the border of Kashmir along with his family. He wanted to take advantage of the rehabilitation policy for those who had crossed over to the Pakistani side of Kashmir in the early 1990s and now wanted to return home and live a dignified life.



But sadly successive Governments, both at the Centre and states have done nothing to make the police accountable. The police have been given such caste blanche to play with the lives of people, only because people in power need them to execute their designs. When we are talking about freedom, liberty, the right to equality, Ram Rajya, and national pride, it's time we guarantee the self-respect and dignity of the common man from the law enforcement agencies. If the police cannot nab criminals for a variety of reasons in many cases, at least they should not make scapegoats of innocent citizens.

SOUND BITE

My utmost and foremost priority will be to ensure very high standards of operational preparedness to face the current contemporary and future.



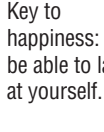
Newly-appointed Army Chief — Gen Manoj Pande



The Russian army is preparing additional refrigerator trucks for storing the bodies of their soldiers.



Ukraine President — Volodymyr Zelenskyy



Key to happiness: to be able to laugh at yourself.

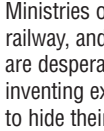


Actor — Akshay Kumar



As an individual, as a batsman, he knows his responsibility, and I'm pretty sure Ishan Kishan will come back very strongly.

Mumbai Indian batting coach — Robin Singh



Ministries of coal, railway, and power are desperately inventing excuses to hide their "monumental incompetence."



Former Finance minister — P Chidambaram

FIRST COLUMN

SILENCE OF THE STRESSED CITIZEN

When freedom is the exercise of voice - one's own or the collective's



BALAKRISHNAN SATYAM

Day before yesterday, I heard a mynah on the kitchen window sill - its tone rang clear. There was conviction, energy and a deep declaration in the chirp. It struck me that fewer people speak like that, and a discreet quietude is more in vogue. Is there a decline in the number of questions or beliefs we ought to express ourselves on? A friend recently remarked that there are more -isms than before but far fewer believers. If we consider an -ism to be a set of strongly held beliefs, a few come immediately to mind. Progressivism and conservatism. Activism and fatalism. Skepticism and utopianism. Science has fostered an abandonment of intense beliefs because it shows us that our schematic understanding necessarily changes perhaps 2-3 times in a century. We have to stay open to a change of paradigm. This seems to leave us with prag-



matism and opportunism! There may be deterrents to an open exchange of views or to an exploration of possible positions. For a few, it could be a lack of access and opportunity, but there are many more who opt to not have a say or to be disengaged. A popular phrase that came up in US politics is 'silent majority'. But what might it mean - is it to be understood as a tacit assent, an apathy, or as a muted protest. Many tell us that our vote is our main opportunity but they forget that it is voice that is actually participation. A vote is once in a few years. Many of our freedoms, in order to be exercised, could call for the exercise of voice. A citizen of a State isn't like a subject in a monarchy - hers is a participatory role. Will the State reflect mainly its powerful, affluent and privileged while it promotes the welfare of the disadvantaged? The modern conservative feels this to be right - proper for economic prosperity, offering reward and opportunity while being considerate to weaker sections as they are sometimes termed in India. Subscribers to various shades of reformism want more visibility, role and even dominance of large communities in the populace, who have been only toilers and troops in earlier centuries. Conservatives and reformists differ on how to use incentives and concessions to spur development. Their priorities don't match. The reformists or progressives are doubtful about the efficacy of the trickle-down model of prosperity and want to guarantee essentials that the bottom rungs cannot afford on their own.

The simple challenge before humanity is to see if it is feasible to adequately reward doctors, teachers and researchers. Somehow a market-dependent, commercialised way of delivering healthcare and education, while providing ready funding on a large scale, also brings them down to the level of wall enamels or mango varieties. Defence personnel serve with a special code and dedication, different from civilians. Similarly, medicare, education and lab research too are fundamentals. There ought to be enough prestige and common perks to keep these specialists out of the market scramble. That's the hurly-burly where mammon takes precedence over man. Unaffordability is as much or a steeper barrier as untouchability, and thus a modern-day casteism has resulted: some term it as 'capitalism'. In the last 300 years or so, since many formal tracts in economics started to get published, concepts like use value and exchange value have been unrestrictedly applied across all types of services. Prior to this era, it's not like there wasn't efficiency, standard of service, and continuous upgradation in capacity in medicine, scientific research and education. Market principles maybe, but the struggle for these basics silences the potential mynahs.

(The writer is a creative director, advertising faculty, and an amateur epistemologist. The views expressed are personal.)

Noida Land Scam, a throwback - Part IV

RERA failed to detect limitations on 70 per cent of the Sports City plot, endangering the interests of home-buyers



R B SINHA

Though the Noida Authority had committed to monitor the progress of project in the brochure, none of the envisaged sport infrastructure projects has been completed as yet. Neither has the Authority encashed the indemnity bond of the allottees for failure to complete the project within stipulated time.

In case of allotments in SC 01 in Sectors 78/ 79(allotted in May 2011), SC 01 in Sector 150 (allotted in May 2011) and SC 02 in Sector 150 (allotted in September 2014), the allottees were required to complete the project in phases within five years from the date of execution of lease deed. In case of SC-01 in Sector 152 (allotted in July 2015), the allottee was required to complete the construction of the international level cricket stadium in the first phase within three years and the remaining residential and commercial projects within five years from the date of execution of the lease deed.

The C&AG has pointed out that plots for Sports Cities were allotted without preliminary consultation with national/international bodies like BCCI, ICC and without fixing and prescribing the technical specifications, etc., required for different sports infrastructure -golf course, international level cricket stadium, Tennis centre, Multi-purpose Sports Hall for Gymnasium, Volleyball, TT, Basket Ball etc. They also didn't do any due-diligence and analysed the reasonableness of the rates/bids quoted by the allottees. It was therefore no wonder that none of the envisioned sports infrastructure have been completed in last ten years though the construction of sports infrastructure was to be given priority in Sport City and completed first and only afterwards, other residential and commercial projects were to be taken up. However, the allottees took up the GH projects first and two residential projects have not only been taken up but completed or partially completed.

Though the terms and conditions prescribed in Brochures permitted sub-division of the plots meant for only residential and commercial use (30% of the sport city plots), the Authority allowed sub-division of the entire plot (826 acres) of the 4 sport city projects into 81 sub-plots thereby destroying the entire concept of development of integrated Sport City. The 578 acres of land earmarked for sport infrastructure in 4 sport cities was too subdivided into 34 sub plots, thereby making the objectives of Integrated Sports infrastructure like nine-hole golf course in three sport cities in sectors-78/79 and 150, international cricket stadium in Plot SC-02 in sector 150, unachievable. The work on cricket stadium has not even commenced though it was to be completed by the end of 2018. The Authority has not yet encashed the indemnity bond of the allottee.

RERA failed to detect limitations on 70 per cent of the Sports City plot, endangering the interests of home-buyers.

THOUGH THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF ESTABLISHMENT OF SPORTS CITY HAVE NOT BEEN ACHIEVED, THESE DEVELOPERS APPEARED TO HAVE GRABBED NEARLY 825 ACRES OF PRIME LAND IN THE CITY AT ONE-THIRD OF THE MARKET RATE WITH AID AND ABETMENT OF SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE AUTHORITY

(The writer is a retired DG of the C&AG of India and a member of RERA, Bihar between April 2018-December, 2021. The views expressed are personal.)

It is also observed that UP RERA has registered residential and commercial projects of the allottees/sub-allottees without noting the limitations on the use of 70 percent of plot of land for Sports infrastructure as mentioned in the lease agreement executed by the Authority. As none of the major Sport infrastructure has been undertaken till date and none of the 9-hole golf courses and International Level Cricket Stadium are likely to be completed in near future, the homebuyers of those residential projects being constructed are likely to face issues in getting their flats registered. Incidentally, most directors of all 4 SPCs at the time of allotment have since resigned and left. The decision of the Noida Authority to approve the use of increased FAR of the entire area of the sport city in residential/ commercial projects of allottees/sub-allottees without ensuring the construction of integrated sport infrastructure in 70% area of each Sport city project is injudicious and highly improper. It would affect the future prospects of the home buyers of these residential projects as their flats cannot be registered unless envisioned integrated sport infrastructure in 70 % area of each sport city project.

Further, the C&AG has determined that NOIDA Authority had given significant incentives of Rs 8,643.61 crore in terms of reduced pricing of plots and allowance of extra Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and Ground Coverage (GC) to the 3 real estate developers for development of sporting infrastructure as against the payment of ₹5598 crores made for 33, 44, 193 sqm (826 acres) of land. Keeping in

view the ongoing development of group housing projects vis-vis little progress observed in development of sports infrastructure in these Projects in last ten years, it would tantamount to providing undue benefit of ₹8,643.61 crore to these three developers. NOIDA Authority, while allowing the builders to pursue group housing projects, abdicated its total responsibility towards completion of envisioned sports infrastructure.

Thus, the world class sports infrastructure envisioned by the Board in 2007 for holding national and international sports events failed to materialise even after a decade. Though the main objectives of establishment of sports city have not been achieved, these developers appeared to have grabbed nearly 825 acres of prime land in the city at one-third of the market rate with aid and abetment of senior officials of the Authority. Incidentally, there was a single CEO of the Authority who dealt with the allotment of Sport City plots in 2010-11 and 2014- 2015.

Discretionary allotment of Farm Houses at prime locations on throwaway prices: In 2009-2011, Noida Authority allotted 157 plots for farm houses of 10,000 sqm each aggregating 18,37,340 sqm in prime sectors of Noida at one-fifth of market rates in an arbitrary and discretionary manner mostly to big business houses, influential real estate developers/builders, politicians, prominent lawyers and their family members without following any transparent bidding process under schemes which did not have any objective criterion for selection of the beneficiaries. Many companies, their directors, family members etc cornered multiple plots at throwaway prices. There was no bidding and selection of allottees was done based on an "interview" by a committee.

The C&AG has pointed out following cases of multiple allotments:

Allotment of 11 plots (FH -3 & FH-19/164, FH-4 & FH-18/164, FH-2 & FH-20/164, FH-5/164, FH-6/164, FH-17/164 and FH-1 & FH-20/165) was made on 30 March 2011 to the companies/entities of the same group (Anil Kumar and Company).

Allotment of four plots (FH-2, 3, 4, 5 sector 131) was made on 27 July 2009 to a group of companies with the same promoter/director (Rajiv Kumar).

Allotment of seven plots (FH-15 & FH-18/128, FH-25 & FH-26/128, FH-27, FH-28 & FH-29/128) was made on 30 October 2009 to four companies of the same promoters (Sanjeev J Aeren and Sunita S Aeren).

Allotment of seven plots (FH-16 & FH-17/128, FH-11 & FH-22/128, FH-23, FH-24 & FH-33/128 was made (two on 26 March 2010 and five on 30 October 2009) to three companies (Meadows Infradevelopers Pvt. Ltd., Glory Infrabuild Pvt. Ltd. and Handful Infra Developers Pvt.Ltd.) of same promoters (Ankur Chadha and Geetu Arora).

In two cases it was observed that four plots (FH-11 & FH-22/128, FH-12 & FH-21/128) of sector 128 of two companies (Meadow Infradevelopers Pvt. Ltd and Snerea realtors Pvt. Ltd.) allotted on 30 October 2009 were transferred to the same individual, Vichitra Lata, on 28 September 2010. **(To be continued)**

POINT COUNTERPOINT



“WE ENCOURAGE THE USE OF LOCAL LANGUAGES IN COURTS. THIS WILL ENSURE THAT THE COMMON MAN HAS FAITH IN THE JUDICIARY...”

— PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI



“IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME... THERE ARE LOTS OF HURDLES, BOTTLENECKS, HICCUPS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REGIONAL LANGUAGES IN HIGH COURTS.”

— CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA JUSTICE N V RAMANA

Futuristic forest management strategies

Today it is essential to enlarge the scope of the forest service and rename it as Indian Forest and Environment Service



VK BAHUGUNA

In the corridors of Indira Paryavaran Bhawan there are whispers about the the Environment Minister's intention to revamp the forest service cadres. The Indian Forest Service (IFS) is one of the oldest civil services and today is in the midst of a big challenge to meet the growing aspiration of the changing society in view of rising population, shrinking resources base, dependency of tribal and rural poor on the forests as also of agriculture and water availability in the country. The threat of climate change and meeting the millennium development goals and the role played by forest in environmental conservation, climate change mitigation and adaption have assumed international dimensions and hence there is a need to revamp the cadre management of various levels of posts.

One of the weakest links in environmental management is the lack of an organized set up at the field and district level. A few years ago, there was a proposal to enlarge the scope of Forest Service and rename it as Indian Forest and Environment Service (IFES). Today it is considered essential to do by reorganizing the IFS. The training of officers shall have to be revised to broaden the course contents. The present cadres of pollution control board, etc., shall be subsumed in this new service. At the headquarters there should be different independent wings to give focus to emerging challenges in the sector.

The job profile of foresters of all ranks has changed a lot since its organizational structure was created in British period which proved the test of that time. However, after independence, the number of posts increased haphazardly to meet the new policy framework yet today the structure remains truncated at the point of delivery i.e. the forest beat level which is headed by the forest guards who have no in depth knowledge of policy issues and spreading dimensions of forest management and also at the district level the set-up is incongruous with civil administration. In Tripura, the government in 2015 replaced the Divisions with functional territorial forest sub-division headed by the State Forest Service (SFS) officers. The Ranges were made co-terminus with blocks and the District set-up with District Forest Officers made co-terminus with civil administration for better coordination and to integrate with other departments and for better man power utilization. There may be more officers at the district level for other line functions but territorial administration becomes unified and focused. The experience improved the efficiency at delivery point with the use of state forest officers gainfully. This exercise should be done all over India by review of SFS, range officers and other subordinate cadres. The forest beats should be headed by the forester rank official. Forest Thana should also be established in certain locations. All ranks in subordinate forest officials should be at par with police in rank and pay. Like police personnel the forest field staff must be paid 13 months' salary and other facilities. Forest field staff needs to be provided with better weapons, vehicles and other infrastructure to meet the challenges from smugglers. However, in many big forested districts like Saranda and Chaisbasa, etc., it may be possible to do it by posting more Additional DFOs in senior scale.

There is also a need to focus on the task of technology development at the state level. There is a need to create Forest Research and Environment Service sub-cadre which will work both at the government of India as well as at state level. The Director of Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy should be designated as Director-General Training and all SFS and other cadre's training institutions should be placed under him to streamline the training and bring uniformity in forestry training of all categories of forestry personnel.

A few months ago, National Commission of Schedule Tribes recommended renaming the IFS as Indian Forest and Tribal Development Service. The proposed forest and environment service can actually be assigned the tribal development work which will promote harmony in forests conservation and tribal development.

Forests constitute more than 21 percent of our land mass. Many economists argue that its contribution to GDP should also be commensurate. Eco-development has tremendous potential to garner revenue for the government as well as local people and farmers and it should be made central activity of forest management. National and State level independent Eco-development wings/ boards or corporations need to be set up to harness the potential.

It would be necessary to set up a study group outside the Ministry to propose changes and then discuss it extensively with states before implementation.

(The author is Chairman, Centre for Resource Management and Environment. The views expressed are personal.)

Ukrainians plead for Mariupol rescue, Russian advance crawls

AP ■ KHARKIV (UKRAINE)

Ukrainian forces fought village by village Saturday to hold back a Russian advance through the country's east, while the United Nations worked to broker a civilian evacuation from the last defensive stronghold in the bombed-out ruins of the port city of Mariupol.

An estimated 100,000 civilians remain in the city, and up to 1,000 are living beneath a sprawling Soviet-era steel plant, according to Ukrainian officials. Ukraine has not said how many fighters are also in the plant, the only part of Mariupol not occupied by Russian forces, but Russia put the number at about 2,000.

Russian state media outlets reported Saturday that 25 civilians had been evacuated from the Azovstal steelworks, though there was no confirmation from the UN. Russia's RIA Novosti news agency said 19 adults and six children were brought out, but gave no further details.

A top official with the Azov Regiment, the Ukrainian unit defending the plant, said 20 civilians were evacuated during a cease-fire, though it was not clear if he was referring to the same group as the Russian news reports.

"These are women and children," Sviatoslav Palamar said in a video posted on the regiment's Telegram channel. He also called for the evacuation of the wounded: "We don't know why they are not taken away and their evacuation to the territory controlled by Ukraine is not being discussed."

Video and images from inside the plant, shared with The Associated Press by two Ukrainian women who said their husbands are among the fighters refusing to surrender there, showed unidentified men with stained bandages; others had open wounds or amputated limbs.

A skeleton medical staff was treating at least 600 wounded people, said the women, who identified their husbands as members of the Azov Regiment of Ukraine's National Guard. Some of the wounds were rotting with gangrene, they said.

In the video the men said that they eat just once daily and share as little as 1.5 litres (50 ounces) of water a day among four people, and that supplies inside the besieged facility are depleted.

One shirtless man appeared to be in pain as he described his wounds: two broken ribs, a punctured lung and a dislocated arm that "was



hanging on the flesh".

"I want to tell everyone who sees this: If you will not stop this here, in Ukraine, it will go further, to Europe," he said.

AP could not independently verify the date and location of the video, which the women said was taken in the last week in the maze of corri-

dors and bunkers beneath the plant.

The women urged that Ukrainian fighters also be evacuated alongside civilians, warning they could be tortured and executed if captured. "The lives of soldiers matter too," Yuliia Fedusiuk told AP in Rome.

In other developments:

Ukrainian Deputy Agriculture Minister Taras Vysotsky said in televised remarks that Russian forces have seized hundreds of thousands of tons of grain in territory under their control. Ukraine is a major grain producer, and the invasion has pushed up world prices and raised concerns about short-

ages.

A Russian rocket attack destroyed the airport runway in Odesa, Ukraine's third-most populous city and a key Black Sea port, the Ukrainian army said.

The bodies of three men were found buried in a forest near the Kyiv suburb of Bucha, the head of Kyiv's regional police force said. The men, whose bodies were found Friday, had been tortured before they were shot in the head, Andriy Nebytov wrote on Facebook. Ukrainian officials have alleged that retreating Russian troops carried out mass killings of civilians in Bucha.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in an interview that Russian and Ukrainian negotiators talk "almost every day." However, he told Chinese state news agency Xinhua, "progress has not been easy." Two buses sent to evacuate residents from the eastern town of Popasna were fired upon, and contact with the organisers was lost, Mayor Nikolai Khanatov said: "We know that (the buses) reached the town and then came under fire from an enemy sabotage and reconnaissance group."

Getting a full picture of the unfolding battle in eastern Ukraine has been difficult

because airstrikes and artillery barrages have made it extremely dangerous for reporters to move around. Also, both Ukraine and Moscow-backed rebels have introduced tight restrictions on reporting from the combat zone.

But Western military analysts suggested that the offensive in the Donbas region, which includes Mariupol, was going much slower than planned. So far, Russian troops and the separatists appeared to have made only minor gains in the month since Moscow said it would focus its military strength in the east.

Numerically, Russia's military manpower vastly exceeds Ukraine's. In the days before the war began, Western intelligence estimated Russia had positioned near the border as many as 190,000 troops; Ukraine's standing military totals about 200,000, spread throughout the country.

Yet, in part because of the tenacity of the Ukrainian resistance, the US believes the Russians are "at least several days behind where they wanted to be" as they try to encircle Ukrainian troops in the east, said a senior US defence official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the American military's assessment.

With plenty of firepower still in reserve, Russia's offensive still could intensify and overrun the Ukrainians. Overall the Russian army has an estimated 900,000 active-duty personnel. Russia also has a much larger air force and navy.

Hundreds of millions of dollars in military assistance has flowed into Ukraine since the war began, but Russia's vast armouries mean Ukraine's needs are nearly inexhaustible.

Mariupol officials have described dire shortages of food, water and medicine. UN humanitarian spokesman Saviano Abreu said the world organisation was negotiating with authorities in Moscow and Kyiv, but he could not provide details of the ongoing evacuation effort "because of the complexity and fluidity of the operation".

"There is, right now, ongoing, high-level engagements with all the governments, Russia and Ukraine, to make sure that you can save civilians and support the evacuation of civilians from the plant," Abreu told AP. He would not confirm video posted on social media purportedly showing UN-marked vehicles in Mariupol.

Ukraine has blamed the failure of numerous previous evacuation attempts on con-

Zelenskyy urges Russian troops not to fight



AP ■ KYIV

U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi has met with Ukraine's president. Footage released early Sunday by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office showed Pelosi in Kyiv with a Congressional delegation. Those with Pelosi included Reps. Jason Crow, Jim McGovern and Adam Schiff.

Zelenskyy told the delegation: "You all are welcome." Pelosi later said: "We believe that we are visiting you to say thank you for your fight for freedom. We are on a frontier of freedom and your fight is a fight for everyone. Our commitment is to be there for you until the fight is done."

The visit was not previously announced. Pelosi met with Zelenskyy in Kyiv. The American legislators assessed Ukraine's needs for the next phase of the war, with Pelosi vowing that Washington would stand with the country until it defeats Russia.

Pelosi, a California Democrat who is second in line to the presidency after the vice president, was the most senior American lawmaker to visit Ukraine since Russia's war began more than two months ago.

Her previously unannounced visit came just days after Moscow bombed the Ukrainian capital while the U.N. Secretary-general was there.

Pelosi and a half-dozen U.S. Lawmakers met for three hours late Saturday with Zelenskyy and his top aides to get a first-hand assessment of the war effort to date.

Speaking to reporters Sunday in Poland, the delegation members were unanimous in praising Ukraine's defenses so far, in painting the battle of one as good against evil and in assuring continued long-term



U.S. Military, humanitarian and economic support.

"We were proud to convey to him the message of unity from the Congress of the United States, a message of appreciation from the American people for his leadership and admiration for the people of Ukraine for their courage," Pelosi said.

Their visit came two days after U.S. President Joe Biden asked Congress for \$33 billion to bolster Ukraine's fight against Russia, more than twice the size of the initial \$13.6 billion aid measure that Congress enacted early last month and now is almost drained.

With the war dragging into its third month, the measure was designed to signal to Russian President Vladimir Putin that U.S. Weaponry and other forms of assistance weren't going away.

"This is a time we stand up for democracy or we allow autocracy to rule the day," said Rep. Gregory Meeks, a

Democrat from New York.

"This is a struggle of freedom against tyranny," said Rep. Adam Schiff, a Democrat from California. "And in that struggle, Ukraine is on the front lines."

Rep. Jason Crow, a Democrat from Colorado, a veteran and a member of the House intelligence and armed services committee, said he came to Ukraine with three areas of focus: "Weapons, weapons and weapons."

"We have to make sure the Ukrainians have what they need to win. What we have seen in the last two months is their ferocity, their intense pride, their ability to fight and their ability to win if they have the support to do so."

"The United States of America is in this to win, and we will stand with Ukraine until victory is won," he added.

The full congressional delegation included Meeks, who chairs the House Foreign Affairs Committee; Schiff, who

chairs the House Intelligence Committee; Jim McGovern of Massachusetts who chairs the House Rules Committee; Crow, Barbara Lee of California; and Bill Keating of Massachusetts.

"You all are welcome," Zelenskyy told the delegation, according to a video of the encounter released by his office.

Pelosi told Zelenskyy: "We believe that we are visiting you to say thank you for your fight for freedom."

"We are on a frontier of freedom and your fight is a fight for everyone. Our commitment is to be there for you until the fight is done," Pelosi added.

The delegation continued its trip in southeast Poland, and members were later visiting the capital, Warsaw, to meet with President Andrzej Duda and other senior officials.

Poland has received more than 3 million refugees from Ukraine since Russia launched its war on Feb. 24.

"We look forward to thanking our Polish allies for their dedication and humanitarian efforts," Pelosi said.

Speaking at a news conference in Poland, Pelosi said she and others in the delegation applauded the courage of the Ukrainian people. She added that the delegation brought Zelenskyy "a message of appreciation from the American people for his leadership."

McGovern said Russia's war had repercussions far beyond Ukraine, saying it was exacerbating a food crisis that would be disastrous for poor people across the globe.

"Putin's brutal war is no longer only a war against the people of Ukraine," McGovern said. "It's also a war against the world's most vulnerable."

He added that Ukraine is a "breadbasket of the world." "I don't think that Putin cares if he starves the world," McGovern said.

NATO exercises begin along its eastern flank

AP ■ WARSAW

Poland's armed forces said on Sunday that military exercises involving thousands of NATO soldiers have begun.

They are regular exercises aimed at improving the security of the alliance's eastern flank but come this year with Russia's war against Ukraine raging nearby.

Due to those circumstances, Poland's military appealed to the public on



Sunday not to publish information or photos of the columns of military vehicles expected to move through the country in the coming weeks.

Some Ukrainians evacuated from ruins of Mariupol steel plant

AP ■ KHARKIV (UKRAINE)

Some women and children were evacuated from a steel plant that is the last defensive stronghold in the bombed-out ruins of the port city of Mariupol, a Ukrainian official and Russian state news organizations said, but hundreds are believed to remain trapped with little food or water.

The United Nations was working to broker an evacuation of the up to 1,000 civilians living beneath the sprawling Soviet-era Azovstal plant after numerous previous attempts failed. Ukraine has not said how many fighters are also in the plant, the only part of Mariupol not occupied by Russian forces, but Russia put the number at about 2,000. An estimated 100,000 civilians remain in the city.

Russian forces have embarked on a major military operation to seize significant parts of southern and eastern Ukraine, the country's industrial heartland. Ukrainian forces fought village by village Saturday to hold back the Russian advance.

Russia's RIA Novosti news agency said Saturday that 19 adults and six children were brought out from the steelworks, but gave no further details.

A top official with the Azov Regiment, the Ukrainian unit defending the plant, said 20 civilians were evacuated during a cease-fire, though it was not clear if he was referring to the same group. There was no confirmation from the UN.

"These are women and children," Sviatoslav Palamar said in a video posted on the regiment's Telegram channel. He also called for the evacuation of the wounded: "We don't know why they are not taken away and their evacuation to the territory controlled by Ukraine is not being discussed."

Video and images from inside the plant, shared with The Associated Press by two Ukrainian women who said their husbands are among the fighters refusing to surrender there, showed unidentified men with stained bandages; others had open wounds or amputated limbs.

Images show damage to oil depots in Russia



AP ■ LVIV

Satellite photos analysed by The Associated Press show damage to oil depots just across the Ukrainian border in Russia after suspected Ukrainian attacks.

The photos from Saturday show damage at two sites in Bryansk. The blasts damaged multiple tanks, leaving the surrounding grounds charred.

The explosions happened on Monday. One hit an oil depot owned by Transneft-Druzhba, a subsidiary of the Russian state-controlled company Transneft that operates the western-bound Druzhba (Friendship) pipeline carrying crude oil to Europe.

The second facility is a short distance from the other. Bryansk is located about 100 kilometres north of the border with Ukraine.

Ukrainians in Romania help new refugee arrivals

AP ■ BUCHAREST

Elena Trofimchuk fled Ukraine to Romania more than a month ago. She now sees Bucharest's North Railway Station as a second home.

She doesn't live there, but it's where she spends most of her day welcoming fellow Ukrainian refugees escaping from Russia's war and helping them sort out tickets, accommodation and onward destinations.

The 26-year-old said that keeping herself busy and useful keeps her from dwelling on Russia's shelling of her hometown, Odesa, where many of her friends remain.

"If you sit and do nothing, you can just become crazy because you're always searching for news. It's very hard. So here I can help people buy tick-

ets and find accommodations. I even help Romanians in the kitchen," Trofimchuk said.

Before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, she worked as a photographer.

Trofimchuk is just one of many orange-vested Ukrainian volunteers working at the station.

Ukrainian volunteer Vitalii Ivanchuk flew all the way from Sri Lanka where he lived with his Ukrainian girlfriend to help refugees coming into Romania.

The 29-year-old IT developer said that many Ukrainians have a tough time communicating with Romanians, and volunteers who can speak both Ukrainian and English are in high demand.

His girlfriend, Anastasiia Haiduk, quit her investment



job shortly after the war started and decided to volunteer at the station until the war ends and she

can be reunited with her family in Ukraine.

The Romanian government

is currently giving away free train tickets to Ukrainian refugees arriving in Romania that they can use to travel on to Hungary, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Slovakia and Bulgaria.

Trofimchuk said she was moved by the warm welcome and the Romanians' show of solidarity with Ukraine.

"Every Romanian person wants to help. They're very friendly. And I was shocked about this. I'm so happy that everyone wants to help," Trofimchuk said.

Nearly 5.5 million people have fled Ukraine since the start of Russia's war on Feb. 24, according to data from the U.N. Refugee agency.

Most have entered countries on Ukraine's western border: more than 3 million people have fled to Poland, while more than 817,000 others have

fled to Romania and around 520,000 have crossed into Hungary, UNHCR statistics show.

For some Ukrainian volunteers, their Saturday evening ritual is to join a weekly demonstration at the Russian Embassy in Bucharest along with Ukrainian residents and Romanians.

Station volunteers in Bucharest say they are now seeing an increasing number of arrivals from Odesa following Russian missile attacks on the southern Ukrainian port city on the Black Sea coast.

But Trofimchuk skipped a recent protest, saying she expected people to arrive from her hometown.

"I will stay at the station as late as I can because there might be people who need my help," Trofimchuk said.

Russian cyber soldiers target leaders: UK

AP ■ LONDON

Russian "cyber soldiers" have launched a new offensive against foreign leaders, targeting social media platforms with a large-scale disinformation campaign that seeks to legitimise the invasion of Ukraine, according to research funded by the U.K.

Paid operatives working from a factory in St. Petersburg use the Telegram messaging app to recruit and coordinate supporters who then flood the social media accounts of Kremlin critics with comments supporting Russian President Vladimir Putin and the war in Ukraine, the U.K. Foreign Office said Sunday.

The so-called troll factory has developed new techniques

to avoid detection by social media platforms, posting comments and amplifying pro-Kremlin content created by legitimate users rather than creating its own content, the Foreign Office said.

Traces of its activity have been found on eight social media platforms, including Telegram, Twitter, Facebook and TikTok.

The operation has targeted politicians and wider audiences in a number of countries, including the U.K., South Africa and India, the Foreign Office said.

It is believed to have links to Yevgeniy Prigozhin, who has been sanctioned by both the U.S. and Britain for financing the Kremlin's online influence operations.

Lankan President urges political parties to set aside differences

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's beleaguered President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Sunday urged all political parties to set aside their differences and appealed to the protesting citizens to join hands to steer a 'pro-people struggle', amidst growing demands for his government's immediate resignation over its failure to tackle the country's worst economic crisis.

His message to the people on International Workers' Day came a day after the powerful Buddhist clergy in the island nation warned that people would be influenced to reject all politicians if Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, Gotabaya's elder brother, did not resign to make way for an interim government to resolve the political and economic crisis in the country.

"On this #InternationalWorkersDay, I once again invite all political party leaders in #lka to come to a consensus on behalf of the people. It's my sincere wish to call on the people to join hands to steer a pro-people struggle setting aside political differences," Gotabaya tweeted.

Sri Lanka is currently in the throes of unprecedented economic turmoil since its independence from Britain in 1948. The crisis is caused in part by a lack of foreign currency, which has meant that the country cannot afford to pay for imports of staple foods and fuel, leading to acute shortages and very high prices. On Thursday, nearly 1,000 trade unions staged a



one-day nationwide strike, demanding the immediate resignation of the government, including President Gotabaya and Prime Minister Mahinda.

The unions from a number of sectors, including the state service, health, ports, electricity, education and postal joined the strike under the theme 'Bow to the people - government go home', urging the President, the Prime Minister and the government to 'go home'.

In his May Day message, Gotabaya said instead of following up on who is responsible for the current problematic situation, what is needed is to focus on what action can be taken to provide immediate relief to the public, online portal newfirst.lk reported.

Pointing out that in the past three years, the group that faced the most serious challenges in the country are the

working class, the president said they are also the ones who were resilient in the face of all these challenges and made great commitments to strengthen the national economy.

"As the day-to-day challenges they face are even more intense today, the government is taking various approaches to liberate the people from this situation and alleviate the oppressive nature of the situation," he said.

Thousands of demonstrators have hit the streets across Sri Lanka since April 9, as the government ran out of money for vital imports; prices of essential commodities have skyrocketed and there are acute shortages in fuel, medicines and electricity supply.

Gotabaya emphasised that the loss of foreign exchange has created many issues, and managing all these factors is the way to solve the current problems.

"Bearing the responsibility of creating a better future for the people of this country, as the Head of State and on behalf of the people I invited the leaders of all political parties to work together," the Daily Mirror online newspaper quoted the president as saying. Each second, our goal is to find solutions to existing crises by resorting to methods that can alleviate the suffering of the people, he said.

"On this year's Workers' Day, I once again invite the leaders of all political parties to come to a consensus on behalf of the people to overcome the challenge we face. I respectfully call on the working people to put politics aside and join to steer the struggle in a positive direction with a pro-people revolutionary transformation on behalf of the working people. It is with these aspirations that I join with you in celebrating the International

Workers' Day that embodies the Workers' Brotherhood, the global labour force," the report quoted the president as saying in his message.

A senior leader from Sri Lanka's Opposition party Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), Lakshman Kiriella, on Saturday said his party will prove their majority in Parliament this week for the no-confidence motion against the government led by the Rajapaksa family.

President Gotabaya has asked the Opposition to show their majority by garnering the support of 113 lawmakers in the 225-member Parliament to form the interim government.

"Everyone will be able to see that we command a majority next week and I will not reveal how we are going to do it as of now," the Daily Mirror newspaper had quoted SJB MP and Chief Opposition Whip Kiriella as saying. Sri Lanka needs at least USD 4 billion to tide over its mounting economic woes, and talks with international institutions such as the World Bank as well as countries like China and Japan for financial assistance have been going on.

Sri Lankan officials were in Washington last week to negotiate with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout.

India has agreed to extend an additional USD 500 million credit line to help Sri Lanka import fuel.

India has already agreed to defer USD 1.5 billion in import payments that Sri Lanka needs to make to the Asian Clearing Union.

Observe Black May Day due to bad Govt policies: Lanka Opp

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Opposition leader Sajith Premadasa on Sunday said that the country is witnessing the most calamitous and disastrous Labour Day since its independence and the working people were observing a "Black May Day" this year due to the 'reckless' policies of the 'tyrannical regime' led by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Sri Lanka is currently in the throes of unprecedented economic turmoil since its independence from Britain in 1948.

The crisis is caused in part by a lack of foreign currency, which has meant that the country cannot afford to pay for imports of staple foods and fuel, leading to acute shortages and very high prices.

Premadasa, who is also the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) leader, said in a message to mark the International Workers' Day that the present "reckless" government led by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has pushed the island nation to the brink of bankruptcy for the first time in its history, the Colombo Page news portal reported.

"Due to the inability, failure, illogical arbitrariness and arrogance of a tyrannical regime, our country and future generations have been plunged into an unprecedented fate.

"In such a situation, working people in our country have to celebrate May Day this year



as a "Black May Day", he was quoted as saying by the online news portal.

Premadasa said that this may be the last May Day celebrated in an anarchic country and a victory for working people. Labour Day is a symbolic day that commemorates the history of the bitter struggle in which working people sacrificed their lives shedding blood and sweat and carried on for a long time up to victory, he said.

"But now the current regime in our country is depriving working people of even the rights they won in the past. "We have never seen a government in history that has shattered all hopes of people in the country in such a short period of time after assuming power," the Opposition Leader said, adding that the government has robbed all hopes of working people of the state and the private sector.

Even people who are barely making their ends meet have been thrown onto the road, he claimed.

"The entire working class, including in health, farming, fisheries, estate, transportation sectors etc., are facing severe hardships. And, it is not even possible to find a non-anarchic, unbroken field.

"Even those who are performing the most essential services, risking their lives to carry out their mission, have fallen out of the attention of the rulers," Premadasa said.

Unscrupulous economic management has led to the plundering of local resources and it is almost impossible to find even a single field which remains undisrupted, he said.

"Social problems have been aggravated by the inability of this bankrupt government to provide basic necessities such as food, shelter, clothing, medicine, education, employment and so on.

"This anarchic regime, which has failed to create an environment in which the people can live without fear or suspicion, has made its sole existence dependent on state terrorism," Premadasa added.

Meanwhile, former president and the Chairman of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) Maithripala Sirisena said that the government has to accept the people's demands, pointing out that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa took over a prosperous country but now over 200,000 to 300,000 people have to face hunger and starvation.

May Day rallies in Europe honour workers

AP ■ PARIS

Citizens and trade unions in cities around Europe were taking to the streets on Sunday for May Day marches, and to put out protest messages to their governments, notably in France where the holiday to honour workers was being used as a rallying cry against newly reelected President Emmanuel Macron.

May Day is a time of high emotion for participants and their causes, with police on the ready. Turkish police moved in quickly in Istanbul and encircled protesters near the barred-off Taksim Square — where 34 people were killed in 1977 during a May

Day event when shots were fired into the crowd from a nearby building.

On Sunday, police detained 164 people for demonstrating without permits and resisting police at the square, the Istanbul governor's office said. At a site on the Asian side of Istanbul, a May Day gathering drew thousands, singing, chanting and waving banners, a demonstration organised by the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey.

In Italy, after a two-year pandemic lull, an outdoor mega-concert was set for Rome with rallies and protests in cities across the country. Besides work, peace



was an underlying theme with calls for an end to Russia's war in Ukraine.

Italy's three main labour unions were focusing their main rally in the hilltop town of Assisi, a frequent destination for peace protests. This year's slogan is "Working for peace."

"It's a May Day of social and civil commitment for peace and labour," said the head of Italy's CISL union, Daniela Fumarola.

Other protests were planned far and wide in Europe, including in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, where students and others planned to rally in support of Ukraine as Communists, anarchists and anti-European

Union groups held their own gatherings.

In France, the May Day rallies — a week after the presidential election — are aimed at showing Macron the opposition he could face in his second five-year term and to power up against his centrists before June legislative elections. Opposition parties, notably the far left and far right, are looking to break his government's majority. Protests were planned across France with a focus on Paris where the Communist-backed CGT union was leading the main march through eastern Paris, joined by a handful of other unions. All are pressing Macron for policies that put

the people first and condemning his plan to raise the retirement age from 62 to 65.

In a first, far-right leader Marine Le Pen was absent from her party's traditional wreath-laying at the foot of a statue of Joan of Arc, replaced by the interim president of her National Rally party. Le Pen was defeated by Macron in last Sunday's runoff of the presidential election, and plans to campaign to keep her seat as a lawmaker.

"I've come to tell the French that the voting isn't over. There is a third round, the legislative elections," said Jordan Bardella, "and it would be unbelievable to leave full power to Emmanuel Macron."

Nepal police, paramilitary force get new chiefs

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

The Nepal government on Sunday appointed new chiefs of the country's police and paramilitary forces, a senior official said.

In a Cabinet meeting, Additional Inspector General (AIG) Dhiraj Pratap Singh was appointed the 29th Inspector General of the Nepal Police. Singh is the third senior-most officer in the police department after Bishwa Raj Pokharel and Sahakul Thapa, who were also in the race for the new post.

The government also appointed Additional Inspector General Raju Aryal to the post of Inspector General of the Armed Police Force (APF), the country's paramilitary force, the official said. Aryal was promoted as the Additional Inspector General of the APF only last week, while Singh was appointed to the post of AIG on March 31 this year.

Evidence mounts of GOP involvement in Trump election schemes

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Rioters who smashed their way into the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, succeeded — at least temporarily — in delaying the certification of Joe Biden's election to the White House.

Hours before, Rep. Jim Jordan had been trying to achieve the same thing. Texting with then-White House chief of staff Mark Meadows, a close ally and friend, at nearly midnight on Jan. 5, Jordan offered a legal rationale for what President Donald Trump was publicly demanding — that Vice President Mike Pence, in his ceremonial role presiding over the electoral count, somehow assert the authority to reject electors from Biden-won states. Pence "should call out all electoral votes that he believes are unconstitutional as no electoral votes at all," Jordan wrote. "I have pushed for this," Meadows replied. "Not sure it is going to happen."

The text exchange, revealed in a court filing from the congressional panel investigating the Jan. 6 riot, is in a batch of startling evidence that shows the deep involvement of some House Republicans in Trump's desperate attempt to stay in power. The evidence provides new details about how, long before the attack on the Capitol unfolded, several GOP lawmakers were participating directly in Trump's campaign to reverse the results of a free and fair election.

It's a connection that members of the House Jan. 6 committee are making explicit as they prepare to launch public hearings in June. The Republicans plotting with Trump and the rioters who attacked the Capitol were aligned in their goals, if not the mob's violent tactics, creating a convergence that nearly upended the nation's peaceful transfer of power.

"It appears that a significant number of House members and a few senators had more than just a passing role in what went on," Rep. Bennie Thompson, the Democratic chairman of the Jan. 6 committee, told The Associated Press last week. Since launching its investigation last summer, the Jan. 6 panel has been slow-



ly gaining new details about what lawmakers said and did in the weeks before the insurrection. Members have asked three GOP lawmakers — Jordan of Ohio, Rep. Scott Perry of Pennsylvania and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy of California — to testify voluntarily. All have refused. Other lawmakers could be called in the coming days.

So far, the Jan. 6 committee has refrained from issuing subpoenas to lawmakers, fearing the repercussions of such an extraordinary step. But the lack of cooperation from lawmakers hasn't prevented the panel from obtaining new information about their actions.

The latest court document, submitted in response to a lawsuit from Meadows, contained excerpts from just a handful of the more than 930 interviews the Jan. 6 panel has conducted. It includes information on several high-level meetings nearly a dozen House Republicans attended where Trump's allies flirted with ways to give him another term.

Among the ideas: naming fake slates of electors in seven swing states, declaring martial law and seizing voting machines. The efforts started in the weeks after The Associated Press declared Biden president-elect.

Black doctors say they face discrimination based on race

AP ■ ATLANTA

Dr Dare Adewumi was thrilled when he was hired to lead the neurosurgery practice at an Atlanta-area hospital near where he grew up.

But he says he quickly faced racial discrimination that ultimately led to his firing and has prevented him from getting permanent work elsewhere.

His lawyers and other advocates say he's not alone, that Black doctors across the country commonly experience discrimination, ranging from microaggressions to career-threatening disciplinary actions. Biases, conscious or not, can become magnified in the fiercely competitive hospital environment, they say, and the underrepresentation of Black doctors can discourage them from speaking up.

"Too many of us are worried about retaliation, what happens when you say something," said Dr Rachel Villanueva, president of the National Medical Association, which represents Black doctors. "We have scores of doctors that are sending us letters about these same discriminatory practices all the time and seeking our help as an association in fighting that."

According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, Black doctors made up just 5 per cent of active physicians in the US in 2018, the most recent data available.

Sloganeering against Pak PM in Saudi: Police books Imran, 150 others under blasphemy laws

PTI ■ LAHORE

A case under stringent blasphemy laws was registered against Pakistan's ousted premier Imran Khan and 150 others, including some members of his former cabinet, in connection with the hounding of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his delegation at Masjid-e-Nabwi in Saudi Arabia, officials said. Video clips circulating on social media showed some pilgrims — apparently supporters of Khan — shouting 'chor' (thief) and 'gaddar' (traitor) as soon as Sharif and other members of his delegation arrived at the Prophet's Mosque in Madina last Thursday.

The Pakistani pilgrims also used abusive language against the delegation members. Madina police claim to have arrested five Pakistanis involved in the sloganeering.

Punjab police on Saturday night registered an FIR against Khan, who is also the chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and 150 others, including former federal ministers Fawad Chaudhry and Sheikh Rasheed, former adviser to the prime minister Shahbaz Gul, former deputy speaker of the National Assembly Qasim Suri, and Khan's close aides in London, Anil Musarrat and Sahibzada Jehangir, officials said.

The case has been registered in a police station in Faisalabad, around 180 km from Lahore, on the complaint of local resident Naeem Bhatti on the charges of desecration of the Prophet's mosque in

Madina, hooliganism and hurting the sentiments of Muslims, they said.

The FIR has been registered under different sections, including 295 A (deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

According to the FIR, over 100 supporters of Khan were sent to Saudi Arabia from Pakistan and the UK to carry out the mission of targeting Sharif and his delegation at Masjid-e-Nabwi in Madina. Khan and other nominated leaders of the PTI had given directions to party workers in this regard, it said.

Woman rescued 50 hours after China building collapse

AP ■ BEIJING

A woman was rescued on Sunday from the rubble of a building in central China more than 50 hours after it collapsed, leaving dozens trapped or missing, state media said.

Separately, police arrested nine people including the building owner on suspicion of causing a major liability accident, the official Xinhua News Agency said.


State broadcaster CCTV showed video of rescuers bringing the woman out on a stretcher about 4:30 p.m. Some could be heard shouting words of encouragement during the operation. She was taken to a hospital and is in stable condition, CCTV said. She was the sixth person

rescued from the building, which collapsed on Friday afternoon in the inland city of Changsha, the capital of Hunan province. About 20 others remained trapped, and another 39 had not been accounted for as of late Saturday.

Besides the owner, police said they had arrested three people in charge of design and construction and five others for what they said was a false safety assessment for a guest house on the building's fourth to sixth floors.

PUBLIC NOTICE

TO WHOMSOEVER IT MAY CONCERN



A notice is hereby given to the public at large that Priyanshu Mishra s/o Ramesh Kumar Mishra r/o Vill. Bibanmau, Jalaipur, Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh -222136 ceased to be an employee of Sri Badrika Ashram Cum Charitable & Social Welfare Society, Vill Shalarnu, Post Karganoo, Distt. Sirmour, Himachal Pradesh - 173223 with effect from 7th April 2022. Priyanshu Mishra is not authorized to collect funds on behalf of or otherwise act on behalf of or represent Sri Badrika Ashram Cum Charitable & Social Welfare Society, in any manner whatsoever. Sri Badrika Ashram Cum Charitable & Social Welfare Society is not responsible or liable for any actions, omissions or representations made by Priyanshu Mishra.

For and on behalf Sri Badrika Ashram Cum Charitable & Social Welfare Society

(Administrative Head)

Sharda Hospital

School of Medical Sciences and Research,

Plot No. 32, 34 Greater Noida, U.P. - 201306.

Mob No. 9803742732, 0120-2329-977, 892.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Sharda Hospital informs that indoor patient medical records except MLC and death patient records from 01.01.2015 to 31.12.2016 will be discarded as per hospital policy and other regulatory norms. In case a patient requires his medical records, he may contact the undersigned within 10 days, hence it is requested to contact the Medical Records Department of the hospital on the above telephone number.

Medical Superintendent
Sharda Hospital

‘LIC will retain stakes in IDBI Bank for bancassurance gains’

New Delhi: State-owned insurance behemoth LIC has said that it will retain part of its stake in IDBI Bank to reap the benefits of the bancassurance channel.

Along with the government, Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) will also divest its stake in IDBI Bank, but may not exit completely, LIC Chairman MR Kumar told PTI in an interview.

LIC is currently doing roadshows for its maiden public issue, which opens for subscription on May 4.

The government for the past few years has been planning to sell its 45 per cent minority stake in IDBI Bank to strategic investors as part of its privatisation drive.

Last week, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey had said the IDBI Bank privatisation process was underway and that the quantum of the stake sale would be determined after the completion of the roadshow.

IDBI Bank became a sub-

siuary of LIC with effect from January 21, 2019, following the acquisition of an additional 82,75,90,885 equity shares.

On December 19, 2020, IDBI Bank was reclassified as an associate company due to the reduction of LIC shareholding to 49.24 per cent following the issuance of additional equity shares by the bank under a Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP).

"Strictly speaking, we are below the threshold limit of management control but then, what government really means is that management control is to be given in such a way that a private entity picks up and runs the bank, and government in the process gets value out of that," Kumar said.

He further said that "since LIC is also in the picture, my stand has always been very clear that we will also divest along with the government, but it may be 49 per cent.

So, it will depend on how this whole transaction plays out and what kind of investors express interest". He further said LIC does not want to

"hold a big stake" but some holding as it has been a win-win for both entities.

IDBI Bank has been the strongest contributor to the bancassurance channel, he said, adding for the bancassurance arrangement to continue LIC may not require to hold the entire stake.

Bancassurance is an arrangement between a bank and an insurance company, allowing the latter to sell its products to the bank's customers and others through the branch network.

In the last three years, the bank has gained a lot in terms of savings accounts, cash management, and premium collection, he said.

"Once you've seen the result of fee-based income coming out of this (arrangement), once the board has recognised that this fee-based income is going to grow, the bank would also like to have continuity in the relationship," the chairman noted.

LIC had bought a 51 per cent stake in IDBI Bank in 2019 for Rs 21,624 crore at an average price of Rs 61 per share. **PTI**

Govt to review design-linked incentive scheme: MoS IT

Bengaluru: The Government will review norms of the design-linked incentive (DLI) program which envisages to support 100 companies involved in product design in the semiconductor space as part of a Rs 76,000 crore scheme for developing the electronic chip ecosystem in the country, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on Sunday. He also said the scheme will continue to be in place to support all product design projects and start-ups, among others.

"Whether the DLI norms need to be modified... We have got some feedback from this conference that maybe the DLI has been designed to be very narrow. Maybe there is a cap on funding that is too restrictive. We will examine all that," Chandrasekhar told reporters.

He was addressing the media at the Semicon India 2022 conference after seven memorandums of understanding (MoUs) were signed between government organisations and technology companies.

"I want to say this very clearly that the USD 10 million package of the Rs 76,000 crore package is for the ecosystem and design and innovation is a very important part of the ecosystem. Talent is a very important part of the ecosystem. There is a need to sort of redesign some of those pieces, we will do it," Chandrasekhar said.

The scheme provides for reimbursement of up to Rs 30 lakh per application for MPW (multi-project wafer) fabrication of design and post-silicon validation activities; reimbursement of up to 50 per cent of the eligible expenditure subject to a ceiling of Rs 15 crore per application for designing semiconductor goods; and reimbursement of 6 to 4 per cent of net sales of designed semiconductor goods over 5 years subject to a ceiling of Rs 30 crore. At the event, the Ministry of Electronics and IT announced the onboarding of Prof Rao Tummala from Georgia Tech University, US, on the Advisory Committee of India Semiconductor Mission. MoUs were signed

between Cyient, WiSig Networks and IIT Hyderabad to enable mass production of "5G Narrowband-IoT- the Koala Chip, Architected and Designed in India".

Signalchip Innovations, Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) and the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) signed an agreement for not only design and manufacture but also deployment and maintenance of 10 lakh Integrated NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation) and GPS Receivers.

State-run CDAC announced partnership with Synopsys, Cadence Design Systems, Siemens EDA and Silvaco for making available their Electronic Design Automation (EDA) tools and design solutions for Chips to Startup (C2S) Programme being implemented by CDAC.

Chips to Startup (C2S) Programme of MeitY aims to create 85,000 specialised engineers at B Tech, M Tech and PhD levels for expanding Indian semiconductor talent. **PTI**

Honda Cars reports 13% dip in domestic sales to 7,874 units



New Delhi: Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL) on Sunday reported a 13 per cent decline in domestic sales to 7,874 units for April. The company had sold 9,072 units in the domestic market during April 2021, HCIL said in a statement.

Exports last month stood at 2,042 units against 970 units in April 2021."The customer sentiment continues to show improvement and positivity, which is reflected in strong demand. However, the supply chain issues remain a challenge for the industry, which is impacting the ability to meet the growing demand," HCIL Director (Marketing and Sales) Yuichi Murata said.

The automaker is hopeful that the situation improves sooner than later so that the demand-supply equation can be more balanced, he added. "On our new City e-HEV, we have received an overwhelming response from the market, reaffirming the preference for a strong electric hybrid model in the mainstream segment. We will be launching this segment-defining product on May 4, 2022," Murata noted. **PTI**

IRDAI panel suggests ‘micro insurance’ for low-income group, small businesses

New Delhi: A committee appointed by regulator IRDAI has suggested over a dozen low-cost ‘micro insurance’ modules with a view to expand protection plans for uncovered population and small businesses.

The committee has suggested that the insurers should be allowed to adopt a modular approach using various permutations and combinations for Combi MI (Micro Insurance) products. ‘MI’ aims to protect low-income people with insurance products that are affordable. The objective of MI is to empower people to cope with and recover from common risks such as death of the breadwinner, paying for treatment of serious illnesses, reconstructing destroyed homes and businesses, among others.

A one-stop solution to meet the insurance protection needs of these targeted groups will go a long way in achieving the objective of increasing insurance penetration in these strata of society, the panel said in its report.

"There is a case to have a Combi MI product which can be developed on a modular basis, giving flexibility to the insurer to offer coverage to different groups and individuals as per their specific protection needs," the report said.

The panel has recommended 14 standard modules and suggested that such products may be sold by insurers either on individual basis or group basis.

Insurers, it said, may follow a modular approach using various permutations and combinations, leaving the choice to the proposer.Certain standard products prescribed by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) can be offered as modules. **PTI**

Maruti Suzuki sales slip 6% to 1,50,661 units in April

New Delhi: The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) on Sunday reported a 6 per cent decline in total wholesales to 1,50,661 units in April.

The company had dispatched 1,59,691 units to dealers in April 2021, MSI said in a statement.

Last month, the company's domestic sales slipped 7 per cent to 1,32,248 units as against 1,42,454 units in April 2021, it added.

Sales of mini cars, comprising Alto and S-Presso, fell 32 per cent to 17,137 units compared to 25,041 in the same month last year.

Similarly, sales in the compact segment, including models such as Swift, Celerio, Ignis, Baleno and Dzire, slumped 18 per cent to 59,184 units against 72,318 in April 2021. **PTI**

Palm oil exports ban a concern but impact to be transitory: Industry

New Delhi: Indian FMCG players, particularly food and snacks manufacturers, have said they are concerned about Indonesia's move to ban exports of crude palm oil, though some of them expect the decision is likely to have only transitory impacts on a short-term basis.

Several industry leaders hint that they will reduce their reliance on palm oil in phases and shift to alternatives such as rice bran oil and cottonseed oil for food products.

Last week Indonesia, the world's largest palm oil producer, banned shipments of crude palm oil (CPO), adding to the previous sanctions on refined oil, to soften the prices in its domestic market.

However, the Indian industry and experts expect the impact of this will be transitory in nature as Indonesia consumes only around one-third of its palm oil output.

India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) "believes that the ban is unlikely to sustain for a long duration, given that Indonesia consumes less than 40 per cent of its total palm oil production, resulting in the impact being transitory".

India is the world's largest importer and second-largest consumer of palm oil, which accounts for around 30 per cent of the country's edible oil consumption, said Ind-Ra.

Expressing similar views Mayank Shah, senior category head at Parle Product, said palm oil is perishable and eventually they (Indonesian exporters) would have to open up. Their production is much higher than the local requirement.

"Hopefully, there could be some reversal in this in the next 10 days as it is not possible for them to continue with the ban for a longer time," Shah told PTI. **PTI**

Tata Motors sales rise 74% to 72,468 units



New Delhi: Tata Motors on Sunday said its total sales increased by 74 per cent in April to 72,468 units compared to 41,729 in April 2021.

The company's domestic sales increased by 81 per cent to 71,467 units from 39,401 units in April 2021, Tata Motors said in a statement.

Total passenger vehicle dispatches to dealers rose by 66 per cent to 41,587 units as against 25,095 units in April 2021.Similarly, domestic commercial vehicle sales surged over two-fold to 29,880 last month against 14,306 units in the same month last year. **PTI**

Resolution primary objective of IBC; but need to be mindful of recovery too: SBI MD J Swaminathan

Mumbai: The primary objective of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) process is resolution of a distressed firm, but the recovery percentage also needs to be kept in mind, SBI Managing Director J Swaminathan said on Sunday.

Financial and operational creditors owe money to companies facing insolvency proceedings and so recovery has to be an important factor while achieving resolution of stressed assets, he noted.

"All of us clearly understand, as the lenders' forum, that resolution is the primary objective of legislation like IBC. So, I don't think that there is any moving away from that particular point.

"We will stay the course on those lines, despite the criticism that either we are being pushed more towards recovery, or we are just being mindful of a res-

olution, disregarding the recovery percentage," Swaminathan said at an event organised by Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.

He, however, added that while attempting a resolution, "we cannot lose sight of recovery".Swaminathan said if the narrative starts building towards haircuts, then it is likely that the lenders may not take any decision, which will lead to paralysis, and then the stressed units will go into liquidation. "In such a case, the entire objective of legislation like IBC towards resolving corporate stress in an orderly manner will be defeated," he pointed out. Haircut taken by lenders as part of resolution plans approved under IBC refers to the shortfall in recovery to creditors as compared to their claims submitted in the insolvency process of a stressed borrower. **PTI**

Suez Canal chief says April revenues hit all-time high

Cairo: Egypt's Suez Canal said Sunday its monthly revenues hit an all-time record, raking in USD 629 million in April.

The unprecedented income came as the Suez Canal in March increased transit fees for ships passing through the waterway.

Adm. Ossama Rabej, head of the Suez Canal Authority, said in a statement that 1,929 vessels sailed through the Suez Canal last month, compared to 1,814 in April 2021.

He said the revenues rose by 13.9 per cent compared to April last year when the crucial waterway received USD 553.6 million.About 10 per cent of global trade, including 7 per cent of the world's oil, flows through the Suez Canal, which connects the Mediterranean and Red seas.The canal, which first opened in 1869, is a major source of foreign currency to Egypt. **PTI**

EV fire incidents will be probed; industry bound to grow beyond our imagination: Transport Secy

New Delhi: Amid multiple cases of electric two-wheelers catching fire, Road Transport and Highways Secretary Giridhar Aramane on Sunday said each and every incident will be probed and asserted that the Indian EV industry is bound to prosper and grow beyond 'our imagination'.

Aramane further said the Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has achieved an overall asset monetisation value of about Rs 21,000 crore in FY22 as part of the Centre's National Monetisation Pipeline.

"Each and every incident (of electric vehicles catching fire) will be probed into," he told PTI in an interview.

Recently, there have been multiple incidents of electric vehicles (EVs) catching fire and resulting in deaths and severe injuries to people.

Asked if the spate of high profile battery fires is undermining India's bid to become



a leader in EVs, Aramane said not necessarily, if the manufacturers quickly establish necessary functional safety protocols, quality control and quality assurance systems.

"The Indian EV industry is bound to prosper and grow beyond our imagination," he asserted.

Aramane said an expert

panel that has been formed to enquire into the matter has not submitted its report.

"All the problems and the procurement, design, management, operations, manufacturing of the batteries and electric vehicles have to be examined," he said, adding following that appropriate recommendations will be given. **PTI**

IOC rolls out 15% methanol blended petrol on pilot basis

Tinsukia: Indian Oil Corp (IOC) rolled out M15 petrol - 15 per cent blend of methanol with petrol -- on a pilot basis in Assam's Tinsukia district.

Union Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas Rameswar Teli launched the M15 petrol in the presence of Niti Aayog member VK Saraswat and IOC chairman SM Vaidya on Saturday.

Teli said that blending fuel with methanol will provide respite from the rising prices.

"Pilot rollout of M15 is a stepping stone towards achieving fuel independence and reducing the import burden," he said.Steps are being taken by IOC to make India self-sufficient in energy, he added. The pilot rollout was done in Tinsukia by the company due to the ready availability of methanol. **PTI**

As prices rise fuel sales growth moderates, LPG consumption falls

New Delhi: India's petrol and diesel sales growth moderated in April while cooking gas LPG consumption fell as record high prices dented demand, preliminary industry data showed on Sunday.

Petrol sales growth moderated to 2.1 per cent in April when compared with the same period in the preceding month, while diesel demand was almost flat. Cooking gas LPG, which had consistently shown growth even during the pandemic period, saw a massive 9.1 per cent month-on-month drop in consumption during April. State-owned oil firms had on March 22 ended a 137-day hiatus in rate revision and began passing a USD 30 per barrel increase in cost of raw material (crude oil) during that period when five states including Uttar Pradesh went to polls.

Petrol and diesel prices



rose by Rs 10 per litre between March 22 and April 6 -- the highest-ever increase during a 16-day period since fuel prices were deregulated two decades back.On March 22, cooking gas prices too were hiked by Rs 50 per cylinder to Rs 949.50 -- the highest-ever rate for the subsidised fuel.The price increases moderated the consumption. Petrol sales by state-owned fuel retailers, which control roughly 90 per cent of the market, at 2.58 million tonnes during April were nearly 20.4 per cent higher than the same period last year. **PTI**

Fundraising via REITs, InvITs slumps 59% in FY22

New Delhi: Fundraising through emerging investment instruments — REITs and InvITs — plunged 59 per cent to Rs 22,145 crore in 2021-22 primarily on account of uncertainty around the world and volatility in the stock market.

In comparison, Rs 54,731 crore was raised in 2020-21. Prior to that, Rs 11,496 crore was mobilised through these avenues in 2019-20, data with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) showed.

The funds were raised through initial offer, preferential issue, institutional placement and rights issue. The total fundraising also included money collected by unlisted InvITs, Sebi noted.

REITs and InvITs are relatively new investment instruments in the Indian context but extremely popular in global markets. **PTI**

Five of top-10 most valued firms gain ₹67,843 cr in M-cap; HUL, Reliance lead winners

New Delhi: Five of the top-10 most valued firms together added Rs 67,843.33 crore in market valuation last week, with Hindustan Unilever Limited and Reliance Industries emerging as the biggest gainers.While Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Bharti Airtel and HDFC emerged as the gainers from the top-10 pack, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, ICICI Bank, Adani Green Energy and State Bank of India were the laggards.

The market valuation of Hindustan Unilever jumped by Rs 25,234.61 crore to Rs 5,25,627.06 crore, the most among the top-10 firms.The market capitalisation (mcap) of Reliance Industries advanced by Rs 21,892.61 crore to reach Rs 18,87,964.18 crore. HDFC Bank's valuation climbed Rs 16,251.27 crore to Rs 7,68,052.87 crore and that of HDFC rallied Rs 3,943.09 crore to Rs 4,03,969.09 crore.

Bharti Airtel added Rs 521.75 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 4,06,245.26 crore.In contrast, the market valuation of Tata Consultancy Services tumbled Rs 22,594.64 crore to Rs 12,98,999.83 crore. The market capitalisation of Infosys tanked Rs 7,474.58 crore to Rs 6,59,587.97 crore. The valuation of State Bank of India declined by Rs 3,480.6 crore to Rs 4,43,106.96 crore and that of ICICI Bank dipped Rs 2,600.14 crore to Rs 5,16,762.48 crore. **PTI**

India-UAE trade pact comes into force

New Delhi: The free trade agreement between India and the UAE has come into effect on Sunday, under which domestic exporters in various sectors like textiles, agriculture, dry fruits, gems and jewellery will get duty-free access to the UAE market.

In a symbolic gesture for operationalising the agreement, Commerce Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam handed over Certificates of Origin to three exporters from the gems and jewellery sector here.

These consignments to Dubai will not attract any customs duty under the pact, which is officially termed as Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs

(CBIC) and the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has issued relevant notifications for the operationalisation of the agreement from May 1.

"Today, CEPA between India and the UAE is coming into force. Today, we are sending the first consignment from India to UAE, which will benefit from this agreement," Subrahmanyam said here.

The UAE is the second or third largest trading partner of India and that country is a gateway to the middle east, North Africa, Central Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, he noted.

The trade pact will help in taking the two-way trade to USD 100 billion in five years from the existing USD 60 billion."USD 100 billion is just a starter...As we go along, it will

become USD 200 billion and then USD 500 billion in the years to come," the secretary said, adding 99 per cent of 'our exports will go to zero duty in UAE". The gems and jewellery sector contributes a substantial portion of India's exports to the UAE and is expected to benefit significantly from the tariff concessions obtained for Indian products under this pact.Overall, India will benefit from preferential market access provided by the UAE on over 97 per cent of its tariff lines (or goods), which account for 99 per cent of Indian exports to the UAE in value terms -- particularly from labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, leather, footwear, sports goods, plastics, furniture, and engineering products.

Underscoring the need for

Indian products to be competitive in the international market, the secretary said that there was a need to build and augment domestic capacities. He also informed that India is negotiating trade agreements at a very fast pace with complementary economies, including the UK, Canada and the EU.

Exports of goods and services account for about 22-23 per cent of India's GDP, Subrahmanyam noted.

"Our vision is that we should take India to a point where 25-30 per cent of our GDP is (from) exports," he added. He asserted that the Department of Commerce has also been strengthening itself to be future-ready and meet the challenges of tomorrow with a focus on trade promotion. **PTI**

FPI outflow continues for 7th straight month; withdraw ₹17,144 cr from equities in Apr

New Delhi: Continuing its selling spree for the seventh consecutive month, foreign investors have pulled out Rs 17,144 crore from the Indian equity market in April amid fears of an aggressive rate hike by the US Fed that haunted such investors and dented sentiments.

Further, foreign flows are likely to remain volatile in the near term amid the high prospect of aggressive rate hikes globally and the headwinds in terms of higher crude prices, and rising Inflation, experts said.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) remained net sellers for seven months to March 2022, withdrawing a massive net

amount of Rs 1.65 lakh crore from equities.

These were largely on the back of anticipation of a rate hike by the US Federal Reserve and due to the deteriorating geopolitical environment following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

After six months of selling spree, FPIs turned into net investors in the first week of April due to correction in the markets and invested Rs 7,707 crore in equities.

After a short breather, once again they turned net sellers during the holiday-shortened April 11-13 week, and the sell-off continued in the succeeding weeks too. **PTI**

PRICELESS WIN FOR TOFFEES

AP ■ LONDON

Everton kept alive their hopes of Premier League survival by beating Chelsea 1-0 on Sunday as Tottenham leapfrogged London rivals Arsenal into the top four with a thumping win against Leicester.

The result at a raucous Goodison Park means Frank Lampard's side are just two points from safety with five games to play -- and will leave Leeds and Burnley sweating.

After a goalless first half in which Everton had the better of the play, the hosts made the crucial breakthrough just after the restart.

Cesar Azpilicueta was pressured into losing possession and Brazilian forward Richarlison swept a shot past goalkeeper Edouard Mendy in the 47th minute.

Just before the hour mark Everton had a huge let-off when a shot from England midfielder Mason Mount hit both posts before Jordan Pickford produced a fine save from Azpilicueta.

Pickford produced a fine save to deny Ruben Loftus-Cheek from range before Demarai Gray squandered a chance to increase Everton's lead.

The home crowd faced the agony of seven minutes of added time but Everton held out, prompting a huge roar of relief at the final whistle.

Former Chelsea boss Lampard, who took over from the unpopular Rafael Benitez at the end of January, has struggled to revive the fortunes of the Merseyside giants.

Everton would arguably be the biggest club ever to drop out of the Premier League -- only Manchester United, Liverpool and Arsenal have won more English top-flight titles -- and they have not played in the second tier since the 1953/54 season.

Son Heung-min scored twice as Tottenham eased past a weakened Leicester side 3-1 to climb to fourth, one point clear of Arsenal, who travel to face West Ham later on Sunday.



Antonio Conte's side have recently lost momentum in the race to qualify for Europe's top club competition, taking just one

point from their previous two matches with no shots on target.

Brendan Rodgers made eight changes from the side that drew

1-1 with Roma in the first leg of their Europa Conference League semi-final last week, with only Kasper Schmeichel, Marc

Albrighton and Timothy Castagne keeping their places.

Harry Kane powered home a header from Son's corner midway

SON SCORED A THIRD IN THE 79TH MINUTE TO KILL THE GAME, CURLING AN UNSTOPPABLE EFFORT INTO THE TOP CORNER BEFORE A LATE CONSOLATION FOR KELECHI IHEANACHO.

through the first half and Son doubled the lead on the hour mark after a pass from substitute Dejan Kulusevski.

Son scored a third in the 79th minute to kill the game, curling an unstoppable effort into the top corner before a late consolation for Kelechi Iheanacho.

Arsenal face the Hammers at the London Stadium after morale-boosting wins against Chelsea and Manchester United, knowing they have fourth place in their own hands. Victory for the Gunners would take them back above Spurs and just three points behind 2021 European champions Chelsea, who have one eye on the FA Cup final against Liverpool.

But Mikel Arteta's side still have to face Spurs on May 12 in a potential winner-takes-all game in the effort to reach the top four. Manchester City still lead Liverpool by a single point at the top of the table after both sides won on Saturday.

Norwich were relegated on a day of drama at the bottom end and Watford look certain to join them after Burnley grabbed two late goals to win at Vicarage Road.

Burnley and Leeds are both on 34 points -- two ahead of 18th-placed Everton, who have a game in hand over both of their relegation rivals.



Lyon vs Barca in Women's Champions League final

AP ■ PARIS

Record seven-time winners Lyon saw off French rivals Paris Saint-Germain on Saturday to join holders Barcelona in the final of this season's Women's Champions League.

The showpiece in the Italian city of Turin on May 21 will bring together the leading side in European women's football over the last decade and the team who ended their hegemony last year and are now seeking to retain their title.

Ada Hegerberg and captain Wendie Renard scored Lyon's goals either side of a Marie-Antoinette Katoto strike as they beat PSG 2-1 to win their semi-final tie 5-3 on aggregate.

The match at the Parc des Princes was watched by a new record crowd for a women's club game in France of 43,254, a week after a world record 91,648 saw Barcelona win the first leg of their tie at home to Wolfsburg.

Earlier Barcelona's run of 45 consecutive wins was ended as they went down 2-0 to Wolfsburg in Germany, but the Spanish champions advanced 5-3 on aggregate to their third final in four seasons.

Barcelona won their first title last year when they crushed Chelsea 4-0 in the final in Gothenburg. That ended Lyon's run of five consecutive Champions League crowns and the French club also saw their grip on their domestic title ended last season by PSG.

Yet they are on the brink of reclaiming that crown and they are determined to wrestle back the Champions League too after following up their 3-2 first-leg win to see off a battling PSG side. "We started this season with the aim of reclaiming the trophy," said Lyon's Selma Bacha, who was full of praise for Barcelona.

"They are helping European football evolve. They play in a similar way to the men's team and are an example to the rest of women's football."

Lyon silenced the home crowd in Paris by taking a 14th-minute lead thanks to 2018 Ballon d'Or winner Hegerberg, the Norwegian rising above Ashley Lawrence to head in Bacha's cross from the left wing.



Atletico Madrid's CL spot in danger

AP ■ BILBAO

Atletico Madrid's top-four hopes suffered another blow as they crashed to a disappointing 2-0 defeat at the hands of Athletic Bilbao.

Athletic Club deservedly took the lead after just eight minutes even if the opener came in fortuitous circumstances, with Inaki Williams' shot taking a wicked deflection off Mario Hermoso to leave Jan Oblak with no chance.

The visitors looked disjointed in the early stages and almost fell further behind, with Inaki Williams agonisingly close to getting on the scoresheet when his wicked cross cannoned off the post.

Diego Simeone changed the system in response to his side's desperately poor start, moving to a back four, as Atleti grew into the contest. Antoine Griezmann registered their first shot on target in the 43rd minute - a tame head-

er - and Yannick Carrasco went close following a lung-busting run.

After the restart, Griezmann's search for a first league goal since November was almost ended with a terrific free-kick that rattled the crossbar.

But Atleti soon had a mountain to climb when Renan Lodi's lax pass was intercepted by Iker Muniain, who drew the foul from Hector Herrera and Inaki Williams coolly dispatched a Panenka penalty past Oblak.

Desperately chasing the game, Atleti threw players forward in search of an unlikely comeback, but it was the home side that looked most likely to grabbing the third goal on the counter-attack.

The result leaves Atletico Madrid four points above fifth-placed Real Betis having played a game more, while eighth-placed Bilbao moved to within a point of a Europa Conference League spot.

AP ■ MILAN

A C Milan left it late to secure a crucial victory over Fiorentina on Sunday as Rafael Leao's strike took their lead at the top of Serie A to five points.

The hosts had squandered a host of opportunities but were then gifted the opener in the 82nd minute when La Viola goalkeeper Pietro Terracciano played the ball straight to Leao, who kept his composure to run in and finish.

Fiorentina flew out of the traps early on as Arthur Cabral's overhead kick was blocked by the home defence inside the first minute.

Milan then had the ball in the back of the net through Theo Hernandez's lovely finish, but

Milan move closer to Scudetto



Junior Messias was offside in the build-up. Cristiano Biraghi's corner then found Igor who lashed an effort millimetres wide before Hernandez wasted a decent chance, striking the side-netting from a tight angle. Striker Olivier Giroud was the next to spurn an opening in an end-to-end first 20 minutes, clipping an attempted effort wide when through on goal. Such an open game would not have been Stefano Pioli's choice pre-game. Milan's Serie A title charge looks set to go to the wire, with both Inter and Napoli breathing down their neck. Chances continued to be

wasted at the start of the second half as Rafael Leao smashed one over the bar following nice work from Braham Diaz and Giroud.

Substitutes Rade Krunic and Ante Rebic livened Milan up a tad, with veteran striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic introduced with 25 minutes to go as Pioli's side looked to break the deadlock.

A break down the left saw Hernandez find Rebic on the penalty spot, but the Croatian's scuffed shot was cleared off the line. At the other end, Mike Maignan was needed to claw away and then catch an Arthur Cabral header.

Rangers play 1-1 draw with Celtic

AP ■ GLASGOW

Rangers manager Giovanni Van Bronckhorst conceded his side's chance of retaining the Scottish Premiership looks over despite battling back to draw 1-1 at Celtic on Sunday.

A share of the points leaves Celtic still six points clear at the top of the table and with a 19-goal advantage on goal difference with just three games to play.

Victory would have virtually guaranteed Celtic the title and they went in front when Jota prodded in after 21 minutes.

Fashion Sakala levelled midway through the second-half and the



Zambian should have given Rangers life in the title race when he hit the post four minutes from time.

"Only a win today would give us a chance," said Van Bronckhorst.

"It's still six points, with the goal difference in favour of Celtic, so it will be more difficult after today."

However, the former Netherlands captain was heartened by Rangers second-half performance ahead of a season-defining Europa League semi-final second leg at home to RB Leipzig on Thursday.

The Glasgow giants trail the Germans 1-0 after the first leg.

"The second half you saw, after 60 or 65 mins, we were getting stronger and

stronger.

"We created great chances, hit the post, you can't ask for more. The only thing is we didn't score the big chances we had."

Van Bronckhorst did not leave much in reserve looking ahead to Thursday as he aimed to apply some pressure to Celtic heading into the final three games of the season.

However, only a collapse will now deny the Hoops a 10th league title in 11 years with just one more win almost certain to be enough.

"We knew they'd throw everything at us and we didn't get beaten which is the most important thing," said Celtic boss Ange Postecoglou.

Unseeded Wang stuns Yamaguchi

AP ■ MANILA

Unseeded Wang Zhiyi withstood a late fightback from world champion Akane Yamaguchi to record a stunning victory in the women's singles final of the Badminton Asia Championships on Sunday.

The Chinese world number 16 needed treatment on a back injury before hanging on to beat the Japanese top seed and defending champion Yamaguchi 15-21, 21-13, 21-19 in just under an hour and a half of pulsating action that had a raucous crowd rocking in Manila.

As in her semi-final win Saturday over second seed An Se-young of South Korea, the 22-year-old Chinese had to recover from the loss of the opening game.



After levelling the match, Wang looked to be heading for a comfortable victory as she raced into a 16-5 lead in the

decider before nerves and her niggling back kicked in to give Yamaguchi a lifeline.

The Japanese player used

all her experience to claw her way back as Wang began to make unforced errors and Yamaguchi levelled at 19-19 after a lung-bursting 30-shot rally.

But Wang, who moments earlier had needed attention from the trainer at the side of the court, summoned up reserves of energy and forced Yamaguchi to go long to set up a first championship point.

Another marathon rally followed, but when Yamaguchi netted the rising star of Chinese badminton collapsed on to her back in exhaustion and elation as she became Asian champion for the first time.

Later Sunday the men's singles final will see fourth seed Jonatan Christie of Indonesia face Lee Zii Jia of Malaysia, the third seed.

AP ■ MADRID

Rafael Nadal deemed Wimbledon's decision to ban Russian and Belarusian players from taking part in the Championships as "unfair", the Spanish tennis legend told reporters in Madrid on Sunday.

The 21-time major winner believes the All England Club chose "the most drastic option", and hopes the tours can find a way to interfere with the ban.

Wimbledon has been heavily criticised by both the ATP and WTA as well as players like Nadal's great rival Novak Djokovic for implementing the ban



due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Belarus is deemed an ally of Russia's troops to invade

Ukraine from across their border.

The ban rules out a swathe of talented players including men's world number two

Danil Medvedev and last year's Wimbledon semi-finalist Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus. "It's unfair for my Russian colleagues," said Nadal.

"In that sense it's not their fault what's happening in this moment with the war. I'm sorry for them. I wish it was not this way, but at the end of the day we know that this is what we have."

Nadal, who is returning to competitive play after a six week hiatus due to a rib injury, said it may fall upon him and his fellow players to take a stand.

"As a fellow player, what can I say? I feel sorry for them," said

the 35-year-old two-time Wimbledon champion.

"I wish this was not the case."

"Let's see what happens in the coming weeks and let's see if we as players need to take a stand."

"There is something wrong."

Nadal criticised Wimbledon for going beyond their remit.

"When a government orders something, you need to follow the rules," he said.

"In this case, the government issued a recommendation and Wimbledon decided to impose the most drastic option without being forced to do so."



WE WERE NOT BLOWN AWAY BY THE OPPOSITION, WE CAME REALLY CLOSE. HAD WE WON THOSE GAMES, THINGS WOULD HAVE BEEN SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT

— ROHIT SHARMA

Openers headline CSK's win

LSG move towards play-offs after six run win over DC

► pointstable

PO.	TEAM	M	W	L	NR	Pts	NRR
1.	GT	9	8	1	0	16	0.377
2.	LSG	10	7	3	0	14	0.397
3.	RR	9	6	3	0	12	0.450
4.	SRH	9	5	4	0	10	0.471
5.	RCB	10	5	5	0	10	-0.558
6.	DC	9	4	5	0	8	0.587
7.	PBKS	9	4	5	0	8	-0.470
8.	KKR	9	3	6	0	6	-0.006
9.	CSK	9	3	6	0	6	-0.407
10.	MI	9	1	8	0	2	-0.836

► boundarymeter

4s 1273

6s 672

PTI ■ PUNE

Ruturaj Gaikwad and Devon Conway's effortless six-hitting exhibition was well complemented by a four-wicket haul from Mukesh Choudhary as Chennai Super Kings notched up a 13-run win over Sunrisers Hyderabad in an IPL match here on Sunday.

Gaikwad (99 off 57 balls) and Conway (85 not out off 55) put SRH's attack to the sword, notching up a scintillating 182-run partnership, the highest opening stand of the season, as CSK posted an imposing 202 for two after being invited to bat.

In reply, SRH fell short, reaching 189 for 6 in 20 overs despite late heroics from Nicholas Pooran (64 not out) and a 47-run innings by skipper Kane Williamson at the top.



Choudhary emerged with the best figures for CSK, scalping four for 46, while Mitchell Santner (1/36) and Dwaine Pretorius (1/40) took one wicket each.

The win, which coincided with MS Dhoni's return to captaincy, kept CSK afloat for an improbable play-off berth as they now have six points with five matches remaining, while

SRH remained in the fourth position with 10 points in the overall standing.

Abhishek Sharma (39) and Williamson gave SRH a flying start to their chase but Choudhary struck twice in two balls to reduce the Hyderabad outfit to 58 for 2 in six overs.

While Sharma was caught by Dwaine Pretorius at long-on, Rahul Tripathi was out for a

duck after giving catching practice at short third man.

Aiden Markram hit two sixes before falling prey to Mitchell Santner.

Pooran hit Ravindra Jadeja for a six before unleashing a monstrous reverse sweep for another maximum, while Williamson too notched up a one-handed six to keep the scoreboard ticking.

The SRH skipper, however, was trapped in front by Pretorius as it became 126 for 4 in 15th over.

Pooran then kept fighting in vain while scoreboard pressure took a toll on the other batters.

Earlier, Gaikwad, who has been blowing hot and cold this season, was at his destructive best as he smashed six sixes and as many fours before tragically falling short of a ton by just one run.

The 25-year-old was in his zone as he stood on his backfoot, and played some exceptional shots to dominate the formidable SRH bowling unit.

Anything short was pulled with immaculate ease, while pitched up deliveries were treated with equal disdain as Gaikwad didn't miss a trick to send SRH on a leather hunt during his classy innings.

Conway too showed great temperament as he was the perfect foil for Gaikwad. He bide his time initially before going for the big shots in the slog overs.

Bhuvneshwar Kumar (0/22) was the best bowler on display for SRH, while pace sensation Umran Malik had a really bad day in office, having conceded 48 in his four overs. T Natarajan (2/42) picked up two wickets but also went for runs. With Washington Sundar suffering an injury while fielding, SRH was forced to use Markram and Shashank Singh as the fifth bowler, who conceded 46 from their combined four overs.

After a watchful start, Gaikwad broke free as he pulled Marco Jansen for two maximums, while Natarajan was sent across the mid-wicket boundary as CSK reached 40 for 0 after the powerplay.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Unheralded Uttar Pradesh left-arm pacer Mohsin Khan put up an exceptional bowling performance as Lucknow Super Giants beat Delhi Capitals by six runs on Sunday, thereby taking a giant stride towards qualifying for the IPL play-offs.

It was skipper KL Rahul's 77 off 51 balls and newly promoted Deepak Hooda's 52 off 34 balls that propelled LSG to an imposing 195 for 3 despite stuttering towards the end of the innings.

In reply, Mohsin (4/16 in 4 overs) got breakthroughs exactly when things seemed to spiral out of control as Delhi Capitals finally managed 189 for 7 in the end.

LSG now have 14 points from 10 games and another win out of the remaining four games would seal a play-off spot for them considering 16 being the magic number in most years.

For DC, things get really tough from hereon as 8 points from nine games mean that they might have to win four out of their remaining five games which looks to be an uphill task with this bowling attack which has been defensive on most occasions.

At least two among Rishabh Pant (42 off 24 balls), Mitchell Marsh (37 off 20 balls) and Rovman Powell (35 off 21 balls) needed to score in excess of 60 to make a match of it.

But Mohsin, who produced disconcerting bounce with his mostly back of the length balls, occasionally slipped in a fuller blockhole delivery as his victims included all the big names



like David Warner (3), Pant, Powell and Shardul Thakur.

The way he set up Pant showed Mohsin's cricketing smarts as he bowled short and wide making the DC skipper desperate to reach for the deliveries.

With not much success coming his way, Pant preempted another short delivery which would have enabled him to play the pull-shot but to his utter dismay found one dipping into blockhole and he yorked himself. Once Pant was out, it was left to Powell but he was also snuffed out with a short delivery which he couldn't clear ending Delhi's hopes of a win even as Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav did try their best. Earlier, Rahul once again anchored the innings with a well-crafted 77 in company of an imperious Deepak Hooda

but LSG didn't seize the initiative completely, despite managing a challenging 195 for 3.

The last five overs yielded 50 runs despite the platform set by the duo, largely due to Marcus Stoinis (17 no off 16 balls) not being able to connect the big shots.

Rahul and Hooda (52 of 34 balls) added 95 runs for the second wicket but more importantly nullified the DC spin threat, taking the duo of Kuldeep Yadav (0/29 in 3 overs), Lalit Yadav (0/16 in 1 over) and partially Axar (0/25 in 4 overs) to the task.

While Rahul, in his 51-ball knock had four fours and five sixes, Hooda had six boundaries, mostly peppering the off-side cordon and a huge six over deep mid-wicket in what was his third half-ton of the season.

KKR hope to end top-order woes, losing streak against RR

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Guilty of making too many changes at the top, Kolkata Knight Riders would like to find a winning combination against Rajasthan Royals and snap their five-match losing streak in the IPL here on Monday.

The form of Venkatesh Iyer, who is experiencing second season blues, has a lot to do with the changes KKR have been forced to make regularly at the top of the order.

Venkatesh's performances have been underwhelming to say the least after a season that helped him get into the Indian team. After his struggles at the top, the team tried him in the middle-order but that too did not work.

Kolkata vs Rajasthan
Live from 7:30pm IST
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

The southpaw was back opening alongside Aaron Finch in the last game but runs deserted him again.

Making the play-offs from here looks improbable for KKR who desperately need to find their best XI and stick with it for the remainder of the competition.

"A lot of chopping and changing is happening, it's been difficult to set up the right combination, with all injuries not helping as well.

We need to stick together, play some fearless cricket, not be conservative with the bat.



"Five more matches remaining, we need to play well, show belief and give something back to the team and the management, forget about the past, start fresh and back your instinct," said skipper Shreyas Iyer after the last game. Shreyas has had a decent run as a batter with 290 runs at 36.25 but he has not got enough support from his teammates. In his first season as KKR captain, Shreyas has shown promise but needs to inspire his troops to script a turnaround. Alongside Venkatesh, the dismal run of another retained player Varun Chakaravathy has hurt the team. However, the move to drop him in the previous game did not yield the desired results as KKR lost their fifth game in a row.

The trio of Tim Southee, Umesh Yadav and Sunil Narine has been impressive and will be aiming to keep the in-form Jos Buttler quiet. Rajasthan rely a lot on Buttler and his 566 runs at 70.75 are a big reason why they find themselves in the top-four. As the Englishman can't be expected to fire in every game, skipper Sanju Samson needs to step up and be more consistent. They are arguably the best bowling side in the competition but could not defend 159 in their previous game against Mumbai Indians due to heavy dew.

With 19 wickets at 13.68, Yuzvendra Chahal leads the bowling charts this season and alongside R Ashwin, Trent Boult and Prasidh Krishna.



'Natarajan in contention for India's T20 WC squad'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former Indian captain Sunil Gavaskar reckons Sunrisers Hyderabad's yorker specialist T Natarajan is going to be in contention for Team India in the upcoming T20 World Cup 2022.

Natarajan is troubling the batters with toe crushing yorkers and tidy bowling in the death overs in the IPL. The left-arm SRH pacer seems to have found his rhythm in the most exciting IPL season and Gavaskar is pleased to see him improving his craft. Speaking on 'Cricket Live' on Star Sports, Gavaskar said: "He's always been a yorker specialist but what we've seen in recent times is the way he's managing to move the ball late which deceives the batsmen.

So, it's good to see that improvement in Natarajan." The legendary cricketer also opined that Natarajan could be a valuable addition to India's pace attack in the T20s due to his ability to bowl with discipline in the death overs.

"It's good to see him do well because for some time it seemed as if India had lost him. It's good to have him back in contention because he bowls very well, particularly in between 16th and 20th over. He'll be very much in contention (for Team India) for his ability to bowl well in the death overs," he added.

Gavaskar also believes that the Tamil Nadu pacer has put the disappointments of the previous season behind and he's presenting a case for himself for the T20 World Cup in Australia.

The former cricketer said, "I think it's a matter of confidence.

Last year, perhaps, he wasn't on top of his game because of the injury situation. Right now he's full of confidence, he's had a bit of a break, and he's fresh and raring to go.

If dew hadn't played a part, 158 would've been enough: Ashwin

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

The target of 159 would have been enough for Rajasthan Royals if dew hadn't played a major role, premier off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said after his team's five-wicket loss to Mumbai Indians in the IPL here.

Suryakumar Yadav and young Tilak Varma gave the best 35th birthday present to their skipper Rohit Sharma as MI finally opened their account on Saturday.

Chasing a victory target of 159, MI reached home in 19.2 overs, courtesy of Surya (51 off 39 balls) and Tilak (35 off 30 balls), the two adding 81 runs for the third wicket.

"I think if dew hadn't played a part, that score would've been enough, but there was heavy dew, so felt it was 10-15 runs

short," said Ashwin at the post-match press conference.

"158 was a competitive score. It was always going to be about how well we started. In fact, we had a very good powerplay and got one wicket more than what Mumbai had at the front.

"So I thought it was a reasonably good score to fight and we pretty much did well with whatever scores we had this season. I thought the wicket was a little sticky to begin with."

It was MI's first win after eight successive defeats and even though the result bears little consequence, it is certainly going to keep the five-time champions in a good mind space.

While RR's winning run came to an end. "It was unfortunate today. I don't know how this works, whether it's the



humidity factor, or the spray whether it works or not or what it was, but it (dew) was wet all over the place today.

"And it makes a massive difference; good deliveries tend to get overpitched and stuff like that for the spinner. Also usage of the spinner cannot be at the back of the innings.

"So all these facets can't be kicking in when dew comes in so it's a combination. We put up a decent score. Could've had 10-15 more, but these things happen in a 14-game IPL," said Ashwin.

In defence of a below par total, RR kept Mumbai quiet in the powerplay while also getting two wickets, but part-timer Daryl Mitchell conceded 20 runs in the seventh over. Asked about the turning point in the match, Ashwin said: "Last game too Daryl Mitchell had bowled that 7th over. It is our

strategy of that sixth bowler and he had bowled well the previous time.

"But today it didn't work, but it happens in the game. If we use a sixth bowler upfront, then we have options in the back end. That's the thought process. Sometimes it comes off, sometimes it doesn't, but that's how T20 cricket is."

Promoting Suryakumar to No.3 worked in MI's favour as he ended with a man-of-the-match performance.

"I've never celebrated personal milestones, but if they help the team, then I will be very happy," said Suryakumar.

"The win will spread a lot of positivity. We already were actually enjoying each other's company during practice session, team dinners and all. This win will spread even more positivity and will help each and everyone learn going forward this season.

Kuldeep Yadav needed positive environment, love & attention: Ponting

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A phenomenal talent like Kuldeep Yadav required a "positive environment" filled with a lot of "love and attention" to blossom and he got that at Delhi Capitals, head coach Ricky Ponting said.

The left-arm wrist spinner, who is currently second in the list of wicket-takers with 17 scalps, had a rough three years prior to this IPL edition after being confined to bench by the erstwhile



national team management and also not getting enough support from his previous IPL team Kolkata Knight Riders.

Add to that a major knee surgery that ruled him out of last IPL.

"We are really pleased for him, he was one of our main targets in the auction. We are giving him a lot of love and attention.

He's a terrific young guy and this talented left-arm leg-spinner really seems to be thriving in this (positive) environment," Ponting

said on *Star Sports' Cricket Live*.

At a base price of ₹2 crore, Kuldeep was a steal for the DC management at a time when most of the franchises were sceptical about how he would measure up post surgery, having not played a lot of cricket prior to that.

In the case of Kuldeep, the DC management has tried to create a protective environment in which the Kanpur player feels secured, and that has led to him bowling beautifully.

Rob Key hints at Eng return for Hales

PTI ■ LONDON

England opener Alex Hales could be available for selection after three years as new ECB managing director Rob Key feels the batter has "done his time".

Hales was withdrawn from England's ODI World Cup squad in 2019 after the Guardian reported that he was serving a three-week ban for recreational drug use.

The 33-year-old has played 11 Tests, 70 ODIs and 60 T20s. Hales last played for England in 2019.

"I will have to speak to the people involved in that decision but I would have Alex Hales



available for selection. I think he has done his time. But does that mean he gets in the team? That is a different debate," Key was quoted as saying by the

Guardian.

Hales, who plays T20 leagues around the world, pulled out of the ongoing IPL citing bubble fatigue.