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# Jet Airways to be back in skies soon

Airline has got security clearance from MHA to start operations

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Jet Airways will be back in the sky soon. The new management has got security clearance from the Union Home Ministry and is expected to start commercial operations at the earliest.

The Civil Aviation Ministry has sent a letter to the airline now promoted by the Jalan-Kalrock Consortium regarding the granting of security clearance from the Home Ministry. On May 5, the airline conducted its test flight at Hyderabad airport and obtained the Directorate General of Civil Aviation's (DGCA) initial clearance.

"It is directed to refer your application .... To convey security clearance for change in shareholding pattern of the company/firm, for scheduled operator permit, on the basis of security clearance received



from the Ministry of Home Affairs," the letter to Jet Airways said.

Jet Airways promoted by Naresh Goyal became defunct in 2018 due to bankruptcy and has now been taken over by the Jalan-Kalrock Consortium, which is the "Successful Resolution Applicant" and new proposed promoter of Jet Airways.

In October 2020, the airline's Committee of Creditors (CoC) approved the resolution plan submitted by the consortium of the United Kingdom's

(UK) Kalrock Capital and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) based entrepreneur Murari Lal Jalan. In June 2021, the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) approved the Jalan-Kalrock Consortium's resolution plan.

The airline now has to acquire air operation certificates from the DGCA. Jet Airways officials said that by October 2022 they can start commercial operations after the DGCA gives clearances on test flights.

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# Police complicity in Jahangirpuri riot needs to be probed: Court

'Utter failure of police in stopping Jayanti procession carried out without permission'

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
NEW DELHI

Dismissing the bail plea of the accused of the Jahangirpuri clashes that shook the national Capital on April 16, the District Court at Rohini has observed that there was "utter failure" on part of the police in stopping the Hanuman Jayanti procession that was carried out without permission and led to violence in the city.

The court directed the Delhi Police Commissioner to investigate the matter and fix accountability. Additional Sessions Judge Gagandeep Singh said personnel of the Delhi Police had accompanied the illegal procession and that their complicity if any, should be investigated.

"The liability on the part of the officials concerned needs to be fixed so that in future no such incident takes place and the police are not complacent in preventing the illegal activities," said the court in the order.



A policeman stands guard at Jahangirpuri as residents peep out of a closed gate of the colony in New Delhi on Sunday.  
Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer photo

The court made the observation while dismissing the bail plea of eight accused persons — Imteyaz, Noor Alam, Hamid, Ahmad Ali, Sheikh, SK Sahahada, Sheikh Zahir, and Ahir — who were arrested in connection with the violence.

At a hearing, the court said the fact that the procession had no prior permission from the police was admitted on

behalf of the authorities and is being brushed aside by senior officers.

Justice Singh said the First Information Report (FIR) filed by the police showed that the staff of the Jahangirpuri police station, led by Inspector Rajiv Ranjan as well as other officials, were accompanying the said illegal procession on its route "instead of stopping it.

"It appears that the local police instead of performing their duty in stopping the said illegal procession in the beginning itself and dispersing the crowd, was accompanying them to the entire route which later on led to the unfortunate riots between the two communities in the city," the court said while coming down hard on the police force.

# Jaipur girl accuses Min's son of rape

Delhi Police files zero FIR against Mahesh Joshi's son, Raj cops to probe matter

**STAFF REPORTER ■** NEW DELHI

A 23-year-old woman from Jaipur has alleged that Rohit Joshi, the son of Rajasthan Minister Mahesh Joshi, raped her on multiple occasions over a year, following which the Delhi Police has registered a zero FIR, officials said on Sunday.

A senior Delhi Police officer said the Rajasthan Police has been intimidated about the FIR and will further investigate the matter.

The case was registered on May 8 at a police station in North District under Sections 376 (rape), 328 (causing hurt by means of poison, etc. with

intent to commit an offence), 312 (causing miscarriage), 366 (kidnapping, abducting, or inducing woman to compel her for marriage etc), 377 (unnatural offences), and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code, the police said.

Mahesh Joshi, the Minister for Public Health Engineering, could not be reached over the phone for his reaction. In her complaint, the woman alleged that the Minister's son raped her on several occasions between January 8 last year and April 17 this year, and also promised to marry her.

The woman said she developed a friendship with Rohit Joshi on Facebook last year and they have been in contact since then.

The two met in Jaipur first and he allegedly invited her to Sawai Madhopur on January 8, 2021.

During their first meeting, she alleged, he spiked her drink and took advantage of it.

*Continued on Page 2*

# List of invitees of Chintan Shivir upsets many Congress leaders

**DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■** NEW DELHI

Ahead of the much-hyped Chintan Shivir of the Congress in Udaipur from Wednesday, not everything is well within the party. The list of invitees who will attend the shivir has left several leaders unhappy.

Several party leaders have questioned why only national and State office bearers figure in the list and why other senior leaders, including former Ministers, ex-MPs, and the younger lot, have not been given space to share their views and ideas for the resurrection of the grand old party.

"They called it nav (new) Chintan Shivir then why not a mix of invitees would share their vision to revive the party? In a three-day session many leaders could get chance to speak, but the same stereotypical behaviour of the party has left many of us disappointed," a former State President of a

prominent State told The Pioneer.

Another leader said the shivir should have been planned as a platform to discuss and debate new ideas coming from a young generation of leaders. "The incumbent office bearers are already part of the system, and it is due to them that the party is being decimated each passing day," he said.

AICC sources said about 400 leaders have been invited to attend the shivir. They include members of Parliament from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, besides State Congress Committee presidents and Congress Legislature Party chiefs.

"If only new people get chance to share their ideas, then only a positive change can be brought about," said a former Rajya Sabha Congress MP.

Another party worker who was part of the Shimla Session in 2003 recalled how about 50 participants were picked from

across the States on a random basis, and a large number of youth leaders were also part of the 2013 Jaipur Plenary.

He also recalled that then Congress chief Rahul Gandhi in the same meeting had said the party should open the doors to people who don't hold any position or are not office bearers even at block level. While sections of senior leaders are angry because they are not on the list despite their experience and positions they held in the past, younger leaders believe at least 50 per cent of the participants should have been new, from outside the system. Another senior leader, who is now a party worker for four decades, rued the fact that he never got an opportunity to attend any of such party's congregation.

He took a swipe at the party for forming a set of committees on various issues except for the most crucial leadership crisis.

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# Covid cases dip but active infections rise

Active caseload increases to 20,635; Delhi, Maha spark concerns of fresh resurgence

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

India recorded 3,451 new Covid cases and 40 deaths in the last 24 hours, a marginal decline from 3,805 cases registered the previous day. The decline in the number of infections is attributed to the lower number of testing on week-ends.

However, the cases continued to be on the rise in Delhi and Maharashtra, sparking concerns of a fresh resurgence.

While Maharashtra recorded 253 new Covid-19 cases on Saturday - up from



205 a day ago, Delhi saw 1,407 cases - a minor dip from Friday's tally of 1,656.

According to Health Ministry's data, the current Covid caseload in the country stands at 43,102,194 and a total of 5,24,064 people have died due to respiratory infection since 2020. India's death rate is 1.22 per cent of the total caseload. The number of active cases in India has risen to 20,635 with an increase of 332 cases in a day. The current active caseload is 0.05 per cent, as per the Government data.

The 40 new fatalities include 35 from Kerala and two from Delhi and one each from Gujarat, Maharashtra and Uttar

Pradesh. Delhi's positivity rate dropped to 4.72 per cent on Saturday.

The city reported 1,407 new Covid cases and 4,365 recoveries in a day.

There are 5,955 active cases in the capital, down from 6,096 the previous day. The number of containment zones has risen to 1,630 from 1,597 on Friday, according to the city's health bulletin.

On the other hand, Maharashtra reported 253 new Covid cases, the highest since the last week of March on Saturday while Gujarat logged 27 Coronavirus cases and one death. The lone death took place in Kheda district.

# Khalistan flags found tied on HP Assembly's gate

**Dharamshala/New Delhi:** Khalistan flags were found tied on the main gate and slogans scrawled on the walls of the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly complex in Dharamshala, police said on Sunday.

While State Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur condemned the "cowardly" act, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which is making inroads in the poll-bound State, termed the incident a "complete security failure" on the part of the BJP-led Government.

The flags, which were removed by the administration, were put up on gate number one of the Assembly complex, police said.

"It might have happened in the late night or early morning today. We have removed the Khalistani flags from Vidhan Sabha gate. We are investigating and going to register a case," Kangra Superintendent of Police Khushal Sharma said. The Winter Session of the



HP Assembly is usually held in Dharamshala. Condemning the incident, Chief Minister Thakur said the culprits will be caught soon.

"I condemn the cowardly incident of raising Khalistan flags at the gate of the Dharamshala Assembly Complex in the dark of night. Only the Winter Session of the Assembly is held there, and hence it requires tighter secu-

urity arrangements during that time only," he tweeted. "Taking advantage of this, the cowardly incident was carried out, but the Government will not tolerate it. Wherever the culprits are, they will be caught soon. Strict action will be taken against the perpetrators of this incident," Thakur said.

SDM, Dharamshala, Shilpi Beakta said, "It is an alert call for us.

CM condemns cowardly act, Opp slams BJP Govt

We received information this morning around 7.30 A.M. We have removed the flags and walls have been painted again. We are inquiring about the matter and are going to register a case under relevant Sections of the Himachal Pradesh Open Places (Prevention of Disfigurement Act), 1985." The rest of the details can be shared after investigation, she added.

Meanwhile, the AAP slammed the BJP, asking how would its Government save the people of the country when it failed in ensuring national security. Taking to twitter, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said that the putting up of the Khalistan flags outside the gate of Himachal Assembly building in Dharamshala was a "complete" failure of the BJP Government in dealing with the matter pertaining to national security and keeping the respect of the people of the hill State.

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# 'Asani likely to intensify into severe cyclonic storm'

Unlikely to make landfall, say IMD officials; Kolkata, Odisha on alert

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

The Indian Meteorological Department on Sunday said that Cyclone Asani is likely to intensify into a "severe cyclonic storm" in the next 12 hours. Asani is the first cyclonic storm in the North Indian Ocean region in 2022. The cyclone is named Asani by Sri Lanka and means "wrath" in Sinhalese.

The Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has put on alert its employees and disaster management team. The KMC has cancelled leaves of all employees to deal with any emergency evolving due to the cyclone.

Trinamool Congress General Secretary Kunal Ghosh on Sunday said that due to the prediction of the Asani storm, Chief Minister Mamata



Banerjee's three-day programme in West Midnapore and Jhargram has been rescheduled to May 17, 18, and 19 from May 10, 11 and 12.

The Odisha Government

said that arrangements have been made to evacuate 7.5 lakh people in 18 districts if any such emergency situation arises due to the cyclone.

Taking to Twitter, the India

Meteorological Department (IMD) said, "The CS 'Asani' over Southeast Bay of Bengal moved northwestwards and lay centered at 1130 hours IST of today, over the same region about 530 km west-northwest of Car Nicobar (Nicobar Islands), 440 km west of Port Blair (Andaman Islands), 900 km southeast of Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh)."

"It is very likely to move northwestwards and intensify further into a severe cyclonic storm over East-Central Bay of Bengal during next 24 hours," the IMD said adding that the system is very likely to continue to move northwestwards till May 10 evening and reach West-central and adjoining Northwest Bay of Bengal off North Andhra Pradesh and Odisha coasts.

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'HANUMAN CHALISA' ROW

Navneet dares Uddhav to contest poll against her

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In her first public posturing after release on bail in the ‘Hanuman Chalisa’ case and subsequent discharge from a city hospital, Independent MP from Amravati Navneet Rana dared Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray to contest and win against her from any constituency in Maharashtra.

Interacting after her discharge from the Lilavati Hospital where she had been admitted for a check-up following the court orders, Navneet said: “If I reciting Hanuman Chalisa or taking the name of Lord Ram is a crime, I am prepared to be behind bars for not just 14 days (for which she her MLA-husband remanded in custody after their arrest in the Hanuman Chalisa case) full 14 years. The people have seen the way I was acted against. I will continue my fight”.

In an apparent political grandstanding, Navneet threw a challenge to the chief minister by saying: “You can contest

from any constituency in Maharashtra, I will be your opponent. Prove it you can get elected from the people”.

Coming down heavily on the ruling Shiv Sena, Navneet said that she would campaign against the Sena in the forthcoming Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). “The Shiv Sena has been in power in the BMC for two generations. The Sena is indulging in massive corruption in BMC. I am the daughter of Mumbai. I will work towards unseating the Shiv Sena from power in the BMC. Watch my words, Mumbaikars and Ram bhakt will burn down the Sena’s Lanka in the coming months,” she said.

Earlier in the day before her discharge from there, senior BJP leaders Devendra Fadnavis visited the Lilavati Hospital and made enquiries about her.

In related development, Navneet’s MLA-husband Ravi Rana said that the MVA government took forcible action against his MP-wife as chief minister Uddhav Thackeray

was “scared of her”. He alleged that the police treated Navneet and him badly denying them basic facilities at the police lockup on the first day of their arrest.

Targeting Shiv Sena chief spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut for his statement that the Rana couple would be buried 20 feet beneath the earthy, Navneet said: “That ‘popat’ (parrot) said in Nagpur that he would bury me 20 feet under the ground... just wait and see, with the Lanka of corruption they have erected in the BMC, the people of Mumbai and Maharashtra will dump them 20 feet below the earth.”

Meanwhile, Shiv Sena Spokesperson Dr. Manisha Kayande dared Navneet to make her MRI report public so that the people would know what exactly was wrong with her.

When the ‘Bunty-Babli’ (Ranas) couple was arrested, Babli (Navneet) was cribbing and crying in jail and hospital. But, now after her discharge she has suddenly become so

energetic. My challenge to Navneet: Make your MRI report also public, let the people know what exactly was wrong with you... She was seen today standing and talking for hours with the media, flouting the court orders,” Dr. Kayande said

Ex-Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar hit out at Navneet saying she’s “itching to get back to jail” with her statements today though barred by the courts and the (Rana) couple is deliberately trying to foment riots in Maharashtra, but they won’t succeed.

“What’s her ‘layakee’ to talk like this? They just want to ignite disturbances through their backdoor supporters who give them energy,” Pednekar said.

Pednekar said that Navneet is a MP and should behave like one instead of attacking the CM in such a manner just because there’s freedom of speech here.

“We thought our Babli would have grown up... But no, she’s still immature,” Pednekar said.

5 of family drown in water filled quarry

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Five members of a family met watery grave on Sunday when they fell into a water-filled quarry located in the vicinity of Dombivli township in the neighbouring Thane district.

Identifying the five members of the deceased family as Mira Gaikwad (55), her daughter-in-law Apeksha (50) and her two sons - Mayuresh (15) and Moksha (13) and their relative Nilesh (15), the police said that the victims were residents of Desle Pada, a hamlet located on the outskirts of Dombivli (East).

The incident took place when the two women from the family were washing clothes at the water-filled quarry. One of the boys all of a sudden slipped into the water. To save the boy from drowning, the four others jumped into the water and drowned.

The Manpada police station has registered an Accidental Death Report (ADR).The post-mortem was conducted at the KDMC General Hospital at Shastri Nagar.

Meanwhile, in another shocking incident, the body of a 20-year-old girl from Bihar was found dead in the wash-

Two Mumbai-based trekkers die in separate incidents in Nepal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI

Two Mumbai-based mountaineers and adventurers died in separate incidents in the Himalayan ranges in Nepal, last week.

Reports reaching here on Sunday identified the deceased as Narayanan Iyer (52), a resident of Ghatkopar in north-east Mumbai and Dr Pradnya Samant (55), a resident of Goregaon in north Mumbai.

Dr Sawant was during the Everest Base Camp trek when she developed high-altitude sickness in Khumbu region of Nepal. She was rushed to the

room of a train in Palghar near Mumbai on Sunday.

The body was found in the Swaraj Express Train, which runs from Bandra Terminus to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra (SVDK) in Jammu and Kashmir.

The co-passengers informed the Travelling Ticket Examiner that a girl has gone to the washroom but has not

Fresh charges against Azam; unlikely to walk out of jail soon

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party MLA Mohammad Azam Khan (73) is unlikely to walk out of jail anytime soon even if granted bail in the last of 87 cases slapped against him by the Uttar Pradesh Police.

Azam Khan had moved the Supreme Court earlier this month after the Allahabad High Court reserved its verdict on his bail application. The apex court is set to hear his plea on May 11.

While hearing Azam Khan’s bail application in this case on May 6, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court termed the delay on the part of the Allahabad High Court in delivering an order as a “travesty of justice”.

The veteran SP leader, lodged at the Sitapur jail for the past 26 months, is now facing fresh charges of submitting a forged building certificate to obtain recognition for the Rampur Public School of which he is the chairman.

Khan is lodged at the Sitapur jail in connection with a 2015 land-grabbing case related to 86 bigs and two biswas of land covered under Enemy Property Act.

Schools gear up to fight heatwaves

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Revising school timings, Restricting outdoor activities, stocking ORS and glucose sachets, and constantly motivating children to stay hydrated are among the steps schools are taking because of the heat-wave conditions in the national capital region (NCR).

A torrid heatwave had sent the mercury soaring across large swathes of India with the temperature in Delhi rising to 46 degrees Celsius. The national capital also recorded its second hottest April in 72 years with a monthly average maximum temperature of 40.2 degrees Celsius. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) had earlier this week said a fresh spell of heatwave is likely to begin over north-west India from May 7 and over central India from May 8.

While closing schools due to heatwave is not an option as suggested by experts as offline classes have started from the new session after nearly two years due to the Covid-induced pandemic. According to Shubhi Soni, the Head of the Shri Ram Wonder Years school in Rohini, all outdoor activities have been restrained in the wake of the rising temperatures.

“School timings will also be revised as per the prevailing conditions and dispersal in the afternoon peak hours will be avoided to prevent heat strokes and energy drainage among students.

“We also have an emergency kit for use, which comprises ORS, glucose, and oral electrolyte to be given to children if they need it. The school staff is keeping a thorough check on children and constantly motivating them to drink water to manage the heatwave,” she said.

Anshu Mital, the principal of MRG School, Rohini, said they have also reduced outdoor activities extensively to safeguard students from exposure to heat.

“Students are often motivated to drink plenty of fluids to keep themselves fresh and hydrated. We also have a school clinic with well-trained staff to treat students if there are any health hazards,” the principal said.

Water is sprinkled on the school ground and terrace to bring down the temperature, Mital said. “We are also making a conscious effort to hold counselling sessions to spread awareness about the preventive measures for heatstroke among students and also encourage them to follow those steps,” she

said. Amid the intense heat-wave across the country, the Centre had last week urged states and Union Territories to review their health facility preparedness for the availability of adequate quantities of medicines and equipment while ensuring sufficient drinking water and continued functioning of cooling appliances in critical areas.

The Centre had also advised people to avoid getting out in the sun, especially between 12 noon and 3 pm, avoid strenuous activities when outside in the afternoon, and avoid alcohol, tea, coffee, or drinks with a large amount of sugar, stating these may lead to loss of more body fluid or cause stomach cramps.

The Centre had also advised people to avoid high protein food and stale food and not leave children or pets in parked vehicles.

“The rising heat is making it impossible to step outdoors. The school has initiated putting a halt to sports activities as precautionary measures... A workshop is being among students about how to keep oneself hydrated, and the importance of healthy meals loaded with carbs and proteins,” said

Harender Kumar Sharma, the principal of TDI International School, Kundli.

Kashmir Peoples Forum pitches for polls reclaiming POK

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Ahead of crafting Bharatiya Janta Party’s (BJP) final poll strategy in Jammu and Kashmir, a frontal right wing organisation, Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Forum, backed by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Sunday raised a poll pitch in support of reclaiming parts of Jammu and Kashmir under the “illegal occupation of Pakistan”.

The event, organised in the premises of Padma Shri Padma Sachdev Government PG College for Women, Gandhi Nagar, witnessed a huge presence of displaced refugees from areas of Pakistan Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK). The venue of the memorial ceremony was painted in colors of the National tricolor.

Senior BJP leaders from the region also attended the function along with their supporters. The local BJP leaders along with their supporters were working overtime to ensure the grand success of the memorial ceremony. Ahead of the forthcoming Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir, the

local BJP unit, facing the wrath of the common public, wanted to test political waters and their support base in the city of temples.

Several religious leaders also attended the Shradhanjali and Punyabhoomi Smarn Sabha’ along with PoJK refugees from across the nation.

On the occasion rich tributes were paid to the saviours of Jammu and Kashmir and to those who lost their lives to save their families during the Pakistani invasion on October 22, 1947. A small documentary giving graphic details of the brutal attack by the Pakistani invaders was also exhibited for the audience.

Speaking on the occasion a senior Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader Surendra Jain raised a pitch for reclaiming parts of Jammu and Kashmir under the “illegal occupation of Pakistan”.

Amid chants for liberation of PoJK, the VHP leader said “whether you want compensation or land of your ancestors and religious places like Sharada Peeth...the pledge you have taken is shortly becoming a reality,” he said.

Jain said it is not an issue related to Hindus and Muslims as many nationalist Muslims were also killed by the Pakistani raiders in 1947.

Without naming National Conference, Congress and PDP, he said “the role of a few families who ruled J&K in past decades is over. Now only the writ of the country and the people of J&K will run in J&K”.

Referring to the reorganisation of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, the VHP leader said, “the Article 370 is done away and its restoration is not possible. It has become part of a history and so are the questions which were being raised time and again over the legality of the accession of J&K with India even as the Maharaja Hari Singh, the last Dogra ruler, had signed the same accession document like the rulers of other princely states.” He said the only issue is the fulfilment of the resolution passed unanimously by the Parliament on February 22, 1994, emphasizing that Pakistan must vacate parts of Jammu and Kashmir under its illegal occupation.

Asani likely...

From Page 1

According to Skymet, a private weather forecaster, Asani has become a severe cyclonic storm, the equivalent of a Cat-I hurricane, packed with a wind speed in excess of 110 kmph and in gusts touching 140 kmph. It is centered around 12.5 degrees north and 87.5 degrees east at 5.30 pm.

Thereafter, it is very likely to recurve north-northeastwards and move towards Northwest Bay of Bengal off Odisha coast. IMD officials said the cyclone is unlikely to make landfall as it would recurve in the sea north-northeastwards on May 10. The cyclone will not make landfall as the system is more likely to move parallel to Odisha- Andhra coast, said IMD officials.

“Light to moderate rainfall will start in coastal districts like Ganjam, Gajapati, Khordha, Jagatsinghpur and Puri after May 10 evening. In the coastal areas, the wind speed will be 40-50 kmph and gusting up to 60 kmph. The maximum wind speed will be 50-60 kmph and the windy condition will continue till May 11 and thereafter, it will start reducing,” IMD director general (DG) Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said.

Minor raped in Aligarh by cop; woman dies after manhandling by cops

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Close on the heels of cases of police excesses in Chandauli and Lalitpur, in two more incidents bringing shame to the police force, a minor was allegedly raped by a cop in Aligarh while a Dalit woman was manhandled to death by policemen in Firozabad.

In the first incident, a 16-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a policeman who is related to her family in the vil-

lage near Atrauli in Aligarh.

The accused policeman, who was posted in the Bulandshahr district, was suspended on Sunday after a report from the Aligarh senior superintendent of police was sent about the incident that took place on Friday.

According to the police, the girl is from Kasganj district and she was visiting a relative in the village near Atrauli. The accused policeman, who is related to the family, had gone

to the village as well, and on Friday night, he took the girl to a neighbouring village on his motorcycle and allegedly raped her. Later, the cop also allegedly threatened the girl with dire consequences if she disclosed the incident to anyone, and fled the spot, according to the FIR.

However, the minor somehow managed to return to her relative’s place and informed them about the incident, following which a case was registered at the Atrauli police station. The

accused was arrested on Saturday evening, and the girl was admitted to a hospital for medical examination.

A senior police officer said a case under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act was registered against the policeman after the medical report confirmed the rape charge. The incident came to light days after a 13-year-old rape survivor was allegedly

raped again by the in-charge of a police station in Lalitpur when she had gone there to file a complaint. The accused Station House Officer Tilakdhari Saroj was arrested on May 4, while all cops posted at the police station, where the alleged incident took place, were removed from duty.

In the second incident, an elderly woman died after being assaulted by a police team at her home in Firozabad, her family members alleged on Sunday.

List of invitees of Cong’s....

From Page 1

“Who will do that and when and where such an opportunity will come?” he said.

For the session the party has formed six committees to prepare background papers for discussions on different subjects - political, social justice and empowerment, economy, organisation, agriculture, youth, and empowerment.

The Udaipur session is likely to be different in several aspects when compared to

Shimla and Jaipur. While the Shimla session floated the idea for a national coalition under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi, Jaipur was an attempt to build Rahul’s leadership against the strong anti-incumbency faced by the then UPA Government of which the Congress was a major stakeholder.

A senior leader said Udaipur session is taking place at a time when the party is looking for its survival against the juggernaut of the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Khalistan flags found....

From Page 1

Former Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh also condemned the incident and sought strict action against those involved in it. He claimed that “fringe elements” were trying to disturb peace and brotherhood in the country by such acts.

“Strongly condemn the act of putting up Khalistan flags at the gate of Himachal Pradesh Vidhan Sabha. These are acts of fringe elements who are trying to disturb the peace and brotherhood of our country, which will not be tolerated.

The Congress national secretary Sudhir Sharma also termed the incident as unfortunate. “It is unfortunate that the flag of Khalistan at the entrance of the Dharamshala Assembly and slogans are written on the walls, while the non-working of CCTV and the absence of security personnel raises question marks on the administration and security agencies. We, the people of Himachal, will give our lives for the integrity of the country,” he tweeted.

Meanwhile, Anti-Terrorist Front of India national president Viresh Shandilya demanded that a sedition case should be registered against the so-called Khalistan supporters who put up Khalistan flags on the Assembly gate.

“Himachal Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur must order to register a case of deshdroh (sedition) against the so-called Khalistan supporters who put up Khalistan flags outside Dharamshala Assembly complex and wrote Khalistan on the walls,” Shandilya said in a press release.

Local MLA Vishal Nehria termed the incident disgusting and an act of cowardice carried out in the darkness of night. “We, the Himachalis, and the Indians are not afraid of any threats from the supporters of so-called Khalistan,” the MLA said.

INBRIEFS



**BRAHMA KUMARIS LAUNCH CAMPAIGN ON GIRL CHILD Gurugram:** Social campaign with the theme ‘Shusanskarokidharohar Bharat ki Betiya’ was launched by Brahma Kumaris at Om Shanti Retreat Centre (ORC) in Gurugram. Dr Mahendra Munjapara, Minister of State for Ayush, Women and Child Development was the Chief Guest on this occasion and the Bollywood celebrity Shehnaaz Gill, who is also Brand Ambassador of this seminar campaign, was also present during the occasion.

**POLICE ARREST MAN FOR SUPPLYING ILLEGAL ARMS New Delhi:** Delhi Police has arrested a 26-year-old man indulged in allegedly tracking arms and ammunition in Delhi. Police said that they have also recovered eight pistols with two magazines from the possession of the accused identified as Mandeep Kumar, a resident of district Amritsar in Punjab. He is found involved in 10 criminal cases of Arms Act, NDPS Act and attempt to Murder. He has been found supplying illicit arms and ammunition to criminals of Delhi and Punjab.

**SAMEER BHATI RECEIVES PHD FROM US VARSITY New Delhi:** Dr Sameer Bhati, Director, Star Imaging & Path Lab received Prestigious Honorary Doctorate from California Public University, USA in a Convocation Ceremony that celebrated his contributions towards Public Healthcare and Preventive Health. During the unprecedented COVID-19 times, Dr. Bhati has made extensive efforts in Covid testing and has worked with targeted plans to support covid patients and their families.

**RESEARCH ORGANISATION TO SELECT STUDENTS FOR INTERNSHIP New Delhi:** A research organization has decided to select 10 to 20 students and the best performing intern, as a part of their internship program for four to six months, to win an all-expenses-paid trip to top global tech summits like SXSW, the Web Summit, or Google Cloud Next. “The fellowship program is about gaining industry exposure, building networks, and acquiring and developing skills. Hence, it could be a great launchpad for fresh graduates,” said a spokesperson of Typset.

**AIIMS PERFORMS FIRST LUNG TRANSPLANT New Delhi:** The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi performed the first lung transplant to date of a 30-year-old woman suffering from cystic bronchiectasis, a progressive, irreversible condition of the airways of the lungs, on 6 May.

Jaipur girl accuses Min’s...

From Page 1

When she woke up the next morning, he showed her naked photographs and videos which worried her, reads the FIR. Mentioning another meeting, she alleged that Rohit Joshi had also once met her in Delhi and forced himself upon her. “Rohit made me stay at a hotel where he got our names registered as husband and wife. He then promised to marry me...but then he got drunk and abused me...He would beat me up and make obscene videos of me. He would threaten to upload them and make them viral,” the woman alleged.

She further stated that on August 11, 2021, she found out that she was pregnant with his baby and alleged that he forced her to take a pill but she didn’t.

According to the woman, the accused allegedly raped her on several occasions.

Jet Airways to be...

From Page 1

Murari Lal Jalan, has invested Rs 375 crore equity in Jet Airways and Rs 604 crore had been funded to recover the debt. Jalan began his career in the paper trading business in Kolkata in the 1980s, where he worked as a trader for JK Paper and Ballarpur Industries. In 2003, he acquired Kolkata-based Kanoji Paper & Industries, which was later renamed, Agio Paper.

Jalan later started a hospital business in Dubai and was associated with Dr.Naresh Trehan. He was also in the real estate business and had set up a firm, MJ Developers. He was also in strategic alliance with Sony and Panasonic and Baba Ramdev’s Patanjali Ayurveda. Jalan’s partner Kalrock is a British private equity fund.



## ORDER OF RED STAR FOR INDIAN SOLDIERS



### MESSAGE OF RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR TO INDIA DENIS ALIPOV

Dear friends,

Today, on May 9, we celebrate the 77th anniversary of the Victory over Nazi Germany in the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945).

The events preceding WWII are well known. Lack of collective responsibility, predominance of narrow-minded and geopolitically motivated approaches became a fertile soil for unilateral aggressive actions. The British conservatives rather than joining hands for peace with the USSR to thwart Nazi aggressive plans in Europe adopted a policy of appeasing Adolf Hitler. The aim was to channel the German aggression to the East, against the Soviet Union. In 1938, these sordid intentions resulted in signing by London and Paris of the infamous Munich agreement, triggering the countdown to the war.

The Victory in WWII is a great common heritage of all countries of the anti-Hitler coalition. By rising above the differences and joining hands they managed to crush Nazism, a misanthropic ideology of racial superiority that threatened the very existence of entire nations and the human civilization as such. Today we bow our heads in veneration to the courage of all who fought shoulder to shoulder against the Nazis.

These days the crucial role of the Soviet Union in defeating the Nazi invaders and liberating Europe and the world from slavery and the horrors of the Holocaust is often glossed over. An egregious injustice to 27 million of Soviet lives lost in the most brutal war ever! Multiple times more than even those who themselves suffered tremendously can imagine. No wonder that 77 years on even these countries tend to diminish the utter unacceptability of Nazi ideology and its derivatives. But we shall never forget. Our memory of heroism and sacrifice shall ever remain strong in our minds and hearts. This memory will never leave space to acquiescence of Nazi ideology in any form and manifestation and attempts to rehabilitate and even glorify Nazi criminals and



their supporters.

Russians will always remember with gratitude the Indian contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany. We proudly recall that in 1941 and 1942 friendship societies were set up in India in support of the USSR. Brave Indian contingents were engaged in providing supplies to the Red Army through Persia. In 1944, two sons of India were decorated with the highest military award of the Soviet Union - the Order of the Red Star. To commemorate these heroic deeds a memorial monument was unveiled at the premises of the Indian Army Headquarters in New Delhi in 2021. It became one of the symbols of historically strong bonds of friendship between our nations, which form a solid base for the Russian-Indian special and privileged strategic partnership.

Atrocities of the Second World War teach a good lesson of how to maintain international relations. Today, the main goal of the global community is to preserve peace and security, with the United Nations playing a key role in this endeavour. In order to prevent deliberate distortions and falsifications of the WWII events Russia initiated the UN GA resolution against glorification of Nazism, which is supported and co-sponsored by the majority of countries, including India. Russia stands ready to respond to any threat to its national security. Our foreign policy remains focused on maintaining the central role of the UN, its Charter and international law emphasizing the principles of resolution of conflicts by peaceful means, mutual respect, non-interference in domestic affairs, collective approach and dialogue.

We invite all countries to stay united against double standards, hypocrisy in international relations and hidden geopolitical agendas. Cooperation in global affairs is the only way forward, while attempts to undermine the WWII lessons are detrimental to global security.

The heroism of Indian soldiers in World War II has been chronicled in detail in war history. One such example is that of Subedar Narayan Rao Nikkam and Havildar Gajendra Singh, of village Baraloo, who were hailed for their contribution to the Red Army

The Bulletin of the Information Service of the Government of India, Indian Information dated September 1, 1944, says: "The Order of the Red Star was presented to Subedar Narayan Rao Nikkam, village Nerala Hathi, Tehsil Kankanhalli, District Bangalore; and Havildar Gajendra Singh, of village Baraloo, Tehsil Shor, District Almora, who were serving in "General Purpose Transport Companies of the Royal Indian Army Supply Corps".

At an impressive ceremony at the Soviet Embassy in Teheran, the Soviet Ambassador M. Maximov on behalf of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR, presented Russian decorations to officers and men of the British and Indian Armies for distinguished services in the transportation of

arms, material and food to Russia. Congratulating the recipients of the honours, the Soviet Ambassador acknowledged the help rendered by them to the Red Army. "It again emphasises the military cooperation of our peoples not only in the field of battle, but also in those areas which influence the success of operations in the field against our common enemy, Hitlerite Germany", he said.

One of the first reports in the Indian press on the British intention to lay the road for the supply of war material to Russia appeared in 77th Tribune of Lahore, of September 13, 1941. The report quoted Benter's special correspondent in Teheran, who wired: "With Iran's oil wells now safely under British control and with

British and Russian forces occupying strategic points on its communications lines as well as blocking the path eastward through the Caucasus, the British and Russian Governments are now intensely studying the problems of sending war material to Russia through Iran. With only one railway and very few roads traversing the country which is three times the size of France, great difficulties have to be overcome".

A stretch of this road, known as the East Persia Route, was completed in eight months, an average of three miles a day, by a pick-and-shovel army of 30,000 men, women, and children supervised by a staff representing 15 different nationalities. The road was complementary to the West Persia routes for British and American

supplies. "The quantity of supplies of jute, rubber, hessian, copper, tin and mercury that India can send to Russia is limited only by the transport facilities available", said an Indian representative of one of the supply organisations according to the Indian Information (January 1944). "Already 1,000 lorries, mostly provided by India, are employed to full capacity. We expect a substantial increase in this number shortly", it said.

The scope of the supplies was vast. As Indian Information said. "Over 5,000 tons of vital war materials per month have been sent from India to Russia during the past six months along the East Persia route, which follows the age-old caravan track now converted into a modern motor highway. Russia has received quantities

of gunny bags, tossa canvas, jute ropes, tea, pepper, tin, wolfram and silk. Two special consignments consisted of 1,000 tons of nickel and 1,000 tons of harvest yarn, both of which reached Russia in record time. The harvest yarn was made to a very exacting specification by the Calcutta Jute Mills. It had to reach before the Russian harvest began and the average timing from Calcutta to the handing-over point was 28 days. Tin, mercury, wolfram and silk were flown from China to Assam in American aircraft, and railed to Zahidan for transport by truck. Hundreds of lorries have been used to reach the consignments to our Allies in the north, and the road surface from Zahidan right up to the Russian border has been kept in excellent repair".



## Gangster's father killed, 2 hurt in separate shooting incidents

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In two separate shooting incidents, two brothers were injured in west Delhi's Subhash Nagar after they were attacked by unidentified assailants while a man was shot dead in city's Khera village, over a rivalry between gangs led by jailed gangster Sunil Maan alias Tillu Tajpuriya and dead gangster Jitender Maan alias Gogi.

In the first incident, two brothers were fired upon by two men in the Subhash Nagar area.

The duo brothers identified as Ajay Chaudhary and Jassa Chaudhary were travelling in a car when unidentified assailants opened fire on their vehicle at Subhash Nagar traffic intersection.

Police said they have arrested one of the accused, who had given a scooter used in com-

mission of crime. The incident took place around 8 pm on Saturday and police had registered a case under section 307/34 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and 25/27 Arms Act Hari Nagar police station.

"Police have arrested one of the accused, identified as 47 year-old Raju alias Googga. He had provided the black coloured scooter used in commission of crime to other accused persons. Manhunt is on to arrest the remaining accused," said a senior police official.

Ajay is said to be a former office-bearer of Keshopur Mandi. Both the brothers were admitted to a hospital where they are undergoing surgery.

In the second incident, a man in his 50's was shot dead in Khera village, over alleged rivalry between gangs led by

jailed gangster Tajpuriya and Gogi.

The deceased has been identified as Bhram Prakash. He is the father of Kallu, who is in prison and a member of the Gogi gang.

Police said the incident took place at about around 5 pm at Khera village on Saturday. A video of the incident was also doing rounds on social media.

In a video footage, two men can be seen riding a bike intercepting Prakash, who was also on a bike.

One of the killers runs towards Prakash and fires upon him.

Even after Prakash falls on ground the shooter fired multiple rounds into his body from a close range while his accomplice waits. Moments later, Prakash's body is seen in the video lying on the roadside.

## Gang war rages in Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a suspected gang war, the gangs of Sunil Maan alias Tillu Tajpuriya and dead gangster Jitender Maan alias Gogi are targeting each other over the past several months which is evident through the recent killing of Bhram Prakash, father of a member of Gogi gang in the national Capital.

Kallu, whose father was shot dead at Khera village, was having animosity with one Prawesh Maan from the village and one associate of Maan was shot dead months ago. Maan is an associate of Tillu.

Just over a month ago, on March 23, an associate of jailed gangster Tajpuriya was shot dead allegedly by the gang members of

Gogi gang at Rohini. The 29-year-old man had allegedly organised a party after Gogi was killed by associates of Tillu gang, two men dressed as lawyers inside Rohini court on September 24, 2021.

On March 1, 2022, two criminals were arrested after a brief exchange of fire in Delhi's Alipur area. Police had said the duo, residents of Haryana, had come to kill Tillu, in order to take revenge of Gogi's murder. On October 11, 2021, a member of the Tillu gang was shot dead in Sector 16 area of Delhi's Rohini. The man, identified as Radhe was on his bike when the members of Gogi gang allegedly fired upon him.

In one of the fierce clashes between both the gangs on June

18, 2018, in Burari, Delhi, four persons including two members of the Sunil Tillu gang and two passers-by were killed and five others got injured.

According to sources, after Gogi was killed, Tillu threw a party and several videos went viral, showing he was cutting cake and celebrating Gogi's death.

Since then the rivalry between the gangs has increased and several shooting incidents have taken place.

The irony is that once, Gogi and Tillu were the closest friends before they fell out with each other over student politics in college. But how did this childhood friendship turn into a turf war that has claimed over 26 people lives in the past 10 years in Delhi and Haryana?

## Crime increasing as Delhi Police busy shielding BJP thugs: Atishi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after three miscreants opened fire at passengers in a car in a market in Subhash Nagar, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Kalkaji MLA Atishi on Sunday said crime in the national Capital is increasing, as the Delhi Police is busy shielding Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) thugs and criminals.

Addressing the media, Atishi stated that the criminals are no longer afraid of the Delhi Police because they are well aware that the police force is busy protecting the hooligans and criminals that the BJP is harbouring. The entire Delhi Police force was out on the

streets and headed to Haryana to take all measures possible in order to protect a BJP criminal.

"The police is failing to provide security to common people of Delhi as they have no time left to do their actual job after going to extreme lengths to keep BJP thugs out of jail. Meanwhile, countrywide data shows that Delhi has the greatest number of reported crime cases," she said.

"A harrowing incident took place at a prominent Delhi market in the midst of Subhash Nagar at 7:30 in the evening yesterday — where three people opened fire at several passengers in a car," Atishi said.

## Jahangirpuri clashes: Accused Tabrez part of peace committee, participated in Tiranga Yatra

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

A video of Tabrez Khan, an accused held in connection with the Jahangirpuri violence by the Crime Branch of the Delhi Police, has surfaced in which he can be seen addressing a Press meet and asking the police to remove the force from the area. In a few videos and photos, Tabrez could be seen participating in the 'Tiranga Yatra' along with Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) North West, Usha Rangani. Interestingly, it was Khan who had written a letter to the Delhi Police, to carry out the 'Tiranga Yatra'.

Soon after the photos and videos of Tabrez with the police official surfaced, the police said

a meeting of the Aman Committee was called in which a number of people had gathered at that time and Khan could be one of them.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Police has clarified that, "News is being circulated in the media that one accused named Tabrez has been arrested by crime branch Delhi Police in connection with riot case of 16/04/22 of PS Jahangirpuri."

The Delhi Police said, "It is further being circulated that said Tabrez was one of the members of peace Aman Committee of PS Jahangirpuri and one of the organisers of Tiranga Yatra that was carried out in Jahangirpuri area on April 20, to send a message of communal harmony and peace."

## Won't ally with political outfits, want to partner with 130 cr Indians: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI/NAGPUR

The Aam Aadmi Party convenor and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said his party would not enter into an alliance with other outfits as it intended to partner with 130 crore people of this country.

Speaking on "AAP and its role in 2024 Lok Sabha elections" as part of a lecture series organised to mark the golden jubilee of the Nagpur edition of Lokmat, Kejriwal also said he didn't want to defeat anyone in politics but sought to make India the number one country in the world.

"Many people ask me with



whom will we do a national alliance. I do not know how to do politics. I don't understand alliances of 10 and 20 parties to defeat anyone. I don't want to defeat anyone, I want the country to win. I will only enter into an alliance with 130 crore people of the country to make India number one in the world," he said.

"One of the biggest parties of this country is spending all its resources on causing riots

and vandalism, is this how this country will progress? If you want riots, hooliganism, and corruption, support those crooks; if you want to progress, schools, and hospitals, support AAP. If you want staunch honesty and Desh bhakti, come join hands and take this coalition of 130 crore Indians to the pinnacle of success," Kejriwal said without naming the BJP.

Kejriwal said his party's focus was not on the 2024 Lok Sabha polls but on working for the country, adding that people like him had come after leaving their careers to serve the country. India must become the number one country in the world as soon as possible, Kejriwal said, adding that he wanted to play an important role in this quest.

## Bagga thanks HC after getting relief

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Hours after he was granted protection from the Punjab and Haryana High Court, BJP leader Tajinder Pal Singh Bagga on Sunday thanked the court and said its decision showed that law still works in the country.

He also thanked the National Commission for Minorities for asking for a report on allegations that he was not allowed to wear a turban while being arrested by Punjab Police from his New Delhi residence.

"In Sikhs, we can't go out without a turban," Bagga said. His father Pritpal Singh was seen distributing laddoos and gearing himself up for a drawn-out battle against Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal. Senior Bagga also claimed Kejriwal is scared of



his son and is using the Punjab Police to intimidate the family.

In a late-night emergency hearing, the Punjab and Haryana High Court on Saturday directed the State Government to not take any coercive action against BJP leader Bagga until its next hearing on May 10.

Bagga's father said the last few days — referring to Bagga's arrest by the Punjab Police from his residence on Friday and his subsequent release, and then a non-bailable arrest warrant issued against the BJP leader by a Mohali court the next day — have been very

tough for them but they are "prepared to fight for the truth". "Whatever is happening is for good and whatever will happen in the future will also be for good," Pritpal said over phone, adding that they have got relief from the HC in the non-bailable warrant issued against his son on Saturday. "My son is consulting lawyers and we will proceed according to their advice."

Hours after the Mohali court issued the arrest warrant in connection with a case registered against him by the Punjab Police last month, Bagga had moved the Punjab and Haryana High Court challenging it. "Earlier, he (Kejriwal) could not do anything since he did not have the police under him but now the Punjab Police is under them (AAP Government) and they are using it to intimidate us," he alleged.



# In poll-bound Raj, BJP steps up efforts to end ‘factional fighting’

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP has stepped up efforts to end "factional fighting" in the poll-bound Rajasthan. Party president JP Nadda is to visit the state on May10-11 to mobilize the state organisation to take on the Congress-led Gehlot government ahead of the party's crucial Jaipur National meet on May 20.

On his proposed trip on May 10-11, Nadda is expected to visit Suratgarh and Hanumangarh in Ganga Nagar in Northern Rajasthan and interact with local and booth level workers to assess the party's connect with voters.

The focus of Nadda in his tour, second to the state since early last month, is to end the



continuing factional fighting between state president Satish Poonia and former two-time Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje.

Poonia faction along with central 'Jal ShaKti' Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat are strongly against making Raje a CM face again. Raje group is insisting on the central leadership announcing her name as BJP's CM candi-

date. Though the BJP central leadership has indicated that the assembly elections will be contested under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the internal feud in the BJP state unit sees no end. Raje recently did not participate in the 'Hoonkar rally' organized by the Poonia- led the group in the state

Even as the Congress itself is a divided house with Sachin Pilot wanting the Congress high command to launch him as CM face in Rajasthan, the BJP, the challenger, is yet unable to put its 'acts together' to make use of anti-incumbency factor against the ruling Congress, according to the BJP state leaders.

Nadda who last month had a four-hour-long discussion with all BJP state leaders,

including Raje, at his residence in Delhi, is likely to do straight talk with the BJP unit in Rajasthan in his May 10 visit.

The party president has already visited Sawai Madhopur in April when he interacted with state leaders. Union Minister Amit Shah too is exoected to make tour, this month, of Southrrn Rajasthan tribal districts sharing borders with Gujarat.

BJP National meet of all important office bearers for two-days at Jaipur on May 20-21 will be presided by Nadda where important organisational decisions may be taken about Rajasthan and several other BJP-ruled state, including Madhya Pradesh which is also to face assembly polls before November, next year, said BJP sources .

# Modern India must have police force that meets democratic aspirations: V-P

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday asserted that a progressive, modern India must have a police force which meets democratic aspirations of the people and called for a renewed thrust to implement police reforms.

Addressing a gathering here after releasing a book, 'The Struggle for Police Reforms in India', authored by former IPS officer Prakash Singh, the vice president stressed the need to upgrade skills of police personnel to effectively tackle 21st century crimes such as cyber-crimes and economic offences which require special investigative expertise.

According to an official statement issued by the Vice President Secretariat, Naidu referred to the instances of misuse of police force during the "infamous Emergency", saying



it was used with impunity to suppress human rights and imprison thousands of people, including political opponents.

Subsequently, a National Police Commission was set up in 1977, which submitted reports with detailed multi-dimensional proposals for police reforms, he recalled.

However, he noted that not much headway has been made in bringing reforms in police forces at the individual and institutional levels. Naidu also flagged certain issues that need to be addressed on a war

footing, including filling up of vacancies in police departments and strengthening the police infrastructure in tune with the requirements of modern age policing. He called for particularly strengthening the police units at the grassroots who are the first responders in most cases. Naidu also wanted housing facilities for police personnel to be improved.

Stressing that the behaviour of police personnel towards the common people should be courteous and friendly, the vice president called upon senior police officers to lead by example.

"A visit to a police station should be a hassle-free experience for a person who goes there seeking help. The first thing to reform for this is the attitude of police -- they must be open-minded, sensitive and receptive to each individual citizen's concerns," he said.

# Only Congress governs for welfare of poor, middle class families: Rahul



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday stepped up his attack on the government over the hike in price of domestic LPG cylinder, and said only his party governs for the welfare of poor and middle class families.

Cooking gas LPG prices were on Saturday hiked by Rs 50 per cylinder, the second increase in rates in just over six weeks following the firming of international energy rates.

Non-subsidised LPG now costs Rs 999.50 per 14.2-kg cylinder in the national capital, up from Rs 949.50 previously, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

In a tweet, Gandhi compared the price of domestic LPG cylinder of about Rs 410 with a subsidy of Rs 827 in 2014 under a Congress-led government to that of over Rs 999 with "zero subsidy" in 2022 under the BJP-led Centre.

"2 cylinders then for the price of 1 now!" the former Congress chief said.

"Only Congress governs for the welfare of poor & middle class Indian families. It's the core of our economic policy," he said. After the hike on Saturday, Gandhi had said millions of Indian households are waging a difficult battle against "extreme inflation", unemployment and "poor governance".

# Knowledge sharing leads to greater knowledge: Kovind

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/NAGPUR

President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday underlined the need for "knowledge sharing" and said that it is our duty which leads to "greater growth of knowledge itself".

Speaking on the occasion of the inauguration of the permanent campus of the Indian Institute of Management, Nagpur, the President said, "Our traditions have always emphasized upon sharing, especially in the field of knowledge."

Hence, it is our duty to share the knowledge which we have gathered. Knowledge sharing leads to greater growth of knowledge itself."

Educational institutes are not just mere places of learning; it is the place that polish the inner and hidden talents in people, the President further said. Highlighting the value of innovation and entrepreneur-

ship in today's era, President Kovind said that both have the ability to not just ease lives but also facilitate employment opportunities.

"We are living in an era where innovation and entrepreneurship are appreciated and encouraged. Both innovation and entrepreneurship have the ability to not just ease our lives through technology but can also provide employment opportunities to many people."

The eco-system at IIM, Nagpur would promote among the students the mindset of becoming job-creators, instead of being job-seekers," the President said.

He expressed hope that just as IIM Ahmedabad has provided mentorship to IIM, Nagpur, the leading professional schools of our country, technical, management, or humanities would provide mentorship to establish similar institutions.

# Now, Foreign Correspondents' Club asked to vacate bungalow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After the Indian Women Press Corps (IWPC), the Foreign Correspondents' Club (FCC) has also been served an eviction notice. The club has been asked to vacate the bungalow allotted to them by July 31.

The FCC was recently at the centre of controversy for refusing to host an event connected to "The Kashmir Files" director Vivek Agnihotri. The notice is dated May 4, which is the same as the IWPC. The FCC occupies bungalow No. AB 19, Mathura Road, New Delhi.

In a letter to the FCC president on May 4, the Directorate of Estates under the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry said it has, however, extended the period of retention of the

bungalow located on Mathura Road till July 31.

"I am directed to convey the in-principle approval of the competent authority for retention of government accommodation bungalow no.

AB-19, Mathura Road, New Delhi allotted to Foreign Correspondents' Club of South Asia for a period of up to July 31, 2022, on the prevailing terms & conditions," Deputy Director (Estates) Hari MP said in the letter.

The letter also asked the FCC president to find suitable accommodation and arrange to vacate the aforesaid house on or before July 31.

Reacting to the government's move, FCC president Munish Gupta said, "We hadn't formally received the letter until yesterday. We will examine and respond. It is our

understanding that such notices have been sent to FCC and others also in the past."

In its notice sent to IWPC, the Directorate of Estate says, "I am directed to convey by the principal approval of the competent authority for retention of government accommodation Bungalow No. 5, Windsor Place, allotted to Indian Women's Press Corps, for a period up to 31 July 2022." It's clear from the letter that no alternate accommodation will be provided to the IWPC by the government.

However, Shobhna Jain, President of IWPC, said, "This is routine procedural work. For the last 25 years, we have been applying for renewal whenever it is about to expire, and there is nothing to read in between the lines."

# DoT abolishes NOCC charges for all telecom licence holders

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

To enhance ease of doing business, the Department of Telecom has removed network operation and control-centre charges for the use of space segments for all services like

VSAT, satellite telephony etc for which permits are issued by the department. The DoT earlier levied Rs 21 lakh per transponder per annum for 36 megahertz of spectrum on a pro-rata basis as NOCC charges.

Besides this, the department also levied NOCC charges of Rs 6,000 for every trial of antenna that are used for receiving and transmitting signals. "There shall be no NOCC charges for use of space segment for all DoT licensees for commercial and captive VSAT services, GMPCS (satellite phone service), NLD (national long distance) and other telecom licensees having

unified licence or standalone licence. This order shall be effective from April 1, 2022," DoT said in an order dated May 6. The Network Operations Control Center was created under the DoT to control the transmissions from ground segment (satellite earth stations) along with the master control facility under Department of Space to manage the operation of satellites in orbit.

Satellite industry body ISPA director general Ashok Bhatt said that the DoT has amended Unified License to allow satellite based IoT services, land mobility services and also removal of NOCC monitoring charges. "We believe that these progressive policy steps are in the right direction and showcase the government's commitment in supporting growth of digital communication by leveraging potential and capability of satellite communication industry."



Anganwadi workers and helpers staged a protest near Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence at the Civil Lines to press for their demands, in New Delhi on Sunday.

# Value of vote of MPs likely to go down to 700 from 708 in July presidential elections

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The value of the vote of a Member of Parliament is likely to go down to 700 from 708 in the presidential polls scheduled in July due to the absence of a legislative assembly in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Saturday.

The value of the vote of an MP in a presidential election is based on the number of elected members in legislative assemblies of states and union territories, including Delhi, Puducherry and Jammu and Kashmir. The Electoral College for the presidential election comprises the members of Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and those of the legislative assemblies of states and union

territories including Delhi, Puducherry and Jammu and Kashmir. Before it was bifurcated into two union territories of Ladakh, and Jammu & Kashmir in August 2019, the erstwhile state of J&K had 83 assembly seats.

According to the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, the Union Territory of J&K will have a legislative assembly, while Ladakh will be governed directly by the Centre.

The government had announced that elections to the legislative assembly would be held after the completion of the delimitation of assembly constituencies. Last week, the Delimitation Commission for Jammu and Kashmir notified its final order in which it has

recommended a 90-member House for the newly carved out union territory. But it may take some time to have an elected House in place in the UT. It is not for the first time that legislators of a state assembly will not be able to participate in the presidential elections.

In 1974, the 182-member Gujarat Assembly was dissolved in March following the Navnirman Andolan and could not be constituted before the presidential election in which Fakruddin Ali Ahmed was elected.

However, Jammu and Kashmir will not go unrepresented in the presidential elections as members of Lok Sabha will be eligible to exercise their

franchise to elect the First Citizen of the country. The value of the vote of a Member of Parliament has been fixed at 708 since the 1997 presidential election.

The value of vote of a Member of Parliament for the first Presidential election in 1952 was 494. It increased marginally to 496 in the 1957 presidential election, followed by 493 (1962), 576 (1967 and 1969).

The presidential elections were held in 1969 due to the death of President Zakir Hussain on May 3, 1969. In the 1974 presidential election, the value of vote of an MP was 723. It has been fixed at 702 for the presidential elections from 1977 to 1992.

# Helpline for elderly receives over 79,000 calls seeking support

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Over 79,000 calls, including those related to pension, Covid support and abuse, have been received by the national helpline for the elderly since October last year, according to official data.

However, out of the total 5,07,493 calls received by the helpline since October 1 last year, 4,28,442 have been 'non serviceable calls', constituting 84 per cent of the total calls received on the helpline. The non-serviceable calls include call drops, nuisance calls, calls for services for non-elderly, calls with out of scope requests and calls outside office hours.

As many as 79,051 serviceable calls have been received by the helpline over the period on issues related to pension (22,430 calls), Covid support (6,406), abuse (4,748), old age homes (20,40), emotional support (1,856) and maintenance (1,326), according to official data. More calls on toll-free number 14567 have been received from men (44,348) than women (18,363). The helpline was launched to address the issues of elders especially in

view of the pandemic. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has started state-wise call centres in 28 states and UTs under the ELDERLINE project.

The helpline also helps connect people to old age homes, caregivers, day care centres, hospitals and doctors, elder care products, etc. These calls are generally made by callers who need these details looking for specific elder care services. About 5,959 calls led to field interventions like rescue of a homeless elderly and care for an abused elderly.

Among states/UTs, the highest number of calls have been received from Uttar Pradesh at 96,764 followed by Maharashtra at 40,239, Rajasthan at 30,219 calls, Karnataka at 29,953 and Madhya Pradesh at 26,689 and Uttarakhand at 23,685.

A senior official said helpline is still picking up in many states and volume of calls is expected to increase soon. The official said in case of mental support calls are connected to mental health professionals with experience in geriatric therapy and counselling.

# 2 SC judges to take oath of office today

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Chief Justice of India (CJI) N V Ramana on Monday would administer the oath of office to Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia and Gujarat High Court Judge Justice Jamshed B Pardiwala as Supreme Court judges.

Two days after the apex court collegium headed by the CJI recommended the names of the two high court judges, the Union Law Ministry swiftly announced their appointments on Saturday in separate notifications.

With the appointment of Justice Dhulia and Justice Pardiwala, the top court will regain its full strength of 34 judges which had come down to 32 after the retirement of Justice R Subhash Reddy on January 4 this year.

Instead of the CJI's courtroom, the usual place for such events, the swearing-in ceremony will be held in the newly-built auditorium of the additional building complex of the apex court at 10.30 AM on Monday. The CJI would be creating a history of sorts by administering oath of office to 11 apex court judges. Justice Pardiwala will go on to serve as

the CJI for over two years, sources aware of the procedure to appoint members of the higher judiciary said.

Justice Dhulia, who will be the second judge to be elevated from Uttarakhand, is the sibling of national award-winning film director and actor Tigmanshu Dhulia. He will have a tenure of a little over three years.

Justice Pardiwala will be the fourth judge from the Parsi community to adorn the top court bench and the first high court judge from the minority community who has been elevated in the last five years, after Justice S Abdul Nazeer. Justice Nazeer was elevated to the Supreme Court in February 2017.

With the retirement of Justice R Subhash Reddy on January 4 this year, the total strength of apex court judges had come down to 32 against the sanctioned strength of 34. Justice Dhulia, born on August 10, 1960, is from Madanpur, a remote village located in Pauri Garhwal district of Uttarakhand. He joined the Bar at Allahabad High Court in 1986. An alumnus of Sainik School, Lucknow, he did his graduation and Law from the University of Allahabad.

# Women with obesity have more fracture risk: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Women with obesity and overweight, particularly women with high waist circumference, are more susceptible to fractures than those with normal weight. In men, however, underweight, not overweight, is associated with a greater risk of broken bones, as per new study presented at the European Congress on Obesity (ECO) in Maastricht, the Netherlands

In men, however, being underweight, not overweight, is associated with a greater risk of broken bones.

Obesity has long been thought to help protect against fractures. This is because mechanical loading on bones, which increases with body weight, helps increase bone mineral density, an important determinant of bone strength.

However, recent studies have suggested that the relationship between obesity and fracture risk varies depending on sex, the skeletal site studied and definition of obesity used (body mass index [BMI] vs. waist circumference).

To find out more, Dr Anne-Frederique Turcotte, Endocrinology and Nephrology Unit, CHU de

Quebec Research Centre, Quebec City, Canada, and colleagues, analysed data from CARTaGENE, a prospective population-based cohort of almost 20,000 individuals aged 40-70 years from Quebec, Canada.

Participants in CARTaGENE were selected randomly between 2009 and 2010, assessed once at recruitment and followed through healthcare administrative databases until March 2016. BMI and waist circumference (WC, a measure of abdominal obesity) were measured at recruitment. In women, greater WC was linearly associated with an increased risk of fracture.

For each 5cm (two inch) increase in WC, the risk of fracture at any site was 3 per cent higher and the risk of a distal lower limb fracture was 7 per cent higher.

The association between WC and ankle fractures was particularly strong. In women, greater BMI was associated with a greater risk of distal lower limb fractures. Compared with women with a BMI of 25 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, those with a BMI of 27.5-40 kg/m<sup>2</sup> showed a greater risk of distal lower limb fractures.

The increase in risk rose linearly from 5% in those



with a BMI of 27.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, to 40% in those with a BMI of 40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>.

Women with a BMI of 22.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup> had a 5% lower risk of distal lower limb fractures than those with a BMI of 25 kg/m<sup>2</sup>. It isn't known why obesity is associated with a higher risk of fractures in women.

However, most fractures are a result of a fall and falls are more common in people with obesity. The ankle, unlike the hip and thigh bone, is not protected by soft tissue, which could make it more prone to breaking during a fall.

Dr Turcotte adds: "Waist

circumference was more strongly associated with fractures in women than BMI. This may be due to visceral fat -- fat that is very metabolically active and stored deep within the abdomen, wrapped around the organs -- secreting compounds that adversely affect bone strength.

"We also know that people with obesity take longer to stabilize their body, when they trip, for example. This is particularly pronounced when weight is concentrated at the front of the body, suggesting that individuals with the distribution of body fat in the abdominal area may be at higher risk of falling."



# More leave BJP in Bengal after Shah’s advice to party leaders

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A day after Union Minister Amit Shah advised safron workers to fight their way up like Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee did as the Opposition leader, more Bengal BJP workers deserted the party, taking the number of such desertions to at least 120 in the past few days.

While 80 members had left the party in Jhargram district alleging lack of sincerity in the leadership 20 saffron functionaries on Sunday resigned their posts in North 24 Parganas complaining arbitrary functioning of the leaders.

A district level leader who left his post said without naming any BJP leader, “if we will have to learn from Mamata Banerjee then why should we not join the Trinamool Congress ... where is there a point in continuing in the BJP ... we had joined the party with Prime Minister Narendra Modi as our ideal and not Mamata Banerjee ... how can we follow in the footsteps of a Chief Minister whose men are murdering, raping and looting our workers ... she can never be an example.”

While hearing complaints



of State and ruling party repression --- and facing demands of central intervention through Article 355 or 356 --- from the party men, Shah had in a closed-door meeting told local leaders that they should not look for any short cuts to power and instead of looking up to New Delhi for backup support the State leadership should build up the fight from below as there was no possibility of imposing central rule in Bengal.

She told the Bengal leaders how Banerjee had worked hard for two-and-half decades before she could throw the 34 years of Marxist regime out of power. He asked the party men to fight TMC’s atrocities polit-

ically rather than relying on others (read the central leadership) to do the work for them.

He also asked the State leaders not to rely too much on the central investigating agencies to prepare the ground for

the BJP by weakening the TMC. Instead the present State president Sukanto Majumdar should follow in the footsteps of his predecessor Dilip Ghosh who had concentrated on creating a strong booth-level organization.

## TMC runs a Govt of serial killers: BJP Bengal chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Bengal BJP president Sukanto Majumdar on Sunday attacked the Trinamool Congress calling it a “party of serial killers” two days after one of its district level youth wing leaders Arjun Chowrasia was found hanging in mysterious circumstances at an abandoned railway quarter near his residence at Kashipur in North Kolkata.

Chowrasia was scheduled to lead a motorbike procession to welcome Home Minister Amit Shah who was visiting Bengal on the day of his mysterious death.

Following a High Court

order the postmortem of the dead person was conducted at the Alipore Army Command Hospital instead of the State-run RG Kar Medical College Hospital. His autopsy report still expected.

Attacking the TMC Government Majumdar said, that “the BJP workers are being killed in Bengal in the same way for the past several years ... to avoid murder charges and to let their deaths pass off as suicides they are being killed and then hung with saffron flags around their neck ... this has been happening in jangalmahal, North Bengal, South Bengal and now in Kolkata ... we have no doubt that this is a government of serial killers.”

# Mother makes endless rounds of Lodha police station to get justice for her young daughter

PNS ■ ALIGARH

Mother’s Day has no meaning in the life of 60 years old Dalit woman of Bade village of Lodha police station, district Aligarh because even after making 65 rounds of police station she failed to register FIR for her 17-year-old daughter Nirbhaya (name changed to protect privacy). Nirbhaya, who was kidnapped at the age of 14, was gang-raped in Palwal, Haryana, her obscene video was made and after that she was sold to a handicapped person in Ambala for Rs 50000. There too, her daughter was sexually assaulted

and later she was forced to marry the same handicapped at that time. Not only this, fake marriage papers were made. Since 2018 till now the mother, Vimla (name changed), and her family members have been making rounds of Lodha police station and police officers but they have not been successful in registering the FIR. Today, on Mother’s Day, Nirmala regrets that as a mother, she could neither get justice for her daughter nor fulfill her mother’s duty for the atrocities committed on her daughter. She says that Mother’s Day is meaningless for me. Vimla has become very ill

in the grief of her daughter whereas the father has become an alcoholic and is in a semi-deranged state. Uncle of Nirbhaya, Ramesh (name changed), said that in 2018, when his niece was 13 years old, relatives of neighbors of my own village who were residents of Palwal Haryana, Sohail and Dilawar kidnapped his niece when her parents went for selling goods. Sohail and Dilawar kidnapped her by luring her to meet with her parents. Sohail and Dilawar took her to Palwal, Haryana and locked her in a room of a house. For 1 month, both raped her collectively and

made obscene videos.

Ramesh said Sohail and Dilawar took her to Ambala after a month and sold her there for ? 50000 to a person named Shahenshah, a handicapped person and a resident of Mahesh Nagar. There too she was started being tortured and raped against her will for 1 year. Fake documents were made after changing her name, and then she was forcefully married to Shenshah first in the temple and then in the court. When she protested, the ankle of her foot was cut off with an ax. In 2021, the atrocities on Nirbhaya were not seen by Chhota Lala, the

# Saharanpur crackers factory blaze toll reaches 5

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With two more deaths, the death toll in the blaze in a firecracker factory in Saharanpur reached five, police said on Sunday.

Fire had suddenly broken out in the firecracker factory located in Sorana village in Sarsawa area of Saharanpur on Saturday.

Senior Superintendent of Police Akash Tomar said that three persons, including Rahul, the factory licence holder, perished in the blaze on Saturday while two more died during treatment. He said the condition of one more person was stated to be serious and he was rushed to the PGI in Chandigarh.

The fire spread fast because of the inflammable material and led to an explosion which made the situation more chaotic. By the time fire tenders and police reached the spot, some of the workers had suffered serious injuries and they were rushed to the district hospital and medical college hospital, the SSP said.

The raging flames were so intense that some two-wheelers and cars parked near the factory



also caught fire and were reduced to ashes, the SSP added. Meanwhile in Bahraich, an 8-year-old boy was dragged underwater by a crocodile while bathing in a pond on Saturday. The remains of the body were located by divers early Sunday.

“Virendra of Gud village under Motipur police station was attacked by a crocodile when he went to the pond with his sister,” Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Akashdeep Badhawan said.

Upon being attacked by the crocodile, the boy’s sister rushed to home and told the incident to her family and they alerted the authorities. Soon, the Forest department launched a search operation.

# BJP’s unit in UP set for a rejig

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Two months after winning the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections for the second successive term, the Bharatiya Janata Party is all set to rejig its organisation in the state with new faces on top posts.

The BJP will soon have a new State president and general secretary (organisation). The UP Assembly election results were declared on March 10.

The incumbent BJP State president Swatantra Dev Singh has been inducted into the Yogi Adityanath cabinet and the all powerful general secretary (organisation) Sunil Bansal is all set to be shifted to some other state. With the impending change in organisation, the state BJP has not planned any new organisational programmes for the coming days.

Sources in the BJP said that Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the political mentor of the BJP, was looking to shift Sunil Bansal to the BJP organisation in either Odisha or Delhi and was looking for his replacement in UP.

There is no fixed term for the post of general secretary (organisation) in the BJP; the incumbent general secretary (organisation) is all set to be

replaced despite the party’s remarkable victory in the recent UP assembly polls.

The sources said that in next few days the BJP would announce its new party president of the UP unit following which the RSS would appoint the new general secretary (organisation).

The role of the general secretary (organisation) is considered to be crucial in every state unit of the BJP, as they are appointed by the RSS. The general secretary is mandated to function as a link between the RSS and the BJP. If the BJP is in power in any state, the party general secretary (organisation) is supposed to play a key role of the communicator between the RSS and the government while being a part of the party-government’s core group.

Sunil Bansal was brought to the UP unit to assist top BJP leader and current Union Home Minister Amit Shah ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Prior to that, he was a pracharak in RSS students wing Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP). Considered close to Shah, Bansal proved himself, with the saffron party winning 71 of the state’s 80 Lok Sabha seats in 2014 and sweeping the assembly elections in

# 2 terrorists killed by forces in J&K, policeman succumbs to injuries

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Two terrorists including one Pakistani commander were neutralised by the joint team of security forces in Cheyan Devsar area of Kulgam on Sunday while one infiltrator was gunned down by the army jawans along the line of control in Lam area of Nowshera sector of Rajouri and one constable of Jammu & Kashmir police succumbed to his fatal injuries in the last 24 hours in Srinagar. The slain terrorists were responsible for the targeted killing of security personnel and a member of the minority community killed in Kulgam.

Around 70 terrorists have been eliminated by the security forces since January 1, 2022 in various anti-terrorist operations.

On the other hand BSF troops fired several rounds after picking up the movement of a Pakistani drone along the International Border (IB) in the Arnia sector late Saturday evening. The drone returned to the Pakistani side but a massive search operation

was launched to ensure that there was no airdropping of the payload by the flying object.

According to a police spokesman, “a joint cordon and search operation was launched by the Police and Army (09RR) in Cheyan Devsar area of Kulgam”. “During the search operation, as the joint search party approached towards the suspected spot, the hiding terrorists fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which was effectively retaliated leading to an encounter. Later on, a CRPF team of CRPF also joined the operation”.

In the ensuing encounter, 02 terrorists of proscribed terror outfit LeT including a Pakistani terrorist commander Haider was killed. The other killed terrorist has been identified as Shahbaz Shah of Kulgam.

As per police records the killed terrorist Haider was categorized terrorist who was active for more than two years in North Kashmir and had recently shifted his base to South Kashmir. The killed ter-



rorist was part of groups involved in several terror crimes, civilian atrocities and various killings including recent killings of police personnel SgCT Mohammad Sultan and Ct Fayaz Ahmad on 10/11/2021 at Gulshan Chowk Bandipora. Besides, he was also involved in an attack on Naka party near Nishat Park Bandipora on 11/02/2022 in which SPO Zubair Ahmad attained martyrdom while 04 other security personnel got injured including 03 police personnel and an ASI of BSF.

The other killed terrorist Shahbaz Shah was a hybrid terrorist and was involved in the

killing of a civilian belonging to minority community namely Satish Kumar Singh on 13/04/2022 at Kakran area of Kulgam. After this attack said terrorist was categorised.

In Jammu region, an infiltrator was gunned down by the army along the line of control in Nowshera sector of Rajouri late Saturday evening. Defence PRO in Jammu, Lt-Col Devender Anand said an alert Army patrol eliminated a terrorist trying to infiltrate along the Line of Control in the Lam sector, Naushera (J&K). The body of the terrorist along with items for survival have been recovered.

Meanwhile, “a drone from the Pakistan side was observed coming towards the Indian side in the Arnia area at 7.25 pm with blinking light on Saturday,” Deputy Inspector General of BSF, Jammu Frontier, S P Sandhu said. He said the alert BSF troops fired around eight rounds to shoot down the drone immediately after it crossed into the Indian side but it managed to fly back.

# From being star of Malayalam mini screen to scavenger’s job: Unni’s tributes to Mahatma

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Unni Rajan, the mega star of Malayalam mini screen is all set to do in real life what the Father of the Nation had been teaching the world till he breathed his last. “The respectability and elegance of the job which we do lies in the perfection and adoration with which we execute the job,” Mahatma Gandhi had said through his speeches and writings. When on Monday, Unni Rajan wears the uniform of the Scavenger in Kerala Government-run post-matric hostel in Kasaragod, he would be setting new records.

Unni Rajan may be the first star from the world of glamour to take up the job of scavenger. There are instances of head load workers, history sheeters, conductors and road side vendors making it big in celluloid but the reverse of this incident is unheard

of.

“It was my dream to get a government job and I had registered as a job seeker in the employment. When I was called for the personal interview, the interviewers asked me whether I was serious in taking up this job. I replied that with the kind of educational qualification I have, this is the best job I can aspire for,” Unni Rajan told *The Pioneer*. He pointed out that Mahatma Gandhi too had cleaned toilets and wash rooms even while he was leading the nation in its struggle for freedom.

Unni said that returns from TV serials are meagre and there is always an element of uncertainty associated with the world of glitterati. Unni, who hails from Kasaragod is 42 and is the sole earning member of his family. He is the popular star of Marimayam,



a serial telecast by Manorama TV. Though Unni’s appearance is limited to a few scenes, it is his presence that evokes tons of laughter. He does not deliver much dialogues but his mono syllables and reactions are sufficient to send the viewers to a state of spree.

The combination scenes featuring Unni Rajan and Mani Shornur are sequences rated as unparalleled even in Malayalam films. The elan and poise with which they perfect the roles are being watched keenly by seasoned artists and movie makers.

The designation scavenger which was looked down with contempt is likely to get recognition and acceptability among the new and old generations with Unni Rajan’s entry to the world of cleaning and hygiene.



Employee Name - Ramprasad Raval  
Location - White Rann, Dhordo Gujarat

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Adfactors



## Crush Khalistan bogey

Those hoisting the Khalistan flags must realize their dreams can never become a reality

The tying of Khalistan's flag on the main gate of the boundary wall of the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly in Dharamshala on Sunday morning is nothing but a cowardice attempt to keep the Khalistan pot boiling. The action is supposed to be in retaliation to the State Government's decision to ban vehicles carrying Bhindranwale and Khalsitani flags. In the last week of April, Intelligence agencies warned of such attempts and said the Sikh for Justice ( SJF) would try to hoist the Khalistan flag in the state. The incident in itself is not alarming. Anyone can sneak into the dead of the night, tie a flag to an object, scrawl a few slogans on the wall, and slip away. But what is worrying is the tacit support being provided to the Khalistan movement by elements both within India and at the international level. Within the country, there have been several cases of seizure of explosives and arrest of Khalistan sympathizers. Unfortunately, such sordid attempts find explicit support from the political class in India. Recently, a politician from Himachal Pradesh, Harpreet Singh Bedi, openly supported the demand for 'Khalistan'. Bedi put out several tweets in support of Khalistan on the microblogging site Twitter and then deleted the account. "According to the constitution, Sikh can demand Khalistan, then how it is wrong if you want to stop this issue, try to change the act otherwise shut the....," one such tweet read. Bedi was formerly associated with AAP but he was subsequently expelled from the party.

Political parties and their leaders must exercise extra care in targeting each other on the Khalistan issue. Instead of hurling pro-Khalistan accusations in public, they should provide evidence, if any, to the police. Remember, there are laws to deal with subversive activities. Using such serious issues for political gains would be playing into the hands of the elements behind

the Khalistan movement. Intelligence inputs out in the media have shown that the Khalistan movement has a strong international financial backing and Pakistan's logistic support. Worldwide, such elements have tried to come into the limelight by indulging in violent activities. The recent seizure of explosives from Khalistan sympathizers has to be seen in that light. India has crushed these elements every time they have tried to raise their heads. But we cannot afford to lower our guards. There should be no let-up in the ongoing efforts to flush out all active Khalistan sympathizers. Equally important is to create an environment of well-being in Punjab so that youth could not be lured to such movements. Freeing Punjab from the drug menace should be the first step in that direction? Tackling the issue of growing unemployment faced by the educated youth and problems faced by the farmers should follow in right earnest. Those hoisting the Khalistan flags must realize that their dreams can never become a reality. India has crushed them in the past and will do the same in the future, too.



Pilgrims visit Badrinath Temple after it reopened for devotees in Badrinath

PTI

## Nationalist victory

Sinn Fein Northern Ireland win fuels unification call

Sinn Fein, representing Irish nationalists, has emerged as the largest party in the elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly. It is a record of sorts, considering that the party was long associated with the paramilitary Irish Republican Army that for decades attempted to separate Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom through violence. The victory of Sin Fein has the potential to change the geographical contours of the United Kingdom as we know it today. Scotland has already taken the initiative to leave the United Kingdom. Its national referendum in 2014 could not muster the needed support and a second one is on cards. Sinn Fein is already ideologically bent on unifying the northern part with the Republic of Ireland. That would directly impact links with the United Kingdom. Exactly a century ago a large part of Ireland seceded from the Kingdom to become a free state. However, six counties, known as Northern Ireland, remained within the Kingdom under the Anglo-Irish Treaty. It is a coincidence that for the first time in Northern Ireland, a pro-British unionist party, the Democratic Unionist Party, stands relegated to the second position.

However, the coast is not all clear for Sinn Fein. First of all, it has to succeed in forming the government. Northern Ireland has a delicate power-sharing system wherein the government can only be formed when the posts of First Minister and Deputy First Minister are filled. Both have equal status. Sinn Fein proposes the name of its Northern Ireland leader Michelle O'Neill as First Minister. However, DUP refuses to forward a name for the deputy First Minister on the pretext that its demand for post-Brexit border arrangements is not yet met. The issue relates to customs and border checks on Northern Ireland's border with the European Union.

If the impasse continues, then the ministers from the previous government will remain in power. A new election will be held if the issue is not resolved even after 24 weeks. Even if it manages to form the government, Sinn Fein cannot start work towards shifting Northern Ireland from the Kingdom to the Republic. A referendum is required for it and that is at the discretion of the British government. And given London's mood, the step is years away. For the present, Sinn Fein's victory is hugely symbolic and ends century-old domination by pro-British political parties.

# Systemic reforms for justice delivery

The PM's emphasis on the use of local language will indeed increase the confidence of the masses in the justice delivery system and they will feel connected with it

At the CMs-CJs' (Chief Ministers-Chief Justices) conference in Delhi on April 30, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Justice of India NV Ramana too were present. There was a free and frank discussion on why cases in most of the courts are languishing. The Prime Minister said three and a half lakh undertrials are languishing in prisons and expediting their trials is essential to deliver justice as soon as possible. Most of these undertrials are poor and deserve early justice. The Prime Minister advised the use of the local language up to the district-level courts to dispense justice.

Chief Justice Ramana opined that one of the causes of piling up of the cases is the non-performance of the legislature and the executive, itself a contentious issue. Perhaps, the CJI's contention is that laws passed are not clearly drafted and that leads to unnecessary controversy. "I think the time has come now to revisit the demand and take it to a logical conclusion. The practice of law before Constitutional courts should be based on one's intelligence and understanding of law..." the Chief Justice of India said.

Similarly, indifferent administration at the lower level compels citizens to approach courts to seek justice. The judiciary's perpetual grouse is that despite vacancies, judges are not appointed on time. There are a number of points that trouble all the three wings of Government.

Seventy per cent of the cases arise from the administrative side or the government. The first step should be to restrain the functionaries from giving adverse decisions. Doubts should be cleared by the department lawyers and the courts must not make the citizens spend time and money on litigation unless absolutely necessary.

According to the Prime Minister, the Centre has repealed 1,450 laws because they had become obsolete, and another 350 laws are lined up to be struck off. The States should also pursue this line of spring



cleaning. Moreover, the drafting of petitions, affidavits as well judgments in district courts and High Courts is tortuous when it comes to terminology. An institution under my charge a few years ago received a judgment that began with Rabindra Nath Tagore and went on in that poetic tone; it was a pleasure to read it. But we had to appeal to the apex court, which turned down the poetic piece. All this means a consumption of time, money and the need for more solicitors, advocates and judges.

Way back in 1976, we had to take legal opinions on a company based in the UK. The London lawyer produced a draft the next day that was just a little longer than one page. The one that came from India was ten times longer; the difference was in the style of writing. The advocate in the UK preferred the shorter one and rightly so because the points covered were about the same. The other area of editing is appeals. I am not a lawyer, yet



"I THINK THE TIME HAS COME NOW TO REVISIT THE DEMAND AND TAKE IT TO A LOGICAL CONCLUSION. THE PRACTICE OF LAW BEFORE CONSTITUTIONAL COURTS SHOULD BE BASED ON ONE'S INTELLIGENCE AND UNDERSTANDING OF LAW..." THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA SAID.

I have come across a case of tenant eviction which began in Mumbai's Small Causes Court and ended up in the Supreme Court! The right to appeal should be reduced to two. Before commencing the final hearing, the judge should decide how much maximum time the two opposing advocates would be permitted. If either advocate exceeds his limit, s/he should have to pay a stipulated sum of money every extra minute, as is done on tax rides for every hundred metres exceeding the minimum fare.

Very recently, I heard of an advocate arguing in the apex court for two full working days. Adjournments should cost expensively to the requesting side; say, half the court fee charged to the litigant. Otherwise, adjournments would continue to be availed freely and popular advocates would carry on getting more and more briefs. Whereas if the client has to pay an adjournment fee, s/he would choose an advocate

who has served in Delhi as well as in other cities.

Judicial activism should be kept to the minimum as also public interest litigation (PILs). The latter was introduced to help the poor and the voiceless to articulate their grievances. It was never meant for the rich and influential. How to "plead promptly without failing to communicate with the judge" is one subject that should be taught seriously. In my college days, a great many topics were dealt with. Often, as a result, if an advocate argued speedily, the judges could not always understand the finer lines of the argument. Or the advocate had to go on pleading indefinitely until he felt he had got his point across, or the judge stopped him from going on. Given the current state of our judicial system, this must be consigned to history.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### A DANGEROUS PROPOSITION

Sir — Time and again, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi throws tantrums and is thus becoming a laughing stock in front of the public. But this time round, it has exceeded all limits and showed his ignorance in the open. The Congress leader sitting alongside the party cadre was seen asking "What is the main theme today?", thus exhibiting his utter ignorance on the subject of the meeting that he was attending. We can well understand how to go to the extent of elaborating and giving a lecture when he does not know the subject. It is indeed a testing time for the Congress and its party cadre to manage a leader who is ignorant about basic things and needs a note to show his presence.

On the other hand, the leaders from other parties have command over the subject and make relevant speeches rather than looking for a subject. The recent rally in Telangana also revealed Rahul Gandhi's total ignorance. It is indeed a dangerous proposition to have a national leader from the Opposition party going blank on basic things.

Gundu K Maniam | Coimbatore

### POWER POLITICS AT PLAY?

Sir — The Punjab & Haryana High Court in a midnight hearing recently directed the Punjab Government to not take any coercive action against BJP leader Tajinder Bagga until the next hearing on May 10. The BJP leader had moved the High Court challenging the non-bailable arrest warrants issued against him by a Mohali court relating to a case registered against him on the charges of making provocative statements, promoting enmity and for alleged criminal intimidation.

As per the court's order, the arrest warrant was issued against Bagga by the court of Judicial Magistrate Ravesh Inderjit Singh. Keeping in view the fact that sufficient opportunities had already been granted to the accused to join the investigation and, despite that, the accused has failed to join the investigation, the court ordered that it is necessary in the

## Yoga in MBBS is a good move



Everyone knows the miraculous values of Sanjeevani *booti* and needs no further elaboration and there are numbers of miraculous plants in Indian system of medicines and recently in this regard WHO had opened research centre at Junagarh, Gujarat. The UN had also declared June 21 as the World Yoga Day and almost all countries had supported this proposition leaving aside their religious affiliation. On this day, all Indian embassies celebrate this day. Former PM Morarji Desai was fully in favour

of the Indian system of medicines; even Atal Bihari Vajpayee got the treatment of his knees done through Kerala therapy. Even Dr Manmohan Singh got his heart bypass surgery done in Delhi.

In the past, the ambassador of Denmark who was posted in Pakistan visited India for the treatment of the motor neuron disease. It is a neurological disease and it is said to be incurable in the entire world but the ambassador tried the various treatments of the Indian system of medicines. Ultimately, he got cured. This incident proves the strength of the Indian system of medicines. When we talk about the Indian system of yoga, it is also included in it as yoga has already proved its results on the front of many incurable diseases and with the inclusion of yoga in MBBS, it will prove beneficial to the common man and will be helpful for the country.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

interest of the justice to issue non-bailable warrants of the accused, Tejinder Pal Singh Bagga for 23.05.2022, who is evading arrest, in order to facilitate the investigation. All these developments took place following the dramatic instances that led to an open political war between the BJP and the AAP, which has since taken an ugly shape.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

### ON THE SEDITION LAW

Sir — The Union Government's stance on the sedition law is clear and unambiguous; it is in favour of retention of the Indian Penal Code's Section 124A pertaining to sedition and treating the 1962 Constitution Bench upholding its validity as a 'binding precedent'. At the same time, the enlightened opinion is that the sedition law has become a legal anachronism and has to be scrapped. This colonial-era law is mostly slapped on dissenters and defenders of basic human rights and religious freedom, political activists fighting for greater autonomy and

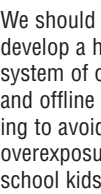
critics of the Government's strong-arm tactics. Obviously, the purpose of retaining the sedition law becomes dubious.

There have been umpteen instances to show that it has been rampantly misused 'to punish' those who exercise their legitimate democratic right to hold the Government of the day to account for its policies and acts of commission and omission. Nowadays anyone who does not toe the line and is critical of the Government and its misdoings is accused of seditious activity. The sedition charge is often slapped in the guise of abusing human rights activists, independent journalists, Dalit leaders and leaders of farmer movements. The sedition law hangs like the sword of Damocles over the heads of those who stand up for citizens' rights and work to advance the causes of justice and freedom.

G David Milton | Maruthancode

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

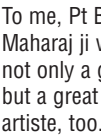
## SOUND BITE



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



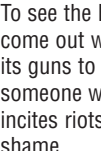
Sri Lanka PM — Mahinda Rajapaksa



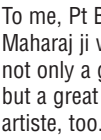
Kathak dancer — Shovana Narayan



Cricketer — Chris Gayle



AAP leader — Atishi



To me, Pt Birju Maharaj ji was not only a guru but a great artiste, too.






FIRST COLUMN

SOLOMON ISLANDS STIRS UP ROW IN AUSTRALIAN POLITICS

Fear of China setting up a base on the Islands rattles even the US



PK VASUDEVA


The Australian opposition is accusing the present Government for bungling the security situation of Solomon Islands. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has rejected accusations that the coalition has bungled a key security relationship, after Solomon Islands shrugged off warnings from Australia and signed a new pact with China. The controversial deal has been the subject of significant debate recently, amid fears it could allow China to establish a military base in the South Pacific. The opposition Labour has called the handling of the issue the greatest Australian foreign policy blunder in the Pacific since World War II, and questioned why the government sent Pacific Minister Zed Seselja instead of Foreign Minister Marise Payne to Honiara after a draft of the pact leaked. Senator Seselja was sent to Solomon Island in a last-ditch effort to convince the Government in Honiara to walk



away from the deal, a trip now shown to be fruitless. Shadow Foreign Minister Penny Wong said Morrison had ignored warnings about the deal last year, and should have personally intervened to ensure it was never signed. Morrison told reporters in Adelaide he made a deliberate decision to send Senator Seselja because it would be counter-productive to publicly heap pressure on Solomon Islands over the agreement. There is going to be a great danger for Australia and New Zealand in the Pacific if Beijing gets a foothold in Solomon Islands. "I'm not going to act like former administrations that treated the Pacific like some extension of Australia. The Pacific Islands are very sensitive to that and I have always had an approach with the Pacific Islands which understands those sensitivities because there is a lot at stake." Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare defended the pact with China. "We intend to beef up and strengthen our police capability to deal with any future instability by properly equipping the police to take full responsibility of the country's security responsibilities, in the hope we will never be required to invoke any of our bilateral security arrangements," he said. Sogavare is not willing to release the full text of the agreement because he would like to consult China before the agreement is brought into the public domain. Beijing typically does not release the text of its bilateral security agreements with other countries. The silence on the part of Sogavare shows that the agreement is more in favour of China for beefing up its security in Pacific. Beijing is going all out to give financial and military aid to Honiara to win over Solomon Islands without understanding that China will finally make its military base there. The US National Security Council, said the US convened a meeting with senior officials from Australia, Japan and New Zealand. "The officials reaffirmed the four countries' enduring and shared commitment to the Pacific Islands," she said. "The United States resolved to intensify its engagement in the region to meet 21st-century challenges. "Officials from the four countries represented also shared concerns about a proposed security framework between the Solomon Islands and the People's Republic of China and its serious risks to a free and open Indo-Pacific." Foreign Minister Marise Payne says the signing of the security pact disappoints the Government. Payne rejected Senator Wong's assessment that inaction by the Morrison government had fuelled the situation. "I think that's an unfair characterisation, and I don't think it recognises the sovereign decisions that governments, of course, make for themselves," she said. "We are looking at very serious geo-strategic challenges in our region, and they are realities." (The writer is former Senior Professor, International Trade and Member, Vivekananda International Foundation. The views expressed are personal.)

Price hike, profiteering ravage all, growth a mirage

Most companies are raising prices in response to the global supply squeeze in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war



SHIVAJI SARKAR

Hyper-inflation - rapid, excessive, and out-of-control general price increases - has become a serious issue with Prime Minister Narendra Modi talking to states for bringing down the fuel prices, supposedly a key reason for the economic trouble. Soaring corporate profiteering is another reason for the rising prices. The top 20 companies continue to have 70 percent profits, as per Mercilius Investment Managers, and higher product prices in a supposedly subdued market. Unilever, Suzuki Motor and JSW Steel all are in the game of raising prices. Most companies are raising prices in response to the global supply squeeze in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

Will speeds of Indian trains ever increase?

IR has only a small stretch of track and allied infrastructure between Delhi and Agra which is fit for trains to run at 160 km/h.

Development of Train 18 — Vande Bharat Express — the first semi-high-speed train of Indian Railways (IR), and subsequent announcement of its large-scale proliferation with 400 rakes in three years, raised the hope that India would soon have a sizeable sector of such trains. The semi-high-speed sector is ill-defined but in the Indian context, stuck as we are in the mail/express train speed range of 110 to 130 km/h for decades, it would mean passenger train operation in the speed range of 160 to 200 km/h.

The reality, however, is far-removed from the hope. IR has only a small stretch of track and allied infrastructure between Delhi and Agra which is fit for trains to run at 160 km/h. IR has been talking about running coaching trains at 160 km/h speed for more than five decades since 1960s and the timeline for achieving the number of times has been revised, embarrassingly, on several occasions. IR's flagship trains, Rajdhani and Shatabdi continue to ply at the same maximum speeds up to 130 km/h since their induction.

Another important aspect which is perhaps as important, if not more, than the maximum speed of operation is the average speed of trains. It calibrates the capacity of IR to run passenger trains consistently at a good speed. Comptroller and Auditor General of India recently tabled a report in parliament, berating IR for not making any perceptible improvement in the running speed of mail/express trains despite spending a significant amount of ₹2.5 lakh crore on track infrastructure between 2008 and 2019. The report stated that the average speed of such trains in 2019-20 was only 50.6 km, which is less than per cent higher than what was registered a decade back. IR has talked about 'Mission Raftaar' since 2016-17, which envisaged raising the average speed of these trains from 50 kmph to 75 kmph by 2021-22. While the target has been missed by a mile, there appears to be no hope of achieving an average speed of even 60 Km/h in near future.

A project to increase the maximum speed of operation to 160 km/h on Delhi-Howrah and Delhi-Mumbai section is in hand for some years. While the declared target date of completion is March 2023, the project is not likely to see completion by then, or even by 2024. IR must look at its strategy closely as such default indicates some gaps in planning, financing and execution.

Let us see this in global perspective. There are more than 20 countries where passenger trains run at a speed of 200 kmph or more; there are many countries which have achieved this by upgrading their existing track, allied infrastructure and rolling stock, including tilting, to raise average and maximum speeds to the range of 150 and 225 kmph respectively; but after the fiasco of the Talgo train trial drama, this may be a distant dream for IR.



THE CAG RECENTLY SUBMITTED A REPORT TO PARLIAMENT BERATING IR FOR NO PERCEPTIBLE IMPROVEMENT IN THE RUNNING SPEED OF MAIL/EXPRESS TRAINS DESPITE SPENDING ₹2.5 LAKH CRORE ON TRACK INFRASTRUCTURE BETWEEN 2008 AND 2019

(Gupta is retired Member (Engineering) and Mani is retired General Manager, Indian Railways. Both are independent rail consultants. The views expressed are personal.)



This is evident since so far as IR has not even formulated the guidelines for construction and maintenance of assets for speed beyond 160 kmph, although R & D arm of IR, RDSO was assigned the task more than three years ago.

A glance at the time table published by the IR (for period July 2019-June 2020) shows that even for train like Vande Bharat, Tejas & Shatabdi expresses on different routes, there is a vast difference in actual average speeds. While the highest average speed is only 96 Kmph for Varanasi-New Delhi Vande Bharat, it is as low as 53 Kmph for Dehradun and Kathgodam Shatabdis. This is mainly on account of various permanent and temporary speed restrictions and operational factors like number of halts & time allowances provided in the time table for planned maintenance works and unforeseen incidents. Unless these impediments are removed in a time-bound manner, merely increasing the maximum speed will provide only limited advantage in terms of overall reduction in travel time in spite of prohibitive capital expenditure.

The average speeds remain low even with induction of more powerful locomotives also because of differential speeds of various trains as all of them, including freight trains, share the same track with curves on which speeds are regulated and the maximum speeds are achieved only for a small time in a run. The impact of laying flatter horizontal curvature on average speeds is evident from the experience of Mumbai

and Madgaon section of Konkan Railway which was originally built for 160 kmph speed potential with flatter curves and hardly any permanent speed restrictions; on this section, Tejas express is able to achieve an average speed of 85 kmph in spite of being non-electrified single line.

With multiple objectives of speed and capacity, IR sanctioned the project to increase the speed to 160 kmph on New Delhi-Howrah and New Delhi-Mumbai Central routes, to be completed by March 2023, at a cost of about 17000 cr. The scope of the project includes fencing, Automatic Train Protection System, Mobile Train Radio Communication and automated and mechanised diagnostic systems. Major portion of 17000 cr is planned through institutional financing (about ₹16000 cr) and till March 2020, no expenditure has been incurred. In addition, the cost of removal of all level crossings, is funded separately. Under the circumstance, completion of these two works by end of this fiscal looks too far-fetched and there is a high risk of severe cost and time overruns.

It is conceivable that once this infrastructure is put in place, the maximum speed capability of Train 18 type rolling stock can be increased to 200 kmph with minor inputs from IR engineers themselves. As for increase in average speeds, IR should try out tilting in some Train 18s to assess its reliability in the Indian environment.

With the fillip given in recent years to construction of expressways, improvements in designs

and comfortable speeds of cars, affordability of modern tourist taxis and higher penetration of air travel, IR will find it difficult to even retain its present share of passenger traffic. If the travel time of inter-city Shatabdi type day trains is not reduced by increasing the average as well as maximum speed, rail travel may no longer offer a significant journey time advantage over road, beset as it is already with an extra travel time to and from the station. Readers would recall that Mumbai-Pune Shatabdi express had to be discontinued because of poor patronage after the commissioning of Mumbai-Pune expressway. Similarly, unless the travel time of Rajdhani is reduced drastically, making services like New Delhi to Mumbai and Howrah truly overnight, similar scenario may emerge after completion of new expressways.

It is obvious that irrespective of the road quality, a Ferrari will run only with the speed of an auto-rickshaw in Chandni Chowk; for the same reason, if IR is genuinely serious to run semi-high-speed trains on existing tracks, with a decent average speed, say around 120 km/h, then the whole eco-system needs a rethink; improvements in rolling stock, particularly on reducing the gap between freight and passenger train speed, time-tabled running of goods trains, reliability of assets and completing the two projects of 160 kmph, without many permanent speed restriction, expeditiously.

With a young and dynamic minister in charge of Railways, the time to act is now.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

“DELHI CM AND PUNJAB CM SHOULD APOLOGISE TO THE SIKHS FOR WHAT HAPPENED (TAJINDER BAGGA ARREST CASE) YESTERDAY.”  
— NATIONAL SECRETARY, BJP  
R P SINGH



“THE BJP WANTS TO PUSH THE COUNTRY INTO A WEB OF HATRED AND VIOLENCE SO IT CAN AVOID DEBATE ON INFLATION, HEALTH, WATER AND POWER.”  
— AAP MP  
SANJAY SINGH



double the cost for tankers. In addition, the rising toll taxes are making goods even more expensive. Tolls also affect inter-region and localized trading. The country sees an opportunity in the Ukraine situation of globally selling food grains at a higher price. While this may ensure higher remuneration to farmers, there is a flip side. It could cause domestic prices to soar. The prime minister recently said the government was approaching World Trade Organisation for

facilitating sales of Indian food grains in the world market. The WTO still has not come out with its terms. The Ukraine situation has created a void as the largest suppliers are unable to meet the world demand. Ukraine exported about 1.7 million tons grains last month, according to consultant ProZerno. The most-recent volume still is only about half of March 2020. Markets are bracing for more upheavals as deliveries from Ukraine and Russia - which together account for about a quarter of the world's grains trade - turn increasingly complicated and raise the spectre of food shortages.

A new market may gradually open up for India. Its ramifications are too early to study. India domestically has

been overflowing with food grain. About 80 crore people are being given free food doles worth over ₹2 lakh crore a year for past two years. While India is the second-largest wheat producer with a share of around 14.14 percent of the world's production in 2020, it accounted for less than 1 percent of global wheat exports. The export potential could be large but with corporate domination, dream prices may elude farmers. The ramifications on the domestic market can cast shadow on the political spectrum.

Coal shortage, its higher prices and dependence on thermal power is increasing power cost per unit to ₹6 to over ₹10 or more. This would make use of electricity for trains, vehicles, farms and

industry an expensive affair. Inflation is eating volumes of large companies like Hindustan Unilever (HUL), claims CEO Sanjiv Mehta but he has no answer for its high 20 percent operating margins, lower than earlier 24 percent. The rising prices are 'rationalising' consumer spending. High raw material prices are now being compensated by raising product prices. As the company tries to transfer costs, consumers are being thrifty and settling for lower priced products. Still, it is having profits at ₹2203 crore or 8.5 percent. This testifies that high profiteering is the bane.

The consumer buys only what he needs of the FMCG. Many companies foresee a decline in high profits.

Intelligent consumer spending is hitting large companies in urban and rural areas. Rising prices are hurting household consumption. Overall market trends can improve if profits are rationalized. The UN Conference for Trade and Development finds that despite everything, the e-commerce trade is growing. It, however, does not consider this healthy. Total retail sales during the pandemic increased to 19 percent in 2020 up from 16 percent in 2019. It has hurt the least-developed countries as well as small businesses. Modi needs to set up a committee of experts and act tough to ensure the country goes back to a magic low inflationary phase for concerted growth.



# Opp rejects Rajapaksa's offer to form interim Govt



PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's main Opposition SJB said on Sunday that it has rejected an offer by embattled President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to its leader Sajith Premadasa to head an interim government, amid continued political uncertainty in the country which is now under a state of emergency.

"Our leader refused to accept the president's offer," Tissa Attanayake, the national organiser for Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) told reporters. Rajapaksa had called over the telephone both Premadasa and Harsha de

Silva, the SJB economic guru, on the prospect of forming an interim government which had been a demand endorsed by the powerful Buddhist clergy as well as the group which had broken away from the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) coalition.

The SJB announced on Saturday that they would back the proposal from the lawyers' body BASL which had advocated for the setting up of an interim government for a period of 18 months with a move to abolish the presidential system of governance. They had also called for the repealing of the 20th Amendment to the

Constitution which conferred unfettered powers to Rajapaksa in 2020.

The Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) calls for the restoration of the 19 Amendment to the Constitution which had empowered Parliament over the president. The SJB is to have a discussion with the BASL on this proposal, the SJB leader Harin Fernando said. The 19A adopted in 2015 pruned presidential powers by empowering Parliament above the executive president.

However, the 19A was scrapped after Gotabaya Rajapaksa won the November

2019 presidential election. Meanwhile, former President Maithripala Sirisena also met Premadasa on Saturday to ask the SJB to take over the interim government.

Premadasa, 55, has already announced that he would not be a party to any government headed by the two Rajapaksas - Gotabaya and Mahinda.

The SJB, which has handed over to the parliamentary Speaker motions of no-confidence against the SLPP coalition government and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, is putting pressure on parliamentary Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena to advance the date of its debate.

The Buddhist clergy too has intensified pressure on Rajapaksa to implement the interim government plan.

The Government hemmed in by a month of street protests has imposed a state of emergency, which gives the security forces sweeping powers to crack down on dissent.

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

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

## Def Ministry asks Lankans to assist in managing economic crisis, cancels leave of security personnel

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Defence Ministry has appealed to the public to assist it in managing the current economic crisis and unrest in the country with "utmost intelligence and patience" and also cancelled the leaves of all security personnel, following the declaration of a state of emergency in the country by embattled President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

In a special Cabinet meeting on Friday, President Rajapaksa declared a state of emergency with effect from Friday midnight. This is the second emergency declared in just over a month. Rajapaksa had declared an emergency on April 1 also after a mass protest opposite his private residence. He had revoked it earlier on April 5. Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence on Saturday announced that due to the declaration of a state of emergency,

shortages in fuel, medicines and electricity supply. Despite mounting pressure, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his elder brother and Prime

Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa have refused to quit office. In a special Cabinet meeting on Friday, President Rajapaksa declared a state of emergency

the leave of security forces personnel is cancelled, the Daily Mirror newspaper reported.

All military personnel are to report to duty with immediate effect, said the Ministry of Defence.

In a separate statement, the ministry requested all citizens to "assist in managing the current economic and social crisis and unrest in the country with the utmost intelligence and patience."

"It must be stated that we all respect the democratic right of the people of Sri Lanka to peacefully express their agitations and protests within the democratic framework," the statement said, amidst weeks of protests demanding the resignation of the President and the government, blaming the powerful Rajapaksa clan for mishandling the island nation's economy, already hit by the pandemic. "Nevertheless, especially the last few days, the

struggle that has been going on as a peaceful struggle has been changed and the democratic rights of the people have been violated in an attempt to disrupt the normal life of the people in the country," the ministry said in a statement.

It is a fact that in general we are all in great distress due to the protests and hartals being carried out in various parts of the country in a manner that affects their daily lives," it added.

The ministry said there had been reports of protesters behaving in a "provocative and threatening manner" without any regard for the prevailing law and order in the country, disrupting the work of the Police and Security Forces who are committed to maintain law and order. "Due to this reason, the majority of the law-abiding citizens of the country find it very difficult to maintain the essential services

required to carry out their daily lives," it said. "Considering the status quo, the State of Emergency in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka has been declared from midnight on May 6, 2022 in accordance with Constitutional powers vested in His Excellency the President of the country...To maintain public peace, securing the lives of the people and ensuring social stability and to establish the constitutional institutions established in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution," it said.

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.

with effect from Friday midnight. This is the second emergency declared in just over a month. Rajapaksa had declared an emergency on

April 1 also after a mass protest opposite his private residence. He had revoked it on April 5 following severe criticism of his move.

# Search for survivors in Cuba hotel blast; 26 dead

AP ■ HAVANA

Relatives of the missing in Cuba's capital desperately searched on Saturday for victims of an explosion at one of Havana's most luxurious hotels that killed at least 26 people.

They checked the morgue, hospitals and if unsuccessful, they returned to the partially collapsed Hotel Saratoga, where rescuers used dogs to hunt for survivors. A natural gas leak was the apparent cause of Friday's blast at the 96-room hotel.

The 19th-century structure in the Old Havana neighborhood did not have any guests at the time because it was undergoing renovations ahead of a planned Tuesday reopening after being closed.

Havana city officials raised the death toll to 26 on Saturday, according to the official Cubadebate news site.

The dead included four children and a pregnant woman. Spain's President Pedro Sánchez said via Twitter that a Spanish tourist was among the dead and that another Spaniard was seriously injured. Cuban authorities confirmed the tourist's death and said her partner was

injured. They were not staying at the hotel. Tourism Minister Dalila González said a Cuban-American tourist was also injured.

Representatives of Grupo de Turismo Gaviota SA, which owns the hotel, said during a news conference Saturday that 51 workers had been inside the hotel at the time, as well as two people working on renovations. Of those, 11 were killed, 13 remained missing and six were hospitalised. González said the cause of the blast was still under investigation, but a large crane hoisted a charred gas tanker from the hotel's rubble early Saturday. Search and rescue teams worked through the night and into Saturday, using ladders to descend through the rubble and twisted metal into the hotel's basement as heavy machinery gingerly moved away piles of the building's façade to allow access. Above, chunks of drywall dangled from wires, desks sat seemingly undisturbed inches from the void where the front of the building cleaved away.

At least one survivor was found early Saturday in the shattered ruins, and rescuers using search dogs clambered

over huge chunks of concrete looking for more.

Relatives of missing people remained at the site while others gathered at hospitals where the injured were being treated.

A desperate Yatzara Cobas stood outside the perimeter waiting for word of her daughter, 27-year-old housekeeper Shaidis Cobas.

"My daughter is in the Saratoga; she's been there since 8 a.m. (Friday), and at this time I don't know anything about her," Cobas said.

"She's not at the morgue, she's not in the hospital." The mother said she had gone everywhere seeking answers from authorities, but coming up empty. "I'm tired of the lies," she said. Lt. Col. Enrique Peña briefed Comandante Ramiro Valdés, who fought alongside Fidel Castro, on the search efforts at the site Saturday morning. Peña said the presence of people had been detected on the first floor and in the basement and four teams of search dogs and handlers were working. He did not know if the victims were alive or dead.

"I don't want to move from here," Cristina Avellar told The Associated Press near the hotel. Avellar was waiting for



news of Odalys Barrera, a 57-year-old cashier who has worked at the hotel for five years. She is the godmother of Barrera's daughters and considers her like a sister. Neighbors were still in shock a day after the explosion.

"I thought it was a bomb," said Guillermo Madan, a 73-year-old retiree, who lives just meters from the building, but

was not injured. The three-decade resident of the neighborhood was cooking and watching television when he heard the blast. "My room moved from here to there. My neighbor's window broke, the plates, everything."

Katherine Marrero, 31, was shopping at the time. "I left the store, I felt the explosion," she said. "Everyone started to run."

Although no tourists were reported injured, the explosion is another blow to the country's crucial tourism industry. Even before the coronavirus pandemic kept tourists away from Cuba, the country was struggling with tightened sanctions imposed by former U.S. President Donald Trump and kept in place the Biden administration.

## Beijing loyalist Lee elected as HK's next leader

AP ■ HONG KONG

John Lee, a hard-line security chief who oversaw a crackdown on Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement, was elected as the city's next leader on Sunday in a vote cast by a largely pro-Beijing committee.

Lee was the only candidate and won with over 99 per cent of the vote in which nearly all 1,500 committee members were carefully vetted by the central government in Beijing.

He will replace current leader Carrie Lam on July 1. Her five-term was marked by huge pro-democracy protests calling for her resignation, a security crackdown that has quashed virtually all dissent, the recent COVID-19 wave that had overwhelmed the health system - events that have undermined Hong Kong's reputation as an international business hub with Western-style freedoms. "I look forward to all of us starting a new chapter together, building a Hong Kong that is caring, open and



vibrant, and a Hong Kong that is full of opportunities and harmony," Lee said in his victory speech.

Lam congratulated Lee in a statement and said she would submit the election results to Beijing. The election followed major changes to Hong Kong's electoral laws last year to ensure that only "patriots" loyal to Beijing can hold office. The legislature was also reorganised to all but eliminate opposition voices.

The elaborate arrangements surrounding the predetermined outcome speak to Beijing's desire for a veneer of democracy.

## After leak, religious rift over legal abortion on display in US

AP ■ WASHINGTON

America's faithful are bracing - some with cautionary joy and others with looming dread - for the Supreme Court to potentially overturn landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade decision and end the nationwide right to legal abortion.

A reversal of the 49-year-old ruling has never felt more possible since a draft opinion suggesting justices may do so was leaked this week.

While religious believers at the heart of the decades-old fight over abortion are shocked at the breach of high court protocol, they are still as deeply divided and their beliefs on the contentious issue as entrenched as

ever. National polls show that most Americans support abortion access. A Public Religion Research Institute survey from March found that a majority of religious groups believe it should be legal in most cases - with exception of white evangelical Protestants, 69 per cent of whom said the procedure should be outlawed in most or all cases.

In conservative Christian corners, the draft opinion has sparked hope. Faith groups that have historically taken a strong anti-abortion stance, including US Conference of Catholic Bishops, have urged followers to pray for Roe's reversal. The Rev. Manuel Rodriguez, pastor of 17,000-strong Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic church in

New York City's Queens borough, said his mostly Latino congregation is heartened by prospect of Roe's demise at a time when courts in some Latin American countries such as Colombia and Argentina have moved to legalise abortion.

"You don't fix a crime committing another crime," Rodriguez said. Bishop Garland R. Hunt Sr., senior pastor of The Father's House, a nondenominational, predominantly African American church in Peachtree Corners, Georgia, agreed. "This is the result of ongoing, necessary prayer since 1973," Hunt said. "As a Christian, I believe that God is one that gives life - not politicians or justices. I certainly want to see more babies

protected in the womb." No faith is monolithic on the abortion issue. Yet many followers of faiths that don't prohibit abortion are agnostic that a view held by a minority of Americans could supersede their individual rights and religious beliefs.

In Judaism, for example, many authorities say abortion is permitted or even required in cases where woman's life is in danger. "This ruling would be outlawing abortion in cases when our religion would permit us," said Rabbi Danya Rutenberg, scholar in residence at the National Council of Jewish Women, "and it is basing its concepts of when life begins on someone else's philosophy or theology."

## 52-yr-old Nepali Sherpa scales Mt Everest for 26th time, breaks own record of most climbs

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

A 52-year-old Nepali Sherpa has climbed Mount Everest for the 26th time, bettering his own record for most number of times to scale the world's highest peak, expedition planners said on Sunday.

Kami Rita and his group of 11 Sherpa guides summited the 8,848.86-metre peak at 6:55 pm (local time), said Dawa Sherpa, manager of Seven Summit Treks Pvt Ltd. The Sherpas made the expedition to fix ropes along the trekking route, to help climbers ahead of the peak climbing season starting May. The group climbed through the traditional south-

east ridge route which was pioneered by New Zealand's Sir Edmund Hillary and Nepali Sherpa Tenzing Norgay in 1953. This year the Department of Tourism, Nepal has issued permits to 316 individuals to climb the peak.

Rita scaled Mt Everest for the first time on May 13, 1994. Besides Mt Everest, Rita has also scaled Mt Godwin-Austen (K2), Mt Lhotse, Mt Manaslu and Mt Cho Oyu. He also holds record for most climbs over 8000 metres. Till date, Everest has been climbed 10,657 times, many have climbed peak multiple times. Over 300 people have died trying to scale the peak.

## PHILIPPINES ELECTIONS

# Dictator's son, rights lawyer vie for Philippine presidency

AP ■ MANILA

More than three decades after a largely peaceful "People Power" revolt overthrew Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos, his son and namesake has emerged as the top contender in Monday's presidential election based on most voter-preference surveys.

Here are some key facts about the major issues, the leading candidates and election concerns:

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

If Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Triumphs, it will be a stunning reversal of the 1986 pro-democracy uprising that booted his father out of office into global infamy. Many Filipinos

remember the human rights atrocities and plunder that unfolded under his dictatorship and would likely push back against any perceived threat to democracy or Marcos Jr.'s attempt to recover his family's assets that were seized by the government as ill-gotten wealth.

The winner stands to inherit immense problems, including an economy battered by the coronavirus pandemic, deeper poverty and unemployment, hyperinflation due to skyrocketing oil and gas prices, decades-old insurgencies and inflamed political divisions. Outgoing populist leader Rodrigo Duterte's successor also likely faces calls to prose-

cute him for his bloody crackdown on illegal drugs that has left thousands of mostly poor suspects dead and alarmed the international community. The International Criminal Court has been investigating the killings as a possible crime against humanity.

### FERDINAND MARCOS JR

A former provincial governor, congressman and senator, the 64-year-old son of the late dictator is waging the most impressive attempt yet of the Marcos family to recapture the presidency. His mother, Imelda Marcos, twice unsuccessfully attempted to retake the seat of power after returning with her

children to the Philippines from exile in the United States, where her husband died in 1989. Marcos Jr has defended his father's legacy and steadfastly refuses to apologize for and acknowledge the atrocities and plunder during the dictatorship.

Married to a lawyer, with whom he has three sons, he has stayed away from controversies, including a past tax conviction and the Marcos family's refusal to pay a huge estate tax. Throughout his campaign, he tenaciously stuck to a battle cry of national unity. He denies accusations that he financed a years-long social media campaign that harnessed online trolls to smear opponents and

whitewash the Marcos family's checkered history, daring critics to "show me one."

LENI ROBREDO  
As an economics student at the state-run University of the Philippines in the 1980s, Leni Robredo joined the massive protests that led to the ouster of the elder Marcos.

The 57-year-old also took up law and successfully ran for a seat in the House of Representatives in 2013 in her first foray into politics after her husband, a respected politician, died in a plane crash in 2012. She defeated Marcos Jr. In the 2016 vice presidential race with a narrow margin in their first electoral faceoff.



# Dozens feared dead after Russian bomb levels Ukraine school

AP ■ ZAPORIZHZHIA

Dozens of Ukrainians were feared dead on Sunday after a Russian bomb destroyed a school sheltering about 90 people in the basement as Moscow's invading forces kept up their barrage of cities, towns and villages in eastern and southern Ukraine.

The governor of Luhansk province, one of two areas that make up the eastern industrial heartland known as the Donbas, said the school in the village of Bilohorivka caught fire after Saturday's bombing.

Emergency crews found two bodies and rescued 30 people, he said. "Most likely, all 60 people who remain under the rubble are now dead," Gov. Serhiy Haidai wrote on the Telegram messaging app. Russian shelling also killed two boys, ages 11 and 14, in the nearby town of Pryvillia, he said. Since failing to capture Ukraine's capital, Russia has focused its offensive in the Donbas, where Moscow-backed separatists have been

fighting since 2014 and occupy some territory.

The largest European conflict since World War II has developed into a punishing war of attrition due to the Ukrainian military's unexpectedly effective defense.

To demonstrate success, the Russian military worked to complete its conquest of the besieged port city of Mariupol, which has been under relentless assault since the start of the war, in time for Victory Day celebrations on Monday. A sprawling seaside steel mill is the only part of the city not under Russian control.

All the remaining women, children and older civilians who had been sheltering with Ukrainian fighters in the Azovstal plant were evacuated Saturday. The troops still inside have refused to surrender; hundreds are believed to be wounded.

After rescuers evacuated the last civilians Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his nightly address that the

focus would turn to extracting the wounded and medics. Zelenskyy said in his nightly address that work would also continue Sunday on securing humanitarian corridors for residents of Mariupol and surrounding towns to leave.

The Ukrainian government has been reaching out to international organizations to try to secure safe passage for the estimated 2,000 fighters remaining in the plant's underground tunnels and bunkers.

Zelenskyy acknowledged the difficulty, but said: "We are not losing hope, we are not stopping. Every day we are looking for some diplomatic option that might work."

The Ukrainian leader was expected to hold online talks Sunday with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, US President Joe Biden and leaders from other Group of Seven countries.

The meeting is partly meant to display unity among Western allies on Victory in Europe Day, which marks Nazi Germany's 1945 surrender.



Elsewhere on Ukraine's coast, explosions echoed again Sunday across the major Black Sea port of Odesa, which Russia struck with six cruise missiles on Saturday. Authorities offered no immediate damage reports.

The Odesa city council said four of the missiles launched Saturday hit a furniture company, with the shock waves and debris badly damaging high-rise apartment buildings. The other two hit the

Odesa airport, where a previous Russian attack destroyed the runway.

Ukrainian leaders warned that attacks would only worsen in the lead-up to Victory Day, the May 9 holiday when Russia celebrates Nazi Germany's defeat in 1945 with military parades. Russian President Vladimir Putin is believed to want to proclaim some kind of triumph in Ukraine when he addresses the troops on Red Square on

Monday.

In neighbouring Moldova, Russian and separatist troops were on "full alert," the Ukrainian military warned.

The region has increasingly become a focus of worries that the conflict could expand beyond Ukraine's borders.

Pro-Russian forces broke off the Transnistria section of Moldova in 1992, and Russian troops have been stationed there since, ostensibly as peacekeepers.

Those forces are on "full combat readiness," Ukraine said, without giving details on how it came to the assessment.

Moscow has sought to sweep across southern Ukraine both to cut off the country from the Black Sea and to create a corridor to Transnistria. But it has struggled to achieve those objectives.

In a sign of the dogged resistance that has sustained the fighting into its 11th week, Ukraine's military struck Russian positions on a Black Sea island that was captured in the war's first days and has

become a symbol of Ukrainian resistance.

Satellite photos analysed by The Associated Press showed Ukraine targeting Russian-held Snake Island in a bid to impede Russia's efforts to control the sea.

A satellite image taken Sunday morning by Planet Labs PBC showed smoke rising from two sites on the island. On the island's southern edge, a fire smoked next to debris. That corresponded to a video released by the Ukrainian military showing a strike on a Russian helicopter that had flown to the island. A Planet Labs image from Saturday showed most of the island's buildings, as well as what appeared to be a Serna-class landing craft, destroyed by Ukrainian drone attacks.

The most intense combat in recent days has taken place in eastern Ukraine. A Ukrainian counteroffensive near Kharkiv, a city in the northeast that is the country's second-largest, "is making significant progress and will like-

ly advance to the Russian border in the coming days or weeks," according to the Institute for the Study of War.

The Washington-based think tank added that "the Ukrainian counteroffensive demonstrates promising Ukrainian capabilities."

However, the Ukrainian army withdrew from Luhansk province's embattled city of Popasna, Haidai, the regional governor, said Sunday.

In a video interview posted on his Telegram channel, Haidai said that Kyiv's troops had "moved to stronger positions, which they had prepared ahead of time."

The Russia-backed rebels have established a breakaway region in Luhansk and neighbouring Donetsk, which together make up the Donbas. Russia has targeted areas still under Ukrainian control.

"All free settlements in the Luhansk region are hot spots," Haidai said. "Right now, there are shooting battles in (the villages) of Bilohorivka, Voivodivka and towards Popasna."

## UK confirms extra military support funds for Ukraine to counter Russia

PTI ■ LONDON

The UK government pledged an additional 1.3 billion pounds in military support to Ukraine during this financial year to help the country counter Russian forces in the ongoing conflict, as British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and other G7 leaders met virtually with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Sunday.

The meeting came on a day, which is being marked across Europe as VE Day - or Victory in Europe Day that ended World War II on May 8, 1945. The additional UK funding will go towards electronic warfare equipment, a counter battery radar system, GPS jamming equipment and thousands of night vision devices, among other military kit pledged by Johnson earlier.

[Russian President] Putin's brutal attack is not only causing untold devastation in Ukraine - it is also threatening peace and security across

Europe," said Johnson.

"The UK was the first country to recognise the scale of the threat and sent arms to help the Ukrainians defend themselves. We will stand by that endeavour, working with our allies to ensure Ukraine can continue to push back the Russian invasion and survive as a free and democratic country. In the process, we are bolstering our own security and economy, turbocharging the development and production of cutting-edge defence equipment here in the UK," he said.

The extra 1.3 billion pounds comes from the Reserve, funds the UK government said it has set aside for the most pressing emergencies.

This latest commitment is in addition to the UK's current package for Ukraine that totals well over 1.5 billion pounds. The support already provided includes around 400 million pounds in humanitarian aid and grants and unlocking over 700 million pounds in additional World Bank lending



through loan guarantees.

"The situation in Ukraine continues to cause immense suffering with every day bringing new, tragic stories of Putin's brutality," said UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak.

"We are unwavering in our support for the people of Ukraine - and this extra 1.3 billion pounds will ensure we continue to provide the necessary military and operational support they need to defend themselves against Putin. The UK is at the forefront providing economic,

humanitarian and defensive support to Ukraine and we are working tirelessly to bring an end to this conflict," he said.

The latest announcement is also said to help support the defence industry in the UK, with Johnson and UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace set to host a meeting of leading defence companies later this month to discuss "ramping up" production in response to increased demand created by the conflict in Ukraine and a global shift away from Russian-made weaponry.

AP ■ ZAPORIZHZHIA

Sparks fly as a circular saw slices into metal, while welders nearby work feverishly to the sound of blaring heavy metal.

Upstairs, sewing machines clatter as women mark patterns on cloth being shaped into bulletproof vests.

An old industrial complex in the southeastern Ukrainian riverside city of Zaporizhzhia has become a hive of activity for volunteers producing everything from body armor and anti-tank obstacles to camouflage nets, portable heating stoves and rifle slings for Ukrainian soldiers fighting Russia's invasion.

One section specializes in vehicles, armour-plating some, converting others into ambulances. Another organises food and medical deliveries.

With the front line about 50 kilometers (30 miles) from the city, some sections of the operation, such as the stitching

of bulletproof vests, are working around the clock in shifts to meet demand.

Crowdfunding has brought in enough money to buy steel from Sweden, Finland and Belgium, which is lighter than local steel, organizers say, a crucial quality for body armor.

The operation is the brainchild of local celebrity Vasyl Busharov and his friend Hennadii Vovchenko, who ran a furniture-making business.

They named it Palianytsia, a type of Ukrainian bread whose name many Ukrainians say cannot be pronounced properly by Russians.

The operation relies entirely on volunteers, who now number more than 400 and come from all walks of life, from tailors to craftsmen to lawyers. Apart from those involved in production, there are also drivers delivering humanitarian aid and medical equipment bought through donated funds.

"I feel I am needed here,"

said fashion designer Olena Grekova, 52, taking a brief break from marking fabric for vests.

When Russia invaded on February 24, she was in Thailand seeking inspiration for her spring collection. Initially, she said, she wondered whether it was a sign from God that she shouldn't return. Her husband and two adult sons urged her not to. "But I made a decision that I had to go back," she said. She had known Busharov for years.

Arriving home on March 3, she gathered her equipment the next day and by March 5 was at Palianytsia. She's been working there every day since, bar one, sometimes even at night.

Shifting from designing backless ballgowns to creating functional bulletproof vests was "a new experience for me," Grekova said. But she sought feedback from soldiers for her designs, which have armor plates added. Now she is helping to produce several versions,

including a prototype summer vest.

In another section of the industrial complex, 55-year-old Ihor Prytula was busy making a new camouflage net, winding pieces of dyed fabric through a string frame. A furniture-maker by trade, he joined Palianytsia at the start of the war.

He had some military experience, he said, so it was easy to get feedback from soldiers on what they needed.

"We speak the same language," he said.

For Prytula, the war is personal. His 27-year-old son was killed in late March as he helped evacuate people from the northern town of Chernihiv. "The war and death, it's bad, trust me, I know this," he said. "It's bad, it's tears, it's sorrow."

The call for volunteers went out as soon as the war began. Busharov announced his project on Facebook on Feb. 25.

## Patriotism, unease mix as Russia marks Victory Day in WWII

AP ■ MOSCOW

Red Soviet flags and orange-and-black striped military ribbons are on display in Russian cities and towns. Neighbourhoods are staging holiday concerts. Flowers are being laid by veterans' groups at monuments to the Great Patriotic War, as World War II is known in the country.

At first glance, preparations for Monday's celebration of Victory Day, marking the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945, seem to be the same as ever.

But the mood this year is very different, because Russian troops are fighting and dying

again.

And this battle, now in its 11th week, is going on in neighboring Ukraine, against what the government has falsely called a campaign against "Nazis."

The pride and patriotism usually associated with Russia's most important holiday, marked by a huge parade of soldiers and military hardware through Red Square, is mixing with apprehension and unease over what

this year's Victory Day may bring.

Some Russians fear that President Vladimir Putin will use it to declare that what the Kremlin has previously called

a "special military operation" in Ukraine will now be a full-fledged war - bringing with it a broad mobilization of troops to bolster Russia's forces.

"I can't remember a time when the May 9 holiday was anticipated with such anxiety," historian Ivan Kurilla wrote on Facebook. Ukraine's intelligence chief, Kyrylo Budanov, said Moscow was covertly preparing such a plan. British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace told LBC Radio that Putin was "laying the ground for being able to say, Look, this is now a war against Nazis, and what I need is more people."

The Kremlin denied having such plans, calling the

reports "untrue" and "non-sense."

Asked by The Associated Press on Friday whether mobilization rumors could dampen the Victory Day mood, Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said "nothing will cast a shadow" over "the sacred day, the most important day" for Russians.

Still, human rights groups reported a spike in calls from people asking about laws concerning mobilization and their rights in case of being ordered to join the military.

"Questions about who can be called up and how have started to flow on a mass scale through our hotline about the rights of conscripts and the

military," said Pavel Chikov, founder of the Agora legal aid group, on the messaging app Telegram.

Russian state TV has ramped up the patriotic rhetoric. In announcing the Feb. 24 military operation, Putin declared it was aimed at the "demilitarization" of Ukraine to remove a perceived military threat to Russia by "neo-Nazis."

A recent TV commentary said Putin's words were "not an abstract thing and not a slogan" and praised Russia's success in Ukraine, even though Moscow's troops have gotten bogged down, making only minor gains in recent weeks.

## Last women, children evacuated from Ukrainian steel mill

AP ■ ZAPORIZHZHIA

Russian forces kept up their barrage of southern Ukraine, hitting the major Black Sea port of Odesa with cruise missiles and bombarding the steelworks up the coast in Mariupol, where Ukrainian fighters remained trapped underground.

Moscow was aiming to complete its conquest of Mariupol in time for Victory Day celebrations on Monday. But it's forces continued to face dogged resistance from defenders within the bunkers beneath the factory. Civilians have been evacuated.

In a sign of the unexpectedly effective defence that has sustained the fighting into its 11th week, Ukraine's military flattened Russian positions on a Black Sea island that was captured in the war's first days and has become a symbol of resistance.

Western military analysts also said a Ukrainian counteroffensive was advancing around the country's second-

largest city, Kharkiv.

Ukraine's military said retreating Russian forces destroyed three bridges on a road northeast of the city to try to slow the Ukrainian advance.

The largest European conflict since World War II has developed into a punishing war of attrition that has killed thousands of people, forced millions to flee their homes and destroyed large swaths of some cities.

Ukrainian leaders warned that attacks would only worsen in the lead-up to Victory Day, when Russia celebrates Nazi Germany's defeat in 1945 with military parades. Russian President Vladimir Putin is believed to want to proclaim some kind of triumph in Ukraine when he addresses the troops on Red Square on Monday.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Saturday that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his people "embody the spirit of those who prevailed during the Second World War." He

accused Putin of trying "to twist history to attempt to justify his unprovoked and brutal war against Ukraine."

"As war again rages in Europe, we must increase our resolve to resist those who now seek to manipulate historical memory in order to advance their own ambitions," Blinken said in a statement as the United States and United Kingdom commemorate the Allied victory in Europe.

The most intense fighting in recent days has been in eastern Ukraine, where the two sides are entrenched in a fierce battle to capture or reclaim territory. Moscow's offensive there has focused on the Donbas, where Russia-backed separatists have been fighting since 2014.

The governor of Luhansk region, one of two that make up the Donbas, said a Russian strike destroyed a school in the village of Bilogorivka where 90 people were seeking safety in the basement. Gov. Serhiy Haidai, who posted pictures of the burning rubble on the



Telegram messaging app, said 30 people were rescued. Rescue work was ongoing.

Haidai also said two boys aged 11 and 14 were killed by Russian shelling in the town of Pryvillia, while two girls aged 8 and 12 and a 69-year-old woman were wounded.

In neighboring Moldova, Russian and separatist troops are on "full alert," the Ukrainian military warned Sunday. The region has

increasingly become a focus of worries that the conflict could expand beyond Ukraine's borders.

Pro-Russian forces broke off the Transnistria section of Moldova in 1992, and Russian troops have been stationed there since, ostensibly as peacekeepers.

Those forces are on "full combat readiness," Ukraine said, without giving details on how it came to the assessment.

## Jill Biden pays surprise visit to Ukraine, meets First Lady

AP ■ UZHGOROD (UKRAINE)

US First Lady Jill Biden made an unannounced visit to western Ukraine on Sunday, holding a surprise Mother's Day meeting with the nation's first lady, Olena Zelenska, as Russia presses its punishing war in the eastern regions.

Biden travelled under the cloak of secrecy, becoming the latest high-profile American to enter Ukraine during its 10-week-old conflict with Russia.

"I wanted to come on Mother's Day," Biden told Zelenskyy. "I thought it was

important to show the Ukrainian people that this war has to stop and this war has been brutal and that the people of the United States stand with the people of Ukraine."

The first lady travelled by vehicle to the town of Uzhhorod, about a 10-minute drive from a Slovakian village that borders Ukraine. She spent about two hours in Ukraine.

The two came together in a small classroom, sitting across a table from one another and talking before reporters before they met in private. Zelenskyy and her children have been at an undisclosed location for

their safety.

Zelenskyy thanked Biden for her "courageous act" and said, "We understand what it takes for the U.S. First lady to come here during a war when military actions are taking place every day, where the air sirens are happening every day -- even today."

The school where they met has been turned into transitional housing for Ukrainian migrants from elsewhere in the country.

The visit allowed Biden to conduct the kind of personal diplomacy that her husband would like to be doing himself.

## Canadian Prime Minister makes surprise trip to Ukraine



AP ■ KYIV

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made a surprise visit to Irpin, which had been damaged by Russia's attempt to take Kyiv at the start of the war, according to Ukrainian media outlet Suspilne and Irpin Mayor Oleksander Markushyn.

Canadian officials did not immediately acknowledge Trudeau's presence.

Trudeau is the latest Western leader to come to Ukraine to offer their support to the country.



# Rate hike wasn’t surprising, timing was: Sitharaman

**Mumbai:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said the recent interest rate hike by the Reserve Bank was not surprising for her but the timing was, asserting that the rising cost of funds will not impact the government’s planned infrastructure investments.

For the first time since August 2018, RBI had on May 4 delivered a blunt 40 basis points increase in key repo rate to 4.40 per cent, and also hiked the cash reserve ratio by 50 basis points to 4.5 per cent after an unscheduled meeting of the rate setting panel, citing increased inflation pressures following the Ukraine war and the resultant spike in crude oil prices.

Retail inflation printed at 6.9 per cent in March and the April reading is forecast to top 7.7 per cent.

“The timing of RBI’s rate hike came as a surprise but not the action itself as people thought it should have been done anyway....It came as a surprise because it’s between the two MPCs (monetary policy committee) meetings. But the US Fed had been saying it all the while,” Sitharaman said in her first reaction to the rate hike while addressing an award function organised by the Economic Times on Saturday evening here.



She said that in the last MPC meeting, the RBI gave indications that it’s time for them to also act, and the hike was part of a synchronised action by major central banks across the globe.

“In a way, it was a synchronised action. Australia did it, and the US did it that night. So, I see a greater understanding among central banks nowadays. But the understanding of how to handle recovery from the pandemic is not fully unique or typical for only India. It’s a global issue.

“And even as we handled that recovery, inflation, which was really festering... and festering at some unbelievable

highs, let us say in the US and Britain, not so much in our country...Still, the challenge of recovery versus inflation seems to be following a particular template that’s across the globe now,” she said. However, she was quick to assert that the central bank’s decision will not impact the government’s planned huge infrastructure investments running into tens of billions of dollars.

On the economic sanctions against Russia after its invasion of Ukraine, she said the blockades were “constraining us” as traditional buyers from Russia were shifting to sources from the Indian basket of crude, 80-85 per cent of

which is from the Middle East. This shift was likely to put more pressure on the Indian crude basket price.

“The sanctions have resulted in people rushing to alternative sources where countries like us are there for decades. Now suddenly it will be crowded with more people who want to buy the same thing. So, supply and price factors will now have its ramification on us,” she said and made it clear that India will continue to buy crude from wherever it was available cheaply.

“In matters related to our oil consumption and buying it from the source which gives us a concessional rate, we’ve asserted our right in doing that. We’ve been explaining that we’ll certainly purchase it, so it is something that hasn’t been said for the first time. We’ll go ahead with what is good for us. We need cheap fuel. If it is available, why won’t we want to buy it?,” she said.

Sitharaman said even before the war, there was an increase in prices of fertilisers. The government had to seek extra spending approval during the supplementary demands because of the way crude oil was playing up and the rise in commodity prices due to supply disruptions. **PTI**

# Govt to invite financial bids for SCI sale by September

## Shipping House, MTI to be hived off

**We would be ready to invite financial bids in 3-4 months, an official said**

**New Delhi:** The Government is likely to invite financial bids for Shipping Corporation of India by September, after the process of demerger of non-core assets is completed, an official said.

As part of the strategic-sale process, the Government is hiving off Shipping House and the training institute and some other non-core assets of Shipping Corporation of India (SCI).

“The process of demerger is time consuming. We would be ready to invite financial bids in 3-4 months,” the official said.

The board of Shipping Corp met last week and approved an updated demerger scheme for hiving off the non-core assets of SCI to Shipping Corporation of India Land and Assets Ltd (SCILAL) including Shipping House, Mumbai and MTI (Maritime Training Institute), Powai to complete the process of demerging all the non-core assets to the new company SCILAL.

As per the balance sheet of SCI, the value of non-core assets held for demerger as of March 31, 2022, stood at ₹2,392 crore.

The SCI board in August last year, had approved a demerger scheme for hiving off

the identified non-core assets and incorporated SCILAL in November 2021, for holding such assets of the company, which is under the Ministry of Ports Shipping and Waterways. The Ministry in April 2022, had directed SCI to expedite the process of demerger of non-core assets of SCI to SCILAL and also requested the Board of SCI to review the demerger scheme for hiving off the non-core assets, including Shipping House, Mumbai and MTI, Powai.

“Such modifications do not have any impact on carrying value of non-core assets in the financial statements. The implementation of the Scheme including the modified scheme is in process and considering the reiteration by MoPSW and DIPAM to expedite the demerger process, there is a certainty of completion of the process in the near future ...,” as per the SCI independent auditor’s report presented to the Board.

In March last year the government had received multiple bids for privatisation of Shipping Corporation of India.

The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) in December 2020, had invited expressions of interest (EoI) for strategic disinvestment of its entire stake of 63.75 per cent in Shipping Corp of India, along with the transfer of management.

The Cabinet in November in 2020, had given in-principle approval for strategic divestment of Shipping Corp.

The privatisation of SCI is now likely to be completed in the current fiscal. The government has budgeted to garner ₹65,000 crore from CPSE disinvestment in the ongoing 2022-23 fiscal.

While the government has already raised ₹3,000 crore from minority share sale in ONGC, another ₹21,000 crore would come in from the ongoing IPO of Life Insurance Corporation this month and ₹211.14 crore after the hand-over of Pawan Hans management control to Star9 Mobility Pvt Ltd, a consortium of Big Charter Pvt Ltd, Maharaja Aviation Pvt Ltd and Almas Global Opportunity Fund SPC, by June. **PTI**

## CAs’ institute to Govt: Allow members to conduct financial audits of MSMEs

**New Delhi:** The cost accountants’ institute has requested the government to consider allowing cost and management accountants to conduct financial audit of MSMEs and private limited companies.

The Institute of Cost Accountants of India, set up under an Act of Parliament, has around 90,000 members and about 5 lakh students.

Seeking to ensure competition as well as parity among cost and management accountants, and chartered accountants, the institute has asked the government to allow its members to do various activities, including the tax audit under the Income Tax Act, 1961.

The institute has also sought permission for conducting financial audit of MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) and private limited companies as per global standards, concurrent audit of banks and audit of grant-in-aid of grantee organisations/ institutions.

In this regard, the institute, last month, submitted a memorandum to Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

The institute’s President P Raju Iyer recently told *PTI* that allowing cost and management accountants to carry out financial audits MSMEs and private limited companies will help in effectively creating competition. **PTI**

# ‘HC verdict on GST on under-construction flats to reduce tax outgo for buyers’

**New Delhi:** The Gujarat High Court ruling that actual value of land should be deducted before levying GST on under-construction flats would reduce the tax outgo for homebuyers, provided the contractual arrangement transparently denotes the land value, experts said.

Currently, GST is levied on sale of under-construction flats/units wherein the entire value of flat or unit (including value of underlying land) is taxed after giving Ad Hoc deduction of 1/3 of value of flat/unit towards land irrespective of actual value of land.

Experts said in urban area or metro cities actual value of land is much higher than 1/3 value of flat and application of 1/3rd deduction is arbitrary in nature as it is applied uniformly irrespective of the area, size and location of land.

“This is indirectly levying tax on land which is beyond the legislative competence of the Union to levy GST on land. This (Gujarat HC) decision will squarely apply where sale agreement clearly specifies value of land and also construction services. This is well

reasoned and fair decision, if followed, the tax incidence on individuals buying under-construction flats will reduce substantially,” N.A. Shah Associates Partner Naresh Sheth said.

In its verdict on Friday last week, the Gujarat High Court in case of Munjaal Manishbhai Bhatt vs Union of India has read down paragraph 2 of Notification No. 11/2017 mandating 1/3rd deduction of Land as ultra-vires.

Further, the court observed that mandatory deduction of 1/3rd for value of land is not sustainable in cases where the value of land is clearly ascertainable or where the value of construction service can be derived with the aid of valuation rules. Such 1/3rd deduction can be permitted at the option of a taxable person particularly in cases where the value of land or undivided share of land is not ascertainable.

Athena Law Associates Partner Adv Pawan Arora said flat buyers who have already borne the incidence of excess GST due to standard 1/3rd deduction, may proceed to file



refund claim with the jurisdictional GST authority of the developer.

Gujarat High Court Advocate Avinash Poddar, who

was also the arguing counsel in the case, said it is expected that now the Government will come up with Valuation Rules as earlier done in the service tax

regime.

“It should be understood by the buyers that developers cannot take this stand, till the GST Department synchronises itself with the judgment of the Hon’ble Court. In such a scenario, developers may continue to pay tax on 2/3rd consideration of flats under protest and thereafter, the Developers/Buyers may file the refund claim with the jurisdictional GST authority of the Developer,” Poddar said.

Dhruva Advisors Partner Ranjeet Mahtani said this judgement is important owing to the impact it will have on real estate arrangements and development agreements across India.

“Particularly, where the value of land is on the higher side (for example in the four metro cities) vis-à-vis construction cost, when compared with other cities and towns of India, the arbitrariness is stark; in such cases the taxpayer, if he / she can establish the actual value of land / undivided share of land to be reduced from the total consideration will have a lower GST impact.

“In these inflationary

times, the verdict is a mild boost for the real estate sector given the potential reduction in GST outgo, provided the contractual arrangement transparently denotes the land value / value of undivided share of land,” Mahtani said.

AMRG & Associates Senior Partner Rajat Mohan said this is a triumph for the entire real estate sector against the imposition of tax on arbitrarily computed taxable value. The ruling will bring immediate relief to the writ applicants and would have a high value for the taxpayers in Gujarat; however, this would hold only persuasive value for the rest of India. “Based on this ruling, other players are also expected to litigate the same issue in higher forums. Even after an unambiguous judicial ruling, developers are not expected to pass on the benefit of such tax cuts, as this matter would be challenged in the apex court,” Mohan said.

This ruling ideally shall pave the way for a clarificatory circular by the department that would bring smiles to the entire ecosystem, Mohan said. **PTI**

# ‘Global factors, macro data, earnings to drive market trends this week’

**New Delhi:** Global markets trends, inflation, release of industrial output data and quarterly earnings will dictate movement of the equity benchmarks this week, analysts said, adding that volatility might continue amid slew of announcements of macroeconomic data at the global level too.

Moreover, foreign fund movement, crude oil prices and trend in rupee would also act as major drivers for the equity market, they added.

“The direction of global equity markets along with movement in dollar index and crude oil prices will continue to dominate while inflation numbers of the USA on May 11 and inflation and IIP numbers of India on May 12 will also cause volatility in the market,”

said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd. Meena said the last batch of fourth quarter earnings will have a stock-specific movement with SBI, Tata Motors, L&T, UPL, Tech Mahindra and Cipla are among the key results slated to be announced.

“This week, participants will first react to Reliance numbers which were announced post-market on Friday. Besides, developments on the Russia-Ukraine front and performance of global markets will be on the radar.

“On the macroeconomic front, IIP (Index of Industrial Production) and CPI (Consumer Price Inflation) data are scheduled for May 12 and market will be eyeing these numbers to gauge the next possible move from the RBI,”

said Ajit Mishra, VP Research, Religare Broking.

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani’s Reliance Industries Ltd on Friday reported a 22.5 per cent rise in its net profit for the quarter ended March 2022 on the back of bumper oil refining margins, steady growth in telecom and digital services and strong momentum in the retail business.

This week, market will track inflation numbers across the globe, said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Yesha Shah, Head of Equity Research, Samco Securities, said, “Given a slew of macroeconomic releases, the current result season and several IPOs that will open for subscription, volatility seen last week is expected to persist. **PTI**

# FPIs withdraw ₹6,400 cr from equity markets in May so far

**New Delhi:** Foreign investors have pulled over ₹6,400 crore from the Indian equity market in the first four trading sessions of the ongoing month when the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and US Federal Reserve raised interest rates.

Given the headwinds in terms of elevated crude prices, inflation, tight monetary policy among others, FPIs’ flows in India are expected to remain volatile in the near term, Shrikant Chouhan, Head - Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities, said.

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) remained net sellers for seven months to April 2022, withdrawing a massive amount of over ₹1.65 lakh crore from equities. This was 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 amid correction in the markets and invested ₹ 7,707 crore in equities. After a short breather, once again they

## Foreign funds’ ownership in domestic equities falls to 19.5%, lowest since 2019

**Mumbai:** Foreign funds’ ownership in domestic equities fell to pre-Covid lows and hit a multi-year low of 19.5 per cent in March this year in NSE500 companies valued at USD 619 billion, shows an analysis.

At 19.5 per cent the FPI ownership in March 2022, is the lowest in the past three years, when it was 19.3 per cent in March in 2019, which was a pre-COVID period.

On a year-on-year basis their ownership stood at 21.2 per cent, second highest on record in March 2021, according to a report by the Wall Street brokerage Bank of America Securities India.

Foreign funds’ ownership in the domestic equities was at 18.6 per cent in December 2017, the lowest in five years, and the peak was in December 2021, when they owned 21.4

per cent of domestic equities.

Significantly, the share loss of foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) has been well corrected by the steeply rising ownership of the stocks by domestic funds, who pumped in USD 6 billion in March and USD 14.6 billion in FY22, the report said.Of the USD 619 billion of FPI ownership, the highest incremental allocation were in energy stocks with 16.2 per cent, followed by IT at 14.8 per cent, and communication services at 4 per cent.In overall allocation, financials still led the chart with 31.4 per cent followed by discretionary (9 per cent).

March alone saw the sixth consecutive month of FPI outflows, which was the most severe since March 2020 (after the pandemic scare) on the back of continued geopolitical risks. **PTI**

# ‘Low taxes on hybrid cars can help faster adoption of EVs’

**New Delhi:** Lowering taxes on hybrid vehicles can lead to faster adoption of electric vehicles in the country, according to a senior official of Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL).

The automaker noted that hybrid technology is currently best suited for Indian conditions as it is not dependent on external charging infrastructure.

The total tax incidence on hybrid vehicles in the country is 43 per cent, which is inclusive of GST, while battery electric vehicles attract a tax of about 5 per cent.

“There is a big gap (in taxes). So, yes it would be a welcome step if the government could support us (by reducing tax on hybrid vehicles as well) ...We request the government if they could consider it,” Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL) Vice-President (Marketing and Sales) Kunal Behl told *PTI*.

He further said: “We believe if they (government) can reduce it, the adoption of the electric vehicles would be very fast.”

Behl noted that hybrid vehicles could help in the transition to fully electric vehicles while at the same time helping in cutting down vehicular emissions and fossil fuel consumption.

“We really respect the government’s understanding that they want to bring down the emission levels...They want to reduce the consumption of

fuels, so both these objectives are met by the hybrid vehicles. So, I am sure there could possibly be a thought which goes in the government into relooking into favourable conditions where customers can adapt to such technologies faster,” he stated.

Honda believes that hybrids are the best solution for the country as buyers do not encounter range anxiety issues and there are no curbs on the performance of the vehicle as well, Behl noted.

“According to us in the current scenario there is nothing better than this (hybrid). It is the best solution right now,” he added.

The company, which has forayed into the mainstream hybrid segment with the introduction of City e:HEV, plans to ultimately transition to full battery electric vehicles as per the global vision of its Japan-based parent company.

Honda globally plans to launch 30 EV models by 2030, with an annual production volume of more than 20 lakh units. **PTI**







AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Liverpool's Premier League title hopes suffered a huge blow even though they went top of the table as Tottenham clung on for a 1-1 draw at Anfield on Saturday.

The Reds edged ahead of Manchester City on goal difference, but the English champions can now afford to draw one of their remaining four games and still retain their title.

Pep Guardiola's men can retake top spot and open up a three-point lead when they host Newcastle on Sunday.

A share of the spoils took

Tottenham to within a point of fourth-placed Arsenal, but their chance of a top-four finish now also rely on the Gunners dropping points in two of their final four games.

Son Heung-min rounded off a brilliant team move to put Spurs in front on 56 minutes.

Luis Diaz's deflected shot levelled 16 minutes from time, but Jurgen Klopp's men failed to find a winner.

Twenty-one points separate the sides, but Spurs have made a habit of saving their best for the big occasion.

Antonio Conte's men are unbeaten in all four meetings with City and Liverpool this season.

Liverpool did not start like a side fatigued by reaching the Champions

League final in their 57th game of the season against Villarreal in mid-week, as the intense press from the home side penned Tottenham in.

However, the visitors were first to seriously threaten when Alisson Becker had to be sharp off his line to prevent Harry Kane's cross reaching Son and Rodrigo Bentancur fired the follow-up far too close to the Brazilian stopper.

Liverpool's best efforts before the break came from set-pieces as Virgil van Dijk hit the crossbar, while Diaz also tested Hugo Lloris after being teed up by Sadio Mane.

Spurs also hit the woodwork in the first-half when Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg took aim from long range.

The second-half followed the same pattern, with Liverpool camped in the Tottenham half, but this time Spurs did pick them off on the counter-attack.

Kane was given time to assess his options and picked out Ryan Sessegnon who slid the ball across the box for Son to tap in his 20th Premier League goal of the season to move within two of Mohamed Salah.

It was the first time Liverpool have trailed at Anfield in a league match since February and Spurs could have doubled their lead had Son controlled another Sessegnon cross moments later.

Salah did his best to extend his advantage in the race for the Golden

## Brighton humiliate Man Utd

AP ■ BRIGHTON

Ralf Rangnick apologised after Manchester United's dismal season hit a new low with a 'humiliating' 4-0 defeat against Brighton on Saturday.

United have endured a host of loss in one of their most embarrassing seasons for decades and this lacklustre loss was among the very worst.

Rangnick's side were routed by goals from Moises Caicedo, Marc Cucurella, Pascal Gross and Leandro Trossard at the Amex Stadium.

After 5-0 and 4-0 defeats against arch rivals Liverpool, a 4-1 loss at Watford that saw Ole Gunnar Solskjaer sacked in November and an FA Cup at home to Championship side Middlesbrough, it seemed impossible for United to fall any further.

But they were so gutless and hopeless on the south-coast that even United's travelling supporters turned on them.

Sixth placed United cannot finish in the Premier League's top four and are certain to miss out on the Champions League for only the fifth time in 30 seasons.

"It was a terrible performance. From the first until the last minute it was not enough, we can only apologise for this performance and a humiliating defeat," Rangnick said.

"We just gave too much time and space. We were never in a position where we could stop them playing through our lines. We told the



players be as compact as they could but we couldn't stop it."

With 58 points and only one game left, United's fifth successive away defeat means they will finish with their lowest points total in the Premier League era.

It would be no surprise if Erik ten Hag, the Ajax boss who has agreed to take charge from next sea-

son, was having second thoughts about his decision to accept the task of rebuilding a team languishing well behind the standards set by Liverpool and Manchester City.

Asked if United's players had failed to follow his instructions, Rangnick said: "I don't think they ignored the game-plan but we weren't able to stop them.

## Ferrari's Leclerc grabs Miami pole | Barca secure spot in top-4 with Betis win



AP ■ MIAMI

World championship leader Charles Leclerc claimed pole position and led Ferrari to a front-row lockout on Saturday when he topped the times in qualifying for the inaugural Miami Grand Prix.

The 24-year-old Monegasque driver clocked a fastest lap in one minute and 28.796 seconds to outpace his team-mate by two-tenths in front of an enthusiastic sell-out crowd at the Miami International Autodrome.

Defending world champion Max Verstappen was third after making a slight mistake on his final flying lap. His Red Bull team-mate Sergio Perez was fourth with Valtteri Bottas

fifth for Alfa Romeo and seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton sixth for Mercedes.

It was Leclerc's third pole this year and the 12th of his career. For Sainz it is the second time he had secured a front row start. It was Ferrari's first front row lockout since the 2019 Mexican Grand Prix.

"It is amazing to be here and the fans are crazy," said a delighted Leclerc. "It is going to be a big challenge tomorrow, but we feel very motivated as there are so many Ferrari fans here. Hopefully we can come out on top!"

Verstappen, who in the championship and trails Leclerc by 27 points, swallowed his disappointment and said: "Overall, I am pretty

### Hamilton relieved as Mercedes regain some form

AP ■ MIAMI

Lewis Hamilton admitted to relief and said he and Mercedes would 'keep chipping away' to recover lost speed after he qualified sixth on Saturday for the Miami Grand Prix. The seven-time world champion had missed out on a top ten start at last month's Emilia Romagna Grand Prix and praised his team for their hard work in attempting to improve their new car.

"That's the best qualifying session that I have had in the last three races," he said. "So I'll take that and keep pushing and keep working hard."

"We've got to keep on chipping away. So much amazing work has gone on in the background."

"I don't think we are necessarily moving forward at the rate we would like to, but we have just got to keep our heads down and keep working and eventually we will get there," Mercedes, winners of a record eight consecutive constructors championships in Formula One.

pleased with qualifying as I only did four or five laps yesterday. But we have to start making these weekends less difficult."

Pierre Gasly of Alpha Tauri qualified seventh ahead of Lando Norris of McLaren and Yuki Tsunoda in the second Alpha Tauri with Lance Stroll taking 10th for Aston Martin.

AP ■ SEVILLE

Barcelona secured qualification for next season's Champions League on Saturday as Jordi Alba's 94th-minute winner against Real Betis guaranteed the Catalans' place in the La Liga top four.

Alba's stinging injury-time volley snatched a 2-1 victory for Barca at the Benito Villamarin to ensure they will play in the Champions League next term, an achievement that is likely to be crucial to the club's hopes of financial recovery.

When Xavi Hernandez took over as coach in November, Barcelona lay ninth in La Liga, with genuine concerns about their chances of closing the gap on the top four.

But, despite a recent dip in form, significant improvements have seen



Xavi's team surge up the table and they can now look forward to rejoining the likes of Real Madrid in Europe's premier tournament next season.

While a trophyless season can never count as a success for Barca, finishing in the top four is an impressive achievement for Xavi and a huge relief for the club.

Victory leaves Barcelona second in the table, 11 points clear of Betis in fifth, with both teams having three games left to play. Barca should now be confident of clinching second place too, with five points the gap between them and Sevilla, who play at Villarreal on Sunday.

Betis looked like they had sealed a point after Marc Bartra headed in an equaliser in the 78th minute, three minutes after Ansu Fati had come off the

bench to give Barcelona the lead. Alba, though, fired in at the back post to claim all three points for the visitors.

Fati's goal was his first in the league since November as the 19-year-old continues his latest recovery from another lengthy spell on the sidelines.

The teenager briefly returned in January from a hamstring injury that has kept him out for the best part of six months, on the back of his nightmare 11 months out with a knee problem between November 2020 and September last year.

Real Betis had to change their goalkeeper after 17 minutes as the injured Claudio Bravo was replaced by Rui Silva, who was called into action soon after, tipping Ronald Araujo's header onto the crossbar.

## Lazio win | Nantes win French Cup final

AP ■ ROME

Lazio pile pressure on Roma for fifth place and keep Sampdoria worrying about relegation thanks to a Patric header and show of individual skill from Luis Alberto.

Luis Alberto curled a free kick onto the head of Patric, the defender left disconcertingly unmarked from seven yards. It was his first ever Serie A goal.

Luis Alberto had been trying all evening and got his goal in absolute style, rolling the ball one way to go around Audero, then cutting back inside to thread his finish through the eye of a needle between two defenders on the line.

Quagliarella thought he'd scored in the final minute, sliding in to meet a Bereszynski cross and redirecting it onto the base of the upright from six yards.

AP ■ PARIS

Nantes won the French Cup for the first time in 22 years on Saturday, beating Nice 1-0 in the final at the Stade de France.

Ludovic Blas drilled home a penalty at the start of the second half to bring Nantes the club's first major trophy since winning the Ligue 1 title in 2001.

For much of the season, Nice looked certain to qualify for the Champions League but, after a recent stumble, could miss out on Europe altogether.

Nantes, who only avoided relegation in a play-off last year, lifted the French Cup for the fourth time and qualified for Europe for the first time in two decades, earning a place in the Europa League.

After the two finals played



in an almost entirely empty stadium due to the pandemic, a sell-out crowd of around 80,000 packed the Stade de France — roughly two-thirds Nantes supporters. Nice knocked out Paris

Saint-Germain and Marseille en route to a first final since 1997, but struggled to create chances with Amine Gouiri and Kasper Dolberg both without a goal in the league since

January.

Nice goalkeeper Marcin Bulka, the PSG loanee who helped dump out his parent club on penalties in the last 16, smothered well as Blas darted into the box, with Gouiri then having a shot deflected wide in a gritty first half.

A first final without PSG since 2014 burst into life 15 seconds after half-time when Hichem Boudaoui was harshly penalised for a handball as he attempted to block Quentin Merlin's cross.

Blas hammered the resulting spot-kick past Bulka, sparking euphoric celebrations from the Nantes players and fans.

Having departed Lille after leading them to the Ligue 1 crown last season, Christophe Galtier's first season in charge of Nice is destined to end in disappointment.

## Alcaraz downs Djoker to reach Madrid final

AP ■ MADRID

Carlos Alcaraz believes the sky is the limit after becoming the first player to beat Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic at the same tournament on clay as he stormed into the Madrid Open final on Saturday.

The 19-year-old Spaniard reached his second ATP Masters final in five weeks and claimed his first win over a reigning world number one, overcoming Djokovic 6-7 (5/7), 7-5, 7-6 (7/5) in front of a sell-out home crowd at the Caja Magica.

Alcaraz has a tour-leading seven wins against top-10 players this season. He enters Sunday's final against defending champion Alexander Zverev carrying a nine-match winning streak, having triumphed in Barcelona a couple of weeks ago.

He is the youngest player to beat a world number one in 17 years.



Asked if he sees a limit to what he can achieve, Alcaraz said: "I don't think so. Tomorrow I will go for the final as I did in Miami. I'm really happy to be able to play a second Masters 1000 final."

"I would say that I feel ready to compete against them (the top players) in every single tournament, in every single surface," added the Miami champion.

Zverev moved into his third Madrid final with a 6-4, 3-6, 6-2 win against Greek world number five Stefanos Tsitsipas, in a clash that finished at 1:06 am local time (2306 GMT Saturday).

The German second seed, a champion in the Spanish capital in 2018 and 2021, extended his Madrid winning streak to nine consecutive matches.

Zverev has won both of his previous meetings against Alcaraz.

"He held his nerves very well. For somebody of his age to play so maturely and courageously is impressive.

## Schalke back in Bundesliga

AP ■ BERLIN

Uruguayan striker Rodrigo Zalazar smashed a late winner in off the bar as Schalke came from two goals down to beat St Pauli 3-2 and win promotion back to the Bundesliga on Saturday.

Zalazar turned Gelsenkirchen's Veltins Arena into a madhouse when he scored against former club Pauli to complete a dramatic comeback and return Schalke to the top flight.

Two points clear at the top of the German second division at kick-off, Schalke needed a win to secure promotion with a game to spare and in front of their own fans.

They looked set for disappointment when Igor Matanovic scored two early goals to put the



visitors 2-0 up after just 17 minutes. The hosts fought back in the second half, however, with Simon Terodde first converting a penalty and then pouncing on a defensive error to bring his side level.

St Pauli's Marcel Beifus

missed a golden chance to restore the lead before Zalazar's brilliant strike completed a brilliant comeback to send 60,000 Schalke fans into ecstasy. St Pauli capitulated in the dying minutes, as both Beifus and Matanovic were sent off.



# MI eye hat-trick of wins



**PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI**

Kolkata Knight Riders resembled a sinking ship ahead of a rather inconsequential IPL-15 match against bottom-placed Mumbai Indians who, even if already out of reckoning, will have their tails up here on Monday.

Panned for trying out too many combinations at the top, a part of their constant chopping and changing strategy this season which backfired on them pretty badly, KKR are coming off a 75-run drubbing at the hands of table toppers Lucknow Super Giants. While MI will enter the upcoming game on the back of a five-run win over second-placed Gujarat Titans, MI under Rohit Sharma have already been eliminated from the race to the playoffs as they have just four points from 10 matches and even if they win all their remaining games, the five-time champions can reach only 12 points, far from what is needed to advance to the next stage. Royal Challengers Bangalore have 12 points already and three other teams have 16 and 14 points.

Two-time winners KKR, under new captain Shreyas Iyer, came a cropper against Lucknow Super Giants on

Saturday and the huge margin of defeat has left them with eight points from 11 games. They have three matches left and the maximum they can reach is 14 points, which is again something that cannot guarantee even a fourth-place finish.

However, despite the inconsequential nature of the match, players from both the beleaguered sides can still gun for individual glory at the DY Patil Stadium.

With the season coming to a close for both the teams, the focus will also be on how to go about the task in the next edition, apart from looking to capping off their hugely disappointing campaigns on a positive note. Heading into the game, the Mumbai Indians enjoy an advantage thanks to their massive 22-8 head-to-head record against the Knights Riders.

At the moment, the best part about MI is that both their openers -- skipper Rohit and Ishan Kishan -- clicked together against the Titans and they would certainly look to convert their scintillating 40s into bigger scores against the struggling Knight Riders.

MI captain Rohit is also approaching a milestone as he is 88 runs away from completing 5000 runs for the franchise in the IPL

# CHENNAI ARE SUPER KINGS

► **pointstable**

Po.	TEAM	M	W	L	NR	Pts	NRR
1.	LSG	11	8	3	0	16	0.703
2.	GT	11	8	3	0	16	0.120
3.	RR	11	7	4	0	14	0.326
4.	RCB	12	7	5	0	14	-0.115
5.	DC	11	5	6	0	10	0.150
6.	SRH	11	5	6	0	10	-0.031
7.	PBKS	11	5	6	0	10	-0.231
8.	CSK	11	4	7	0	8	0.028
9.	KKR	11	4	7	0	8	-0.304
10.	MI	10	2	8	0	4	-0.725

**PNS ■ MUMBAI**

Star all-rounder Moeen Ali sparked a stunning Delhi Capitals (DC) batting collapse which was ably complemented by rookie pacer Mukesh Choudhary on Sunday at Dr DY Patil Sports Academy in Navi Mumbai, as MS Dhoni-led Chennai Super Kings (CSK) beat apprentice Rishabh Pant's DC by 91 runs in Match Number 55 of the ongoing Indian Premier League season to win the fourth league stage match.

With a win over the 2020 losing finalists, the four-time champions have kept alive their hopes of reaching the playoffs. With three matches remaining in the league stage, CSK can reach a maximum of 14 points if they manage to win all of them. But that won't be enough if Rajasthan Royals and Royal Challengers Bangalore manage to get one more win.

They already have 14 points and two more points will take them to 16, and that will keep CSK out of the equation. But as for now, with the win over Delhi, they have kept their chances open.

At the expense of Kolkata Knight Riders, Chennai moved to the eighth position in the league



table. Delhi remained in sixth position and has now lost six out of the 11 matches played in the cash-rich league this season. Delhi lost opening batters Srikar Bharat (8) and David Warner (19) early on in the 209-run chase, but Mitchell Marsh (25) and Rishabh Pant (21) kept Delhi

► **boundarymeter**

4s	1534
6s	798

in the contest with their 36-run stand for the third wicket. But just when it started to look like it would get tight for CSK, Moeen struck and got rid of Marsh, Pant, and Rival Patel (6).

From 72 for 2 in 7.2 overs, the scorecard soon became 81 for 5 in 9.4 overs and then it was further improved to 85 for 7 in 10.5 overs by Mukesh.

The left-arm medium pacer dismissed Axar Patel (1) and Rovman Powell (3) in the 11th over of the innings to kill the contest. From there, it was a mere formality and Simarjeet Singh joined the party to secure a big win for the Dhoni-led side.

Moeen ended the day with figures of 4-0-13-3.

Earlier, batting first, CSK rode on Devon Conway's third consecutive fifty-plus score to post a total of 208 for the loss of six wickets.

The New Zealander continued his purple patch and registered his career-best IPL score of 87 from 49 balls. During his stay at the crease, he hammered seven fours and five sixes to give CSK a platform to set up a big score in a must-win match. The left-handed batter, who recently got married, added 110 runs for the first wicket with last year's leading run scorer, Ruturaj Gaikwad (41 off 33 balls). And this time, he took the lead to attack the Delhi bowlers.

After Rutu's departure, Conway added another 59 runs for the second wicket with Shivam Dube (32 off 19 balls) before MS Dhoni (21 not out off 8 balls) added insult to DC's injuries at the tag end.

# Faf, Wanindu set up RCB's win

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**

Spinner Wanindu Hasaranga spicked up a five-wicket haul after skipper Faf du Plessis' impactful half-century as Royal Challengers recorded a 67-run victory over Sunrisers Hyderabad to boost their play-off hopes in the IPL here on Sunday.

Opting to bat on a slow surface, du Plessis led from the front with a 50-ball 73 not out, while Dinesh Karthik (eight-ball 30 not out) provided the late flourish as RCB overcame an anxious start to post 192/3.

In response, Sunrisers Hyderabad were skittled out for 125 to crash to their fourth loss on the trot as Hasaranga stymied their chase with figures of 4-1-18-5.

The win also avenged their shocking nine-wicket loss to Hyderabad in the first leg at the Brabourne where Bangalore had collapsed to 68 allout.



Making amend for a sloppy outing on the field, Hasaranga cleverly used his wrong ones and derailed their chase in the middle overs with wickets of the hardhitting Nicholas Pooran and Jagadeesha Suchith in successive overs.

The Lankan then ended his spell in style with a double-wicket maiden, dismissing Shashank Singh and Umrann Malik in successive deliveries to virtually seal it for Bangalore.

With this, he became the second bowler after Yuzvendra Chahal to get past the 20-wicket mark in the IPL. Hasaranga is now one wicket shy of current Purple Cap holder Chahal's tally of 22.

Hyderabad No 3 Rahul Tripathi made a fine 58 to keep them in the hunt but Josh Hazlewood (2/17) dismissed him and followed it up with the wicket of Kartik Tyagi next ball.

For Bangalore, it was their second win in a row, coming on the back of a hat-trick of defeats as they firmed up their place inside top-four.

Likewise Bangalore, Hyderabad too had a jittery start and went on to lose two wickets in the first over in their tall chase of 193.

by spinner Jagadeesha Suchith (2/30) and Bhuvneshwar Kumar (0/34) slowed things a bit in the middle overs before Dinesh Karthik gave a last-over flourish (25 runs) to prop up the total.

Making full use of a reprieve by Rahul Tripathi in the third ball of the final over, the Indian experienced wicket-keeper-batter went on to make a quickfire eight-ball 30 not out.

He smashed four sixes, three of them coming in succession followed by a boundary in the last over against Afghanistan debutant Fazalhaq Farooqi, en route to his entertaining cameo.

Hyderabad had their solitary moment of glory, the very first ball of the game when Kohli (0) got out for a third golden duck this season, sixth overall in IPL. This was also his second golden duck against the same team season.

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**

Rajasthan Royals on Sunday said that their West Indian batter Shimron Hetmyer has left for Guyana for the birth of his first child.

"We are helping him (Hetmyer) in every way we can, and our best wishes are with him and his wife Nirvani," the Royals said on their official Twitter handle.

They also said that Hetmyer would return to Mumbai soon and resume his duties for the franchise for the remaining matches of the IPL.

"We look forward to Shimron then returning to Mumbai, and resuming duties at the Royals for the remainder of our matches in IPL 2022," the franchise added.

Royals, who had defeated Punjab Kings in their last league game, will play Delhi Capitals in their next match.



# I wasn't treated properly: Gayle on opting out of IPL-15

**PTI ■ LONDON**

One of T20 cricket's all-time greats, Chris Gayle has revealed that he opted out of IPL-15 because of lack of respect, saying he "wasn't treated properly" in the last couple of years despite doing so much.

The swashbuckling West Indian has been one of the top performers with the bat since the inception of the lucrative league.

After stints with Koklata Knight Riders and Royal Challengers Bangalore, 'the Universe Boss' joined Punjab Kings. But after enjoying a good 2019 season, when he finished as the sixth highest run-getter in the tournament, Gayle struggled to find a spot in the Punjab playing XI in 2020 and 2021. Last year, Gayle featured in 10 games and scored 193 runs at a strike rate of 125.32, while in 2020, he played just seven matches and amassed 288 runs. "For the last couple of years, the way the IPL went about, I felt like I wasn't treated properly," Gayle was quoted as saying by 'mirror.co.uk'.

"So I thought 'okay, you (Gayle) didn't get the respect you deserved after you did so much for the sport and IPL'. So I said 'okay, that's it, I'm not going to bother to enter the draft', so I left it as it is."

"There is always going to be life after cricket so I'm just trying to adapt to normality."

However, the big-hitting Jamaican has also vowed to return to the league next year, adding that he would love to win a title with either RCB or Punjab Kings. "Next year I'm coming back, they need me! I've represented three teams in the IPL -- Kolkata, RCB and Punjab. "Between RCB and Punjab, I would love to get a title, with one of those two teams. I had a great stint with RCB where I was more successful within the IPL, and Punjab, they've been good."



## DC players forced into isolation after net bowler tests Covid+ve

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**

Delhi Capitals players were once again forced into isolation in the ongoing IPL-15 after a net bowler of the franchise tested positive for COVID-19.

"One net bowler tested positive today morning in test. Players have been asked to stay in rooms," IPL sources said hours ahead of their Sunday's match against Chennai Super Kings.

Delhi Capitals are scheduled to play against CSK in the day's second match, at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai.

Sources said a fresh round of testing took place on Sunday morning with all members of the contingent confined to their rooms.

It is the second time during the IPL 2022 that the Delhi team has been forced into isolation.

Earlier in the season, six members of the franchise including physio Patrick Farhart, all-rounder Mitchell Marsh, keeper-batter Tim Seifert and three other non-playing members had tested positive for the virus.

The Capitals' matches against Punjab Kings and Rajasthan Royals, originally scheduled to be played in Pune, were also moved to Mumbai.

As per the IPL protocol, Delhi Capitals will have to undergo another round of testing and till then all members will have to be isolated in their rooms.

# McCullum rues KKR's power play struggles

**PTI ■ PUNE**

Kolkata Knight Riders were found wanting on more than one front, but head coach Brendon McCullum singled out their struggles in the power play, as a disappointing IPL campaign neared its end.

Former champions KKR suffered their seventh defeat on Saturday night, a 75-run drubbing by Lucknow Super Giants here.

"We struggled in the power play which has been a frustration for us throughout the season," McCullum said, adding that the team needs to find a way to be more aggressive without losing wickets in the first six overs.

The Shreyas Iyer-led side now finds itself on the brink of elimination. "We've been good throughout the middle phase and not too bad at the death," McCullum said at the post match press conference.

"But in the power play we've been a little stuck and we've to find a method to not lose many wickets and also throw a few punches and get a few boundaries," he reiterated.

KKR have used several opening combinations this season but failed to find the one that clicks. Their openers have not been able to give kind of starts required for teams to win matches. "If you look around other teams at the top of the table, one of their opening batters is also one of their highest run-scorers. It's an area we haven't been able to settle. Unfortunately, some of the guys haven't been in the form that they would have liked to. "That happens, sometimes. In a quick tournament, you do have to sometimes change personnel."

