

OPINION 6

RISING HATE
CRIMES IN INDIA

WORLD 9

RUSSIA POUNDS UKRAINE'S
VITAL PORT OF ODESA

MONEY 10

INDIA'S COAL OUTPUT UP 29%
WITH 66 MN TONNES IN APRIL

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY MAY 11, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

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Protesters lay siege to Mahinda's safe house

PTI/AGENCIES ■ COLOMBO

A protest began in front of Sri Lanka's Trincomalee Naval Base on Tuesday after reports emerged that former Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and some of his family members were there after leaving the official residence in Colombo, a media report said.

Mahinda left his official Temple Trees residence early on Tuesday even as a mob tried to enter the premises. Throughout the night on Monday, the police fired teargas shells to quell mobs trying to enter the Temple Trees residence.

Meanwhile, a group of lawyers lodged a complaint with the police headquarters to arrest Mahinda Rajapaksa and his colleagues who had allegedly instigated Monday's violence against peaceful anti-government protesters.

Embattled Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Tuesday urged people to stop "violence and acts of revenge" against fellow citizens and vowed to address the political and economic crisis facing the nation, even as the death toll rose to eight in the unprecedented violence that erupted after supporters of former Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa attacked anti-government protesters here.

Ministry of Defence on

Tuesday ordered the Army, the Air Force and the Navy personnel to open fire on anyone looting public property or causing harm to others amidst violent protests in the island nation over the unprecedented economic and political crisis. Defence Secretary General (Retd) Kamal Gunaratne urged protesters to exercise calm and not resort to violence.

We support best interests of Lanka, democracy: India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Tuesday said it is "fully supportive" of its democracy, stability and eco-

nommic recovery of Sri Lanka and underlined economic assistance provided as part of the "neighbourhood first" policy. A day after Prime Minister

Stop acts of revenge, Prez urges people; Lankan Def Ministry orders tri-forces to open fire on rioters

Mahindra Rajapaksa resigned amid violent protests in the country over the Government's handling of the economic crisis, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, "India will always be guided by the best interests of the people of Sri Lanka expressed through democratic processes."

Responding to queries on the Lankan situation, he said, "As a close neighbour of Sri Lanka, with historical ties, India is fully supportive of its democracy, stability and economic recovery."

He also referred to the assistance India provided to help Sri Lanka to deal with the economic crisis.

"In keeping with our 'neighbourhood first' policy, this year alone India has extended support worth over USD 3.5 billion to the people of Sri Lanka for helping them overcome their current difficulties," Bagchi said.

He also said in addition, the people of India have provided assistance for mitigating the shortages of essential items such as food and medicine.

Can sedition cases be put on hold till relook, asks SC

Centre given 24 hrs to reply

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Centre to inform within 24 hours whether the filing of sedition cases in future will be kept in abeyance till the proposed re-examination of the sedition law by an "appropriate" forum.

The bench headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana asked this in response to the submissions of the Centre that said it has decided to "re-examine and reconsider" the sedition law by an "appropriate forum".

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said he would take instruction from the Government and apprise the bench on Wednesday.

"We are making it very clear. We want instructions. We will give you time till tomorrow. Our specific queries are: one about pending cases, and the second, as to how the Government will take care of future cases..." said the bench, comprising Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli.

The Bench also asked Centre to inform if future cases can be kept in abeyance till reconsideration is over.

"We have perused the affidavit by the respondent (Central Government). Meanwhile, to protect the inter-



est of the people already booked under 124A as well as the future of this provision, the SG will take instructions whether cases can be kept in abeyance till further time till reconsideration is over," the court said in its order giving Centre a day to clarify.

Senior lawyer Kapil Sibal opposed the Centre's new affidavit on plans to re-consider sedition law and said the court should proceed to decide the validity irrespective of whether the Government is examining the provision or not. "This court cannot wait for another jurisdiction. It is for the judiciary to consider whether it is constitutional or not," he said.

The CJ asked the SG on how much time the Government would take to complete the exercise. "I won't be able to give an accurate time

frame. The process has started. Please see the tenor and spirit of the affidavit," the SG said.

The Ministry of Home Affairs in an affidavit filed before the apex court on Monday said the decision was in tune with the views of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on shedding "colonial baggage", noting he has been in favour of the protection of civil liberties and respect of human rights and in that spirit, over 1,500 outdated laws and over 25,000 compliance burdens have been scrapped.

The apex court has been hearing a clutch of pleas challenging the validity of the law on sedition which has been under intense public scrutiny for its alleged misuse to settle political scores by various Governments.

You can soon order liquor online in Delhi; discount curbs may end

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Tipplers in Delhi would soon be able to order liquor online. The Excise Department of Delhi has proposed to allow the home delivery of liquor and end all restrictions on discounts offered by vendors. A proposal to this effect is likely to be brought before the Cabinet meeting.

The document accessed by *The Pioneer* showed that Group of Minister (GoM) has recommended home delivery of liquor sourced from retail liquor vendors.

The GoM has also viewed that there should not be any restriction on the rate of discounting by the retail liquor vendors as long as the market operates in a healthy manner.

The GoM also proposed to discontinue a policy to open two shops in a ward. After the Cabinet approval, the Excise Department will have to frame rules and identify agencies to supply liquor at home.

The home delivery of liquor may be done by empanelled intermediaries who will



be collecting the liquor from respective retail vendors and delivering it to respective public localities through ordering by the chosen empanelled agency/agencies chosen to do home delivery," the document said. However, no delivery will be made to any hostel, office, and institution. The GoM also noted that the mandate of equitable distribution of retail vendors across Delhi has not fructified due to issues related to non opening of retail vendors in the non conforming areas.

At the same time ensuring equitable coverage of authorised liquor to solve the problem of underserved and unserved areas in Delhi including non conforming area is one of the prime objectives of the government so that area no

instance of hooch tragedy due to intake of spurious liquor, bootlegging and interstate smuggling of liquor due to porous border with neighbouring States.

The new 2021 rules stated that shops with L-13 licence will be allowed to deliver both Indian and foreign alcohol/liquor to the homes of people, only if the order is received through an online web portal or app.

However, this rule restricts all deliveries to hostels, offices or institutions.

The Law department of the Delhi Government had pointed out that in absence of any enabling provision, home delivery of liquor by an intermediary, except a licensee, is impermissible.

According to the 2021-22 excise policy, every liquor outlet in the city will provide a walk-in experience to its customers who will have multiple choices of brands, and the entire selection and sale process will be completed within the vend premise.

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AAP MLA detained as bulldozers roll in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Shaheen Bagh, bulldozers on Tuesday rolled in New Delhi's New Friends' Colony, Vasant Kunj, Raghuraj Nagar and Mangolpuri to remove illegal encroachment from roads, pavements and footpaths amid heavy security. The police detained an AAP MLA in Mangolpuri for obstructing the drive.

As per a data shared by the local bodies, the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NMC) removed 66 illegal structures, while South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) removed 12 structures from roads, pavements and footpaths on Tuesday. According to local bodies, the corporation plans anti-encroachment drive in all its four zones on May 11.

According to SDMC, the drive started at 11 am and went on till 2 pm. Over 12 temporary structures were removed from the area which caused inconvenience to the locals.

"The municipal corpora-



A bulldozer razes an illegal structure during an anti-encroachment drive by the MCD in New Friends Colony in New Delhi on Tuesday

tion razed the illegally constructed structures and boundary walls constructed at Government land were demolished. A road stretch measur-

ing two kilometres in length was made 'encroachment free' by the SDMC squad. In addition to this, as many as 12 sheds were removed while net (jail

works in front of residences were also demolished," SDMC central zone chairman Rajpal Singh said.

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Modi to visit Lumbini on Buddha Purnima

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to give a boost to historical ties between the two countries, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to visit Nepal on May 16 on the occasion of Buddha Purnima. It will be his first visit to Nepal after becoming Prime Minister for the second time in 2019.

Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, accompanied by his spouse Arzu Deuba, paid an official visit to India from April 1 to 3. It was his first bilateral visit abroad after assuming his office in July 2021. Besides official engagements in New Delhi, Deuba also visited Varanasi.

The PM will travel to Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautam Buddha, at the invitation of his Nepalese counterpart. His hour-long trip will come on the occasion of Buddha Purnima, Lord



Buddha's birth anniversary. Deuba is also scheduled to participate in the programme.

In his first term as the Prime Minister, Modi had visited the Himalayan nation four times. Later this month, Modi will travel to Japan to take part in the Quad summit there.

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Hardik Patel shares stage with Rahul

New Delhi: Sulking Congress leader Hardik Patel was seen on stage with Rahul Gandhi at a rally on Tuesday in Gujarat, where the Opposition party is struggling with a widening rift ahead of elections later this year. Though Rahul Gandhi did not mention him in his speech, he met with Hardik Patel and promised that his issues would be addressed, sources say.

Hardik, the party's working president in Gujarat, shocked his bosses recently when he dropped "Congress" and the party symbol from his Twitter bio, feeding speculation that he is in talks with the ruling BJP. The 28-year-old, who joined the Congress in 2019, has been complaining of being "ignored" by the Congress and its top leaders in Gujarat. He compared it to the feeling of a "groom forced into nasbandi (vasectomy)". Agency

Santoor maestro Pandit Shivkumar bids final adieu

Mumbai: Santoor virtuoso Pt Shivkumar Sharma, who took the stringed instrument to the global stage and successfully straddled the worlds of classical and film music, died here on Tuesday following a heart attack. He was 83.

Sharma, one of India's most well-known classical musicians, died between 8 and 8.30 am at his Pali Hill residence here, his secretary Dinesh told PTI.

He had been active till the end and was due to perform in Bhopal next week. He was also suffering from renal ailments.

"He had a severe heart attack in the morning... He was active and was to perform in Bhopal next week. He was on regular dialysis but was still active," a family source said.

Sharma, one half of the famous 'Shiv-Hari' composer duo along with flautist Hari Prasad Chaurasia, is survived by his wife Manorama and sons Rahul, also a santoor player, Rohit.

The Shiv-Hari duo com-

posed music for an array of films such as "Silsila", "Lamhe", "Chandni" and "Darr".

A Padma Vibhushan recipient, Sharma was born in Jammu in 1938 and is believed to be the first musician to have played Indian classical music on the santoor, a folk instrument from Jammu and Kashmir. Describing his father as his 'gururji', Rahul said the end was peaceful.

"He is not with us anymore but his music lives on. He went away peacefully. He has given the entire world his music, peace through his music and what he did for santoor... It's now known across the world.

"His music will always live on. He will be with us through his music. He had age related issues. He was 83. We had done a concert together 15 days ago, everything was fine. He passed away peacefully," Rahul told reporters outside his home.

The santoor legend's long-time collaborator and friend



1938-2022

Chaurasia was at Sharma's residence for nearly eight hours and broke down while talking to the media.

"Ye aapne kaise keh diya woh hamare beech nahin rahe. Aisa ho hee nahin sakta. Woh hamare saath the, aur hamesha rahenge (How could you say he is no more? It can't be. He was with us and will always be)," the flautist said.

Durga Jasraj, daughter of the late classical vocalist Pandit Jasraj and a close friend of Sharma, said the santoor legend fainted in the bathroom and was "gone in a fraction of a second".

"I have lost my second father. I have been trying to coordinate all the other arrangements but what happened is that he fainted in the bathroom in the morning and that was a cardiac arrest and he could not be revived." We called for the ambulance and everything but he was gone in a fraction of a second.

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2 terrorists neutralised by forces in Anantnag

Slain ultras had earlier escaped from the Watnad encounter site

PNS ■ JAMMU

Two terrorists were neutralised by the joint team of security forces in Kreeri, Dooru area of Anantnag on Tuesday evening while one civilian injured during cordon and search operation in Pandoshan area of Shopian late Monday evening succumbed to his fatal injuries. At present an injured jawan of the Indian army and another civilian were receiving treatment in the 92 Base hospital, Srinagar.

According to Inspector General of Police, Kashmir

range Vijay Kumar the slain terrorists killed in Anantnag belonged to the same group of terrorists who escaped from Watnad encounter site on 16/4/22 in which one soldier made a supreme sacrifice.

Meanwhile, a civilian identified as Shahid Gani Dar succumbed to his injuries in the command hospital, Srinagar. Dar was injured during the cordon and search operation in Shopian late Monday evening.

According to a Srinagar based Defence PRO, "a joint cordon & search operation was launched by Indian Army & Jammu and Kashmir police at about 07:45 pm on 09 May 22. At around 8:30 pm, while the security forces were establishing a cordon around the target house, the terrorists started firing indiscriminately in all directions in an attempt to breach the cordon, thereby putting the lives of civilians at

a great risk".

As the security personnel started shifting civilians from the operation site the terrorists started firing on the civilians in order to create chaos to assist them in their escape bid.

Despite shifting the majority of the civilians to a safe location one soldier Lance Naik Sanjib Das and two civilians namely Shahid Gani Dar and Suhaib Ahmad received gunshot wounds. All the injured were immediately evacuated in an army helicopter to 92 Base Hospital, Srinagar.

According to Defence PRO, civilian Shahid Gani Dar succumbed to his injuries. The other injured civilian, Suhaib Ahmad is reported to be critical but stable. He will be undergoing life saving surgeries. Lance Naik Sanjib Das is stable and out of danger. Taking advantage of cover of the dark, the terrorists managed to escape the operation site.

12 UP cities to get metro rail network; DPRs almost ready

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

To ensure world-class connectivity, Uttar Pradesh will soon have the metro rail network in 12 cities, DPRs of which are almost ready.

Metro rail services already exist in Lucknow, Ghaziabad, Noida, Greater Noida and Kanpur while Gorakhpur, Kashi, Meerut, Bareilly, Jhansi and Prayagraj are also expected to get the same soon.

Urban population constitutes 24 per cent of the total population of Uttar Pradesh, which contributes 65 per cent to the state's GDP. The Yogi government is working towards providing eco-friendly and viable commuting options to make the lives of these people in urban areas easier.

A government spokesman said that to realise the objectives, the detailed project reports (DPRs) for Varanasi, Prayagraj, Jhansi and Meerut are in final stages. Chief

Minister Yogi Adityanath has also instructed the officials concerned to prepare DPRs for Metro Neo projects in Bareilly, Meerut, Jhansi, Prayagraj and Varanasi.

The metro services in Agra are also nearing completion on a war-footing. Over 35 per cent of the first phase of Agra Metro Project has been completed while the work of priority corridor in Kanpur was completed in less than two years' time despite two waves of the Covid-19 pandemic, the spokesman said.

He added that the chief minister has issued directives to start work on the Gorakhpur Metro Lite project within six months. "In its first phase, the 15.14-km Metro Lite of Gorakhpur at a cost of Rs 2,670 crore will connect major centres of the city, including Gorakhnath Mandir, Gorakhpur Railway Station, Gorakhpur University and the newly-built AIIMS," he said.

Illegal e-health-care: HC asks AAP Govt for affidavit on action

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed the AAP government to file an affidavit regarding the mechanism being followed to ensure that the earlier direction to take action against online health service aggregators which are operating illegally and collecting samples for COVID-19 tests is being complied with. The high court was hearing a petition by Dr. Rohit Jain seeking contempt action against the authorities for not adhering to the court's earlier direction to take action against online health service aggregators which are operating illegally and collecting samples for Covid-19 tests.

The court also asked authorities regarding the steps taken when a complaint is received that a lab is functioning without the requisite licence in the city of Delhi.

Justice Subramonium Prasad perused the division bench's August 6, 2020 order by which the authorities were

asked to take action against the online aggregators and said the decision indicates that a direction has been passed to the respondents to initiate action against such violators of law who are engaged illegally operating in Delhi, after giving the adequate opportunity of being to the concerned parties.

The letter and spirit of the said order indicate that this court had intended to ensure that labs and online health service aggregators, which were not accredited by NABL and had not received approval from the ICMR to collect samples and provide reports, did not function in the city of Delhi," the high court said.

It further said, "The respondents are directed to file an affidavit delineating the mechanism being followed to ensure that the order dated August 6, 2020, is being complied with in its letter and spirit, and the steps that are taken when a complaint is received that a lab is functioning without the requisite licence

in the city of Delhi."

It listed the matter for further hearing on June 1, while directing that the responsible officers of the Delhi government, ICMR, and Delhi Police shall be present in the court on that day to assist the court in this regard. While hearing the contempt plea, the high court had earlier asked the Delhi government to consult with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and publish the requisite standards for the collection of blood samples for COVID-related tests.

It had also said the ICMR will highlight, on its website, how much blood sample is permitted to be collected for conducting the COVID-related tests. Advocate Shashank Deo Sudhi, appearing for the petitioner, had urged the court to allow the contempt plea and restrain the illegal online health service aggregators, which are not authorised to collect diagnostic samples for COVID-19 tests, from further committing contempt of order passed by the court in 2020.



Noida Authority has been working to make the city plastic-free and has collaborated with HCL Foundation to launch a Plastic Heist Campaign to create awareness regarding the harmful effects of single-use plastic

Pioneer Photo

UP officials asked to take action on GoM reports

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed the officials concerned to take appropriate action on the report of the Groups of Ministers (GoM) who have returned from their divisional tours.

"The report of the GoM should be given to nodal officers of the respective districts so that the development works can be accelerated according to the needs of people and in the areas where the ministers have suggested improvement," Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said here on Tuesday.

Stressing on the need to continue with the divisional/district tour programme of the GoM, the chief minister has

also given instructions to the officials to be sensitive to the problems of the common man and resolve them at the earliest.

After the cabinet meeting held at Lok Bhavan under the chairmanship of the chief minister, the presidents of all the 18 ministerial groups gave him information about the district-wise status of the divisions under their charge one by one.

It was said that the updated status of development projects was reviewed by holding a divisional review meeting during the group visit. Instructions were given to the officers for quality work while maintaining the timeline of the projects.

At the same time, after get-

ting the details of women's safety matters, prosecution status in SC/ST cases, police patrolling, child sex offences, problems of businessmen, and action against gangsters, the chief minister issued necessary instructions for better law and order with zero tolerance policy. The GoM also shared with the CM the experiences of 'Jan Chaupal' and 'Sabahoj' during their visit.

According to most of the ministers, there is a positive atmosphere among people on the subject of women's safety, better health facilities and distribution of free ration to the eligible people without discrimination.

The ministers suggested that there is a need to make the system of public grievance

redressal better. The ministers also thanked the chief minister and said forming the GoM was an innovative move.

In the cabinet meeting, Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak also shared the experiences of 'Swasthya Chintan Shivir', the 14th conference of the Central Council of Health and Family Welfare (CCHFW) held at Kevadiya, Gujarat, from May 5 to 7. He said that a presentation was made on the UP model of communicable diseases including eradication of encephalitis and eradication of Kala-azar, apart from the ongoing efforts to improve the health infrastructure, including one district-one medical college in the state.

Santoor maestro Pandit Shivkumar...

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In a way, he went peacefully at home," she told PTI.

Sharma's secretary added the mortal remains will be kept at the Pali Hill home. At 10 am on Wednesday, the body will be shifted to the Abhijit Cooperative Housing Society in Juhu for "public darshan" till 1 pm. The last rites will be held at Pawan Hans Crematorium in Vile Parle.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's office said in a statement that Sharma will be accorded a state funeral.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Ram Nath Kovind were among those who condoled Sharma's death.

"Our cultural world is poorer with the demise of Pandit Shivkumar Sharma Ji. He popularised the Santoor at a global level. His music will continue to enthrall the coming generations. I fondly remember my interactions with him. Condolences to his family and admirers. Om Shanti," the prime minister said.

The president said Sharma's recitals would leave connoisseurs of Indian classical music spellbound.

"He popularized Santoor, the traditional musical instrument from J&K. Sad to learn that his Santoor is now silenced. Condolences to his family, friends and countless fans everywhere," the president tweeted.

The tributes poured in. "Sad to know about the demise of Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, eminent Santoor player and internationally celebrated Indian music composer. His departure impoverishes our cultural world. My deepest condolences," tweeted West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

National Conference leader Omar Abdullah wrote, "Very sad to hear about the passing of Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma. A legend in his lifetime, he popularised the santoor like no one before him. A proud son of the soil, he made his mark globally. My condolences to his family. May his soul rest in peace."

Sarod player Amjad Ali Khan said Sharma's death was a personal loss for him.

"The passing away of Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma marks the end of an era. He was the pioneer of Santoor and his contribution is unparalleled.

For me, it's a personal loss and I will miss him no end. May his soul rest in peace. His music lives on forever! Om Shanti," Khan tweeted.

Ghazal singer Pankaj Udhass and veteran actor Shabana Azmi also condoled Sharma's death.

"We have lost a gem today Padma Vibhushan Shri Shiv Kumar Sharma ji Santoor virtuoso a big loss to the Indian classical music," Udhass wrote on Twitter.

"Deeply saddened to hear that maestro Pt Shiv Kumar Sharma has passed away. His mellifluous music will remain in our hearts of course but tinged by the pain of his loss. My deepest condolences to the family," tweeted Azmi.

Veteran actor and BJP MP Hema Malini described Sharma as a gentleman to the core.

"He will be missed by many associated with him as also his admirers all over the world. I have had the good opportunity to interact with him on many occasions. My heart goes out to his family," she tweeted.

The post on the official Twitter handle of Yashraj Films

#ShivkumarSharma blessed the world of music with tunes that will continue to mesmerize the coming generations. May his soul rest in peace."

Ashok Vajpeyi, eminent Hindi poet and Sharma's good friend, said the santoor player was "easily the greatest musician to emerge from his native Kashmir".

"Pt Sharma reinvented the santoor to attain depth and range capable of resonating classical complexities and nuances. He created a music full of joy, depth and meditative richness. In his demise, the creative community of India loses a doyen, a master, a gentle soul and a great performer," he told PTI.

Classical singer Pt Vijay Kichlu said Sharma was "more than a brother" to him.

"Since he was also a Kashmiri like me we were very close to each other and met frequently. We used to be together for at least four-five weeks once a year. The world of music has seen something entirely new during his lifetime because it was him who first brought a rural Kashmiri instrument (Santoor) to a classical platform," he told PTI.

City temp drops below 40 degrees C

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The maximum temperature in the national capital dropped below the 40-degree mark on Tuesday as moisture-carrying easterly winds prevailed in the city under the impact of severe cyclone Asani.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), no heatwave is predicted for the next two days.

Earlier the IMD predicted, "heatwave spell from Wednesday with temperatures soaring to 44 degrees Celsius."

In a revised forecast, it said the maximum temperature will settle around 40 degrees Celsius on Wednesday and 42 degrees Celsius on Thursday.

The Safdarjung observatory, Delhi's base station, recorded a maximum temperature of 39.5 degrees Celsius, a normal for this time of the year. The minimum temperature settled at 28 degrees Celsius.

The relative humidity on Tuesday morning at 8:30 was recorded at 61 per cent and 45 per cent in the evening at 5:30.

The weather stations at Ridge, Ayanagar, Mungeshpur, Najafgarh, Pitampura, Palam, and Lodhi Road recorded maximum temperatures of 39.5 degrees Celsius, 40 degrees Celsius, 40.9 degrees Celsius, 39.6 degrees Celsius, 39.4 degrees Celsius and 38.7 degrees Celsius respectively, stated the IMD data.

A heatwave is likely at a few places in the capital on the subsequent three days, the IMD said. Back-to-back patchy rain, thunderstorms, and strong winds had provided some respite from the intense heat last week.

The mercury started creeping up on the weekend and hit the 42-degree mark at some places on Sunday.

Delhi sees 1,118 new Covid-19 cases, one death



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The National Capital on Tuesday reported 1,118 fresh coronavirus cases and one more death. However, the positivity rate stood at 4.38 percent and a total of 25,528 tests to detect coronavirus were conducted in Delhi a day before.

According to data released by the city's health department, with the new cases, Delhi's overall COVID-19 infection tally rose to 18,96,171, while the death toll rose to 26,183.

The national capital on Monday had reported 799 new coronavirus cases and three

deaths — the single-day fatality count highest in over two months — while the positivity rate had stood at 4.94 per cent.

The city had logged three Covid deaths on March 7 and four fatalities due to the disease on March 4. Delhi had logged 1,422 Covid cases and zero death on Sunday, while the positivity stood at 5.34 percent.

The city saw 1,407 Covid cases with a positivity rate of 4.72 percent and two deaths on Saturday.

It had on Friday logged 1,656 COVID-19 cases, the highest since February 4, while the positivity rate had stood at 5.39 percent

6 MHA officials held after CBI's....

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"Based on inputs of the Union Home Ministry, the CBI is conducting a major countrywide operation against FCRA violations to nab the representatives of NGOs, middlemen and public servants of the FCRA Division of the Union Home Ministry for alleged involvement in facilitating FCRA clearances to the NGOs in lieu of bribes," a senior CBI official said. The official refused to share further details and specifics saying since the operation is continuing, more information cannot be shared at this stage.

UP Govt to modernise over 2,000 rice mills

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a first, the Uttar Pradesh government will undertake the task of modernising over 2,000 rice mills across the states to ensure quality control, so that the finished product fetches a better price in market.

The move is aimed at achieving the government's goal of self-sufficiency in food and nutrition security, employment creation, and wealth generation. Rice milling is the oldest and largest agro-processing industry in the country.

There are about 757 large mills having a milling capacity of 4 tonnes per hour or more in the state while the number of smaller units is about 1,157 with less than 4 MT per hour

milling capacity. The smaller mills are equipped with traditional machines due to which the quality of rice deteriorates and does not conform to the standards of the Food Corporation of India.

"The private rice mills will be modernised and in this regard, some mandatory provisions will be made by the government," Commissioner, Food and Civil Supplies, Sorab Babu said. The department will soon hold a meeting with the UP Rice Millers' Association and millers to encourage them for the same.

With the upgrade in machinery, capacity building, and use of modern technology, the government aims to produce high-quality rice.

AAP MLA detained....

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"In South Zone, demolition drives were conducted in D-2 and D-2 markets, Church road, Masoodpur road and adjoining areas. Civic agency squad, during the drive, made nearly 3,000 metres area encroachment free. A total of 49 articles were also seized," he said.

"In West Zone, the drive was conducted in Raghuraj Nagar and illegal structures, whether temporary or permanent were demolished. A distance of nearly 1,000 meters area was freed from illegal encroachment and 11 articles were seized and one vehicle was impounded," he stated.

Singh said the municipal corporation has successfully conducted its demolition drive as per the plan.

"The people of the area were extremely happy with this move, as the encroachment caused long traffic jams due to which they (locals) were not able to reach their desired destination on time, the schools buses were not able to reach on time, etc," he said. According to MCD officials, the drive will be conducted at Meher Chand Market, Lodhi Colony, Near Sai Baba Mandir and JLN Metro Station and surrounding areas, Arjan Garh Metro Station, Aya Nagar Village Road, Ghitorni Village and surrounding area, Chaukhandi and Surrounding area and Najafgarh Zone near Akash hospital. On the other hand, the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NMC) also executed its anti-encroachment drive at Mangolpuri.

Commissioner of the

NMC Sanjay Goel said the corporation removed temporary encroachments from Mangol Puri, Y-1 block in ward no 46 with the help of local police. "Officials of civic body removed approximately 66 temporary structures along with wooden counters, pipes, 5 tandoors, with the help of one JCB bulldozer. During the encroachment removal drive three dumpers trucks were deployed along with manpower, officials and sufficient police force," Goel said.

"About 266 meters of road from municipal primary school to Kanjhawala road were cleared from encroachment. Illegal parking in adjoining parks was also locked and got vacated and 0.79 acre (3200 sq.mts) area got vacated," he stated.

You can soon order....

From Page 1

The policy document, however, did not highlight home delivery of liquor which is part of Excise Rules and legal drinking age that was proposed to be reduced from 25 years to 21 years in parity with neighbouring cities.

In its proposal before the Cabinet, the Excise Department has put up several proposals for the consideration of the Cabinet for the policy's 2022-23 iteration which include discontinuation of opening two liquor shops in one ward, re-tendering zones at a base reserve fee of Rs 280 crore (as against Rs 225 crore in 2021-22) in case an existing vendor pulls out.

Modi likely to visit

From Page 1

Heads of States of the US, Japan and Australia will be there on May 23 and 24. The four heads of States had met in person for the first time last year in Washington at the invitation of President Joe Biden.

The Quad grouping is primarily aimed at ensuring a free and rule-based Indo-Pacific region. China has repeatedly criticised the Quad and claim it will lead to militarisation of the strategic region.

Delhi Govt nod to 2 key flyover projects

NEW FLYOVER BETWEEN ANAND VIHAR AND APSARA BORDER AND ELEVATED CORRIDOR BETWEEN RAJA GARDEN AND PUNJABI BAGH FLYOVER TO BE BUILT IN 18 MONTHS

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a move to decongest major roads, the Delhi Government on Tuesday decided to construct two new flyovers in East and West Delhi. The Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) headed by Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia has approved a proposal to this effect. The two new elevated corridors are expected to be completed in 18 months.

The total cost of a corridor connecting the Punjabi Bagh flyover to the Raja Garden flyover is estimated at Rs 352.32 crore. Similarly, a flyover between Anand Vihar and Apsara Border will cost Rs 372.04 crore. "The Delhi Government approved two key flyover projects today. A new flyover between Anand Vihar

KEY FEATURES OF RAJA GARDEN FLYOVER AND PUNJABI BAGH FLYOVER

- Construction of a six-lane elevated corridor from ESI Hospital to the existing Club Road half flyover and development of the existing half flyover from two lane to six lanes
- Development of the existing Moti Nagar half flyover from two lanes one way to six lanes two way and shifting of the existing subway ramps near ESI Hospital towards the service road on both sides of the carriageway
- Development of RCC drains, footpaths, strengthening and beautification of existing roads and artwork on the flyover

and Apsara Border and a new elevated corridor between Raja Garden and the Punjabi Bagh flyover. These projects are vital for decongesting city traffic and shall be completed in 18 months," Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said in

a tweet after the meeting. Reviewing the details of the project, Sisodia said that lakhs of commuters will benefit from the construction of this flyover and corridor and these projects will eliminate traffic problems by increasing the capacity of

FLYOVER BETWEEN ANAND VIHAR AND APSARA BORDER

- Construction of a six-lane elevated corridor at a cost of Rs 372 crore
- Construction of two up-down ramps to provide direct connectivity to the flyover to the people of surrounding areas
- Cycle lanes and multi-utility zones etc. will also be constructed

the existing roads, making them safer. Sisodia said that the Arvind Kejriwal Government is working on a war footing to identify traffic hotspots in the city and decongesting them. "Our aim is to decongest Delhi's roads, beautify them and provide a better experience to commuters of Delhi as well as those from other States," said Sisodia.

Notably, the stretch between the Raja Garden flyover and Punjabi Bagh flyover is an important part of the Ring Road connecting South Delhi, Gurugram and other parts of NCR with North Delhi.

Commuters face heavy traffic here during peak hours. The one way flyovers and low-capacity intersections here lead to heavy traffic jams in the area creating problems for commuters as well as nearby residential colonies.

"In such a situation, a corridor development between Raja Garden flyover and Punjabi Bagh flyover will help in decongestion of traffic and bring relief to lakhs of interstate commuters daily," said an official. Some of the key features of the corridor between

Raja Garden flyover and Punjabi Bagh flyover are construction of a six-lane elevated corridor from ESI Hospital to the existing Club Road half flyover and expansion of the half flyover from two lanes to six.

Also, development of the existing Moti Nagar half flyover from two lanes one way to six lanes two way and shifting of the existing subway ramps near ESI Hospital towards the service road on both sides of the carriageway.

Besides, there are plans to develop RCC drains, footpaths, strengthening and beautification of existing roads and artwork on the flyover between Anand Vihar and Apsara Border.

"Along with the flyover, cycle lanes and multi-utility zones etc. will also be constructed," said the official.

Officials of the Public Works Department which will execute these projects, said these facilities will provide relief to commuters travelling to Uttar Pradesh border from East and northeast Delhi and also ease movement of motorists in West Delhi areas around Ring Road.

Delhi may get world-class mega liquor vends soon

GoM for increasing max size of retail vends to 5,000 sq ft and above in Excise Policy 2022-23

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Tipplers in Delhi may soon have an altogether different shopping experience in world-class mega liquor vends spread over more than 5,000 square feet (sq ft), with tasting rooms and merchandise like cigars, liquor chocolates and art paintings on sale.

The minimum and maximum sizes of retail liquor stores in the city were fixed at 500 sq ft and 2,000 sq ft by the new Excise Policy being implemented by the Delhi Government from November last year.

The Delhi Government's Group of Ministers (GoM) has made several recommendations for formulating the Excise Policy 2022-23, including increasing the maximum size of retail vends to 5,000 sq ft and above, officials said.

The minimum size of 500 sq ft mandated by Excise Policy 2021-22 for retail vends to provide walk in experience to customers should be maintained, the GoM recommended in its meeting last month.

"However, the upper limit of 2,000 sq ft may be increased to 5,000 sq ft," it said as per an official document. The GoM



further recommended that in case licensees intend to open a retail vend of more than 5,000 sq ft then an additional annual licence fee of Rs 5 crore will be applicable.

"Such vends will be converted from L-7 V to L-7MV licence, providing the customers a better experience," the document said.

These converted retail vends may also be allowed to sell ancillary products including cigars, liquor chocolates, art paintings, high value merchandise such as bottle openers, ice boxes, bar glasses and other gift items, it said.

Approximately 29 per cent of the space may be allocated for the merchandise in the converted vend.

These vends can set up a tasting room within the premises. These rooms may only have training and tasting sessions and will not be used to

serve liquor to consumers, added the document.

The recommendations of the GoM will become part of the Excise Policy 2022-23 after approval of the Delhi Cabinet, added the officials.

The Excise Policy 2022-23 being framed by the Delhi Government may discontinue the norm of opening two vends per municipal ward in view of problems arising out of constraints of doing so in unregulated parts of the city, officials said on Tuesday.

The Excise Policy 2021-22 notified by the government had divided the city into 32 zones with 850 retail vends distributed over a total of 272 municipal wards as well as the New Delhi Municipal Council areas and the airport. It had made it mandatory for each zonal licence holder to open two retail liquor stores in each ward.

Delhi court acquits 5 'LeT' men

Says mere recovery of SIM used for calling Pakistani number insufficient to prove terror plot

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court has acquitted five men who were arrested under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) of Atrocities Act (UAPA) for their alleged involvement with the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

Acquitting the accused, Mohd Shahid, Ashabuddin, Mohd Rashid, Abdul Subhan and Arshad Khan, a Pakistani resident, Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ) Dharmender Rana

said that the prosecution has miserably failed to prove its case and the accused people deserve to be acquitted. The court said that mere recovery of cellphones and SIM cards used for communication with a Pakistani number was not sufficient to prove a terror plot or conspiracy when there is no other evidence to prove such a terror link.

The accused were facing trial under Sections 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code and Sections 18 (conspiracy for terrorist act), 18B (recruiting a person for terrorist act) and 20 (member of a terror outfit) of the UAPA. According to the court order, it is settled proposition of law that in a criminal trial, the prosecution is required to prove its case

beyond a shadow of reasonable doubt. "With these observations, the accused are hereby acquitted of the offences charged with," order stated. "It is alleged by the prosecution that the accused persons are members of a banned terrorist organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba. The prosecution has placed heavy reliance upon the intercepted conversations between the accused persons and the dreaded terrorist Javed Balluchi," the order said.

"Doubts regarding the probative value of intercepted telephonic conversations have already been discussed above. Once the intercepted conversations available on record are discarded, there is no material available on record to connect the accused persons to LeT.

BJP asks NDMC to rename Delhi roads after freedom fighters, martyrs

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Tuesday demanded that the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) change the names of six streets in the national Capital bearing the names of Mughal emperors and rename them after Maharshi Valmiki, Maharana Pratap, General Bipin Rawat and Dr APJ Abdul Kalam.

The move comes after the Delhi BJP president submitted a memorandum to the Delhi Government to change the name of 40 villages including Humayunpur, Yusuf Sarai, Begumpur, Saidul Ajab and Hauz Khas and demanded that they be rename after freedom

fighters, martyrs, Delhi riot victims, famous artistes, and sportspersons. Adesh Gupta in his letter to the NDMC Chairman said that despite several years of Independence, names of some roads in Delhi symbolised "slavery".

Gupta demanded that Tughlaq Road be named after Guru Gobind Singh and Babar Lane after revolutionary Khudiram Bose, Aurangzeb Lane as Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Lane, Humayun Road as Maharshi Valmiki Road and Shahjahan Road as General Bipin Rawat Road. "It is our demand that Tughlaq that symbolises slavery be changed to Guru Gobind Singh Marg for paying tribute to the great fig-

ure," Gupta said.

He also demanded renaming of Akbar Road after Maharana Pratap who fought the Mughals and was considered "pride of Hindus" on the Rajput icon's 482nd birth anniversary. NDMC Vice-Chairman Satish Upadhyay told The Pioneer that they will consider the matter and will take a collective decision through proper procedure.

Satish Upadhyay said, "Naming the roads after freedom fighters, martyrs, Delhi riot victims, famous artistes, and sportsperson is the best initiative to show gratitude and honour to them instead of bearing names of Mughal emperors."

Right-wing Hindu group recites Hanuman Chalisa outside Qutub Minar; 44 detained

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Members of a fringe Right-wing outfit staged a protest near Qutub Minar on Tuesday demanding that the centuries-old minaret be renamed 'Vishnu Stambh' and chanted Hanuman Chalisa outside the historic premises. "About 50 people belonging to the United Hindu Front and Rashtravadi Shiv Sena had

gathered for the demonstration and 44 protestors were detained under relevant Sections of the Delhi Police Act as permission was not granted for the gathering," said Benita Mary Jaiker, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South). Jai Bhagwan Goyal, president, United Hindu Front alleged that he was to participate in the protest but was not allowed by cops to leave his home in Shahdara, a

claim denied by the police. Goyal claimed that the Qutub Minar is the Vishnu Stambha built by King Vikramaditya but in later years, Qutubuddin Aibak claimed credit for it.

"There were 27 temples in the complex and those were destroyed by Aibak. Proof of all this is available as people can find idols of Hindu gods there which should be kept at one

place and we should be given the right to worship there," he said. The protestors chanted 'Jai Shri Ram' and recited the Hanuman Chalisa and Goyal claimed it was to highlight the demand of several Hindu groups. "We have given a memorandum of our demands to Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Tourism Minister G Kishan Reddy," he said.



Heat delays transfer of deer herd from Delhi Golf Club to Asola sanctuary

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Scorching heat has delayed the transfer of a herd of Sambar deer from the elite Delhi Golf Club (DGC) to their new home in the capital's Asola Bhatti Sanctuary.

One of the oldest and reputed institutions in the heart of Delhi, the DGC had last year approached the Delhi Forest and Wildlife Department, requesting them to shift the deer to the Asola Sanctuary, which is witnessing an increase in wildlife population.

"It is not exactly known if the deer existed from the beginning or if someone introduced them to the DGC... Their number has increased over time," an official said. The deer stomp on the grass of the golf course and damage it. In winter months, when food is scarce, they start eating the grass, which increases the maintenance



cost, the DGC official said. Deer need a natural environment with minimal human interference, officials said, adding the transfer will improve the prey base for leopards in the Asola sanctuary.

An official said around six to seven deer have been shifted from the DGC to the wildlife sanctuary in a meticulously planned operation. "Shock and stress are a leading cause of death among deer. It is being ensured that they are

shifted from one place to another when there is minimal traffic movement and human interference," the official said. However, the intense heat has impeded the drive.

"Since Asola is a new place for these Sambar deer, they may not know the location of water holes, which will create stress among them. So, the transfer of the remaining deer has been deferred," the official said.

"We have not removed the infrastructure, including the cages and camera traps, from the DGC. The transfer will now be carried out after the heat abates," he said. The DGC official quoted above said some of their members have also opposed the transfer of the deer.

Between 2010 and 2019, the Rajasthan Forest Department also relocated several sambar deer from the Delhi Golf Club to the Ranthambore National Park's buffer areas.

Shooter of Tyagi and Gauri gang held for Subhash Nagar attack

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police's Special Cell has arrested a sharp shooter of Salman Tyagi and Saddam Gauri gang in connection with the road side shooting on two brothers in the crowded Subhash Nagar area last week. The victims Ajay Chaudhary and his brother Yashpal were going to Kalra Hospital to meet their relative on Saturday when the incident occurred. Both the brothers are undergoing treatment at a hospital and their condition is stated to be critical.

The accused has been identified as Ansh Bhumia alias Paras, a resident of Dabri in Delhi. Police said that he along with his associates Adnan Tyagi and Faizal surrounded Chaudhary's Toyota Innova car and opened more than 10 rounds of bullets targeting them at a busy traffic junction in Subhash Nagar According to

Rajiv Ranjan Singh, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Special Cell, after the incident which was captured on CCTV, the three assailants fled away. "Paras, who is a sharp shooter of gangster Salman Tyagi and Saddam Gauri, came out of jail on April 28. During the investigation it was revealed that due to an old enmity, Salman hatched conspiracy to eliminate Chaudhary," said the DCP. "On the directions of Salman, the three assailants attacked Chaudhary and his brother. Bhumia was arrested on Monday. One pistol and six rounds were recovered from Bhumia's possession," said the DCP. "The two-wheeler used in firing incident was recovered from DDA Park, Begampur village in south Delhi. One Raju (47) was also arrested on Sunday for allegedly giving the two-wheeler to the accused for the crime," police said.

Bid to make city's roads safer

Three-lane Speed Violation Detection System, AI camera installed at flyover near Green Park Metro Station

SAURAV GUPTA ■ NEW DELHI

To check traffic violators, the Delhi Government's transport department has installed a three-lane Speed Violation Detection System (SDVS) and an Artificial Intelligence (AI) camera at a flyover near the Green Park Metro Station, in collaboration with Kerala-based PSU Keltron State Electronics Development Corporation Limited as a pilot project.

The decision to install the SDVS and AI camera in Delhi was taken after a World Economic Forum (WEF) and Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) conference held recently to address the issue of road safety in India. The Head of Communication Project Group, Keltron, Binsun NT told The Pioneer that the WEF and FIA requested them

to make a Proof of Concept (PoC) of the product in Delhi-NCR for five to six months to evaluate its effectiveness and scalability. Giving the specification of the three-lane SDVS, Binsun said, "The SDVS is mainly used for identifying speeding vehicles.

If the vehicle is moving above the speed limit set for the road, the SDVS system will detect the vehicle and issue a challan which will be fully admissible in court as we have a calibrator certificate and the violators cannot challenge it.

The system will also click the images of the car and the number plate of the violators." "The current speed violation detection systems installed in Delhi are camera-based solutions with limitations. If the vehicle is moving at more than a particular speed then the system won't be able to detect it. But, the SDVS system is a radar-based system and it can detect a vehicle moving at a speed of up to 240 kms per hour," said Binsun. "In Delhi, people use different kinds of number plates such as reflec-

tive, non-reflective etc. But the current cameras are not able to click pictures of the number plate of the violators clearly. However, the SDVS can click the picture of any kind of number plate with 99 per cent clarity.

The technology used in the SDVS cameras is a global shutter system which is mainly used to click the images of fast moving objects," he said.

Giving the specifications of the AI camera, Binsun said that it is mainly used to detect people who are in violation of traffic rules such as riding a bike without a helmet, and not wearing a seat belt while driving, etc. This AI camera can automatically detect the vehicle and person in violation and click the picture of the number plate along with the moving vehicle.

"These products neither need maintenance checks nor do they have any kind of technical issues. Over 340 SDVSs installed in Kerala have been working successfully for the last six to seven years without any glitches," Binsun concluded.

INSHORT

BULLDOZER GETTING DEFAMED: NAQVI

New Delhi: Amid a row over the demolition drivein Shaheen Bagh, Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said it has become a fashion to give a 'communal colour' to illegal acts and rued that the 'bulldozer was getting defamed' for action against encroachment. Parodying a popular Bollywood song, Naqvi said of the controversy, 'Bulldozer badnaam hua, encroachment tere liye.'

SC REFUSES TO HEAR MAJITHIA'S PLEA

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to entertain a plea of Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia seeking quashing of FIR registered against him by Punjab Police under the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act of 1985 and gave him liberty to approach Punjab and Haryana High Court.

SC TO HEAR PLEA ON NEET-PG 2022

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to hear on May 13 a plea of doctors seeking postponement of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test for Postgraduate (NEET-PG) 2022, which is scheduled to be held on May 21 on the ground that it will clash with the ongoing counselling for NEET-PG 2021.

Identify minorities at State level within 3 months: SC to Centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Expressing displeasure over its changing stands, the Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Centre to take a decision on identification of minorities including Hindus at the State level within three months.

A bench of Justices S K Kaul and MM Sundresh directed the Centre to consult the States. The Centre had in March said that it was for the States and Union Territories (UTs) to take a call on whether or not to grant minority status to Hindus and other communities where they are less in number.

But, on Monday, the Centre told the apex court that the power to notify minorities is vested with the Union Government and any decision in this regard will be taken after discussion with States and other stakeholders. "Later, you say the Centre has powers. In a country like ours, which has so much diversification, we understand but somebody should have been more careful. Before these affidavits are filed everything is in public domain which has



its own consequences. Therefore, you have to be more careful in what you say," the bench observed.

Dictating its order, the bench said, "A fresh affidavit has been filed by the Ministry of Minority Affairs which seems to back out what was said in the earlier affidavit. Something we don't appreciate. It is now sought to be stated that the question sought to be adjudicated has far reaching ramifications throughout the country.

"The stand has already been taken in the first affidavit. But as per fresh affidavit, the power is vested with the Central government to identify minorities...Aforesaid being the position, it is neces-

sary that the exercise is taken by the Centre as proposed. List on August 30," the bench said while seeking a status report three days before the hearing.

As the hearing commenced, a junior counsel sought pass over saying that Solicitor General Tushar Mehta was busy in some other court. "What I am unable to understand is Union of India is not able to decide what to do. All this thought should have been given before. This creates uncertainty and all this comes into public domain before we put our eyes on it. This creates another problem.

"If the Centre wants to consult states, we will have to take a call. Solution can't be that everything is so complex,

we will do so. This cannot be the answer from the Government of India. You decide what you want to do. If you want to consult them do it. Who is stopping you from doing so," asked the Judges.

The apex court had earlier granted four weeks to the Centre to respond to a plea, which has sought directions for framing of guidelines for the identification of minorities at the state level, contending that Hindus are in minority in 10 states. In an affidavit filed in response to a plea filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, the Ministry of Minority Affairs said the central government has notified six communities as minority communities under section 2C of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992.

Upadhyay had challenged the validity of section 2(f) of the National Commission for Minority Education Institution Act, 2004, alleging that it gives unbridled power to the Centre and termed it "manifestly arbitrary, irrational, and offending". Section 2(f) of the Act empowers the Centre to identify and notify minority communities in India..

Ministry warns Ola, Uber of strict action over failure to redress consumer complaints

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs on Tuesday warned cab aggregators, including Ola and Uber, of strict action unless they improve their systems and redress rising consumer complaints.

The Government held a meeting with the ride-hailing platforms amid a rise in consumer complaints of alleged unfair trade practices by them, including ride cancellation policy, as drivers force customers to cancel trips after accepting bookings, which results in customers paying cancellation penalties.

The meeting was attended by representatives of Ola, Uber, Meru, Rapido and Jugnu.

"We told them about the rising consumer complaints against their platforms. We gave them the statistics also. We have asked them to improve their system and redress the consumer complaints otherwise the competent authority will take strict action," Consumer Affairs Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh said after the meeting.

Hinting at the scale of customer unhappiness against the cab aggregators, he said the complaints on the Jago Grahak Jago helpline are just the tip of the iceberg. The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) Chief Commissioner Nidhi Khare said the cab aggregators should immediately come out with solutions.

"The authority is likely to issue an advisory to ensure that unfair trade practices by cab aggregators are not carried on in violation of consumers' rights," she added.

Khare also said the government has com-

municated that there will be "zero tolerance against such malpractices" by cab aggregators.

On Monday, Singh had said the government has sought information from the cab aggregators on how they handled cancellation charges and surge pricing and how they calculated fares.

"We have asked why the charges to go from point A to point B are different for two different people," Singh had said, adding the ministry was also keen to know whether these ride-hailing apps have taken adequate measures to safeguard consumer data on their platforms.

Last week, Khare said the CCPA received several complaints from consumers regarding the cancellation and pricing policy of cab aggregators. "The number of complaints is very high and therefore we have called the cab aggregators for an explanation of their policies," she said.Citing a few examples, she said the regulator received many complaints of alleged unfair trade practices, including cab drivers forcing consumers to cancel a trip and bear a penalty as the drivers do not want to accept the ride for whatever reason.

Khare further said existing consumers are being charged high rates for a ride, while new users are lured with lower charges for the same distance.

"It appears that cab aggregators are using algorithms to lure new customers, putting old customers at a disadvantage. This is an unfair practice," she added.

Against this backdrop, Khare said the regulator would like to understand their algorithms and other policies adopted for operating as cab aggregators in the country.

SC stays Allahabad HC's NBW against Noida Chief executive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the Allahabad High Court order issuing non-bailable warrant against Chief Executive Officer of Noida in a contempt case related to a land acquisition matter. A bench comprising Chief Justice NV Ramana and Justices Krishna Murari and Hima Kohli agreed to hear the plea of IAS officer Ritu Maheshwari against the order of the High Court.

"This is a gross case where

a lady appeared in the Allahabad High Court, her lawyer was present and sought a pass over. The High Court issued the order asking her to appear and in custody," senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the IAS officer, said. "List it tomorrow. Stay the order," the bench said.

On Monday, the Supreme Court had observed that it has become a "routine" affair that Uttar Pradesh officials are approaching it against the Allahabad High Court orders and they do not "respect orders of the court".

SC asks MP SEC to issue local poll schedule within 2 weeks

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the Madhya Pradesh State Election Commission (SEC) to issue a poll programme for local bodies within two weeks, saying more than 23,263 such bodies are functioning without elected representatives for the last over two years and this is bordering on a "break down of rule of law".

The apex court said the ongoing activity of delimitation or formation of the ward cannot be a legitimate ground to be set forth by any authority to not discharge its constitutional

obligation in notifying the election programme at the opportune time and to ensure that the elected body is installed before the expiry of five years term of the outgoing body.

A bench headed by Justice A M Khanwilkar noted that until the triple test formality is completed "in all respects" by the state government, no reservation for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) can be provisioned.

The bench, also comprising Justices A S Oka and C T Ravikumar, noted if the triple test exercise cannot be completed before the issue of the election programme by the

SEC, the seats, except reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes which is a constitutional requirement, must be notified as for the general category.

"Therefore, we direct the SEC by way of an interim order, to issue an election programme without any further delay on the basis of the wards as per the delimitation done in the concerned local bodies

when the elections had become due consequent to the expiry of five years term of the outgoing elected body or before coming into force of the impugned Amendment Act(s) whichever is later," it said.



Army chief General Manoj Pandey with President Ram Nath Kovind on Tuesday

PTI photo

CBI searches 8 sites in case of ₹180 cr building purchase by J&K Bank

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Tuesday searched eight locations in Jammu, Srinagar and Mumbai, including premises of then J&K Bank chairman Haseeb Drabu, in connection with alleged irregularities in purchase of a building by the bank for its integrated office in Mumbai in 2010.

The Akruiti Gold Building was purchased for around Rs 180 crore and the agency had registered the case on November 11 last year on a reference from the Jammu and Kashmir government.

The premises of the then directors of the bank M I Shahdad and Vikrant Kuthiala, and Executive Director AK Mehta were also searched during the operation, they said.

The CBI is today conducting searches at eight locations including at Jammu,

Srinagar and Mumbai at the premises of then members of the Estate Committee of the Board of Directors, including then Chairman of J&K Bank, then directors, then executive director," the CBI said in a statement.

The CBI had also conducted searches earlier at various locations including at Mumbai, Hyderabad and Kolkata.

Incriminating documents, articles and electronic evidence, several bank account details and bank locker keys have been recovered during searches, the agency added.

This is the second search in this connection. The four accused persons were also members of the estate committee of the bank.

In its FIR, the CBI has alleged that the bank had entered into a deal for its branch office at the Bandra

Kurla Complex (BKC) with Akruiti Gold at a much higher rate than offered by other shortlisted builders causing a loss of over Rs 100 crore to the bank.

The case was earlier probed by the Anti-corruption Branch of the Jammu and Kashmir Police, which had registered an FIR following a preliminary inquiry.

The inquiry report, now part of the FIR, had said an advertisement was issued by the J&K Bank on November 6, 2008, inviting offers for outright sale of integrated office premises at Bandra Kurla, Mumbai, requiring 20,000 sqft space. Twenty-five builders had responded to the advertisement which were opened by the committee formed for the purpose and out of the offers received, eight properties Ashapura Builders (Hallmark Business Plaza), Topaz Akruiti,

Crescenzo (BKC), Platin BKC, Naman Centre, Golden Homeland agencies (Wockhardt), Windsor and KRC Towers were shortlisted.

Of these eight, the rates offered by Ashapura Builders were the lowest at Rs 25,000 per sqft, Ashapura Builders on July 28, 2009, made an offer for its building's third floor of 30,000 sqft built up area at Rs 22,500 per sqft chargeable area.

"The application was processed and submitted to the then chairman to take a decision but no decision was taken regarding finalisation of the contract with Ashapura Builders.

A committee was constituted with approval of the chairman to take a view with regard to the offer received. The committee so constituted has done nothing in respect of offers received," the FIR had alleged.

Centre set target to reduce 50% deaths on road by 2024: Gadkari

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday set a target to reduce 50 per cent road accident deaths by 2024. Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said a sensitisation of stakeholders like the Road Ministry and NHAI for collectively addressing issues regarding road safety is also being done as road safety is a very serious issue and there should be zero tolerance for road accidents.

The Minister also said action should be taken immediately on black spots. Black Spots are locations having higher concentration of road accidents.

The minister rued the fact that India accounted for the highest number of accidents in the world, one of the major reasons for which was poor road engineering. "In our country,



every year about five lakh accidents take place and 1.50 lakh people lose their lives and a majority of the victims are aged between 18 and 45," said Gadkari.

Gadkari directed the senior officials to consider and implement various strategies and solutions to improve road safety as early as possible. The Minister said action should be taken immediately on black spots. He said while taking action three things have to be considered: immediate measures, mid-term action, and long-term action. He said all

Ros (Regional officers) & PDs (Project directors) should take a pledge of zero accidents.

He said that India was losing 3 percent to 5 percent of its Gross Domestic Product due to accidents. He noted that a person could get a driving license in the country very easily unlike in the United States. It is also not good for me to tell you that when we referred to the records of driving licenses, at least 30% of them were bogus and one person had three to four licenses," Gadkari mentioned.

"We have changed the system and with the help of the Income Tax department, were able to take some action on those people who had multiple driving licenses," the minister added.

Gadkari earlier has said that the road accident scenario in India is more dangerous than the pandemic, pointing to potential savings of 90

lakh per person if such deaths are prevented.

"For the government, each life is precious, whether poor or rich, urban or rural, male or female. The situation is alarming. There are more deaths than in Covid-19. It is more dangerous than Covid-19," said Gadkari.

The Road and Transport and Highways ministry have swung into action following a World Bank report on accidents in India which has one per cent of the world's vehicles and accounts for 10 percent of all road crash victims

The report noted that while the attention last year shifted due to Covid-19, there is an interesting link between road safety and pandemic losses and unfortunately, the road crashes have not been going down and any time 10 percent of the capacity in hospitals was being used for the treatment of crash victims.

ITBP to induct 8 women as canine squad handlers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a first among the Central Paramilitary forces (CAPFs), the Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force (ITBP) has decided to induct a batch of eight women personnel as canine handlers.

These women dog handlers will be deployed with the canine squads for roles in various security theatres, including in anti-Naxal operations.

Till now, the role of dog handlers was tasked exclusively to the men.

The selected women ITBP personnel are in the rank of constable and belong to the 'animal transport' cadre of the specialized mountain-warfare Force.

The ITBP is primarily tasked to guard the 3,488-km-

long Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, apart from rendering a variety of duties in the internal security domain like conducting anti-Maoist operations and carrying out anti-sabotage checks during high-profile events and VIP visits.

The eight women are part of a 25 personnel team who will join training in the last week of this month at the ITBP-run National Training Centre for Dogs (NTCD) in the Bhanu area in Panchkula,Haryana.

"The ITBP has broken the proverbial glass ceiling by inducting ladies in the K9 (canine) wing," said ITBP Deputy Inspector General (Veterinary) Sudhakar Natarajan.

The eight women person-

nel, in an average age bracket of early to mid-twenties, would be first put under training for two to three months as they begin rearing the Malinois breed of pups.

This initial course will be followed by another three months of a 'tactical obedience course' and the final leg would be to undergo three to four months of 'dual purpose dogs' or PEDD (patrol and explosive detection dogs) training, he said.

This was probably the last work profile where women were not engaged till so far in the Central forces.

Police forces of Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra have already inducted women as dog handlers in their canine wing.

‘Bharat Gaurav Tourist train for Ramayana circuit’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Railways would launch and operate the first state of the art fully air-conditioned Bharat Gaurav Tourist Train for the Ramayana circuit.

Ministry sources said the proposed 18-day Bharat Gaurav Tourist train tour to be started on June 21 will have its first stop at Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Rama, where tourists will visit Shri Ram Janmbhumi temple and Hanuman temple and additionally Bharat Mandir at Nandigram.

After Ayodhya, the next destination would be Buxar in Bihar where the tourists will be shown the hermitage of Maharishi Vishwamitra and the Ramrekha Ghat where the guests can take a holy dip in the Ganges. The almost 8000-km

circuit in line with the Government of India initiative "Dekho Apna Desh" will cost Rs 62,370/- per passenger According to IRCTC which will operate the train, the journey will further move to Sitamarhi for the visit of Sita's birth place and proceed by road to Janakpur (Nepal).

Tourists will stay overnight at hotels in Janakpur and visit the famous Ram-Janaki Temple in Janakpur. After completion of Sitamarhi visit, train proceeds to the oldest living city of the world, Varanasi.

While at Kashi, tourists will walk around the temples at Varanasi Sita Samahit Sthal, Prayag, Shringverpur and Chitrakoot will be covered by road. Night stay at hotels will be provided at Varanasi, Prayag and Chitrakoot. The train journey on the next leg will move to Nasik for overnight stay at Hotels. Visit

to Trayambakeshwar temple and Panchvati will be covered and the next destination after Nasik is scheduled for the visit of ancient city of Krishkindha, Hampi, with overnight stay at hotels.

"Here the guests will visit the temple believed to be the birth place of Shri Hanuman atop the Anjaneyadri Hills and other heritage and religious sites. Rameshwaram is the next destination of this train tour wherein Ramanathaswamy temple and Dhanushkodi will be covered along with overnight stay at hotels. The train destination is Kanchipuram where Shiv Kanchi, Vishnu Kanchi and Kamakhshi temples are on the day's excursion.

"From here, the last destination that the train touches in this tour is Bhadrachalam in Telangana state which is also widely referred to as the

Ayodhya of the south. After this, the train will return back to Delhi on the 18th day of its journey covering roughly a distance of around 8000 Kms in this entire Ramayana tour," IRCTC

official mentioned.

From clean toilets to enhanced security features of CCTV cameras and security guards for each coach have also been provided for the tourists.

Train gets foldable baby berths

To make train journeys more comfortable for passengers travelling with infants, the railways has fitted foldable "baby berths" on the side of lower main berths of the Lucknow Mail as part of a pilot project.

The "baby berth", which are hinged to the lower main berths, can be folded and secured with a stopper when not in use.

It has been aligned with the main berth. On the Lucknow Mail, two "baby

berths" of 770 mm in length, 255 mm in width and 76.2 mm in height were fitted to 12 and 60 main berths of the second cabins on both ends of coaches on April 27.

The (booking) system will be like the existing offer of lower berths to senior citizens. So if a passenger says yes travelling with a child, the lower berth with a baby berth will be reserved for the passenger.

Alcohol taking 1 life every second: WHO

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Youth is dying every second due to alcohol consumption, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has revealed in its new report released on Tuesday which highlights the increasing use of sophisticated online marketing techniques for alcohol and the need for more effective regulation.

It shows that young people and heavy drinkers are increasingly targeted by alcohol advertising, often by digital means – and in many cases regardless of the social, economic or cultural environment in receiving countries, said the report titled “Reducing the harm from alcohol – by regulating cross-border alcohol marketing, advertising and promotion” which was released on Tuesday. Talking about the health hazards of alco-

hol, the report points out that alcohol is taking a toll on one person every 10 seconds. Almost three million people lose their lives every year due to consumption of liquor. The WHO has called upon the countries for the need for more effective regulation.

“A disproportionate number of these alcohol – related deaths occur among younger people, with 13.5% of all deaths among those who are 20–39 years of age being alcohol-related. “Alcohol robs young people, their families and societies of their lives and potential,” said Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director General, WHO. “Yet despite the clear risks to health, controls on the marketing of alcohol are much weaker than for other psychoactive products. Better, well enforced and more consistent regulation of alcohol marketing would both save and improve young lives across the world”

In addition, alcohol consumption among women is an

important growth sector for alcohol production and sales. “While three quarters of the alcohol is consumed by males, alcohol marketers tend to see the lower rate of women drinking as an opportunity to grow their market, often depicting drinking by women as a symbol of empowerment and equality. They organize corporate social responsibility initiatives, on topics such as breast cancer and domestic violence, and engage with women known for their success to promote brands of alcohol.”

“Sponsorship of major sporting events is another key strategy used by transnational alcohol companies. The increasing market of e-sports, including competitive gaming events, is another opportunity to sponsor events and increase brand recognition and global sales. So is product placement in movies and serials, many of which are streamed on international subscription channels,” the report says.

Int'l sports medal winners to be made Grade 1 officers in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Tuesday decided to accord cultural university status to the Bhatkhande Sangeet Mahavidyalaya and also approved a proposal to appoint international-level medal winners in sports as grade-1 Government officers.

These decisions were taken in the State cabinet meeting held here in Lucknow on Tuesday. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Khanna said the cabinet approved the draft bill to replace Bhatkhande Sangeet Sansthan Deemed University with the Bhatkhande State Cultural University promulgated from January 6, 2022.

Bhatkhande Sangeet Sansthan Deemed University, funded by the Culture department, is currently established for teaching in various disciplines of classical music. With the aim to protect and promote the culture of the state, there was a need to set up a cultural university. This university will

not only give a fillip to the culture of the state but also will generate employment, the minister said.

In order to establish the Bhatkhande State Culture University by adopting the Uttar Pradesh State University Act, 1973, the ordinance of January 6, 2022 was promulgated, the Minister said.

In the second decision, the state cabinet also approved the proposal for promulgation of ‘Uttar Pradesh International Medal Winner Direct Recruitment Rules, 2022’ for appointment of medal winners in international games directly to 24 gazetted posts.

These 24 posts belong to nine different departments like Rural Development, Secondary Education, Basic Education, Home, Panchayati Raj, Youth Welfare, Transport, Forest, and Revenue. All these posts are under the purview of the Public Service Commission and the appointments will be made after the consent of the Commission. For this, the department of Personnel has

made necessary amendments in the ‘Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission (Delimitation of Functions) Regulations, 1954’ Act, Khanna said.

The posts on which appointments will be made are BDO, BSA, DPRO, Assistant Sports Officer, Naib Tehsildar and Deputy SP.

Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Girish Chandra Yadav said that the medal winners in Olympics, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, World Cups or World Championships as well as Paralympic Games would be entitled for these posts. “The other criteria is that the person should be a native of Uttar Pradesh,” Yadav said.

The State Government also gave its nod to signing of an MoU with the Airport Authority of India (AAI) for maintenance of five airports in Aligarh, Azamgarh, Sravasti, Chitrkoot and Myorpur (Sonbhadra). Currently, the government spends Rs 7 crore per year for maintenance of each airport.

BJP leader’s autopsy report: TMC wants Amit Shah’s apology

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The ruling Trinamool Congress has demanded apology and resignation of Union Home Minister Amit Shah for “peddling an untrue story about an unfortunate death” and “terming the mysterious death of Arjun Chowrasia a BJP youth wing leader at Cossipore in North Kolkata a political murder”

Hours after the autopsy report of the deceased — indicating suicide — became public Bengal ministers Chandrima Bhattacharya and Dr Shashi Panja on Tuesday said “the version of the Trinamool Congress has been proved true and that of Home Minister Amit Shah who called it a ‘political murder’ — without even waiting for the autopsy reports — false,” adding “he owes an apology to the people of Bengal for making misleading statement.”

Earlier the military command hospital authorities submitted the autopsy report before the Calcutta High which had after hearing a petition ordered an impartial authority to conduct the postmortem. The autopsy reports said that the death of Chaowasia, whose body was found hanging in an abandoned room near his residence at Cossipore in North Kolkata on May 6, was anti-mortem in nature.

The ministers quoting the postmortem report said “it was unbecoming of the Home Minister of the country to draw a conclusion without any authentic report at hand ... he definitely owes and apology ... it is not a political murder as insisted by the Home Minister.”

Local TMC MLA and Kolkata Deputy Mayor Atin Ghosh too attacked Shah for making a “sweeping statement ... he should resign for the comment he made out of turn ... this is blatant interference in the State Government’s jurisdiction.”

TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said that Shah would “do good to take a lesson from the Cossipore incident and desist from making hurried statements ... he was misled by his party men who fed him with a false story for narrow political gains and he relied on this demanding a CBI investigation into the incident.”

Senior Bengal minister Frihad Hakim too attacked the BJP for playing the politics with dead bodies. “Having failed to mislead the people of Bengal and win their trust in the last year’s Assembly elections the BJP has resorted to playing the politics of corpses ... this will take them nowhere ... instead of working for the people like Mamata Banerjee does they are always in the hunt for a dead body in order to remain relevant in the politics.”

Guv asks Didi to rise above party lines, treat people impartially

PNS ■ KOLKATA

In a statement that was quickly interpreted by the ruling Trinamool Congress leadership as one being made by a BJP leader and not the constitutional head of a State, Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar once again on Tuesday reminded Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to rise above party politics to become the “true” Chief Minister of all and treat people of all ‘hues’ in same manner.

After meeting the victims of post poll violence at the Raj Bhavan on Tuesday the Governor said, “I have met the victims of post poll violence and heard them ... My request to the Chief Minister will be to rise above party lines and treat all the citizens in equal manner ... it is not good for an admin-

istrator to be partial.”

Earlier hundreds of BJP men along with the victims of violence led by State Opposition Leader Suvendu Adhikari and State BJP president Sukanto Majumdar met the Governor where he heard the relatives of those killed in the post poll attacks.

In furtherance to his discussion with the victims the Governor said that many of them were asking for jobs and said that he would “look into the matter.” He said “I will discuss the matter with the Chief Minister without interfering in the State’s administrative business,” adding “I expect that the Chief Minister should provide the same relief to the post poll violence victims that she provided to the victims of the Rampurhat (mass murder) incident.”

MAKING UP A \$1 TRILLION ECONOMY

Deadline extended for e-bids for consultants

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Government has extended the deadline for submission of e-bids for the ‘Request for Proposal’ (RFP) for the appointment of a consultant who will work out a roadmap for making UP a \$ 1 trillion economy in the next five years. The e-bids may now be submitted up to May 24. The technical bids will be opened on May 25.

This is the third time the deadline has been extended for the appointment of a consultant.

The Yogi Adityanath Government had floated global bids to invite proposals for the appointment of the consultant on March 15 last after the BJP won the assembly elections in the state for the second time in a row.

The assembly election results were announced on

March 10. The bids were to be submitted by April 14 then. The deadline was later extended to April 29 and now to May 24. The Government explained that over 170 queries were raised at the pre-bid conference following which the Government felt that it needed some follow-up measures.

Companies gave some suggestions following which the State Government decided to make necessary corrections. The revised documents will be uploaded soon.

Official sources said that the Government was forced to extend the deadline because of the fault lines which emerged during discussions with the different consultants/companies. Some of the big names



were reluctant to participate in the bid. The Government has now made amendments in the terms and conditions for the bidders.

UP’s GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product) needs a four to five times push to reach the target of a one trillion dollar economy and it’s an

uphill task under the existing institutional framework, forcing top consultants to stay away from the e-bidding.

The Government dossiers claim that the GSDP has already touched ₹15.80 lakh crore (\$230 billion) with a rich growth rate of 7 per cent over the previous year.

It will be a challenging task to boost up the size of the GSDP by nearly five times to reach the target of one trillion dollars in five years (2022–27), discounting the dollar fluctuations and global trends.

The Directorate of Economics and Statistics of UP Government, in its advance estimates, has indicated that the GSDP for 2021–2022 remained at about ₹19.10 lakh crore.

The RFP admits that it is a Herculean task that demands some giant steps to be taken by the State Government to move forward.



1992 batch IAS officer Dipak Singh on Tuesday took over the charge of Bihar Education Department as Additional Chief Secretary

J&K admin to provide transport to nomads

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Union Territory Administration in Jammu and Kashmir has embarked on an ambitious journey to ferry a transhumant population comprising Gujjars, Bakkerwals, Gaddi and Sippis to the highland pastures in Kashmir this summer season.

It is for the first time the government has decided to provide transport facilities to minimize hardship of the nomads during the seasonal migration.

According to the first survey of the transhumant tribal population conducted by the Tribal Affairs department in 2021 around 6.12 Lakh people migrate every year to highland pastures known as ‘Dhoks’.

Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, Secretary to the Government, Tribal Affairs department said, “To start with, a fleet of 40 trucks have been deployed to transport around 30,000 families from Jammu to Kashmir via Mughal road and

National Highway-44 connecting Jammu with Srinagar”. Dr Choudhary said, funds amounting to Rs 6.80 Cr have already been released to the Jammu and Kashmir Road Transport Corporation for 30 trucks. “The deppit endeavours to include more trucks and some passenger vehicles for movement of migratory tribal families during the annual seasonal migration and on return”, he added.

On Tuesday a fleet of six trucks was formally flagged off by Assistant Commissioner Revenue Rajouri, Imran Rashid Kataria carrying the migratory population to dokhs of Peer Panjal.

While speaking at the event, the ACR said that the initiative has been taken to minimise the hardships of the migratory population during their journey to the upper reaches.



“Earlier, they had to cover the entire journey on foot which caused a lot of inconvenience to them but with this move, the sufferings of these families have mitigated to a great extent”, he added.

District Tribal Officer, Wakeel Ahmed Bhatt informed that these vehicles would continue to move to and fro during the entire migratory season and anyone who is willing to avail the benefits of the initiative can contact ACR office or the office of the District Tribal Welfare department for necessary assistance.

Official sources said, “the transit accommodations will be used for brief halts on way to

highland pastures and will also serve as pick-up and drop-off points for the transportation system”.

Welcoming the initiative Dr Javaid Rahi, author and researcher on tribal issues said, “it’s a welcome step and would go a long way in facilitating movement of tribals from one location to another. In the past private parties used to hire transport services for shifting livestock during emergencies. It is for the first time the government is organising smooth transport of tribal population to highland pastures to cut down their hardships and challenges”.

Dr Rahi said, “in the past several mishaps took place on national highways where livestock was crushed to death and the tribals could not get anything in return. The safe mode of travel would surely bring down the death rate due to mishap during peak season and would help the tribal population live a peaceful life without facing many hardships during transit”.

Maha Min refutes claims of Ranas’ ‘photo session’

T N RAGHUNATH ■ MUMBAI

A day after the ruling Shiv Sena leaders questioned the doctors at the Lilavati Hospital about the nature of treatment that Independent MP Navneet Rana received at the hospital, Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope disapproved the management facilitated the conduct of a photo session for Navneet while she was undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Talking to media persons here, Dr Tope said that he had so far not seen such a photo-session held at a time when CT and MRI scan being conducted on a patient, as it happened in the case of Navneet after she was admitted to the hospital in the wake of her having been granted bail on May 4 in the case involving their arrest over threat to recite “Hanuman Chalisa” in front of chief minister Uddhav Thackeray’s private residence “Matoshri” at Bandra in north-west

Mumbai.

“I am the Health Minister of the state. But, I have so far not seen such a photo-session being held when the patient was undergoing CT or MRI scan at the hospital. Whatever happened at the Lilavati was improper. If the people use it as precedent to hold similar photo-sessions at other hospitals, it will also be improper”.

Dr Tope was responding to queries if the state government would initiate any action against Lilavati for facilitating such a photo-session at the x-department of the hospital.

It may be recalled that on Monday, senior Shiv Sena leaders had visited Lilavati Hospital — where she was admitted after she was granted bail in the “Hanuman Chalisa” case — and questioned the doctors about the nature of treatment that she underwent at the hospital.

After the Sena team’s visit

to the hospital, the H-West Ward Office of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) had issued a notice to the Lilavati Hospital seeking an explanation on several alleged violations of medical norms that have come to light during the team’s visit to the hospital.

While questioning the doctors at the hospital, the Sena team — comprising Dr. Manisha Kayande, former Mayor Kishori Pednekar who is a professional nurse, Rahul N Kanak and Anil S Kokil — had sought details of the MRI scanning done on Navneet at the hospital and sought explanation for the ‘wrongdoings’ as seen in photos/videos circulated on social media in the past few days.

“How was ‘shooting’ of photographs and videos permitted inside the MRI room, under what circumstances and who authorised it,” Dr. Kayande had asked.

“Why were mobiles, cam-

eras with metallic, electric or electronic devices allowed in the MRI room when it is banned as per the hospital rules for such sensitive locations,” Pednekar had wanted to know.

Kanak and Kokil wanted to know how certain ‘unauthorised persons’ were allegedly allowed entry to the VVIP patient’s room and even posing for selfies with the MP. Dr. Kayande and Pednekar wondered how the lady MP — who had complained of severe back pain and spondylosis — was made to lie on her back, how she lifted her head when being rolled inside the MRI machine.

“When she was rushed to the hospital, she appeared in great distress ... then all these pictures/videos came out and on Sunday she was discharged, she looked hale and hearty. She looked absolutely fit and fine quite contrary to her earlier severe medical condition. That’s why we have raised our doubts,” Dr. Kayande said.

Nine pilots suspended by DGCA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has suspended nine pilots and 32 cabin crew for failing the pre-flight breath analyser (BA) test.

While two pilots and two cabin crew have been suspended for a period of three years for the second time in four months, as many as 37 other pilots and cabin crew have been suspended for a period of three months for testing BA positive for the first time.

The DGCA said during the period of four months commencing from 1st Jan 2022, it carried out 48 enforcement actions for the violations of the various requirements of the regulation regarding testing of crew for the consumption of alcohol.

Maha teams up with NGO to impart job skills to 4K youth on special bus

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government has teamed up with an NGO YouthAid Foundation, to start a unique ‘Rajyavyapi Udyamita Yatra’ under which a travelling bus will impart job skills to 4,000 youths in 36 districts of the state during the next 40 days.

Maharashtra Minister for Skill Development, Employment and Entrepreneurship Rajesh Tope on Tuesday flagged off the Rajyavyapi Udyamita Yatra bus from Vidhan Bhavan in south Mumbai.

Talking to media persons after flagging off the bus yatra, Tope said: “The COVID 19 Pandemic disrupted the livelihoods of many urban, rural, and tribal poor populations. It is our commitment to helping them by creating opportunities

to re-start and revive business activity. For the next 40 days, this yatra will run through 36 districts ensuring a state-wide outreach to people who are really in need of appropriate livelihood options.”

Giving details of the yatra, YouthAid Foundations founder Mathew Mattam said: “Our trainers who will meet and train 4000 desirous entrepreneurs through the entire route of 4000 kilometers travel covering 36 districts. They will also meet more than 40,000 people during this yatra and provide training to start micro-business, awareness in schools and colleges on entrepreneurs, and interact with people who have an idea but don’t know how to go ahead with starting their business innovations as well as to create an entrepreneurial mindset among the people.”

“As a part of Rajyavyapi Udyamita Yatra, there will be a 3-day entrepreneurship training programmes in each district. We will provide support for legal compliances, and information about government schemes and link those schemes to entrepreneurs after they complete training besides providing marketing support to start 4000 micro-businesses by end of the December in all over 36 districts,” Mattam said.

Even after the completion of the Yatra, YouthAid Foundation will continue to extend support to the trained entrepreneurs, an assistance that will help create self-employment at the local level and migration will reduce from villages to cities.

According to Mattam, the yatra will play an important role to encourage local entrepreneurs, businesses, and local

markets will be developed. The yatra also will reach youth to create an entrepreneurial mindset among them so that they need not be job seekers, but instead job creators. “This yatra will be part of the foundation’s larger goal to reach 1 million entrepreneurs by 2030,” Mattam said.

Mattam said that among other things, the yatra would help the people to nurture their business ideas and mentor them towards business growth so that they can make their presence in the entrepreneur eco-system and contribute to inclusive socio-economic growth. “The yatra is contributing towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations and self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat), a concept propagated by the Government of India,” he said.

IMD issues ‘red’ warning for Andhra Pradesh coast

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Tuesday issued a “red” warning for the Andhra Pradesh coast for cyclone Asani. This means local authorities need to take action to prevent disasters associated with the cyclone as severe cyclone Asani has changed its track significantly and is likely to touch the Andhra Pradesh coast between Kakinada and Visakhapatnam.

Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla on Tuesday reviewed preparedness for severe cyclone Asani, which is moving over Bay of Bengal, off Andhra Pradesh and Odisha coasts, where rescue troops were deployed for assistance of civilians.

According to the IMD, Asani is likely to weaken gradually into a cyclone by

Wednesday morning and into a depression by May 12 morning but before it weakens, it is forecast to cause intense rainfall and extremely strong winds along Andhra Pradesh and Odisha coasts.

Asani, which means wrath in Sinhalese, is likely to move northwards and reach west central Bay of Bengal close to Kakinada-Vishakhapatnam coasts by Wednesday morning. Thereafter, IMD said, Asani is likely to recurve slowly north-northeastwards and move along Andhra Pradesh coast between Kakinada and Vishakhapatnam and then emerge into northwest Bay of Bengal off North Andhra Pradesh and Odisha coasts.

The cyclone would have wind speeds of 75–85 kmph gusting to 95 kmph on the Andhra Pradesh coast and 45–55 kmph gusting to 65 kmph on

the Odisha coast. Suspension of fishing operations has been suggested. Storm surge of height of about 0.5 m above astronomical tide is likely to inundate low lying areas of Krishna, East and West Godavari and Vishakhapatnam districts of Andhra Pradesh, IMD has warned. Moderate rainfall at many places with heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places is likely over coastal Andhra Pradesh and Odisha is likely from May 10 night.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has earmarked a total of 50 teams for undertaking rescue and relief operations in areas affected by Asani. Of the 50 teams, 22 have been deployed on the ground in West Bengal, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh while the remaining 28 have been asked to be on alert within these states.

FIRST COLUMN

REDUCE LOGISTICS COST VIA RAILWAY REFORMS

Corporatise core railway ops for fresh capital, efficiency



R P GUPTA

The cost of logistics in India is double or triple than in advanced countries. That makes India lose its export competitiveness and deems it a high-cost economy. This also invites “cost push” inflation mainly due to high dependency on road transport. The share of goods transported by railways has fallen from 86% in 1950-51 to about 29.5% in 2015-16. It might further reduce unless more rail tracks are built. For reducing logistics costs, railways must double its share of goods traffic and improve efficiency in the next five years. Rail transport is supposed to be cost efficient, energy efficient and eco-friendly compared to road transport. Its dependency on imported energy is also quite low. However, its potential is not yet fully exploited. Currently, the average speed of goods train is barely 24 kmph due to inadequate tracks and traffic congestion. Goods terminals have poor facilities for loading, unloading and storage; which adds to logistics costs. The railways don’t have an integrated model of road and rail transportation and modern storage for small consignments. Hence, dependency on the costlier road transport continues. In the past two decades, the capital investment in railways has been less than a fifth of funds invested in the road sector. Railways profits are used up in subsidizing passenger fares, leaving a marginal surplus for capital investment. Considering the backlog, Railway needs new investment of about ₹30-40 trillion in the next 5 years. This can’t be done with the budgetary sources alone and needs some financial innovations. Non-core activities in Railway must be hived off and rail operations split into six corporates individually dealing rolling stocks (wagons/trains), goods and passenger traffic, all engines (power) and workshops for repairs and maintenance, railway track and bridges, goods terminals and railway stations, and manufacturing plants for rail coaches and engines.

Railways assets, including the land and buildings, be suitably distributed among the six corporates. Such investment value may be treated as the Government’s contribution to the corporates as equity or debt and equity. About 10-20% equity may be divested to public through the stock exchange to ensure accountability towards public shareholders. Each corporate can raise funds for meeting its investment needs like any other PSU with the government providing sovereign guarantee. Surplus land and buildings and obsolete equipment and stores in each corporate should also be monetised for raising resources for new investment. However, land for expansion must be preserved. The corporates can bill one another for services sought or rendered. A regulator may be appointed for fixing tariff for goods freight and passenger fares. At an appropriate time private operators may be invited to compete with these PSUs. That will bring in additional investment and technology and improve efficiency. However, traffic control must remain with a separate authority for monitoring the movement of trains. One of the corporates can develop existing terminals or build new goods terminals with modern handling facilities to improve operational efficiency. Development of warehouses, cold storages attached to goods terminals will reduce the distribution cost and promote goods traffic. The aforesaid strategy will certainly augment ambitious investment, expand capacity and modernize railway that too, without any major budgetary support. Competition among private and PSU corporates shall gradually improve overall operating efficiency besides building capacity. Its impact shall be quite visible on the overall economic growth, logistics costs, inflation and exports. Dependency on the imported fuel shall also dilute. A fast and comfortable rail travel shall partially replace air traffic and promote tourism as well. Besides private sector, States should also join the team. This will indeed generate lot of goodwill for the government because railways is the most visible infrastructure.

(The writer is an economist and author. The views expressed are personal.)

Defections: Take away the Speaker’s powers

For the anti-defection law to be effective, the power to decide on disqualification cases must be vested in an independent authority

In a recent address at Bengaluru, Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu lamented that the anti-defection law had failed to check mass defections and suggested an amendment in the law to stop it. The lamentation and suggestion coming from someone who had been BJP president sounds bold, as several mass defections in the recent years have been engineered by the party. However, Naidu was speaking there not as a BJP man but as Vice-President and his observation does not apply to one party. And indeed, why blame the BJP alone? Given their time, all parties have trampled the anti-defection law under their feet.

The central flaw in the anti-defection law has been the assignment of total authority to the speaker to decide on the petition. All political parties have used the speaker as the weapon to defeat the law. In theory an MLA or MP, after being elected as speaker (presiding officer of the house), ceases to be partisan. In practice they remain partisan. They do the bidding of the top leadership of the party they belong to.

Any party leadership usually wants the speaker to sit over the disqualification petition till the term of the house is over. That helps the leadership kill the petition without looking like having done so, because the case is not carried on to a new house. The speaker adroitly follows the party leadership’s brief by giving long dates of hearing and stretching on issues of procedure and evidence.

Nobody can question the speaker. The petitioners and the aggrieved political party in opposition have to put up with his naked partiality. Even the judiciary cannot question the speaker, because the law does not allow it to interfere with the case prior to the making of the decision by the speaker. That has allowed the party leaderships to reward the defectors immediately with offices of power and help them enjoy it till the end of the term of the house.

The anti-defection law, referred to as the Tenth Schedule, was added to the Constitution through the Fifty Second (Amendment) Act, 1985. For 35 years since then the speakers colluded with their party leaderships to stretch the proceedings in disqualification cases to defeat the purposes of the law, without the fear of the judiciary intervening to set a time for their decision. However, it changed in early 2020 with Thounaojam Shyamkumar Singh’s case.

Thounaojam Shyamkumar Singh was elected as an MLA on a Congress ticket in Manipur in 2017. Immediately after his election he defected to the BJP and was rewarded by the party with a cabinet berth with several portfolios-town planning and forest and environment and horticulture and soil conservation. The Congress party filed a petition in the Manipur High Court seeking directions to the speaker Y. Khemchand to decide the disqualification



THE CENTRAL FLAW IN THE ANTI-DEFECTION LAW IS THE SPEAKER HAVING FULL AUTHORITY TO DECIDE ON THE PETITION. ALL PARTIES USE THE SPEAKER AS THE WEAPON TO DEFEAT THE LAW

(The writer is an independent journalist and author. The views expressed are personal.)



plea “within a reasonable period of time”. On September 8, 2017, the High Court rejected the petition, saying it could not pass any order as the question of whether a High Court can direct a speaker to decide on a disqualification petition within a time frame is pending before a Supreme Court bench. On January 29, 2018, the appellant again moved the High Court, which concluded on July 23, 2019, that the speaker was a quasi-judicial authority who was required to take a decision within reasonable time - much less than five years, the prescribed term of the House-but it declined to pass an order.

The case reached the Supreme Court where a three-judge bench headed by Justice Nariman asked the speaker Y. Khemchand to decide the disqualification petitions within four weeks. This was the first time the court had set a time limit for a speaker’s decision. Khemchand did not pass his order in four weeks. He asked for ten more days, and when the ten days passed, he asked for another fifteen days, which the bench did not accept. The bench removed Thounaojam Shyamkumar Singh from the state cabinet and restrained him from entering the Legislative Assembly till further orders.

Article 212 of the Constitution bars the judiciary from interfering with the proceedings of the legislature. That was the article under which the speakers took protection to enjoy the licence and liberty to

play the game their party leaders wanted them to. In the Thounaojam Shyamkumar Singh case, the court was forced by the speaker’s deliberate indecision and inaction on the disqualification petitions to invoke Article 142, which allows the Supreme Court to pass any order necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter.

A year or so later the Supreme Court intervened again to set a time limit for the speaker’s decision in the Goa case. In July 2019, ten Congress MLAs and two Maharashtra Gomantak Party MLAs defected to the BJP and were rewarded with ministries and other offices of power. The speaker sat over the disqualification petitions against them for one and half years, until the Congress went to the Supreme Court, which asked the speaker to make his decision by April 20, 2021. The same year the Calcutta High Court set a time for the Speaker of the West Bengal Assembly to decide on the disqualification petition against Mukul Roy who, after being elected on a BJP ticket, had defected to the Trinamool Congress.

The conclusion is obvious. For the anti-defection law to be effective, an amendment has to be made to take away the power of the speaker to decide on disqualification cases. The power must be vested in an independent authority. In the Thounaojam Shyamkumar Singh case the

Supreme Court said, “Parliament may seriously consider amending the Constitution to substitute the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies as arbiter of disputes concerning disqualification which arise under the Tenth Schedule with a permanent Tribunal headed by a retired Supreme Court Judge or a retired Chief Justice of a High Court, or some other outside independent mechanism, to ensure that such disputes are decided both swiftly and impartially, thus giving real teeth to the provisions contained in the Tenth Schedule, which are so vital in the proper functioning of our democracy.”

An independent authority that decides the case within a reasonable time limit alone can deter political parties and elected representatives from arriving at opportunistic pacts to twist and mangle the mandate of the people. The time limit should be three months, extendable by three more months only on reasonable grounds.

The law should also be amended to deny any defector an office of power during the term of the house. If the defectors would not get anything after they defect why would they defect?

Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu should advise his Government to move amendments in the law to make these changes in order to establish, what he said, the primacy of “character, conduct and caliber” in politics.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

“IF MANN (PUNJAB CM) IS ABLE TO DO IT (GOVERNANCE), THERE WILL BE ACCOLADES, ELSE SIDHU WILL CONTINUE TO BE A WATCHMAN.”
— FORMER PUNJAB CONGRESS CHIEF NAVJOT SINGH SIDHU



HE (SIDHU) IS A COMMON MAN...DEFEATED AND REJECTED BY PEOPLE....AAP IS PARTY OF COMMON PEOPLE...OUR CM GAVE TIME TO AN AAM AADMI.”
— CABINET MINISTER, PUNJAB LALJIT SINGH BHULLAR

Stalin’s year in office: Time to come good on promises

As an effective negotiator in alliance politics at the state level, he aims to take the art to the national level

Tamil Nadu chief minister M. K. Stalin completed one year in office on May 7. He has emerged out of the shadows of his famous father and late former chief minister M. Karunanidhi. Stalin now has to live up to the voters’ expectations, given the fact that he assumed office when Tamil Nadu lacked charismatic leaders.

Secondly, the coffers of the Tami Nadu Government are not in a healthy state. Thirdly, having been out of power for ten years, the Stalin-led DMK had promised the moon to the voters for coming to power. Stalin said after taking oath: “The DMK Government will function so that those who voted for the party will be happy about its performance and those who did not will feel



KALYANI SHANKAR

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

sorry for not voting for it.”

Stalin spent the first three months dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic and managed it somewhat creditably. Tamil Nadu faced torrential rains and flood havoc for the next two months. Therefore, he could concentrate on development only for the remaining seven months of his first year in office.

He has delivered on some promises, such as free bus-rides for women, medical care, and education for the homeless. More promises in a list of 500 are yet to be met, including the monthly provision of Rs 1,000 to homemakers, and custodial deaths, which have focussed on the law enforcement personnel.

Stalin is now confident of acquiring a national profile.



Apart from the electoral success, the DMK strengthened its position by winning the urban polls in a big way three months ago. DMK has dabbled in national politics and participated in the National Front, United Front, NDA, and UPA Governments. So, there is nothing wrong with Stalin’s ambition.

In the past year, Stalin first

pitted his “Dravidian model against Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s (Gujarat model.) Explaining his ambition, Stalin tweeted, “The goal of the Dravidian model is to build a better Tamil Nadu.”

Secondly, having emerged as a good negotiator in alliance politics at the state level, he aims to take it to the national level. He could bring together 12 parties, including the Communist parties and the Congress in the state. He would like to play a role in elections in 2024 and be a galvanizing force among non-BJP parties, some of whom do not see eye to eye with Congress.

Thirdly, Stalin is playing an aggressive role in promoting the ideas of federalism and social justice. He has floated

the All-India Federation for Social Justice to “achieve principles of social justice and federalism at the national level”. Fourthly, Stalin used the emotional issue of language and encouraged the anti-Hindi imposition sentiments.

Fifthly and more importantly, Stalin has shown his initiative on the foreign policy front vis a vis Sri Lanka, which faces an unprecedented political and economic crisis. Stalin has not only met Modi offering to help the Sri Lankan Tamils but also expressed concern about the refugee inflow. Tamil Nadu has always wanted a say in the Sri Lankan policy, and the Centre often went along with the sentiments of Tamil Nadu political parties.

Stalin recently got a unanimous resolution passed in the Assembly and has appealed to the public to make voluntary donations to the Sri Lankan cause. As chief of the DMK, he announced an Rs crore donation. He announced that the Tamil Nadu government would soon be sending 40,000 tonnes of rice, 500 tons of milk powder, and life-saving drugs in the first phase to the neighbouring country.

Sixthly, Stalin recently inaugurated the DMK office in Delhi as part of his national ambition. “For me, all state parties opposing BJP should join hands with Congress and the Left to form a team against BJP,” he said.

Seventhly, to enhance his growing national stature, he mobilised a galaxy of non-BJP leaders for his book release on February 28. They included

Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Farooq Abdullah, Tejaswi Yadav, Uddhav Thackeray, among others.

Stalin launched a struggle against the Centre on many issues. He has been networking with chief ministers to press the Centre to share a more significant share of Goods and Services Tax. The resolution against the NEET selection measures to bring back education on the state list, and reservations in medical education, are some of the issues.

The low-profile leader certainly has made a mark at the national level. However, is one year enough to judge a person’s abilities? Certainly not, but it indicates which direction his Government is moving forward.

Lanka crisis: Def Ministry orders tri-forces to open fire on rioters



PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence on Tuesday ordered the Army, the Air Force and the Navy personnel to open fire on anyone looting public property or causing harm to others amidst violent protests in the island nation over the unprecedented economic crisis.

The order came after embattled President Gotabaya Rajapaksa urged people to stop "violence and acts of revenge" against fellow citizens and vowed to address the polit-

ical and economic crisis facing the nation. The death toll rose to eight in the unprecedented violence that erupted after supporters of then prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa attacked anti-government protesters here on Monday.

Though Mahinda Rajapaksa, 76, has quit as prime minister, this has failed to bring calm.

Nearly 250 people have been injured in the violence in Colombo and other parts of the country. The Ministry of Defence has ordered the tri-forces to open fire on anyone

looting public property or causing harm to others, the Daily Mirror newspaper quoted the Army Spokesman as saying. A curfew is in force across the island nation after mobs burned down the ancestral home belonging to the ruling Rajapaksa family amid mounting anger at the worst economic crisis.

Anti-government protesters have also set up a checkpoint on the road leading to the Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo to prevent the Rajapaksa family loyalists from fleeing the country.

Sri Lanka is facing its worst economic crisis since gaining 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.

Meanwhile, anti-government protesters in Sri Lanka on Tuesday set up a checkpoint on the road leading to the Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo to prevent the Rajapaksa family loyalists from fleeing the country, as violence and widespread protest continued against the regime over the country's worst economic crisis in decades.

"Large group of people have set up a checkpoint on the road leading to the Katunayake Airport. They are trying to prevent ruling faction loyalists from fleeing the country," News 1st channel reported.

The Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo is locally known as Katunayake Airport.

Mahinda, along with his wife and family, fled his official residence — Temple Trees —

and took shelter at a naval base in Trincomalee — a port city on the northeast coast of Sri Lanka. Throughout the night on Monday, the police fired teargas shells to quell mobs trying to enter the Temple Trees residence.

In the early hours of Tuesday, police fired tear gas and warning shots to hold back mobs as security forces moved Mahinda and his family out of his official residence.

A protest has begun in front of the Trincomalee Naval Base after reports that Mahinda and some of his family members are there after leaving Temple Trees.

On Monday, protesters attacked the ancestral home of the Rajapaksas in Hambantota, the houses of 14 former ministers, 18 lawmakers, including former Deputy Speaker, and leaders loyal to the Rajapaksa family.

Meanwhile, the number of people injured in recent clashes has risen to 249, while 7 were killed in the same, hospital sources said.

A Spokesperson for the National Hospital stated that 232 people injured in the clashes have been admitted to the hospital for treatment so far.

President urges people to stop ‘violence and acts of revenge’ as death toll in violence rises to 8

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Tuesday urged people to stop "violence and acts of revenge" against fellow citizens and vowed to address the political and economic crisis facing the nation, even as his elder brother and former prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa was evacuated to a naval base for his safety after a series of attacks on his supporters that left at least eight people dead.

Nearly 250 people have also been injured in the violence in Colombo and other parts of the country. A curfew is in force across the island nation after mobs burned down the ancestral home belonging to the ruling Rajapaksa family amid mounting anger at the worst economic crisis.

Though Mahinda Rajapaksa has quit as prime minister, this has failed to bring calm. The protesters are demanding the resignation of



President Gotabaya as well. "I appeal and urge people to remain calm & stop violence & acts of revenge against citizens, irrespective of political affiliations.

All efforts will be made to restore political stability through consensus, within constitutional mandate & to resolve economic crisis," President Gotabaya tweeted in his first comments since the outbreak of the violence that saw arson attacks on the homes of several former ministers and politicians. Hours later, the defence ministry ordered the Army, the Air Force and the

Navy personnel to open fire on anyone looting public property or causing harm to others. Mahinda, 76, resigned as prime minister on Monday amid unprecedented economic turmoil, hours after his supporters attacked anti-government protesters, prompting authorities to impose a nationwide curfew and deploy Army troops in the capital. The attack triggered widespread violence against pro-Rajapaksa politicians.

Mahinda, along with his wife and family, fled his official residence - Temple Trees - and reportedly took shelter at a naval base in Trincomalee - a port city on the northeast coast of Sri Lanka. Throughout the night on Monday, the police fired teargas shells to quell mobs trying to enter the Temple Trees residence. In the early hours of Tuesday, police fired tear gas and warning shots to hold back mobs as security forces moved Mahinda and his family out of his official residence.

FIA officer investigating high-profile corruption cases against Pak PM Sharif and others dies of heart attack

PTI ■ LAHORE,

A former top official of Pakistan's top investigation agency who probed several high-profile corruption cases against political bigwigs, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his family, has died of a heart attack, according to media reports on Tuesday.

Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) former director Mohammad Rizwan, 47, went on long leave just before the formation of PMLN-led coalition government and was later transferred from the office of FIA Lahore director last month, the Dawn newspaper reported.

He was replaced by Additional Director Abu Bakar Khuda Baksh as head of the joint investigation team (JIT) probing the sugar crisis. His name was also placed on the no-fly list. According to a family member, Rizwan suffered a cardiac arrest in the early hours of Monday and he was shifted to the hospital where he was pronounced dead.

His funeral will be held here on Tuesday. Rizwan belonged to police service and rank of a DIG. During his posting as FIA Lahore chief, Rizwan probed into money laundering and market manipulation charges against sugar baron Jahangir Khan Tareen (who is currently supporting the ruling PML-N) and former federal industries minister

Khusro Bakhtiar and his family members and two sugar mills of media houses. The FIA investigators under Rizwan detected Rs110 billion earned by the sugar mafia during the rule of Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) rule through 'speculative pricing'. Further action in sugar scam was halted due to political reasons.

In money laundering probe, the investigation team under Rizwan detected 28 benami accounts (accounts opened in the name of another person) of the Shehbaz family through which money laundering of over Rs14bn was committed during 2008-18, according to the FIA.

The money (Rs14bn) received from the accounts of low-wage employees of Shehbaz Sharif was transferred outside Pakistan via hundi/hawala networks, ultimately destined for beneficial use of his family members, according to FIA.

Former prime minister Imran Khan expressed his condolences over death of Rizwan. "Saddened to learn of the passing of Dr Rizwan one of most upright & courageous officers who withstood pressure while investigation & preparing the Rs 16 bn money laundering case against Crime Minister SS. My condolences & prayers go to his family," Khan said in a tweet, referring SS to Shehbaz Sharif.

US charges political rival in Haitian President’s killing

AP ■ MIAMI

A former Haitian senator is facing charges in the United States related to last year's assassination of former Haiti President Jovenel Moise, authorities said.

John Joel Joseph made his initial appearance Monday in Miami federal court, according to court records. The Haitian citizen was extradited from Jamaica to US on Friday to face charges of conspiring to commit murder or kidnapping outside United States and providing material support resulting in death, knowing or intending that such material support would be used to prepare for or carry out conspiracy to kill or kidnap. He faces a possible life



sentence. According to a criminal complaint, Joseph and others, including about 20 Colombian citizens and several dual Haitian-American citizens, participated in a plot to kidnap or kill Haiti's president, who was ultimately slain at his home in Haiti on July 7.

Joseph was arrested in Jamaica in January along with his wife and two sons. In March, he agreed to be extradited to the US. Meanwhile, his family requested asylum in

Taiwan activist released from China says global help worked

AP ■ TAIPEI

A Taiwanese human rights activist who served five years in jail in China said that international pressure and the tireless advocacy by his wife worked to ensure his safe return to Taiwan. "I know that my life's safety and security was defended by many people, thanks to everyone, I have never felt abandoned or alone," Lee Ming-che said at a press

conference Tuesday in his first public appearance since being released from prison. Lee Ming-che was arrested by Chinese authorities in 2017 and charged with subversion of state power. His arrest was China's first criminal prosecution of a nonprofit worker since Beijing passed a law tightening controls over foreign non-governmental organizations in 2016. His arrest marked a turning point as

China showed that it would not hesitate to prosecute Taiwanese individuals for political activism, regardless of the harm it would bring to cross-strait relations.

It also raised public awareness in Taiwan of the tangible consequences of China's authoritarian rule on individuals as relations between Taiwan and China worsened with election of President Tsai Ing-wen. China claims Taiwan is a part of its national territory and has not ruled out force to bring island under its rule.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given on behalf of **Mr. Sunil Kumar & Mrs. Rashmi Agrawal** who are the joint-owners of Entire Second Floor, without roof terrace rights of Property No.56, built on Plot No.5, area admeasuring 373 Sq. Yds., on Road No.5, situated at Jaidley Park, near East Punjabi Bagh, New Delhi, vide Sale Deed dated 19.12.2020, which is registered as Doc. No. 5188 in the office of Sub Registrar-IA, Punjabi Bagh, New Delhi and intend to mortgage against the financial assistance from **IDFC First Bank Limited**. That, Surviving Member Certificate of Late Mrs. Inrati Devi & Probate Order (of WILL dated 18.11.2017) are/is Not Available. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any person(s) having any objection regarding ownership and/ or creating mortgage of the said property is/are hereby requested to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 7 days at below address:

Lucem Legal LLP
269, Rama House, Ground Floor, Masjid Mohd, Opp. Uday Park, South Ex'II, New Delhi-110049
Contact # 011-40046316

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that **My client Deepak Vij S/o Late Sh. N.K.Vij R/o 11/14-A Moti Nagar, New Delhi-110015** inform that his father passed away on date **18/12/2017**. My client hereby request **Supertech Limited** to transfer the booked **Unit No Flat # 0707/ROI 8 B 800707** in **Tower B-8** in **Project Eco Village-I of Supertech Limited** Situated at **Plot 8 Sector-1 Greater Noida 201303** in the name of **Deepak Vij (Main Applicant)**. If any body has any objection he/she may contact **Supertech Limited E-square,C-2, Sector- 96, Noida** or the undersigned **within 15 days** of this Notice being published by **My client Mr Deepak Vij S/o Late Shri N.K. Vij**

MOHINDER DHAWAN (Advocate)
Bar Room 3 Civil Side TisHazari, Delhi-54

ICICI Bank

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

PUBLIC NOTICE: Builder Cancellation

This is to bring to your notice that **JYOTI MITTAL/ SANTOSH MITTAL** (borrower/s) has availed Home loan facility vide facility agreement number **LBNOD00002135179** located at **Apartment no. B-105 TF, THIRD FLOOR PEDESTAL, @70A SECTOR-70 AND 70 A, GURGAON HARYANA 122001**.

The borrower/s has failed to pay the contractual amount to the builder as per the terms and conditions of the agreement.

The Bank had informed the same to the borrower through letter dated **MAY 06, 2022** informing that **BPTP LIMITED** has cancelled the allotment of the above mentioned property. You are therefore requested to resolve this matter with the builder within 7 days from the date of this publication. Please take further notice that post cancellation of the allotment of the said property ICICI Bank shall not be bound and/or responsible for any other allotment done by the builder

Dated: May 11, 2022
Place: Delhi/ NCR

For ICICI Bank Limited Sd-

ICICI Bank

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

Whereas

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

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

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Neetu Gupta/ Ashu Gupta/ LBDEL00002371563	Flat No 55 LIG, 3rd Floor, Block- F3, Sector G2, Pocket 2, Narela, Delhi/ May 09, 2022	November 15, 2021 Rs. 9,99,147/-	Delhi/ NCR
2.	Sanjay Brahmi/ Aradhana Brahmi/ LBDEL00001822909/ LBDEL00002437990/ LBDEL00001828305	Plot No- 370, B 2nd Floor, With Out Roof Right, Block- B, Bharaula, Manjilis Park Colony Gali No- 4 Delhi/ May 09, 2022	November 15, 2021 Rs. 22,32,792/-	Delhi/ NCR
3.	Chandan Kumar Goswami/ Sudipta Lakshmi Khound/ LBGHZ00001436579	Flat No T-XI-504, 5th Floor, Amrapali Grand, Plot No- Gh 09, Zeta 1, Noida/ May 09, 2022	September 27, 2021 Rs. 30,20,716/-	Delhi/ NCR
4.	Progen Sas Technologies India Pvtated Ltd/ Sanjay Rawat/ Sushil Kaushik/ LBDEL00005232371	Plot No.58, First Floor, Without Roof Rights, Block- Bq, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi/ May 09, 2022	October 16, 2021 Rs. 2,07,86,058/-	Delhi/ NCR

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

Date : May 11, 2022
Place: Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Directorate of Horticulture & Farm Forestry

Indravati Bhawan, 2nd Block, 4th Floor, Nava Raipur Atal Nagar, Chhattisgarh
e-mail-dirhorti-cg@nic.in, cghorticulture@gmail.com
Website:-http://agriportal.cg.nic.in, cghorticulture@gmail.com ☎ 0771-2433002 📠 0771-2433002

E-Tender

Directorate of Horticulture & Farm Forestry, Government of Chhattisgarh, invites E-Tender from reputed and authorized firm/ company / placement agency from all over India, to provide young, hardworking and dedicated Personnel / ManPower with computer literacy to work with Technical Support Group of the State Horticulture Mission. Additionally we require to Hire Professional.

Complete e-tender form and essential documents has to be submitted online by the bidder at the e-tender website: "**eproc.cgstate.gov.in**" and also be sent in a sealed envelop at the office by hand or post, in the name of "**To The Mission Director, State Horticulture Mission, Chhattisgarh**" with the title "**EOI For Selection of Reputed & Authorized Firm/Company/Placement Agency for Placement of Personnel at Nhm Under (Midh) CG**"

The physical documents to be submitted at office must contain a tender envelop (main cover) including 2 envelopes, A & B. **Envelop A** must have the tender fee DD & Security Deposit FDR both & Technical Bid should be in **Envelop B. Financial bid has to be strictly submitted online.**

Tender Fee- Rs. 1000/- (Rs one thousand only in form of DD)
Security Deposit- Rs 5,00,000 (Rs. five lakh only in form of FDR)
Last date of submission (online)- 30.05.2022 by 8pm, (offline physical submission)- 31.05.2022 by 12noon.
Opening of Tender - 31.05.2022 at 12:30 pm.

Ro.No.: 91045/4
Do.Date.: 10/05/2022

Sd- Mission Director

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is publicly notified that the Flat No 111C, Block-B-10, Udagiri-II, Sector-34, Noida has been allotted in the name of M/s Star Packaging & Corrugating Industries through its Partner's Surya Kant Singhania S/o Shri Poran Chand Singhania R/o D-95, Sector-26, Noida Distt. G.S.Nagar U.P. had sold the said flat, on the basis of GPA to the following persons:- A GPA was executed in favour of Deepak Sharma S/o Late Shri Raj Kumar Sharma R/o V-21, Sec-12, Noida executed at GPA executed at Sub Registrar-III Noida Vice Book No IV Volume No 2 and Addl Book No IV Volume No 80 on pages 341-346 document no 3215 dated 31.12.1996 and Agreement to Sell was not registered. So with the help of the notice it is informed the transfer of the above flat goes in favour of Mrs. Anjana Sharma W/o Shri Deepak Sharma R/o V-221, Sector-12, Noida, Distt. G.B. Nagar, U.P-201301 if any one/ above partners has/have any objection he/she may submit his/her, objection in the Housing Department of Noida Authority along-with sufficient proofs within 15 days of the publication of this notice.

PUBLIC NOTICE

"To be known to all that I, Jai Pal S/o Sh. Thakur Das R/o 146-D, DDA MIG Flats, First Floor, Pocket-1, MayapuriVihar, Phase-I, Delhi-110091, Allottee/Owner of Flat No. 146-D, Category DDA Built-up MIG Flat, situated on The First Floor, in Pocket-1, MayuriVihar, Phase-I, Delhi-110091, have applied for conversion of the aforesaid flat from leasehold to freehold, vide application No.011520045 dated 02/05/2022 in DDA. I have lost the below mentioned original documents.

- 1). Original Possession Letter, issued by DDA.
- 2). Original NOC for Water & Electricity connection, issued by DDA.
- 3). Original Site Possession Certificate, issued by DDA.

Any person(s) claiming any right interest, having any objection or write in possession of Original documents, may found/contact with above named persons at above address/ phone No.9560668217, within15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objections with respect to this document can personally inform or write to the Dy. Director, (L&SH or Director (I), D-Block, 3rd Floor, VikasSadan, INA, New Delhi.

Jai Pal

AP ■ BEIJING

Teams in white protective suits are entering the homes of coronavirus-infected people to spray disinfectant as Shanghai tries to root out an omicron outbreak under China's strict "zero-COVID" strategy.

City official Jin Chen said Tuesday that in older communities with shared bathrooms and kitchens, the homes of anyone else who uses those facilities will also be disinfected. He tried to address public concern about damage to clothing and valuables, saying residents can inform the teams about anything that needs protection.Shanghai also suspended service on the last two subway lines that were still operating Tuesday, marking the first

time the city's entire system has been shut down, according to The Paper, an online media outlet.

The latest measures come as Shanghai has ordered people in some districts to stay in their homes again after letting some out for limited shopping in recent weeks. The latest steps have further frustrated residents, who were hoping a more than monthlong lockdown was finally easing as the number of new cases in the city falls.

Most of the city of 25 million people appear confined to their apartments or residential complexes, though there has been some easing in outlying suburban areas without new cases in their communities. AP video shot Monday showed a silent

and deserted city, with only a very occasional vehicle and a few food delivery drivers on scooters moving down empty roads.

The daily number of new cases in Shanghai fell to about 3,000 on Monday, down from a peak of 26,000 in mid-April. Authorities have kept most of the city bottled up as they try to stop spread of virus, even as many other parts of world are loosening restrictions and trying to live with it.

Six more COVID-related deaths were reported in China's largest city, raising toll from outbreak to 553. Beijing, the capital, began another round of three days of mass testing for millions of its residents in a bid to prevent an outbreak from growing to Shanghai proportions.

Marcos presidency complicates US efforts to counter China

AP ■ MANILA (PHILIPPINES)

Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s apparent landslide victory in the Philippine presidential election is giving rise to immediate concerns about a further erosion of democracy in the region, and could complicate American efforts to blunt growing Chinese influence and power in the Pacific.

Marcos, the son and namesake of longtime dictator Ferdinand Marcos, captured more than 30.8 million votes in Monday's election according to an unofficial count, more than double those of his closest challenger.

If the results stand, he will take office at the end of June for a six-year term with Sara Duterte, the daughter of outgoing President Rodrigo Duterte, as his vice president.

Duterte - who leaves office with a 67% approval rating - nurtured closer ties with China and Russia, while at times railing against the United States. He has walked back on many of his threats against Washington,

however, including a move to abrogate a defense pact between the two countries, and the luster of China's promise of infrastructure investment has dulled, with much failing to materialize.

Whether the recent trend in relations with the U.S. Will continue has a lot to do with how President Joe Biden's administration responds to the return of a Marcos to power in the Philippines, said Manila-based political scientist Andrea Chloe Wong, a former researcher in the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs.

"On the one hand you have Biden regarding geostrategic interests in Philippines, and on other hand he has to balance promoting American democratic ideals and human rights," she said.

"If he chooses to do that, he might have to isolate Marcos administration, so this will definitely be a delicate balancing act for Philippines, and Marcos' approach to U.S. Will highly depend on how Biden will engage with him."

Russia pounds Ukraine’s vital port of Odesa, Mariupol plant

AP ■ ZAPORIZHZHIA

Russian forces pounded Raway at the vital port of Odesa, Ukrainian officials said Tuesday, as part of an apparent effort to disrupt supply lines and weapons shipments.

On the other end of the southern coast, they hammered a steel plant where Ukrainian fighters are denying Moscow full control of another critical port.

Days after the dramatic rescue of what some officials said were the last civilians trapped at the plant in Mariupol, authorities said about 100 were still believed to be in the network of underground tunnels under bombardment. The strikes come as the grisly toll of the war continued to take shape, with the Ukrainians saying they found the bodies of 44 civilians in the rubble of a building in the northeast that was destroyed weeks ago.

The Ukrainian military said Tuesday that Russian forces fired seven missiles a day earlier from the air at the crucial Black Sea port of Odesa, hitting a shopping center and a warehouse. One person was killed and five were wounded, the military said.

Ukraine alleged at least some of the munitions used dated back to the Soviet era, making them unreliable in targeting. But the Center for Defense Strategies, a Ukrainian think tank tracking the war, said Moscow did use some precision weapons against Odesa: Kinzhal, or "Dagger," hyper-sonic air-to-surface missiles.

Ukrainian, British and American officials warn Russia is rapidly using up its stock of precision weapons and may not be able to quickly build more, raising the risk of more imprecise rockets being used as the conflict grinds on.

Ever since President Vladimir Putin's forces failed to take Kyiv in the early days of the war, he has said his focus is the country's eastern industrial heartland of the Donbas - but one general has suggested Moscow's aims also include cutting Ukraine off from its entire Black Sea coast.

That would give it a swath of territory that would link Russia to both the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized in 2014, and Transnistria, a pro-Russian breakaway region of Moldova.

Even if it falls short in the goal of severing Ukraine from the Black Sea Coast - and it

appears to lack the forces to do so - continuing missile strikes on Odesa reflect the city's importance as a strategic transport hub. The Russian military has repeatedly targeted the city's airport and claimed that it has destroyed several batches of the Western weapons that have been key to Ukraine's resistance.

Odesa, Ukraine's largest port, is also a major gateway for grain shipments, and Russia's blockade of it is already threatening global food supplies. And the city is also a cultural jewel, dear to Ukrainians and Russians alike and targeting carries symbolic significance as well.

The strikes came the same day Russian President Vladimir Putin marked his country's biggest patriotic holiday without being able to boast of major new battlefield successes. On Monday, he watched troops march in formation and military hardware roll by in a Victory Day parade on Moscow's Red Square to celebrate the Soviet Union's role in the 1945 defeat of Nazi Germany.

A symbol of Russia's difficulties is the city of Mariupol, where Russian forces have sought for weeks to end the



resistance of Ukrainian defenders making their last stand.

Petro Andriyushchenko, advisor to the city's mayor, estimated in a social-media post that at least 100 civilians remain trapped in underground bunkers in the Azovstal mill. Ukrainian and Russian authorities previously said a convoy over the weekend led a third evacuation of hundreds of civilians from the mill to safety in a government-controlled city.

Separately, Donetsk regional governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said Tuesday that those civilians were people "that the Russians have not selected" for evacuation. It wasn't immediately clear how the two officials knew that, and the fighters still at the plant were yet to confirm it.

Earlier, Ukrainian and Russian officials had said all civilians had been evacuated from the plant.

With Russian forces struggling to gain ground in the

Donbas, military analysts suggest that hitting Odesa might serve to stoke concern about southwestern Ukraine, thus forcing Kyiv to station more forces there. That would pull them away from the eastern front as its military stages counteroffensives near the city of Kharkiv, aiming to push the Russians back across the border there. Kharkiv

Putin marks Victory Day with little to show for 11-week war

AP ■ ZAPORIZHZHIA

With no major new battlefield success to boast of, Russian President Vladimir Putin marked his country's biggest patriotic holiday without even uttering the word "Ukraine," as the Kremlin's forces had little to no progress to show for their latest offensive.

The Russian leader oversaw a Victory Day parade Monday on Moscow's Red Square, watching as troops marched in formation and military hardware rolled past in a celebration of the Soviet Union's role in the 1945 defeat of Nazi Germany.

Many Western analysts had expected Putin to use the holiday to trumpet some kind of victory in Ukraine or announce an escalation, but he did neither. Instead, he sought to justify the war again as a necessary response to what he portrayed as a hostile Ukraine.

"The danger was rising by the day," Putin said. "Russia has given a preemptive response to aggression. It was forced, timely and the only correct decision."

With the conflict grinding through its 11th week, he

steered clear of battlefield specifics, failing to mention the potentially pivotal battle for the vital southern port of Mariupol.

Meanwhile on the ground, intense fighting raged in Ukraine's east, the vital Black Sea port of Odesa in the south came under repeated missile attack, and Russian forces sought to finish off the Ukrainian defenders making their last stand at a steel plant in Mariupol.

Putin has long bristled at NATO's creep eastward into former Soviet republics. Ukraine and its Western allies have denied the country posed any threat.

As he has done all along, Putin falsely portrayed the fighting as a battle against Nazism, thereby linking the war to what many Russians consider their finest hour: the triumph over Hitler. The Soviet Union lost 27 million people in what Russia refers to as the Great Patriotic War.

After unexpectedly fierce resistance forced the Kremlin to abandon its effort to storm Kyiv over a month ago, Moscow's forces have concen-



trated on capturing the Donbas, Ukraine's eastern industrial region.

But the fighting there has been a back-and-forth, village-by-village slog, and analysts had suggested Putin might use his holiday speech to present the Russian people with a victory amid discontent over the country's heavy casualties and the punishing effects of Western sanctions.

Others suggested he might declare the fighting a war, not just a "special military operation," and order a nationwide mobilization, with a call-up of reserves, to replenish the depleted ranks for an extended conflict.

In the end, he gave no signal as to where the war is headed or how he might intend to salvage it. Specifically, he left unanswered the question of whether or how Russia will marshal more forces for a continuing war. "Without concrete steps to build a new force, Russia can't fight a long war, and the clock starts ticking on the failure of their army in Ukraine," tweeted Phillips P. O'Brien, professor of strategic studies at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

Nigel Gould Davies, former British ambassador to Belarus, said: "Russia has not won this war. It's starting to lose it." He said that unless Russia

has a major breakthrough, "the balance of advantages will shift steadily in favor of Ukraine, especially as Ukraine gets access to growing volumes of increasingly sophisticated Western military equipment."

Despite Russia's crackdown on dissent, antiwar sentiment has seeped through. Dozens of protesters were detained around the country on Victory Day, and editors at a pro-Kremlin media outlet revolted by briefly publishing a few dozen stories criticising Putin and the invasion. In Warsaw, antiwar protesters splattered Russia's ambassador to Poland with what appeared to be red paint as he arrived at a cemetery to pay respects to Red Army soldiers who died during World War II.

As Putin laid a wreath in Moscow, air raid sirens echoed again in the Ukrainian capital. But Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy declared in his own Victory Day address that his country would eventually defeat the Russians.

"Very soon there will be two Victory Days in Ukraine," he said in a video. He added: "We are fighting for freedom,

for our children, and therefore we will win." A Z e l e n s k y y adviser interpreted Putin's speech as indicating that Russia has no interest in escalating the war through the use of nuclear weapons or direct engagement with NATO.

Biden signs Ukraine bill, seeks \$40B aid in Putin rejoinder

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Washington sought to portray a united front against Russia's invasion of Ukraine as President Joe Biden signed a bipartisan measure to reboot the World War II-era "lend-lease" programme, which helped defeat Nazi Germany, to bolster Kyiv and Eastern European allies. The signing Monday came as the U.S. Congress is poised to unleash billions more to fight the war against Russia - with Democrats preparing \$40 billion in military and humanitarian aid, larger than the \$33 billion package Biden has requested.

It all serves as a rejoinder to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has seized on Victory in Europe Day - the anniversary of Germany's unconditional surrender in 1945 and Russia's biggest patriotic holiday - to rally his people behind the invasion.

"This aid has been critical to Ukraine's success on the battlefield," Biden said in a statement.

Biden said it was urgent that Congress approve the next Ukraine assistance package to avoid any interruption in military supplies being sent to help fight the war, with a crucial deadline coming in 10 days.

"We cannot allow our shipments of assistance to stop while we await further Congressional action," he said. He urged Congress to act - and "to do so quickly."

In a letter delivered to Capitol Hill on Monday, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony



Blinken urged Congress to act before May 19, when the existing drawdown funds run out. The Pentagon has already sent or committed all but \$100 million of the \$3.5 billion in weapons and equipment that it can send to Ukraine from its existing stockpiles. And that final \$100 million is expected to be used no later than May 19, they said.

"In short, we need your help," they said in the letter, which was obtained by The Associated Press. "The ability to draw upon existing DoD stocks has been a critical tool in our efforts to support the Ukrainians in their fight against Russian aggression, allowing us to quickly source equipment and ensure a sustained flow of security assistance to Ukraine."

The resolve from Biden and Congress to maintain support for Ukraine has been lasting, but also surprising. Still, as the months-long war with Russia grinds on, the bipartisan showing for Ukraine will be tested as the U.S. And allies are drawn closer toward the conflict.

The House could vote as

soon as this week on the bolstered Ukraine aid package, sending the legislation to the Senate, which is working to confirm Biden's nominee Bridget Brink as the new Ukrainian ambassador.

The House's Tuesday schedule mentioned the Ukraine legislation, but it was unclear how firm that was.

With the president's party holding only the slimmest majorities in the House and Senate, Republican cooperation is preferred, if not vital in some cases, for passage of the president's strategy toward the region. "I think we will be able to do it as quickly as possible," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said over the weekend about an emerging aid package.

"We have great bipartisan support in terms of our support for the fight for democracy that the people of Ukraine are making."

Despite their differences over Biden's approach to foreign policy and perceived missteps in confronting Russia, when it comes to Ukraine the members of the House and Senate have held together to support the president's strategy.

Rajasthan State Agricultural Marketing Board, Division Sri Ganganagar
No.: 142-71 **NOTICE INVITING BID 01/2022-23** Date : 06.05.2022
Bids for various building and road works of KUMS Sri Ganganagar (Grain)/ Padampur/ Gajsinghpur/ Department of animal husbandary are invited from interested bidders upto 6:00 PM date 26.05.2022 & 06.06.2022. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://sppp.raj.nic.in>) of the state; and department website <http://agriculture.rajasthan.gov.in/rsamb>. UBN AGM2223WS080093 to 00102
Raj.sammcd/C22/1587 **Executive Engineer**

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005
PUBLIC NOTICE: Builder Cancellation
This is to bring to your notice that **Himanshu Bhargava/ Ajai Kumar Bhargava/ Megha Bhargava** (Borrower/s) has availed Home loan facility vide facility agreement number LBJAI00002051900 located at Apartment no. **Unit No. D-50-SF, Second Floor, Pedestal Building, Sector-70 And 70 A, Village Palra, Gurgaon, Haryana, Gurgaon- 122001**. The borrower/s has failed to pay the contractual amount to the builder as per the terms and conditions of the agreement.
The Bank had informed the same to the borrower through letter dated **May 06, 2022** informing that **NATIVE BUILDCON PVT LTD** has cancelled the allotment of the above mentioned property. You are therefore requested to resolve this matter with the builder within 7 days from the date of this publication.
Please take further notice that post cancellation of the allotment of the said property ICICI Bank shall not be bound and/or resposible for any other allotment done by the builder.
Dated: May 11, 2022 Place: Delhi/ NCR **For ICICI Bank Limited Sd-**

उत्तराखण्ड लोक सेवा आयोग
हस्तिनार
पिन कोड:- 249404
संख्या : 224 / 70 / 01 / डी0आर0(मा0शि0) / सेवा-1 / 2019-20
दिनांक : 10 मई, 2022
विज्ञापित
(उत्तराखण्ड विशेष अधीनस्थ शिक्षा (प्रवक्ता संवर्ग-समूह 'ग' सेवा (सामान्य एवं महिला शाखा) परीक्षा-2020)
एतद्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि 'उत्तराखण्ड विशेष अधीनस्थ शिक्षा (प्रवक्ता संवर्ग-समूह 'ग') सेवा (सामान्य एवं महिला शाखा) परीक्षा-2020' हेतु प्रकाशित विज्ञापन संख्या : **A-1/S-1/2020 दिनांक 09.10.2020** के सापेक्ष मुख्य परीक्षा के पश्चात अभिलेख सत्यापन सूची में स्थान पाने वाले अर्थार्थियों के अभिलेख सत्यापन एवं सन्निरीक्षा का कार्य आयोग स्थित परीक्षा भवन में दिनांक 07 मार्च, 2022 से 28 मार्च, 2022 तक विभिन्न तिथियों में सम्पन्न किया गया। अभिलेख सत्यापन एवं सन्निरीक्षा के पश्चात कतिपय अर्थार्थियों को मा0 आयोग द्वारा अनई घोषित किया गया है, जिसका कारण सहित विवरण आयोग की वेबसाईट पर उपलब्ध है। अनई घोषित अर्थार्थी दिनांक **17 मई, 2022 (मंगलवार)** सायं 06:00 बजे तक अनईता के सापेक्ष अपना प्रत्यावेदन ई-मेल द्वारा **sewaone1@gmail.com** पर अथवा डाक या अन्य किसी भी माध्यम से (कार्यदिवस- सोमवार से शुक्रवार) सचिव, उत्तराखण्ड लोक सेवा आयोग, हस्तिनार के कार्यालय के डाक काउन्टर पर जमा करा सकते हैं। प्रत्यावेदन के साथ अपने दावे की पुष्टि हेतु वांछित अभिलेख/प्रमाण-पत्र संलग्न किया जाना आवश्यक है। उक्त अंतिम तिथि के पश्चात प्राप्त प्रत्यावेदनों पर मा0 आयोग द्वारा कोई विचार नहीं किया जायेगा। अर्थार्थी अनईता सूची एवं विस्तृत विवरण हेतु आयोग की वेबसाईट **www.ukpsc.gov.in** का अवश्य अवलोकन कर लें। **(कर्मैन्द्र सिंह) सचिव।**

BSES **BSES Rajghani Power Limited, New Delhi**
TENDER NOTICE **Date: 11.05.2022**
Sealed tenders under two parts (Un priced & priced) are invited for the supply of following materials from all bidders:-

NIT No.	Brief Tender Description	Estimated Cost (₹)	Cost of EMD (₹)	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
CMC/BR/22-23/RB/PR/RJ/1024	SUPPLY OF 11KV VCB PANELS IN BSES	10.00 Cr.	10,00,000	31.05.2022 15:00 HRS	31.05.2022 15:15 HRS
CMC/BR/22-23/RB/PR/RJ/1025	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF 1.1KV GRADE POWER CABLE OF SIZE 1CX630 SQ.MM	2.30 Cr.	4,60,000	31.05.2022 15:00 HRS	31.05.2022 15:30 HRS
CMC/BR/22-23/RB/PR/RJ/1026	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF 1.1KV GRADE POWER CABLE OF SIZE 2CX10 SQ.MM	15.60 Cr.	15,60,000	31.05.2022 15:00 HRS	31.05.2022 15:45 HRS
CMC/BR/22-23/RB/PR/RJ/1027	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF 11KV GRADE XLPE INSULATED ALUMINIUM CONDUCTOR POWER CABLE OF SIZE 11KV 3CX300 SQMM CABLE	8.0 Cr.	8,00,000	31.05.2022 15:00 HRS	31.05.2022 16:00 HRS

Cost of each Tender Document: ₹ 1180/-
For any query call on **011-49107235** or e-mail on brpl.eauction@reliancecda.com
For details in respect of Equipment/BOM/Services, Qualifying requirements, Terms & conditions, purchase/submission of tender documents etc. please visit our website **www.bsesdelhi.com**
Head (Contracts & Materials)
Regd. Off. : BSES Rajghani Power Limited, BSES Bhawan, Nehru Place, New Delhi-110019 | Corporate Identification No.: U40106DL2001PLC111627
Telephone No. : +91 11 4920 7235 | Website : www.bsesdelhi.com

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE
ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005
Whereas
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) R/w Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, (on underlying pool assigned to ICICI Bank by Dewan Housing Finance Ltd.) in relation to the enforcement of security in respect of a housing loan facility granted pursuant to a loan agreement entered into between DHFL and the borrower, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.
As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Number (Loan Account Number (DHFL Old LAN & ICICI New LAN)	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Pinkey James/ Niju Thomas/ (266000000699 & QZDEL00005026254)	Plot No-58 & 59 Flat No-103 1st Floor, Back Side Rhs Matiala Extn Uttam Nagar, Delhi- 110059/ May 05, 2022	September 27, 2021/ Rs.26,15,222/-	Delhi/ NCR
2.	Gauri Shankar Singh/ Sima Devi/ (200000042652 & QZNOD00005038939)	Property No RZ 236,first Floor Front Rhs Gali No 19, Kh No 529, Tughlakabad Extn, Delhi-110019/ May 05, 2022	September 27, 2021/ Rs.19,90,974/-	Delhi/ NCR
3.	Chacko John Varghese/ Annamma Varughese/ (26600000778 & QZDEL00005018662)	Plot No. D-28, Sf, Front (L.H.S) Kh.no-962 To 964 Vill-nawada Om Vihar, Uttam Nagar, Delhi./ May 05, 2022	September 27, 2021/ Rs.12,98,324/-	Delhi/ NCR
4.	Parmod Kumar Patol/ Namita Patol/ (26600000908 & QZDEL00005019398)	F 107 & 108, 1st Fir, Back Side Rhs Pvt No-6, Kh No 604,605,606, Block-F Vill-nawada, Mohan Garden Extn, Uttam Nagar, Delhi./ May 05, 2022	December 31, 2021/ Rs.10,62,191/-	Delhi/ NCR
5.	Verma Abhay Rajkumar/ Madhu R Soni/ (24900001339 & QZJNK00005025153)	P.No108, T.F Back Side With Roof Right Kh.no.20/21/1, Vill. Matala, Gali No.07 Jain Colony Part-3, T Extn Delhi./ May 05, 2022	September 27, 2021/ Rs.9,87,023/-	Delhi/ NCR
6.	Kanand Kumar Warke/ Sarika Kanand Warke/ (266000000741 & QZDEL00004999615)	Property No. E-16, 1st Floor, Pvt No 103 Northern Western Portion, Puran Nagar Kh No 69/22/1 & 19/2, Palam Delhi./ May 05, 2022	September 27, 2021/ Rs.6,97,967/-	Delhi/ NCR
7.	Rajeev Ranjan Kumar/ Asmita Kumari/ (26800001246 & QZDEL00004998562)	Plot No B-29, 2nd Floor, FRONT Side, Subhash Park, Uttam Nagar, Delhi/ May 05, 2022	September 27, 2021/ Rs.12,16,561/-	Delhi/ NCR
8.	Gulab Singh/ Kanchan Singh/ (9600001932 & QZDEL00005039346)	Plot No. RZ-H-206, 1st Floor (back Side), Without Roof Rights, Kh No-62/20/2, Village Palam Abadi, Gali No-7, Raj Nagar Part-2, Palam Colony, New Delhi/ May 05, 2022	December 31, 2021/ Rs.12,77,225/-	Delhi/ NCR
9.	Kashif/ Aisha Parveen/ (25500001725 & QZPTU00004999375)	Plot No.2566, 2nd Floor, Khalsa No. 412, Village Khampur Raya Mandir Wali, Shadipur, New Delhi/ May 05, 2022	September 27, 2021/ Rs.24,37,917/-	Delhi/ NCR
10.	Sandeep Sharma/ Chetana Sharma/ (13100001763 & QZNOD00005008102)	Plot No.83-A. First Floor Front Side, Kh.109/14, Gali No 19, Bharat Vihar, Raja Puri, Village Palam, Uttam Delhi/ May 05, 2022	September 27, 2021/ Rs.8,41,762/-	Delhi/ NCR

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.
Date: May 11, 2022 Place: Delhi/ NCR **Authorized Officer ICICI Bank Limited**

India's coal output up 29% with 66 mn tonnes in April

New Delhi: The Government on Tuesday said the country's coal output rose 29 per cent to 66.58 million tonnes (MT) in April.

This comes at a time when the country is witnessing a power crisis on account of various factors, including shortages of the dry fuel.

The country's coal output in April 2021 stood at 51.62 MT, as per provisional statistics of the Ministry of Coal.

The ministry in a statement said dispatch of coal to power utilities grew 18.15 per cent to 61.81 MT during April 2022, compared to 52.32 MT in April 2020.

Of the top 37 coal producing mines, 22 have performed more than 100 per cent while the production from another 10 mines stood between 80 and 100 per cent.

The ministry further said decline in the prices of imported coal has been observed since the end of October last year. However, international prices are still at a high level.

The coal ministry had ear-



lier said the current power crisis is mainly on account of sharp decline in electricity generation from different fuel sources and not due to non-availability of domestic coal.

In an interview to PTI, Coal Secretary A K Jain had attributed the low coal stocks at power plants to several factors such as heightened power

demand due to the boom in the economy post pandemic, early arrival of summer, rise in price of gas and imported coal and sharp fall in electricity generation by coastal thermal power plants.

He had added that a slew of measures are already underway to enhance total power supply in the country. **PTI**

Life insurers log 84% biz premium growth in April, led by LIC

New Delhi: Life insurance companies logged 84 per cent growth in their cumulative new business premium at Rs 17,940 crore in April 2022, primarily helped by LIC, Irdai data showed.

All 24 life insurers had collected Rs 9,739 crore as new business premium during the same month a year ago.

The largest insurer, state-owned LIC's first year premium or new business premium more than doubled (at 141 per cent rise) to Rs 11,716 crore as against Rs 4,856.76 crore in April 2021, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) said.

LIC commands the largest market share of 65.31 per cent, while the rest of the 23 private players have the remaining 34.69 per cent.

The rest of the private sector players witnessed over 27 per cent jump in their combined new business premium at Rs 6,223 crore. Their collective first year premium was Rs



4,882 crore in April 2021.

In terms of percentage growth, LIC was followed by Star Union Dai-ichi Life (122 per cent) and Tata AIA Life (107 per cent growth).

There was a 32 per cent jump in terms of number of policies/schemes at 13,21,098 in April this year by all the 24 players.

Of this, LIC witnessed 31.92 per cent increase in policy sales at 9,13,141, while the private players saw 33.87 per cent rise at 3,04,748. **PTI**

Equity MFs see ₹15,890 cr inflow in April amid volatile stock market

New Delhi: Sustaining positive momentum for the 14th straight month, equity mutual funds attracted a net sum of Rs 15,890 crore in April amid heightened volatility in stock market and consistent selling by foreign portfolio investors.

This was much lower compared to a record net inflow of Rs 28,463 crore seen in the preceding month, data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) showed on Tuesday.

The lower quantum of net inflow from the previous month could be attributed to investors going slightly cautious given the ongoing challenges to the investment environment, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India, said.

Akhil Chaturvedi, Chief Business Officer, Motilal Oswal AMC, said that it will be interesting to see ongoing investment trends, given the intensity of volatility being very high, and expect positive trend to continue going forward though.

Equity schemes have been witnessing net inflow since March 2021, after the second wave of COVID-19 resulted in the correction in the markets, highlighting the positive sentiment among investors.

Prior to this, such schemes had consistently witnessed outflows for eight months from July 2020 to February 2021, losing Rs 46,791 crore.

All the equity-oriented categories received net inflows in April with sectoral/ thematic funds category being the biggest beneficiary with a net inflow of Rs 3,843 crore. The segment also saw a launch of a new fund -- ICICI Prudential Housing Opportunities Fund, which mobilised Rs 3,130 crore.

This was followed by large- and mid-cap fund and that witnessed over Rs 2,000 crore net infusion.

"Despite volatility in markets and fear around macros both globally and locally, it is good trend to see continued positive flows in equities. Though lower than last month, which may be due to NFO

allotment, SIP flows are holding strong, which is also very positive," Chaturvedi said.

Monthly SIP (Systematic Investment Plan) contribution dropped to Rs 11,863 crore in April compared to Rs 12,328 crore in March.

However, the number of SIP accounts stood at all-time high in April at 5.39 crore. During the month under review, 11.29 lakh SIP accounts were added. Apart from equities, the debt segment saw a net inflow of Rs 69,883 crore in April after witnessing a net outflow of Rs 1.5 lakh crore in the preceding month.

Also, gold exchange traded funds experienced a net inflow of Rs 1,100 crore in the month under review.

Overall, the mutual fund industry registered a net inflow of Rs 72,846 crore last month as compared to a net withdrawal of Rs 69,883 crore in March. "It has been a good start to new fiscal (FY23) with net flows for overall mutual funds schemes in the positive territory. **PTI**

MCE aims to expand presence in backhoe, motor grader segments

New Delhi: Mahindra Construction Equipment (MCE) is looking to enhance its market share in the backhoe and motor grader segments this fiscal, a top company official said.

The entity, which sold a total of around 1,000 units last fiscal, is also looking to expand in the overseas markets.

"This fiscal we are anticipating the domestic construction equipment industry (backhoe loaders) to grow by 8-10 per cent over FY22 .. As a company, we are looking to increase our market share in the backhoe loaders from the current 2.5 per cent level," M&M Business Head - Commercial Vehicles Business Unit - Jalaj Gupta told PTI.

He noted that the backhoe loader segment de-grew by 28 per cent last fiscal as compared



with FY21.

The segment saw a dip in sales in the 2021-22 fiscal as cost of machines went up due to the transition from BS-III norms to BS-IV with effect from April 1, 2021, he said.

"In the next 4-5 years, due to the various initiatives that the government is taking on infrastructure development, the broad outlook for the industry looks very positive," Gupta stated. **PTI**

Gold declines ₹115; silver gains ₹214

New Delhi: Gold in the national capital on Tuesday declined by Rs 115 to Rs 50,983 per 10 grams amid rupee appreciation, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had settled at Rs 51,098 per 10 grams in the previous trade.

Silver, however, gained Rs 214 to Rs 61,569 per kg from Rs 61,355 per kg in the previous trade.

"Spot gold prices for 24 carat at Delhi were Rs 115 down pressured by rupee appreciation despite strong global gold prices," said Tapan Patel, Senior Analyst (Commodities), HDFC Securities.

Snapping its two-day losing streak, the rupee appreciated 12 paise to end at 77.32 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday. **PTI**

SBI hikes interest rates on bulk term deposits

Mumbai: Country's largest lender State Bank of India on Tuesday announced a hike of 40-90 basis points in the interest rates on several bulk term deposits.

The revised interest rates on bulk term deposits amounting to Rs 2 crore and above are effective from Tuesday, the bank said.

While interest rate on deposits maturing between 7 days and 45 days has been kept unchanged at 3 per cent, those maturing between 46 and 179 days will now attract an interest rate of 3.50 per cent as against 3 per cent earlier.

The public sector lender also revised interest rate on bulk term deposits maturing between 180 and 210 days by 40 basis points to 3.50 per cent, as against 3.10 per cent earlier, as per the bank's website.

Deposits maturing between 211 days and less than 1 year will earn an interest of 3.75 per cent, up 45 bps



from 3.30 per cent.

The interest rate on bulk deposits having maturities between 1 year and less than two years has been increased by 40 bps to 4 per cent. For deposits having 2 years to less than 3 years maturity period, the rate has been hiked by 65 bps to 4.25 per cent.

The interest rate on bulk term deposits for 3 years and

up to 10 years has been increased by 90 basis points to 4.50 per cent as against 3.60 per cent.

Last week, Punjab National Bank said had increased interest rates on term deposits in selected buckets up to 60 basis points from May 7. The new fixed deposit rates are applicable on deposits up to Rs 10 crore, PNB said. **PTI**

SBI board approves raising up to USD 2 bn via bonds in FY'23

New Delhi: The country's largest lender SBI on Tuesday said its board has approved raising up to USD 2 billion (about Rs 15,430 crore) from the overseas market during the current fiscal to fund foreign business growth.

The central board has approved raising of funds through single or multiple tranches, SBI said in a regulatory filing.

The long-term funds of up to USD 2 billion would be raised through a public offer and/or private placement of senior unsecured notes in US dollar or any other convertible currency during 2022-23, it added. **PTI**

CEPI to provide up to USD 19.2 mn to Bharat Biotech, others for development of 'variant-proof' Covid vaccine

New Delhi: The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) on Tuesday said it will provide up to USD 19.3 million (about Rs 149 crore) to Bharat Biotech International, the University of Sydney, and Switzerland-based ExcellGene SA for the development of a "variant-proof" SARS-CoV-2 vaccine candidate.

CEPI will fund the initiative under its USD 200 million programme to advance the development of vaccines that provide broad protection against SARS-CoV-2 variants and other betacoronaviruses.

The funding will support the consortium as it seeks to establish preclinical and clinical proof of concept for an adjuvanted subunit vaccine designed to provide broad protection against all known SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern, as well as future variants of the virus which have not yet

emerged.

CEPI will fund the researchers to conduct activities including immunogen design, preclinical studies, manufacturing process development and a Phase 1 clinical trial.

"As repeated waves of COVID-19 infection remind us, we will be living alongside the virus for many years to come. The threat of a new variant emerging that might evade the protection of our current vaccines is real, so investing in R&D for variant-proof SARS-CoV-2 vaccines is a global health security imperative," CEPI CEO Richard Hatchett said.

He further said: "Our partnership with Bharat Biotech, University of Sydney and ExcellGene will advance the development of a vaccine candidate to protect against future variants of COVID-19, potentially contributing to the long-term control of the virus." **PTI**

NTT Data Payment Services India raises ₹90 crore

New Delhi: Financial technology firm NTT Data Payment Services India has raised Rs 90 crore from its Japan-based parent firm NTT Data Corporation to expand offerings and aims to double revenue in the next two to three years. NTT Data Payment Services India CEO Dewang Neralla on Tuesday said the funds will be utilised for scaling up company solutions in the payment aggregator space and acquiring smaller companies to strengthen its presence in the financial technology segment.

"The idea is to build scale organically and acquire smaller companies to grow both organically and inorganically. We closed last financial year with revenue in the range Rs 272-280 crore which we plan to double in the next two to three years," he said.

The company caters to more than 60 lakh merchants

in sectors, including education, government, retail, BFSI and healthcare.

"With India being one of the core markets for NTT Data, this capital infusion will further strengthen our payments' business and is in tandem with our long-term growth strategy.

"As there is a huge untapped market, we will explore both organic as well as inorganic opportunities. The funds will only give us further impetus to our growth momentum. Further fund infusion will be decided based on the future opportunities," Neralla said.

With the new funds, the company is looking to foray into newer segments such as Bharat Bill Payment Operating Unit. Neralla said the company will apply for Bharat Bill Payment Operating Unit permit this year. **PTI**

Hospitality industry body seeks regulation on travel food aggregators

New Delhi: Hospitality industry body FHRAI has sought intervention of the parliamentary standing committee on finance for regulation of online travel and food aggregators, alleging anti-competitive practices by the tech platforms.

In a letter to the parliamentary standing committee on finance chairman Jayant Sinha, FHRAI said a handful of Online Travel Aggregators (OTAs) as well as Food Service Aggregators (FSAs) have created havoc.

The parliamentary panel is examining alleged illegal practices of big tech players and technology platforms that could adversely impact competition in the Indian market.

"The primary reason for the intervention of the committee is enormous public interest /consumer interest in this matter. The customers face continuous problems of non-fulfilment of prior commitments coupled with almost zero complaint redressal mech-

anism from the OTAs and FSAs," Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) vice president Gurbaxish Singh Kohli wrote.

He further said, "Due to plundering of business interests of lakhs of hotels and restaurants in the country, it is imperative to ensure a protective mechanism in the face of predatory pricing and anti-competitive tactics adopted by OTAs and FSAs."

It is also a matter of concern that through international funding the FSAs and OTAs are used to garner customers or divert them to their forum, Kohli added.

According to FHRAI, the common problems from FSAs and OTAs arise from their inability to service customers.

"At times, the OTAs and FSAs show on their platforms that the restaurants are not operating and rooms are sold out, but in fact, they are unable to service their customers thereby causing great trouble to

both the customer and the service provider," it said.

Alleging hidden charges levied by OTAs and FSAs, the hospitality industry body said these platforms "often indulge in double dipping by inflating charges payable by consumers through levies raised under different names and pretexts, and which consumers are often confused to think that the same is levied by hotels and restaurants."

These charges include convenience fees, service and packaging charges which are not levied by the business, delivery charges, transaction fees to offset credit card commission, tips which are supposed to be paid to delivery persons, and donations collected for different charities.

"None of these charges are levied by the hotel or the restaurant and the consumers are made to believe that the charges are levied by the hospitality industry," it pointed out. **PTI**

BoB hikes lending rate by up to 10 bps

New Delhi: State-owned Bank of Baroda (BoB) on Tuesday announced an increase in its lending rate by up to 10 basis points (0.1 per cent), joining its peers that have raised rates after the surprise tightening of monetary policy by the RBI last week.

The bank has hiked the marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR) by up to 0.1 per cent on various tenures effective May 12, BoB said in a regulatory filing.

The 1-year MCLR -- the rate to which a majority of consumer loans are linked -- has been revised to 7.40 per cent from 7.35 per cent, an increase of 5 basis points.

Similarly, MCLR for three-month and six-month tenures has been increased by 5 basis points to 7.15 per cent and 7.25 per cent, respectively.

At the lower end, overnight and one-month MCLR has been raised by 10 basis points to 6.60 per cent and 7.05 per cent, respectively. **PTI**

GAIL's environmental awareness drive bags ABBY awards

New Delhi: GAIL's two campaigns "Interdependence" -- a global campaign for awareness against climate change and "Hawa Badle Hassu" -- A web series advocating clean energy and clean environment wins Silver and Bronze "Goafest 2022 ABBY One Show Awards" respectively under branded content and entertainment category.

Interdependence campaign bagged silver ABBY One Show Awards, a coveted recognition for any campaign, and GAIL campaign being only one from any PSU receiving such an accolade. Megha's Divorce' short film, a part of 11 International short films, under Interdependence campaign was showcased and promoted across the world. The film showcased the Indian context on Delhi's Air Pollution raising



awareness on environment and climate change both nationally and internationally. "Interdependence" is a global campaign patronized by United Nations and organized by Art for the World, An NGO asso-

ciated with United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPPI) based in Geneva, Switzerland.

ABBY One Show Awards Bronze awarded "Hawa Badle Hassu" is an Environmental

Sci-Fi thriller web series for creating awareness for clean energy and clean environment. "Hawa Badle Hassu" is a web series with a total of forty minute run time broken into 4 episodes. Each episode tackles crucial spaces and aspects pertaining to Environment (pollution).

The first episode focuses on 'Home Environment' and as the story progresses it moves to cover topics like 'Education and career building options around environment', 'Outdoor Environment' and finally escalates to 'Global Environment'.

GAIL, as a responsible corporate, is committed to a cleaner environment which is an integral aspect of GAIL's corporate value system and is firmly entrenched in the very mission statement. **PNS**

New equipment array at Exon'21 as part of 'Make in India' initiative

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

To celebrate the completion of 20 years of its operation in India, Sany India is launching an array of new equipment at the Excon 2021 which are "BUILT TO CHANGE" the world around us and achieve our vision of a new India.

"With localization being the prime focus of our company, most of the new generation machines are being manufactured as part of the 'Make in India' initiative," said Deepak Garg, Managing Director, Sany India & South Asia.

VIT-AP holds meet on 'climate crisis'

Amaravati: VIT-AP University in collaboration with SICOM (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change) and GCRS (Geo Climate Risk Solutions Private Limited) as knowledge part-ners organizes an "International Conference on Climate Crisis and Future Implications." The two-day virtual conference began on Saturday 7th May 2022 and ends on 8th May 2022.

The programme was inaugurated by chief guest Mr. Sanjai Jalla, Mission Head, SICOM Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in the presence of Dr. S. V. Kota Reddy, Vice-Chancellor, VIT-AP University. During his speech, Mr. Jalla emphasized on the importance of responsible production and consumption of resources



in mitigating the impacts of climate change. The conference was an attempt to continue the dialogue on adaptation policies, economic and legal strategies and provisions of infrastructure to society keeping climate at the center of it. Invited guests and speakers included international and national academicians, policy makers, and professionals from all disciplines aiming to collaborate and extend the discourse of climate crisis and implications.

Dr. S. V. Kota Reddy, Vice-Chancellor, VIT-AP University, welcomed and congratulated the participants from various reputed institutions presenting research papers on the theme of climate change.

He emphasized on the importance of taking active measures against climate change. He stated that VIT-AP aims to reduce the in-house energy consumption by installing Solar PV panels in the campus. **PNS**

Delhi Capitals aim to bounce back against Rajasthan Royals



Rajasthan vs Delhi
Live from 7:30pm IST
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

Delhi Capitals will aim to quickly recover from their loss in the previous match to stay in the IPL play-offs race while Rajasthan Royals will be eager to hold on to their winning momentum when the two teams clash here on Wednesday.

The Capitals have lost six of their 11 games and although they are fifth on the points table, they are bunched alongside Sunrisers Hyderabad and Punjab Kings, who also have 10 points from as many games.

Delhi has the advantage of a positive Net Run Rate (+0.150) but the Capitals need to win all their remaining three matches for a shot at the playoffs.

Rajasthan, on the other hand, are sitting on the third spot with 14 points and need just two wins to be certain of qualification. They have a healthy 0.326 NRR, which could come in handy even if they lose their remaining games.

DC have been one of the most inconsistent teams in the league this season as they have

struggled to keep the winning momentum going.

After a moral-boosting win against Sunrisers, they were handed a 91-run thrashing by CSK.

Their bowlers looked clueless against Devon Conway, who was hitting boundaries and sixes at will as CSK set a 200 plus target.

Delhi's bowling department hasn't inspired confidence. While Kuldeep Yadav is having a good season, the left-arm spinner has gone for runs aplenty in the previous two games.

The return of pace spearhead Anrich Nortje has also not made much of a difference as the South African hasn't been able to replicate his fiery performance from the previous seasons.

Khaleel Ahmed has been economical while Axar Patel has bowled well.

In the batting department, David Warner has enjoyed a good run but the Australian has got little assistance from his opening partners, who have ranged from Prithvi Shaw to Mandeep Singh to Srikar Bharat.

This biggest downer for Delhi has been Rishabh Pant's form. He has shown glimpses of his destructive power but the team would want more from its skipper who can single-handedly turn around any game.

The Capitals will have to fire on all cylinders against a formidable Rajasthan side.

The Royals have arguably the best bowling side in the competition.

With 22 wickets at 14.50, Yuzvendra Chahal leads the bowling charts this season and alongside R Ashwin, Trent Boult and Prasidh Krishna, the Rajasthan attack has the ability to defend any total.

One of the positives for the Royals is that have been able to break the overdependence on Orange Cap holder Jos Buttler, who has had a quite couple of outings.

Given a chance to play after over a month, young Yashasvi Jaiswal shone with a fine half-century against Punjab Kings, providing the otherwise faltering batting department a boost.

GT ENTER PLAYOFFS



PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

Gujarat Titans returned to winning ways after back-to-back losses and became the first team to seal their place in the play-offs by defeating Lucknow Super Giants by 62 runs in an Indian Premier League match here on Tuesday.

Even though LSG did a decent job with the ball to restrict GT to 144 for 4 after being asked to bowl, the KL Rahul-led side flopped with the bat as they were bowled out for 82 in 13.5 overs.

Rashid Khan (4/24) starred with the ball for GT, while Yash Dayal

(2/24) and R Sai Kishore (2/7) picked up two wickets each.

Earlier, opening batter Shubman Gill hit a fine half-century but LSG produced a disciplined bowling effort to restrict GT to the modest score. Gill remained not out on 63 off 49 balls with the help of seven fours but lacked support from the other end. He was left stranded as GT's next highest scorer was David Miller (26).

Avesh Khan (2/26) picked up two wickets for LSG, while Mohsin Khan (1/18) and Jason Holder (1/44) scalped one apiece.

GT sealed their play-off berth, reaching 18 points from 12 games. The defeat snapped LSG's five-match

winning streak but they are still comfortably placed in the second spot with 16 points and need just a win to book their last-four berth.

LSG made a slow start to their chase and their problems were further compounded after they lost Quinton de Kock (11) and skipper KL Rahul (8) in consecutive overs to slump to 24 for 2 after four overs.

While Yash Dayal accounted for De Kock, Rahul top-edged a Mohammed Shami short delivery to Wriddhiman Saha behind the stumps.

Debutant Karan Sharma didn't help his cause either, handing a catch to David Miller inside the circle to give Dayal his second scalp of the day.

► pointstable							
PO. TEAM	M	W	L	NR	Pts	NRR	
1. GT	12	9	3	0	18	0.376	
2. LSG	12	8	4	0	16	0.385	
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. KKR	12	5	7	0	10	-0.057	
8. PBKS	11	5	6	0	10	-0.231	
9. CSK	11	4	7	0	8	0.028	
10. MI	11	2	9	0	4	-0.894	

► boundarymeter	
4s	1577
6s	814

Introduced into the attack in the eighth over, Rashid Khan struck with his third delivery, foxing Krunal Pandya with a googly and Saha was quick to whip off the bats.

With wickets falling in quick succession from the start, LSG never got any momentum to their chase, reaching 58 for 4 at the halfway stage.

The ever-rising asking rate led to the downfall of Ayush Badoni (8), who was stumped by Saha off R Sai Kishore.

LSG's scorecard cut a sorry figure as the likes of Marcus Stoinis (2) and Jason Holder (1) too failed to rise to the occasion.

Deepak Hooda top-scored for LSG with a struggling 26-ball 27.

Earlier, Rahul Tewatia (22 not out off 16 balls) used the long handle to good effect in the final over, smashing Holder for three boundaries to take the score close to the 150-run mark.



Delhi need to execute plans consistently: Watson

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Delhi Capitals will be looking to bounce back into form when they take on Rajasthan Royals in the IPL 2022 at the Dr DY Patil Sports Academy, Mumbai on Wednesday.

Speaking ahead of the match, Delhi Capitals' Assistant Coach Shane Watson said, "The Rajasthan Royals have been playing well and they have been consistent throughout the tournament. Jos Buttler has been incredible for them and Rajasthan have world-class spinners in Ravichandran Ashwin and Yuzvendra Chahal. The Royals are going to be a tough opponent and every individual has to up their game."

The Delhi Capitals faced a tough 91-run loss against Chennai Super Kings in their last game. When asked about the match, Watson said, "Our last match against CSK certainly wasn't our best game. CSK

batted incredibly well to be able to get the total that they did. We were a little bit off with our execution with the ball. And we just had one of those days with the bat when things didn't go our way."

The Australian further added, "Ricky has always asked the players to learn from their last game, learn about the little things that they can improve on individually and then just move forward on to the next game. The most important thing is that the players need to keep learning."

Watson also spoke about the biggest challenge the Delhi Capitals have faced this season, "Our biggest challenge this season has been our execution. We have executed our plans in all three departments at times, but we've not been able to be consistent."

The players have been working really hard to find a way to be consistent and hopefully, we can execute our plans over the last three games."

Titans are playing with no fear of world: Gavaskar

ANI ■ MUMBAI

Former Indian captain Sunil Gavaskar reckons IPL 2022 newbies Gujarat Titans are doing well in the 15th edition of IPL because they are playing a fearless brand of cricket but at the same time they are not thinking too much about the result.

Gujarat Titans are first in the IPL 2022 points table with nine wins in 12 games as Hardik Pandya and company are just one win shy of securing a playoffs berth. Speaking on 'Cricket Live' on Star Sports, Gavaskar said: "Gujarat are playing with such freedom and they are fearless (in approach). There's no fear of the world in their game and that's why they are winning." "Of course, you wish to win even when you are play-

ing in your backyard but a loss doesn't mean that it's an end to the world, that's the approach with which they are stepping on the pitch. They are enjoying their game and playing positive cricket."

In the reverse fixture, GT defeat fellow IPL newcomers Lucknow Super Giants on Tuesday.

Former Indian cricketer Harbhajan Singh has backed Hardik Pandya-led Gujarat Titans to win the match against Lucknow and they did also to become the first team to qualify for playoffs.

"Gujarat Titans are going to win the match against Lucknow Super Giants and they will become the first team to qualify. The Hardik Pandya-led side is very strong. Rashid Khan is in great form and coach Ashish



Nehra is giving them just the right amount of confidence. This team is difficult to beat," Harbhajan said.

Former Australian cricketer Matthew Hayden lauded the Gujarat Titans for the brand of cricket they are playing in their debut season and the match-winners the franchise has in its ranks.

Hayden said: "GT bat deep, they've got the confidence, and they are full of match winners. It's exciting to watch them because when there's not a Rahul Tewatia show, it's a Rashid Khan show and when Rashid isn't performing, it's a Killer-Miller (David Miller) show. This team is lined up with several match-winners and that's what makes them a dangerous side. It's exciting to watch the brand of cricket they are playing."

India to play 3 T20Is at home against Aus

PTI ■ MELBOURNE



India will gear up for the ICC T20 World Cup with a home series against Australia featuring three T20 internationals in September later this year.

According to a report in foxsports.Com.Au, "Australia will play a number of white ball series with home games against Zimbabwe, New Zealand, West Indies and England coming either side of three T20s in India in September." The series will serve as a preparation for the showpiece event to be held in Australia in

Rishabh should bat in 'Russell mode': Shastri

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India coach Ravi Shastri says Rishabh Pant must bat in the "Andre Russell mode" in T20 format and not change the tempo once he gets going so that he can win more matches for his side, Delhi Capitals.

The Southpaw has collected 281 runs in 11 matches at a strike rate of 152.71 but has struggled to convert his starts into meaningful contributions. The 24-year-old wicketkeeper-batter is having an underwhelming IPL season. He has shown glimpses of his destructive power but could not take the team over the line like he has done umpteen times in the past.

"I feel once he gets the tempo going he shouldn't change, he should be in the Russell mould in this format of the game," Shastri said on

ESPNcricinfo's 'T20 Time Out'.

"You get your eye in, you're striking it well - don't think too much. No matter who the bowler is, if it's there to be smacked, smack it. Who knows, you might win more matches than people expect you to."

Shastri feels what sets Russell, one of the most destructive batters in T20 cricket, apart from the other is the clarity of mindset, which will also serve Pant, who is capable of playing belligerent knocks, well.

"Russell is very, very clear in his mindset. It is bang-bang-bang once he's in the mood. There's no stopping him, there's not even a negative thought that will peep through his system - it is (all about) smacking."

"Rishabh is totally capable of playing in that fashion, and I hope he thinks in that way because you'll see some special innings from him in T20 cricket."

"He's getting off to starts and then getting out in a manner which he wouldn't like, but I don't think he should change his tempo," added Shastri.

Former New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori feels Pant is his best when he is reckless and pummeling the opposition.

"Rishabh Pant is almost at his best when he's reckless, and we've seen him play some exceptional innings when he just continues to take teams down time and time again," Vettori said.

The Capitals have lacked a quality finisher and Pant has adopted a conservative approach out of a sense of responsibility.

"It's a team game, you don't expect an individual to go and win the game all the time. But in that short period of time, if he does the damage, there's enough damage to bring that required rate from say 12 an over to 10 an over. Then it's for the other guys to take it home," Vettori added. The Capitals need to win all their three remaining matches to get to the play-offs and Shastri wants Pant to bat at number 3. "I'd like to see him bat at three for Delhi Capitals, especially now when the heat is on, when they've got to win. Let him go and smack it."

There's lot of noise outside, but that doesn't affect me: Bumrah

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who picked his maiden fiver in the IPL, said he is happy with his rhythm in the ongoing season and the "noise outside" doesn't affect him personally.

Despite the five-wicket haul, Bumrah has been able to take only 10 wickets in this IPL season from 11 matches.

"Look we prepare for the tournament and we have our process, we don't look at the end result," Bumrah said at the post-match press conference after MI lost to KKR by 52 runs.

"If you understand the game, you have to really observe what's going on, what is the game like, what situation you are bowling like, and for me personally I was very happy with the rhythm going on throughout the tournament."

Bumrah bowled exceptionally well to restrict KKR to 165 for 9, but the MI batters faltered yet again, as the team suffered its ninth loss in eleven games.

"I know there is a lot of noise outside that goes on but it doesn't really affect me. Because I am not a person who judges my performance on what others think or what the experts are saying or whatever people want to say," he said. Bumrah hasn't been able to pick wickets consistently this season but the pacer said the way



he contributes to the team is more important for him.

"I look at my personal evaluation is very important, I look at the processes that I have to follow and I look at the end result on how I can contribute to the team, by sometimes bowling a good over and however I can help the team."

"So this is how I play cricket and this is how I always wanted to play cricket and that is how I will do (play) going further as well."

Mumbai are already out of the play-offs race and Bumrah admitted that the team was still searching for a "complete performance".

"You said it right, we didn't manage to close games, in a lot of games, we came very close and we crumbled in crucial scenarios. This is a new team and our youngsters are understanding and making their game better," said Bumrah, one of the senior members.

"This is not an excuse that you lost because of it. But when new youngsters come they take time to understand their game. We are searching for a complete performance and we are trying and working hard, but it hasn't worked this time," he added. Bumrah said MI will look to put up a good show in the remaining three matches.



PTI ■ KOLKATA

Talismanic captain Sunil Chhetri will return to the national team during next month's Asian Cup qualifiers and head coach Igor Stimac is confident that the country will win the tournament and book a ticket for the continental showpiece in China next year.

The 37-year-old Chhetri will return to action after six months, having last played for India during their 3-0 win over Nepal in the SAFF Championships final in October.

Stimac said Chhetri is back to his full fitness and will be the "main force and strength" of the team.

"Sunil is still here, he's still in great shape," Stimac said when asked how long Chhetri can prolong his career.

"We didn't involve him in Bahrain and Belarus games because he needed time to recover from some minor problems he was facing throughout the last couple of years.

"That time has served very well to Sunil. He has recovered very well. He's showing that on the training pitch every day and still at this point he will be the main force and strength of the Indian national team up front."

Chhetri had suffered minor niggles and missed out of the friendlies against Belarus and Bahrain in March.

Stimac also said young forward Rahim Ali, who will be out of action for at least six weeks due to an injury, will be a big loss.

"I feel very sorry that Rahim Ali who in the recent past created a great partnership with Sunil. He was someone who was making Sunil's life much easier up front and doing a great job to be honest, bringing players to his back and leaving Sunil open and free there on the other side," he said.

"He was showing great game improvement. Most of the last season he played with this injury on his abductors and now that became chronic and that will keep him out for six-seven weeks."

Focus would be on Stimac after his contract was extended till September 2022 with an eye on the 2023 AFC Asian Cup.

"Expectations are always there. I'm



Stimac sole focus is on Asian Cup qualification

very confident that the work we are providing here and at least this time, we had enough time to prepare well, never mind that some of the players are not with us," the 54-year-old said during a virtual interaction.

"We have enough quality in our team with the players who are here with us to make sure that India qualifies and that's what we're going to do. I see India in the final stages and there is no doubt about it. We're going to have great support in the stands here."

India will now play two practice games — against ATK Mohun Bagan (Wednesday) and I-League all stars (May 17) before flying to Doha to play two more friendlies against Zambia

(May 25) and Jordan (May 28) in the build up to the Asian qualifiers.

"This is a far better situation than in the previous games when we got the players one or two days prior to the games then there is nothing you can do there.

"This is finally something which is giving me as a coach the opportunity to prepare well for the games you know which was not the case in the previous cases," Stimac said.

India, who are the highest-ranked side (106) in group D, will face Hong Kong (147), Afghanistan (150) and Cambodia (171) in a one-legged final round of qualifiers beginning here on June 8.

"That (ranking) doesn't mean anything. Whatever is there you need to earn it on the pitch throughout 90 minutes. The way you prepare your team mentally and physically that will make the difference when the day comes," he said.

Thirteen teams have already qualified and another 11 spots — six group toppers and five best runners-up — are up for grabs during the final phase in June.

"... I'm interested in the final result in a way that we qualify for the Asian Cup. That's our aim. I don't mind how many points or how many goals we score. Our aim is to qualify.

"Of course, if we make it if we

make three wins, that would be fantastic. That's what we are aiming for. But my aim is to qualify."

On Sandesh Jhingan's availability, Stimac said they would monitor the progress of the star India central defender during ATK Mohun Bagan's AFC Cup group matches beginning on May 18.

"We're going to follow ATK (Mohun Bagan) players throughout the competition and we'll see who is in form and who is not.

"The competition in the team is strong. I strongly believe that we have enough quality here and whoever is here we're going to make our job done," he concluded.

Cricket SA withdraws racism charges against coach Mark Boucher

AP ■ CAPE TOWN

Cricket South Africa announced on Tuesday that all charges against head coach Mark Boucher have been withdrawn, leading to the abandonment of a disciplinary hearing which was due to start on May 16.

The 45-year-old former Test wicketkeeper was facing charges of racism, laid by CSA, which could have resulted in his dismissal.

The controlling body admitted in a statement that there was "no basis to sustain any of the disciplinary charges".

The allegations against Boucher followed Social Justice and Networking hearings last year into discrimination into cricket.

Boucher was accused by former teammate Paul Adams of leading a song with racially derogatory words during fines meetings after matches while they were playing.

Adams announced on Sunday that he was not prepared to testify at the hearing, stating his comments to the SJN ombudsman related to the overall culture of the team rather than any particular player. CSA noted in its statement that Boucher had apologised to Adams and the apology had been accepted.

It was also alleged that Boucher had sidelined his black assistant coach Enoch Nkwe, leading to Nkwe's resignation, but Nkwe was also unwilling to testify at the planned hearings.



A further charge was that Boucher had failed to deal effectively with a controversy over "taking the knee" in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement.

CSA said its lawyers had consulted with other potential witnesses and concluded that none of the three charges were sustainable.

The recent exoneration of director of cricket Graeme Smith, who like Boucher had been the subject of "tentative findings" by SJN ombudsman, Advocate Dumisa Ntsebeza, "fortified the conclusion that the charges against Mr Boucher would be dismissed."

Board chairman Lawson Naidoo said CSA had been committed to treating issues raised at the SJN hearings "with utmost seriousness" with a view to ensuring fairness.

"The decision to withdraw the charges brings about finality on these issues for CSA and Mark and allows the focus to return to the cricket field." Boucher is contracted until the end of the 2023 Cricket World Cup.



Holder rested as WI name ODI squad for Netherlands, Pak tours

AGENCIES ■ ANTIGUA

The Cricket West Indies (CWI) selection panel on Tuesday announced the West Indies senior men's squad for the upcoming

One-Day International (ODI) tours of the Netherlands and Pakistan.

The West Indies will visit the Netherlands for three ODIs on May 31, June 2 and 4, followed by another three ODIs on June 8, 10 and 12 in Pakistan. The tour of the Netherlands will be the first-ever ODI Series between the two teams and will be played at the VRA Cricket Ground, Amstelveen.

The matches in Pakistan will be played at the Pindi Stadium in Rawalpindi. Both series form part of the ICC ODI Super League, where teams will have the opportunity to earn points to secure one of the top seven places, excluding hosts India, to gain automatic qualification for the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup. Three newcomers have been named in the ODI squad - fast bowlers Jayden Seales and Shermion Lewis as well as specialist batter Keacy Carty.

Both Seales and Lewis have played at the Test level. Carty is the first player from St. Maarten to be selected for the West Indies Senior Men's team.

All format all-rounder Jason Holder is being rested to manage his workload whilst Shimron Hetmyer is also unavailable for selection to be at home for the birth of his first child. Evin Lewis was not considered for selection after failing to meet CWI's fitness criteria.

Squad: Nicholas Pooran (C), Shai Hope (VC), Nkrumah Bonner, Shamrah Brooks, Keacy Carty, Akeal Hosein, Alzarri Joseph, Brandon King, Shermion Lewis, Kyle Mayers, Anderson Phillip, Rovman Powell, Jayden Seales, Romario Shepherd, and Hayden Walsh Jr.

FIXTURES

West Indies tour of Netherlands — May 31: 1st ODI at VRA Cricket Ground, Amstelveen, June 2: 2nd ODI at VRA Cricket Ground, Amstelveen, and June 4: 3rd ODI at VRA Cricket Ground, Amstelveen. West Indies tour of Pakistan — June 8: 1st ODI at Pindi Stadium, Rawalpindi.

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester City are on the brink of being crowned winners of the Erling Haaland sweepstakes.

It's understood that an agreement for the 21-year-old to join City from Borussia Dortmund is considered a "done deal," according to The Athletic.

An official announcement should be made this week.

Haaland has agreed to terms on a five-year contract that'll earn him £375,000 a week, according to The Guardian. Negotiations started after the Norwegian striker apparently instructed his representatives to move ahead with plans to complete his transfer to Manchester City last month. It's now believed Borussia Dortmund is expecting to hear from City in the coming days that they're ready to pay the release clause in Haaland's contract, which is believed to be worth £75 million, per Ornstein. Haaland's arrival at



City will conclude the club's search for a prolific No. 9 to fill the void left by club icon Sergio Aguero.

Signing Haaland may also end speculation over Manchester City's interest in Tottenham Hotspur striker Harry Kane. City reportedly pursued Kane last summer before the English star committed to staying with Spurs for at least one more season. Haaland has evolved into one of football's brightest young stars since he initially caught the sport's eye while with Red Bull Salzburg. He went on to flourish at Borussia Dortmund, scoring 85 goals in 88 appearances after arriving in 2020.

With Real Madrid out of the running to sign Haaland this summer, they'll likely shift their focus to Paris Saint-Germain superstar Kylian Mbappe.

Man City expected to finalise deal for Haaland this week

Pogba opts against joining City

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Paul Pogba has opted against joining Manchester City on a free transfer, reports The Athletic.

The French midfielder, whose contract with rivals Manchester United expires this summer, received a "flattering" proposal from the Premier League leaders, according to Ornstein, and gave the possible switch serious consideration. However, the 29-year-old, courted by the likes of Paris Saint-Germain, Juventus, and Real Madrid, apparently favors a move abroad. PSG are leading the race for Pogba's signature because Juve, his former team, can't match the Ligue 1 outfit's financial package, sources told ESPN.

Pogba won't make a final decision on his future until the end of the campaign, Dawson added.

The World Cup winner, currently sidelined with a calf injury, has likely already played his final game for Manchester United. He's recorded a team-leading nine Premier League assists this season despite only appearing in 20 matches.

Pep Guardiola had identified the Frenchman as a potential candidate to help fill the void that will be left by departing captain Fernandinho. Declan Rice and Freddie de Jong have also previously been linked with a move to the Etihad Stadium, though significant hurdles exist in the pursuit of both players.



Roma, Feyenoord fans get 4,000 quota for Europa Conference final

AP ■ NYON

Roma and Feyenoord have been allocated 4,000 tickets for their fans at the Europa Conference League final in Albania with three quarters of the tickets given free, UEFA said on Tuesday.

The clubs' combined allocation is less than the 8,500 tickets — priced from 25 euros (\$26) to 125 euros (\$132) — UEFA put on sale on Tuesday through its website to fans worldwide.

The stadium capacity is just 20,000 in the National Arena in Tirana for the inaugural final of the third-tier European club competition on May 25.

UEFA picked Tirana as host in December 2020, one year after the new stadium officially opened.

UEFA previously promised some free tickets to cup finals

this season "to reward the lifeblood of the game for their loyal support during the pandemic."

The free tickets allocation for the Europa Conference League final is 6,000 with each club choosing how to distribute its quota.

The remaining 3,500 tickets go to local organizers, soccer officials, and UEFA's sponsors and broadcasters.

Roma's two previous European finals let it play in its own Stadio Olimpico that now seats 70,000. Roma lost the 1984 European Cup final to Liverpool and was beaten by Inter Milan in the two-leg UEFA Cup final in 1991.

Feyenoord also hosted its last European final, winning the single-leg 2002 UEFA Cup final against Borussia Dortmund watched by more than 45,000 in Rotterdam.

UBER CUP FINAL

India seal quarterfinal berth with 4-1 win over USA

PTI ■ BANGKOK

Indian women's badminton team sailed into the knockout stage of the Uber Cup Final after humbling USA 4-1 in a lopsided Group D match here on Tuesday.

India, who had defeated Canada 4-1 in their opening tie, notched up a second successive win to cement their position in the top two spot in their group to qualify for the quarterfinals.

P V Sindhu once again lead the proceedings with a 21-10, 21-11 win over Jennie Gai, doubles pair of Tanisha Crasto and Treasa Jolly then beat Francesca Corbett and Allison Lee 21-19, 21-10 before Aakashi Kashyap



notched up a 21-18, 21-11 victory over Esther Shi as India took an unassailable 3-0 lead.

Young doubles pair of Simran Singh and Ritika Thaker then went down fighting to Lauren Lam and Kodi Tang Lee 12-21, 21-17, 13-21 to salvage some pride for USA.

In the final match, Ashmita Chaliha prevailed 21-18, 21-13 over Natalie Chi to wrap up the match. Indian women's team, which has won two bronze medals in the past, will next face Korea on Wednesday in their last group match.

The Indian men's team also qualified for the knockout stage after ensuring their place in the top two in their group.

Shapovalov overcomes code violation for win at Italian Open

AP ■ ROME

Denis Shapovalov overcame a point penalty and a hostile crowd to beat local hope Lorenzo Sonego 7-6 (5), 3-6, 6-3 in the first round of the Italian Open.

Late in the second set, Shapovalov was given a code violation for unsportsmanlike conduct after hopping over the net to show the chair umpire a mark on his opponent's side of the red clay court - which is not permitted. The umpire determined that Shapovalov's serve was out, resulting in a double fault and a break point for Sonego. Then with the code violation, Shapovalov lost the game to trail 5-3. "A lot of things hap-

pened in the heat of the moment. I need to be better with my behavior," Shapovalov said.

"It was my mistake. I'll know the rule for next time. I definitely won't step over the net." Even after stepping over the net, Shapovalov wasn't done arguing.

The 13th-seeded Canadian then called the chair umpire onto his side of the court and singled out a fan who was heckling him.

"I'm not going to kick him out because I didn't see what he was doing," the umpire said.

"I saw you talking to him and you incited it a little bit. I understand you're frustrated."

After the match, Shapovalov apologised to the umpire.