

OPINION 6
IMPERIALIST CHINA'S
CHALLENGES IN PAK**WORLD 9**
RUSSIA CONTINUES AIRSTRIKES
AS UKRAINE SEEKS DEAL**MONEY 10**
₹12 LAKH CR EXPENDITURE ON
URBAN SCHEMES SINCE 2014'

NEW DELHI, FRIDAY MAY 13, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

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At 7.79%, inflation soars to 8-year high, ₹ tumbles

Indian market falls in sync with global markets**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Retail inflation spiked to an eight-year high of 7.79 per cent in April this year, while industrial production growth remained subdued at 1.9 per cent in March compared to a year ago.

At the same time, benchmark indices sank for the fifth session on the trot on Thursday, with the Sensex and Nifty tanking over two per cent each, tracking extremely weak global trends and selling in index majors HDFC twins, Reliance Industries and ICICI Bank.

On the currency front also there was little to cheer. The Indian rupee hit a fresh all-time low before it settled at 77.40 against the US dollar on Thursday, following risk-off sentiments amid increasing concerns over inflation globally.

The spike in inflation is driven by rising food and fuel prices, which may prompt the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to go in for another interest rate hike in the next month policy



review to tame price rise.

Worried over the rising inflation, the RBI in a surprise move raised the repo rate by 40 basis points to 4.40 per cent last week. Inflation has remained above the RBI's comfort zone of 6 per cent for four months in a row mainly due to the Russia-Ukraine war which has impacted the prices of commodities across the globe.

The previous high in the consumer price index (CPI)-based retail inflation was recorded at 8.33 per cent in May 2014. CPI inflation was 6.95 per cent in March this year and 4.23 per cent in April 2021.

Inflation in the food basket

rose to 8.38 per cent in April from 7.68 per cent in the preceding month and 1.96 per cent in the year-ago month, showed the data released by the Centre.

Meanwhile, industrial production remained subdued at 1.9 per cent in March compared to a year ago, mainly due to poor performance by the manufacturing sector which showed staggered impact of the third wave of the pandemic.

Factory output measured in terms of Index of Industrial Production (IIP) had recorded a growth of 24.2 per cent in March 2021, as per government data released on Thursday.

The IIP growth was 1.5 per

cent in January as well as February this year amid the third wave of COVID-19. It was just 1 per cent in November and December last year. Factory output grew by 4.2 per cent in October 2021.

After recovering for two consecutive days, the rupee slumped by 15 paise to end at 77.40 against the US dollar on Thursday. Weak domestic equities, surging US dollar in overseas markets and persistent foreign fund outflows also weighed on the rupee which plunged to its all-time intraday low of 77.63 against the US dollar, forex traders said.

At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened steeply lower at 77.52 against the greenback and moved in a range of 77.36 to 77.63 in the day trade. The rupee finally ended at 77.40, down by 15 paise over its previous close. The rupee had settled at 77.25 against the US dollar on Wednesday.

On May 9, the domestic unit had closed at the record low of 77.44 against the greenback. Global equity markets went into a tailspin after higher-than-expected US retail inflation data for April fanned fears of aggressive rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve which could hamper growth, analysts said.

Continued on Page 2

Reform WHO for 'resilient global health security architecture': PM

We adopted a people-centric strategy against Covid: Modi at Biden summit**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Stating that India has adopted a people-centric strategy against the Covid-19 pandemic that continues to disrupt lives and test the resilience of open societies, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday called for building a resilient global supply chain and enabling equitable access to vaccines and medicines.

The PM also said the WTO rules should be made more flexible and the WHO must be reformed and strengthened to build a more "resilient global health security architecture".

Speaking at the second Global Covid virtual Summit hosted by US President Joe Biden, the Prime Minister said, "We have made the highest-ever allocation to our annual healthcare budget. Our vaccination programme is the largest in the world. We have fully vaccinated almost 90 per cent of the alien population and more than 50 million children. India manufactures four WHO approved vaccines and has the



capacity to produce 5 billion doses this year."

Modi had also taken part in the first global virtual summit on Covid hosted by Biden on September 22 last year. The summit intends to galvanise new actions to address the challenges of the pandemic and build stronger global health security architecture.

The Prime Minister further stated that "we must build a resilient global supply chain and enable equitable access to vaccines and medicines."

"We also call for streamlining the WHO's approval process for vaccines and therapeutics to keep the supply chain stable and predictable. As

a responsible member of the global community, India is ready to play a key role in these efforts," he said.

"Last month we laid the foundation of WHO Centre for Traditional Medicine in India with an aim to make this age-old knowledge available to the world. It is clear that a coordinated global response is required to combat future health emergencies," the Prime Minister added.

"India's genomics consortium has contributed to the global database of the virus. We will extend this network to our neighbouring countries.

In India, we extensively use our traditional medicines to supplement our fight against

Covid and to boost immunity saving countless lives," Modi said. He pointed out that India's vaccination programme is the largest in the world.

"We have fully vaccinated almost 90 per cent of the adult population and more than 50 million children. India manufactures four WHO-approved vaccines and has the capacity to produce 5 billion doses this year," he said.

"We supplied over 200 million doses to 98 countries bilaterally and through 'Covax'. India has developed low-cost Covid mitigation technologies for testing, treating and data management. We have offered these capabilities to other countries," Modi said.

India concerned about human rights conditions in Ukraine

PNS/ AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/ GENEVA

India on Thursday expressed concern over human rights condition in Ukraine and appealed for immediate cessation of hostilities there. New Delhi called for respect and protection of human rights of the people there and reiterated its "abiding commitment" to the global promotion of human rights.

Making this assertion at a special session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Ambassador Indramani Pandey also said India has been sending humanitarian supplies, including medicines and other essential relief materials, to Ukraine and its neighbours.

"Impact of the situation is being felt beyond this region; oil prices are skyrocketing, there is shortage of food grains and fertilisers," he said, adding the developing and least developed countries were bearing the brunt of the conflict.

Addressing the 34th



Special Session of the Human Rights Council on the deteriorating situation in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression, he said, "We call for respect for and protection of the human rights of the people in Ukraine and reiterate our abiding commitment to the global promotion and protection of human rights."

He said it is evident that women and children have been

disproportionately impacted, and they form a bulk of those who shifted to neighbouring countries and were displaced internally. India supports all efforts to alleviate the suffering of the people of Ukraine, he said, adding, "We believe that the immediate priority should be evacuation of innocent civilians from areas witnessing intense fighting."

Continued on Page 2

Ranil Wickremesinghe sworn in as Lankan PM

Colombo: Opposition leader and former premier Ranil Wickremesinghe was sworn-in as Sri Lanka's 26th Prime Minister on Thursday, days after his predecessor Mahinda Rajapaksa was forced to resign following violent protests over the worst economic crisis in the debt-ridden island nation.

The 73-year-old United National Party (UNP) leader took oath before President Gotabaya Rajapaksa at a ceremony in the president's office after they held closed-door discussions over formation of a new government to address the economic crisis.

"My best wishes to the newly appointed PM of #LKA, @RW_UNP, who stepped up to take on the challenging task of steering our country through a very turbulent time. I look forward to working together with him to make Sri Lanka strong again," President Gotabaya tweeted along with a picture of him and Wickremesinghe.

Sri Lanka was without a Government since Monday when Gotabaya's elder brother



and Prime Minister Mahinda resigned after violence erupted following an attack on the anti-Government protesters by his supporters.

The attack triggered widespread violence against Rajapaksa loyalists, leaving 9 people dead. Mahinda quickly congratulated Wickremesinghe, saying that he wishes him all the best as he navigates "these troubled times." "Congratulations to the newly appointed Prime Minister of #lka, @RW_UNP. I wish you all the best as you navigate these troubled times," tweeted Mahinda, who is under protection at a naval base

following violent attacks on his aides.

The High Commission of India in Colombo said it looks forward to working with new Government of Sri Lanka formed in accordance with democratic processes. "High Commission of India hopes for political stability and looks forward to working with the Government of Sri Lanka formed in accordance with democratic processes pursuant to the swearing in of Hon'ble @RW_UNP as the Prime Minister of #SriLanka," it tweeted.

PTI

Mahinda, son barred from leaving country

A Sri Lankan court on Thursday banned former prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, his politician son Namal and 15 allies from leaving the country over acts of violence against anti-government demonstrators.

IAF sergeant held for leaking info to Pak's ISI

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police's Crime Branch has arrested an Indian Air Force (IAF) sergeant for allegedly leaking classified and sensitive information about defence installations and personnel to Pakistan's spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The police suspect that he was honey-trapped.

The accused has been identified as 32-year-old Devender Sharma, who was working as an administrative assistant (GD) at the IAF Record Office at Delhi's Subroto Park.

According to a senior police official, a complaint was received from the IAF authorities alleging that Sharma had leaked sensitive information about defence installations and Air Force personnel through electronic means to the agent of an adversary country.

Continued on Page 2

Continue survey of idols on Gyanvapi premises: Court

PNS ■ VARANASI

A Varanasi court on Thursday ordered to continue the survey of Gyanvapi premises and rejected the petition seeking removal of the advocate commissioner. The court directed the advocate commissioner to furnish the survey report by May 17 and appointed two commissioners to accompany him during the survey.

Delivering the judgment on a petition seeking permission for the survey of underground sites of Shringar Gauri temple too besides the temple, Civil Judge (Senior Division) Ravi Kumar Diwakar ordered that the survey and videography of temple and other idols on Gyanvapi premises would continue.

The court rejected another petition praying for removal of the advocate commissioner



and raising questions on his fairness. However, the court appointed two commissioners, Vishal Singh and Ajay Pratap Singh, to accompany the Advocate Commissioner during the survey.

In its order, the court made it clear that the survey work would be conducted jointly by

Advocate Commissioner Ajay Kumar Mishra and Vishal Singh and in the absence of the former, the latter would conduct the survey and similarly, in the absence of the latter, the advocate commissioner would continue the process of commission.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

RAJIV KUMAR APPOINTED NEW CEC

New Delhi: Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar was on Thursday appointed the next chief election commissioner and will oversee the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, besides various Assembly polls. He will assume charge on May 15 after incumbent Sushil Chandra demits office on May 14, a notification issued by the Law Ministry said.

ANTI-ENCROACHMENT DRIVE: MLA ARRESTED

New Delhi: Protests erupted in the Madanpur Khadar area under the South Delhi Municipal Corporation on Thursday during an anti-encroachment drive by the civic body with people pelting stones at security personnel leaving a few injured, police said. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Amanatullah Khan, who was part of the protest, has been arrested along with others, they said.

HC dismisses plea on Taj Mahal, pulls up petitioner

Lucknow: The Allahabad High Court on Thursday dismissed a plea seeking a "fact-finding enquiry" into the history of the Taj Mahal and the "opening of 22 rooms" on the monument's premises, saying the petitioner failed to point out which of his legal or constitutional rights were being infringed.

The Lucknow bench of justices DK Upadhyay and Subhash Vidyarthi pulled up the lawyer of petitioner Rajneesh Singh, who is the media in-charge of the BJP's Ayodhya unit, for filing the PIL in a "casual" manner and said it cannot pass an order under Article 226 of the Constitution in the matter.

The article empowers a high court to issue to any person or authority in the area under its jurisdiction orders or writs to enforce the fundamental rights.



A tourist poses for a photograph in front of the Taj Mahal during sunrise in Agra on Thursday

PTI

The bench said that the petitioner could not point out as to which of his legal or constitutional rights were being infringed. The petitioner's lawyer Rudra Vikram Singh

urged the court to permit him to withdraw the petition and file a fresh plea, but the bench did not accept his request and dismissed the petition.

Continued on Page 2

Former manager of UPSIDC arrested in ₹4.56 crore scam

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A former manager of Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Corporation Limited (UPSIDC), SK Tripathi, was arrested in Lucknow by the sleuths of the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of UP Police for embezzlement of over Rs 4.56 crore in the supply of chlorine tablets.

According to the reports, after facilitating a fake certificate from the Directorate of Industries by M/s Era Enterprises, Lucknow, SK Tripathi, the former manager of UPSIDC has been accused of embezzlement of over Rs 4.56 crore in the supply of chlorine tablets and other materials.

Cases have been registered in this regard at the Sarojininar police station in Lucknow and Kakadeo police station in Kanpur Nagar.

The team of EOW (Sector Kanpur) was investigating the cases registered at both the police stations. Seven accused, including the owner of M/s Ira Enterprises, were wanted out of which one accused, SK Tripathi, was arrested with the help of local police here on Thursday.

Further investigations are on and two teams have been formed to nab the remaining accused.

The EOW will seek custody of the accused to extract details of others involved in the scam.

Two BJP MPs cross swords over Raj Thackeray's Ayodhya visit

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Two Bharatiya Janata Party Members of Parliament have crossed swords over the proposed visit of Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray to Ayodhya on June 5 with party MP from Kaiserganj Braj Bhushan Sharan Singh declaring that he will not allow Thackeray to enter Ayodhya and the Ayodhya MP Lallu Singh saying that he will welcome the politician from Maharashtra.

Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh has declared that Raj Thackeray will not be allowed to enter Ayodhya till he tenders a public apology for humiliating North Indians. He has humiliated North Indians working in Maharashtra and has even threatened to throw them out of Mumbai, he stated.

"How can we allow any leader who has poured vitriol against people of UP and Bihar entry into Ayodhya," the MP from Kaiserganj said on Thursday. "We will not let him enter UP, forget about Ayodhya," he said.

Brij Bhushan Saran Singh has also started galvanising support in favour of his call by organising sant sammelan in Ayodhya where meetings with local leaders and sadhus were held on Wednesday evening. The sadhus threw their weight behind the Kaiserganj MP saying his argument was judicious.

"We are not against Raj Thackeray. He has the right to have a darshan of Ram Lalla but before coming here he must apologise for his statement against the people of UP and Bihar," said Ram Dineshacharya, a saint who has backed the MP from Kaiserganj.

Brij Bhushan, whose supporters have put up posters against Raj Thackeray, is busy drumming up support from

Ayodhya and the adjoining region.

On the other hand, the BJP MP from Ayodhya, Lallu Singh, said that all were welcome to Ayodhya.

"A good sense will prevail and everyone will be allowed to have a darshan of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya. Yeh bachkana harkat hai (This is a childish act)," the BJP MP from Ayodhya said.

Some leaders in BJP see Brij Bhushan Saran Singh's stance against Raj Thackeray as a political move to promote his son Karan Bhushan Singh because all the posters and hoardings that have come up in and around Ayodhya carry his name.

Brij Bhushan Saran Singh is himself a six-term Lok Sabha MP while his son Prateek Bhushan is a two-time MLA.

A senior BJP leader said that the Kaiserganj MP was vocal against Raj Thackeray but was silent on Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray who was also expected to send his son Aditya to Ayodhya.

"He should be vociferous against both Thackerays but is silent on Uddhav whereas indications are that Raj may join hands with the BJP in the coming assembly elections," the BJP leader said.

Former chief minister of Maharashtra and the present leader of opposition Devendra Fadnavis has requested his party MP not to oppose the MNS chief's visit to Ayodhya.

"The BJP MPs should not oppose Raj Thackeray's proposed visit to Ayodhya. Anyone can visit Lord Ram and seek His blessings," Fadnavis said on Wednesday.

The MNS chief is scheduled to visit Ayodhya on June 5.

The MNS in a statement said that BJP MP Brij



Bhushan Saran Singh does not speak for the entire Uttar Pradesh. "We have decided to go to Ayodhya. We are working on the bookings and other arrangements," MNS leader Bala Nangaonkar said.

Delhi HC refuses to interfere with extradition of Portuguese national

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



The Delhi High Court has refused to interfere with the proceedings initiated for the extradition of a Portuguese national of Indian origin for a rape case against him in London. The High Court said that the mere unsubstantiated apprehension of discrimination on account of his race cannot be held to be a sufficient reason to mistrust the state functionaries of the United Kingdom.

Justice Chandra Dhari Singh stated that the petitioner, who invoked Article 9 of the applicable treaty which provides relief if the prosecution is on account of the person's race, religion, nationality, or political opinions, has not provided any substantial proof to

suggest any discrimination. There is no justiciable proof of the petitioner being arraigned due to racial discrimination or the case being racially motivated, the judge said.

The court dismissed the petitioner's plea seeking to make full disclosure of the evidence collected during the

investigation and opined that the petitioner has been escaping arrest on frivolous grounds and the present petition is one such attempt.

"A mere unsubstantiated apprehension of discrimination or bias cannot be held to be a sufficient reason to mistrust the state functionaries of the United Kingdom, hence, a case for claiming relief under Article 9 of the Treaty is not made out. Accordingly, there appears no reason to intervene with proceedings and pass any such order for disclosure of additional information or evidence," the court said in its order dated May 11.

"Accordingly, in order for Article 9 to be deemed applicable, the petitioner must reasonably 'satisfy' the Court that the request for his extradition has been made for the

purpose of prosecuting him on account of his race. However, the petitioner has not provided any substantial proof on record to suggest any discrimination that might be applicable against him in the United Kingdom," it added.

The judge further said that the requisite evidence for extradition proceedings against the petitioner has already been supplied and only a prima facie case is to be seen by the trial court in the course of extradition proceedings.

"The petitioner will get adequate opportunity to represent himself, ask for disclosure of evidence, as well as cross-examine the same at the stage of the trial. Thus, it is clear that no violation of the duty to adequate disclosure can be said to have occurred in the present case," the court stated.

Delhi Police nabs man for molesting, stalking minor

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has arrested a 37-year-old man for allegedly molesting and stalking a girl in the national Capital's Shahdara district.

The accused has been identified as Irfan Khan, a local. Police said that he works as a private accountant and he is married with three children.

A video purportedly showing Khan being beaten up by the people also made rounds on social media, prompting the police to take note of the incident.

The 13-year-old victim had on May 7 lodged a police complaint alleging that Khan had been stalking her for few days and that he also molested her while she was en route to tuition classes.

According to R

Sathiyasundaram, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Shahdara district, after the girl apprised her parents about the issue, they accompanied her to her tuition classes and they stood some distance away as Khan approached their daughter and caught him red-handed.

"While he tried to leave, the victim's parents and other people nabbed him and beat him up. The beat officer reached the spot and rescued him. The girl was counselled and the identity of the accused was established as Irfan Khan, a local," said the DCP.

"Accordingly, as per the complaint, a case under section 354D (stalking) of the Indian Penal Code and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012, was registered against the accused..He has been remanded to judicial custody and the case is under investigation," the DCP added.

RS polls: Goyal, PC may be re-nominated from Maharashtra

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, former Union Finance Minister and senior Congress Minister P Chidambaram, Shiv Sena chief spokesperson Sanjay Raut and former Union Minister and NCP leader Praful Patel — who are among the five sitting Rajya Sabha members whose terms will end on July 4, 2022 — will in all likelihood be re-nominated from Maharashtra as candidates by their respective parties for the biennial RS polls scheduled for June 10.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Thursday announced the schedule for

biennial RS elections to fill up 57 Rajya Sabha seats which are getting vacant on different dates between June 21 and August 1, 2022.

Goyal, Chidambaram, Raut, Patel, Vinay Sahasrabudhe and Vikas Mahatme, both from the BJP, will be retiring on July 4, 2022.

They are among the 57 RS members whose terms will end on different dates during the next eleven weeks.

Goyal, Chidambaram, Raut, Patel, Sahasrabudhe and Mahatme had been elected unopposed to Rajya Sabha from Maharashtra on June 2, 2022.

The nominations will begin on May 24, while the last date for nominations is May 31.

noida

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, G.B. Nagar (U.P.)
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E - TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on NOIDA Authority's official website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <http://tender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

(A)1.	34/PGM/AO/SM(JAL-OA)/21-22- O/M of sewer line and MSPS/IPS at Expressway (Cleaning and removal of existing Desilting/Debris/Silt rubbish/Bio mass/Grit & Sediment Material from Open inlet Chamber and well upto Bottom Invert Level IPS-7, Sec-129 & IPS-8, Sec-127 at Noida Gr. Noida Expressway), NOIDA (Expressway) NOIDA. Cost. 34.93 Lac
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CORRIGENDUM

It is for information to all concerned that "APWD registered Class-I (A) Contractors" may be read as "eligible contractors" in the PRESS NOTICE published vide this office no. CE/TB- VI/43/2022/02, Dated: 28-04-2022 for the work, "Construction of AnirudhaDev Sport University at Chabua, Assam" under NIDA on Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Mode III Basis.

Note: All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.

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निविदा आमंत्रण घोषणा-पत्र
क्र. 31/यां.वि./2022
भोपाल, दिनांक 12.05.2022
निम्नलिखित निर्माण कार्य हेतु दो लिफाफा पद्धति के अनुसार म.प्र. लोक निर्माण विभाग में केन्द्रीकृत व्यवस्था के अंतर्गत पंजीकृत टेकेदार परसेन्टेज मोहर बंद निविदाये निर्धारित प्रपत्र पर ऑनलाईन आमंत्रित की जाती है।

S. No.	Tender No	Work	Probable Amount (In lakh)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (In Rs.)	Completion Period (Months)
1	2022_UAD_202964_1	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER DRAINAGE SCHEME MUNICIPAL CORPORATION BHOPAL AREA NEAR SAIFA COLLEGE, BHOPAL TALKIES, POST OFFICE AND MASJID CHUTTAN BEE AND SURROUNDING AREAS WARD 19 ZONE 05	Rs. 446.89	Rs. 223446/-	12 months (including season rainy)

- Interested bidders can view the NIT on website <https://mptenders.gov.in/>
- The Bid Document can be purchased only Online from 13.05.2022 10:30 Hrs A.M. to 13.06.2022 05:30 Hrs P.M.
- Amendments to NIT, if any, would be published on website only, and not in newspaper.

The initial period of 5 (five) year after completion shall be treated as Defect Liability Period (DLP).

IN. CHIEF ENGINEER
MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, BHOPAL

क्र. 163/022/023

2 more arrested for firing at two brothers in Subhash Nagar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has arrested two more men for allegedly opening multiple rounds of fire at two brothers in west Delhi's Subhash Nagar area.

The accused have been identified as Adnan Tyagi (18) and Faizal (25), a resident of Tihar Village.

On Saturday, three assailants fired indiscriminately at an Innova car and grievously injured two brothers Ajay Chaudhary and Yashpal Chaudhary, when they were coming after meeting their relatives at Kalra Hospital, Kirti Nagar. They both received critical gunshot injuries.

During investigation, the accused were identified as Paras (gang member of Salman Tyagi), Salman's brother Adnan Tyagi and Salman's relative Faizal.

Further investigation revealed that they were followed the directions of Salman, who is in jail in MCOCA case. Salman has old enmity with Ajay and they planned to eliminate him, police said.

Police found that the one Raju provided the scooter used in crime to the accused persons. He was arrested on Sunday. Paras was arrested on Monday by the Special Cell of Delhi Police, they said, adding that

gang leader Salman was also arrested on Sunday from Tihar Jail.

According to Ghanshyam Bansal, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), West district, on Tuesday, information was received that Adnan and Faizal would be at Khurja in UP. Later, a raid was conducted at Jahangirpur, Khurja and Adnan and Faizal were arrested.

The investigation revealed that Salman was extorting money in 2016 and there was some tussle between him and Baniya, cousin of Ajay, said the DCP.

After that Salman was arrested under NDPS Act and subsequently a MCOCA was invoked on him and his gang. He suspected that Ajay was confining him in jail, the DCP said.

He wanted to take revenge from Ajay and discussed it with his brother Adnan and cousin Faizal.

They conspired to kill Ajay. Adnan and Faizal watched the activities of Ajay and came to know that he and his brother frequently visit Kalra Hospital to see their relative, police said.

They roped in old associate of Salman called Paras. They also roped in Raju. The weapons for the offence were arranged by Salman, police said.

Continue survey...

From Page 1
In its order, the court also said the district administration would not try to delay the survey work and would help the advocate commissioner.

Civil Judge (Senior Division) Ravi Kumar Diwakar had appointed Ajay Kumar Mishra as advocate commissioner to conduct survey and videography of Shringar Gauri Temple and other idols located in Gyanvapi premises on a petition filed by five Delhi-based women.

When the advocate commissioner reached the Gyanvapi to conduct a survey on May 6, the advocates of defendant Anjumam Intejamia Masjid

Committee protested the survey work, raising questions over his fairness. The advocates appearing for the committee also submitted a petition in the court on May 7 demanding the removal of the advocate commissioner. On the same day, the advocates appearing for the plaintiff also filed a petition seeking permission for survey of underground sites of the temple too.

After hearing on both petitions, the court had reserved its judgement on Wednesday.

The plaintiff and their advocates expressed happiness over the judgement and said that it cleared the way for the survey and videography of Gyanvapi premises.

HC dismisses...

From Page 1
The writ petition was filed on Saturday in the registry of the Lucknow bench of the High Court by Rajneesh Singh seeking a fact-finding inquiry into the history of the Taj Mahal. It also sought opening of the doors of its "22 rooms" to see "the truth, whatever it is".

Several Hindu right-wing outfits have claimed in the past that the Mughal-era mausoleum was a Lord Shiva temple.

The monument is pro-

tected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

The petition also sought the setting aside of certain provisions of The Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Declaration of National Importance) Act 1951, and The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 1958, under which the Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri, Agra Fort, Itimad-ud-Daulah's tomb were declared historical monuments.

IAF sergeant held for leaking info to Pak's...

From Page 1
"He had also received money, from the agent of an adversary country, for the leaked information," the complaint stated.

"During investigation, it was found that Sharma was allegedly honey-trapped by a Pakistan-based woman with whom he shared sensitive documents related to personnel, national security and defence," said the senior police official.

"A case under 'The Official Secrets Act' was also registered, and on May 6 a police team arrested the sergeant," said a police official.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to enhance the operational capabilities of the indigenous missile systems, India on Thursday successfully fired the extended range version of BrahMos Air Launched missile from Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft.

Giving details here, officials said the launch from the aircraft was as planned and the missile achieved a direct hit on the designated target in the Bay of Bengal region.

It was the first launch of extended range version of BrahMos missile from Su-

30MKI aircraft. With this, the IAF has achieved the capability to carry out precision strikes from Su-30MKI aircraft against a land and or sea target over very long ranges.

The extended range capability of the missile coupled with the high performance of the Su-30MKI aircraft gives the IAF a strategic reach and allows it to dominate the future battle fields, they said.

BrahMos is the first joint venture between India and Russia to develop and manufacture supersonic cruise missiles. It has a range of more than 400 kms.

Delhi Court dismisses bail plea of NSE's former boss Ramakrishna

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Admitted bail applications of the National Stock Exchange's (NSE) former boss Chitra Ramkrishna and group operating officer Anand Subramanian in the co-location case. Denying the relief, Special Judge Sanjeev Aggarwal said there was no sufficient ground to grant them bail. CBI had opposed their bail applications saying they could influence the witnesses and tam-

per with the evidence. It said the nature and gravity of the offence was "quite severe and had far-reaching repercussions on the financial stability".

The CBI is probing the alleged improper dissemination of information from the computer servers of the market exchanges to the stock brokers. Earlier, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has penalised the NSE, Ramakrishna, Ravi Narain, and two other officials for lapses in recruitment at the senior level.

Protests against SDMC's anti-encroachment drive; AAP MLA held

Even as Madanpur Khadar simmers, NMC's drive in Rohini, Karol Bagh and Turkman Gate goes off peacefully



Locals plead with folded hands during an anti-encroachment drive at Karol Bagh in New Delhi on Thursday
RANJAN DIMRI | THE PIONEER

SAURAV GUPTA ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Thursday arrested Amanatullah Khan, AAP legislator from Okhla, and five others, for obstructing the civic authorities and police personnel from carrying out anti-encroachment drives in his constituency. Police have registered a case under Section 186/332/353/147/148/149/153 of the Indian Penal Code (for rioting and obstructing public

servants in discharge of their duty). The arrest followed a day-long detention of the MLA in police custody after he got embroiled in a clash with the South Delhi Municipal Corporation's (SDMC) anti-encroachment team and police-men in the Southeast Delhi's Madanpur Khadar area. This is the fourth day of the 'anti encroachment drive' by the civic agencies across the national Capital. Besides Madanpur Khadar, the demoli-

tion drive was also executed at Srinivasapuri, Khayala, Punjabi Bagh, Sagarpur and Dabri in the Southeast Delhi area. Khan, who had reached the Madanpur Khadar area at around 12 P.M., was joined by the locals in raising slogans against SDMC officials and police personnel, trying to stop them from carrying out a demolition drive in the Kanchan Kunj area. A senior police official said that earlier in the day a few protestors and Khan were detained



MCD workers use bulldozers to demolish illegal structures during an anti-encroachment drive at Madanpur Khadar in New Delhi on Thursday
RANJAN DIMRI | THE PIONEER

and there was minor stone pelting but later the crowd was dispersed. Police personnel wearing helmets and armed with batons remained stationed at Kanchan Kunj area to ensure smooth execution of the demolition drive. "I will support the civic body if there is any encroachment. But there is no encroachment in the area. In fact, people are themselves removing the encroachment, if any. But the civic body's mindless move is leaving people without shelter. I am ready to go to jail if it saves the houses of poor people," said Khan. Talking to *The Pioneer*, Rajpal Singh, the SDMC's Central Zone Chairman said that the drive started at around

11:00 A.M. and continued till 5:00 P.M. Two illegal permanent structures on encroached land and several temporary structures including kiosks and sheds were removed. He said that almost 80 civic agency officials along with four JCB bulldozers and 12 trucks with adequate police forces and paramilitary personnel were deployed. "The encroachment from the pavements, roads and foot-paths needs to be removed as these cause traffic jams on the streets," Singh said. On its part, the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NMC) removed illegal encroachment from Rohini at KN Katju Marg, Karol Bagh at Prem Nagar area and Turkman Gate. However, no

protests were reported. According to a senior NMC official, at the KN Katju Marg around 200 police personnel and paramilitary personnel were deployed to help the civic body carry out the demolition drive. NMC Commissioner Sanjay Goel said that during the anti-encroachment drive at KN Katju Marg in Rohini Zone around 120 temporary struc-

tures including shanties and about a 1,500 meter of stretch on both sides of the road was cleared. "Various encroached areas were cleared in Prem Nagar zone. The teams also cleared garbage and it took 20 rounds of trucks to clear the site," Goel said. At the Turkman Gate, the demolition team including from the Licensing Department and

Engineering Department of the concerned zone seized 34 articles and removed 22 vendors," Goel added. Meanwhile, the NMC has requested the Station House Officer (SHO) of Samaypur Badli and Bawana police stations to ensure adequate force including women police officials to help the anti-encroachment demolition teams to carry out demolition drives.

MCD bent on destroying Delhi in name of clearing illegal constructions: AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Following the ongoing demolition drive by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) said that the saffron party is hell-bent on destroying the entire Capital in the name of clearing unauthorised constructions. Saurabh Bhardwaj, the AAP spokesperson alleged that the BJP-led MCD intends to uproot the lives of 63 lakh innocent Delhiites and render them homeless, based on its preposterous demolition orders. "Over the past 15 days, the BJP-ruled civic agencies and the Delhi Police are collectively terrorising people with their 'bulldozer' justice.

All these unauthorised constructions that were done in Delhi over the last 15 years took place with the BJP-led MCD's cognisance and permission. These constructions were the result of large amounts of money exchanging hands as bribe," said Bhardwaj. "These bulldozers should first be run over the homes of those MCD officers, BJP Councillors and Mayors who have enabled these unsanctioned constructions by committing flagrant corruption and pocketing large sums of money in the process," said Bhardwaj. "We demand that the corrupt officers and Councillors who have squandered these gigantic amounts of money should be the ones exposed to

homelessness and displacement, not the innocent population of 63 lakh Delhi residents," he said. Bhardwaj claimed that a video of the residence of BJP Delhi State president and Councillor Adesh Gupta was displayed on a private channel, and it was revealed that not only has unauthorised construction taken place at his house, but he has occupied Government land to do so. Reacting to Bhardwaj's statement, Delhi BJP leader Praveen Shankar said that the way AAP leaders are reacting to the anti-encroachment drives clearly shows that the drive is affecting their political supporters and the proof is MLA Amanatullah Khan's constant efforts to provoke people to take the law in their hands.

Power demand at 6,780 MW for first time this year

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As the sizzling heatwave continues to sweep the national Capital, the power demand in the city on Thursday clocked 6,780 MW for the first time this year. According to sources in discoms, the city's peak power demand on Thursday broke the record created just a day earlier. It not only clocked the season's highest of 6,780 MW at 3:33 pm, but also highest-ever in month of May. "On Wednesday, Delhi's peak power demand clocked 6,572 MW in afternoon, the highest-ever in month of May till then. Just hours later, this record too was broken, when peak power demand clocked 6,596 MW at 11:18 PM," they said. Sources said that Delhi's peak power demand has

increased by nearly 2.8 per cent in just 24 hours and by 7.3 per cent since May 1. The previous high in May was 6,461 MW that was recorded on May 31, 2019. This is eighth time in 10 days of May that national Capital's peak power demand has crossed 6,000 MW-mark. The Capital's peak power demand in May had never crossed the 6,000 MW mark in 2021 and 2020. In 2019, it had crossed 6,000 MW mark only on three occasions i.e. on May 29 (6,020 MW), May 30 (6,240 MW) and May 31 (6,461 MW). "In May so far, the peak power demand has been higher on 100 per cent of corresponding days of May of 2021, 2020 and 2019," sources said. "In April 2022, the peak power demand had been higher on 100

per cent of corresponding days in respect to that of April 2021, 2020 and 2019. Moreover, on seven occasions in April this year, Delhi's peak power demand clocked the highest-ever in April, each breaking previous record in quick succession. On April 19, it was 5,735 MW, 5,761 MW on April 20, 5,781 MW on August 21, 5,786 MW on April 27, and 6,050 MW on April 28, and it touched 6,197 on April 29 and 6,036 MW on April 30," sources said. "The reason behind increasing power demand in Delhi is cooling load. In fact, according to estimates, almost 50 per cent of city's power demand in summers is because of cooling load that includes ACs, coolers and fans. The rain had a direct bearing on cooling load," they added.

IMD predicts heatwave for next five days

Max temperature was 42.5 degrees Celsius on Thursday, min recorded at 29.5 degrees Celsius

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The maximum temperature in the national Capital on Thursday settled at 42.5 degrees Celsius, which was three notches warmer than normal for this time of the year, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The minimum temperature in Delhi was recorded at 29.5 degrees Celsius, which is four notches above the normal temperature for this season. The relative humidity in the Capital city's atmosphere on Thursday was recorded as 61 per cent at 8:30 in the morning



Women use scarfs to shield themselves from the hot summer sun in New Delhi
RANJAN DIMRI | PIONEER

and 32 per cent in the evening at 5:30. The weather stations at the Ridge, Ayanagar, Mungeshpur, Najafgarh,

Pitampura, Palam, and Lodhi Road recorded maximum temperatures of 42.3 degrees Celsius, 43.5 degrees Celsius,

45.4 degrees Celsius, 44.7 degrees Celsius, 44 degrees Celsius, 43.4 degrees Celsius and 42 degrees Celsius respec-

tively, said IMD data. The problems of Delhiites are about to be compounded as IMD predicted a heatwave for next five days and maximum temperature will shoot up to 44-45 degrees Celsius. The IMD said, "There will be major heatwave spells over Northwest and Central India during next five days." The weather station also suggested measures to avoid health issues. It asked people to avoid heat exposure and keep cool, avoid dehydration, drink sufficient water even if not thirsty. It advised them to wear lightweight, light-coloured, loose, cotton clothes and cover their heads with a cloth, hat or umbrella while going out. It also suggested consumption of ORS and homemade drinks like lassi, torani (rice water), lemon water, buttermilk, etc, to keep hydrated.

98.3% DU students appear for offline exams



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Despite prolonged protests by a section of students against holding offline exams, Delhi University (DU) registered an attendance of 98.3 per cent on first day of physical mode examinations that were held after a gap of over two years due to Covid-19 pandemic. Offline examinations

for second and third-year undergraduate students at university began on Wednesday. A total of 67,948 students appeared for papers across courses that were conducted in two sessions. A total of 44,311 students, or 97.5 per cent students, had appeared for exam in morning session and just 1,124 registered students did not appear for the exams. The

attendance was even better in evening session at 99.8 per cent and 23,637 out of 23,684 registered students appeared for exams. A DU official also said that students who missed exams due to Covid-19 infection or were under quarantine as someone close to them tested positive will be given another chance in August. "(Such students) will be asked to provide medical certificates and they will be given another chance in August to give exams," he said. As students are appearing for offline exams after two years, the university has given them a breather by granting additional 30 minutes to write exam. "The duration of exams of undergraduate, post-graduate, professional programmes is three hours and an additional 30 minutes are being provided as a special one-time measure," said official. Ahead of offline

examinations, the second and third-year students staged protests demanding an open book examination. Several stu-

Jamia may postpone entrance tests as dates clash with Class 12 Board exams

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) is likely to postpone entrance tests for admission to its undergraduate and post-graduate programmes till the second week of June as their dates are overlapping with CBSE Class 12 Board exams. Entrance tests to courses not covered under the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) were scheduled to start from June 2. The exams are now expected to begin on June 11. The university is also

dents also filed a plea in Delhi High Court seeking examinations in open-book mode in view of Covid pandemic.

expected to extend the last date for submission of applications from May 12 to May 25. The entrance exams are expected to be from June 11 while the revised schedule is likely to be issued soon. "We have decided to extend dates of entrance exams as class 12th exams are underway and they overlap with entrance exams. The last date for submission of applications will also be extended from May 12 to May 25," said official. The Term-II examinations for Class 12 Board exams are to be concluded on June 13.

Delhi Govt extends drive to curb open garbage burning

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Thursday extended its campaign to curb open burning of garbage to check air pollution till June 13. Launched on April 12, the campaign was scheduled to end on Thursday. "A total of 5,241 places were inspected across the city as part of the campaign. The Delhi Pollution Control Committee has so far issued notices to 21 erring individuals and organisations," Environment Minister Gopal Rai said. Ten departments have deployed around 500 teams to check open burning of waste in the city. The campaign is part of the city government's summer action plan that focuses on city forests, redevelopment of parks, rejuvenation of water



bodies, sapling plantation, tree transplantation monitoring, phasing out of single-use plastics, development of an eco-waste park, urban farming, among others. Last year, the city government had implemented a 10-point action plan to check the worsening of air

pollution in the winter season. The plan focused on stubble burning, dust, burning of garbage, fireworks, installation of a smog tower, identification of more polluting sites, strengthening of green war rooms, and vehicular emissions.

Delhi Govt allocates ₹140 cr for planting 10 lakh saplings

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister, Manish Sisodia, on Thursday approved the budget of ₹140.47 crore to plant 10 lakh saplings across various degraded forest lands and restore Delhi's lush green cover. Sisodia said that as a part of the project the forest land in Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary, Dera Mandi, Ghittorni, Maidangarhi, Rangpuri, Tughlaqabad, Pul Pehladpur and Rajokri of Southern Ridge area, which has large chunk of less vegetated forest areas will be eco-restored by suppression/removal of invasive



species, Wildlife Habitat improvement and soil moisture conservation measures. In the meeting of Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC), Sisodia also said that this is not

just an allocation of funds but investment for the quality of health of Delhi residents. "Over the years the green cover has grown in the national capital and it will be further improved

after plantation of 10 lakh saplings. This project will help us restore Delhi's green lungs. Now, the green cover of Delhi has increased from 299.77sqkm in 2015 to 342sqkm in 2021," said Sisodia. "The forest department will plant more than six lakh saplings on 'mission mode' before this monsoon and another four lakh saplings in next monsoon season, which is the best time for planting," said an official. "Along with native species of Aravali, the saplings short-listed for plantation include specially grown plant species in the upgraded nursery of forest department," the official added.

One more person arrested for Jahangirpuri riot

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested one more person in connection with the Jahangirpuri violence which broke out during a Hanuman Jayanti procession on April 16. The accused has been identified as Abdul alias Raja and he was arrested from the national Capital, an official said. According to a senior police official, Abdul was found to be allegedly involved in rioting and in one of the CCTV footage that was being analysed by Crime Branch team, it was



seen that Abdul was threatening people with an axe in his hand. With this, 37 people, including three juveniles, have been apprehended by police so far. Clashes had broken out between two communities during the procession in Jahangirpuri in the capital on April 16, leaving eight police personnel and a local injured.

Water supply in Delhi will be hit due to maintenance work today

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Jal Board (DJB) on Thursday issued an advisory stating that the water supply in parts of the national capital will be affected on May 13, due to the maintenance work. According to the advisory, Due to depletion of pond level of Yamuna at Wazirabad Water Works 671.80 feet against the normal level of 674.50 feet and reduction in release of raw water by Haryana in river Yamuna, water production has been affected from Water Treatment Plants at Wazirabad, Chandrawal and Okhla. "The affected areas are Civil lines, Hindu Rao Hospital and adjoining areas ,Kamla

Nagar , Shakti Nagar and adjoining areas ,Karol Bagh , Pahar Ganj and NDMC areas , New Rajinder Nagar , Patel Nagar, Baljeet Nagar, Prem Nagar, Inderpuri and adjoining areas, Kalkaji, Govindpuri, Tugalkabad, Sangam Vihar, Ambedkar Nagar. Prahladpur and adjoining area, Ramlalela Ground, Delhi gate, Subhash Park., Model Town, Gulabi Bagh, Punjabi Bagh, Jahangirpuri, Moolchand, South Extn., Greater Kailash, Burari and adjoining areas, , Parts of Cantonment areas and South Delhi," it stated. DJB also advised the public to make judicious use of water to avoid any inconvenience.

‘100% coverage of schemes ends appeasement’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said that total coverage of the Government schemes brings an end to "discrimination" and "policy of appeasement".

Addressing "Utkarsh Samaroah" in Bharuch, Gujarat, the PM advocated 100 per cent coverage of beneficiaries and delivering to "every creed and every section equally".

The programme marks the celebration of 100 per cent saturation of four key schemes of the State Government in the district, providing timely financial assistance to those in need, according to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The schemes relate to social security and providing financial assistance to widows, elderly and destitute citizens.

The Prime Minister who interacted with the beneficiaries via videoconferencing said many citizens from tribal, SC, and minority communities are deprived of the benefits of the schemes due to lack of information. He said that every entitled person should get the full benefit of the scheme.

Women of the region presented a huge "Rakhi" to the Prime Minister wishing him health and long life. Chief Minister of Gujarat Bhupendrabhai Patel was among those present on the occasion.

The Prime Minister said due to lack of information, the Government schemes either remain on paper or ineligible people avail their benefits adding that although the process to reach out to each and every beneficiary was difficult, it was the "only way" to serve the people.

"Hundred per cent saturation of Government schemes ends discrimination and need for a recommendation to get the benefits, because people are confident that they will eventually get the benefit. It also puts an end to appeasement politics because 100 per cent coverage leaves no space for it," he said.

Modi said his Government has been trying to cover each and every eligible beneficiary of welfare schemes ever since he became the Prime Minister eight years ago.

"Hundred per cent saturation is not merely a figure. This



indicates that the Government is sensitive and cares for the people. On the occasion of the completion of eight years of our Government, the country has taken a vow to reach out to 100 per cent beneficiaries," he said.

This (100 per cent coverage) also finishes the "politics of appeasement", said the Prime Minister.

Modi said ensuring 100 per cent coverage of welfare schemes was his dream, and added that he would not rest till it was achieved.

He said when the BJP-led NDA came to power in 2014, nearly half of the country's population did not have the facility of toilets, electricity, bank accounts and vaccination.

"Last eight years of my service to the nation from

Delhi were dedicated to good governance and welfare of the poor," he said.

"Once again, we all need to get our acts together to reach out to the needy and give them what they deserve. This is a difficult task and many politicians stay away from doing this. But, I am here to serve the people, not to do politics," Modi said.

The Prime Minister asked Patel to fulfil the wishes of his three daughters and contact him in case he faces any difficulty.

He also interacted with two widows — Meena Rathva and Aruna Vasava — who thanked the Government for the financial support in such difficult times.

Modi thanked nearly 100 widows who had prepared a giant rakhi for him.

benefits. But our Government changed this scenario and also made improvements in the schemes. We have set new targets and we are achieving them with each passing day" said the PM, adding that his Government has also started providing financial assistance to marginal farmers.

Ahead of his address, Modi interacted with three beneficiaries of these Government schemes.

Talking to one Ayyub Patel, a visually-impaired beneficiary who came there with his elder daughter Aliya, Modi became emotional after the girl started crying when she said she wants to become a doctor as she cannot see her father's condition.

The Prime Minister asked Patel to fulfil the wishes of his three daughters and contact him in case he faces any difficulty.

He also interacted with two widows — Meena Rathva and Aruna Vasava — who thanked the Government for the financial support in such difficult times.

Modi thanked nearly 100 widows who had prepared a giant rakhi for him.

Four CBI's SIs arrested over corruption charges

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Thursday arrested four of its own Sub-Inspectors posted here on certain allegations and conducted searches at their premises. All these officers have also been dismissed from service as part of zero tolerance for corruption.

The searches yielded incriminating documents and they are being scrutinized for further action.

"CBI has registered a case against its Sub-Inspector posted at New Delhi and unknown officials/private persons on a complaint. The Complainant who is running a partnership firm in Chandigarh had alleged that on 10.05.2022, six persons including CBI officials entered his office and threatened him that he would be arrested for supporting and providing money to terrorists as they have information regarding the same," the CBI said in a statement.



It was further alleged that the accused forcefully took the complainant in a car and also demanded Rs 25 lakh from him, said.

The agency further said, "As part of its zero tolerance policy towards corruption and other offences, not only in respect of those from outside but its own officials, CBI on receipt of the complaint, immediately registered a case, identified its three other officials

allegedly involved in the matter and effected their arrests."

"Taking a serious note of this act on part of these delinquent officials, all four of them were dismissed from service," it said, adding the arrested accused are being produced before the Competent Court at Chandigarh.

The arrested accused Sub-Inspectors are Pardeep Rana, Ankur Kumar and Akash Ahlawat.

RS polls on June 10 for 57 seats from 15 States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Thursday announced that polls will be held on June 10 to fill 57 Rajya Sabha seats from 15 States falling vacant due to the retirement of members on different dates between June and August.

Prominent among those retiring are Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, Congress leaders Ambika Soni, Jairam Ramesh and Kapil Sibal, and BSP's Satish Chandra Misra. Members are retiring between June 21 and August 1.

The BJP is set to increase its members in the Upper House from Uttar Pradesh, while the BSP and the Congress would be the major losers in the upcoming election to 11 seats of the upper house from the state.

While 11 seats are falling vacant in Uttar Pradesh, six members each are retiring from Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, five from Bihar and four each from Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Karnataka. Three

members each from Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, two each from Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Punjab Jharkhand and Haryana, and one from Uttarakhand are also retiring. The notification for the polls will be issued on May 24 and voting will be held on June 10. According to established practice, counting will take place an hour after the conclusion of polling. Most of the new members who get elected are likely to vote in the President's election, due sometime in July.

Uttar Pradesh sends 31 members to Rajya Sabha. Among the 11 retiring MPs from the state, five are from the BJP, three from the SP, two from the BSP and one from the Congress. With 403 elected members in the UP assembly, a candidate will require at least 37 votes for victory. The outcome of the recently held state assembly elections has changed the equation this time. With 273 MLAs, the BJP-led NDA will be able to get seven members elected easily, while SP and its allies (RLD and SBSP), with

a strength of 125 legislators will be able to ensure victory of three candidates.

For the 11th seat, both SP and BJP will be trying to win the support of other parties, including Raja Bhaiyya's Jansatta Dal Loktantrik and the Congress which have two MLAs each and the lone legislator of Mayawati's BSP.

After the retirement of Sibal, the Congress' representation in the upper house from the state will be nil. BSP's two senior leaders - Satish Chandra Mishra and Ashok Siddharth — will retire in July after which it will have only one member Ramji Gautam in the upper house. The five retiring BJP RS MPs include Zafar Islam, Shiv Pratap Shukla, Sanjay Seth, Surendra Nagar, and Jai Prakash Nishad. Those completing their term in the SP include former UP legislative council chairman Sukhram Singh Yadav, whose son Mohit has joined the BJP. Besides Yadav, the tenure of Reoti Raman Singh and Vishambhar Prasad Nishad will also end in July.

SC refuses interim relief on plea against LIC IPO share allotment



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to grant any interim relief and stay the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) IPO share allotment on a batch of pleas filed by some policy holders. A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud, Surya Kant and PS Narasimha said that the court should be reluctant to grant any interim relief in matters of commercial investments and IPO.

"We are not inclined to grant any interim relief", the bench said as it issued notice to the Centre and LIC on the batch of pleas seeking their response within eight weeks.

The Bench said that on the aspect of interim relief the court must be guided by the well settled principle of prima facie case, balance of convenience and whether there is any irreparable injury. LIC IPO opened on May 4 for retail and other investors and is set to be allotted on Thursday. Bench noted that one of the pleas has challenged the interim order passed by the Bombay High Court and disposed it, saying the writ petition before the HC will be transferred to the apex court. SC tagged the batch of pleas with a pending matter referred to a Constitution bench on the issue of passage of the Finance Act, 2021 as a money bill.

ED can go to Kolkata, conduct money laundering probe in coal scam, says SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday told the Enforcement Directorate (ED) that they can go to Kolkata and conduct the investigation in a money-laundering probe, linked to coal scam in West Bengal, in which the agency had issued summons to TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee and his wife Rujira Banerjee.

As the ED referred to how the CBI officials were 'gheraoed' (surrounded) in Kolkata earlier and said that Abhishek Banerjee is politically "influential", the apex court observed it may say the Kolkata Police shall extend all cooperation and the state would be bound by that, the moment the agency would make a requisition 72 hours in advance.

A bench headed by Justice UU Lalit was hearing an appeal of Abhishek Banerjee and his wife Rujira Banerjee against a Delhi High Court order dismissing their petition seeking quashing of summons issued to them in the money-laundering

probe linked to a coal scam case in West Bengal. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the petitioners, said they are not preventing investigation in the matter and the ED can come to Kolkata and conduct the probe.

"Supposing in case we say whatever documents, whatever records you need, every page shall be made available and you can come down to Kolkata," the bench, also comprising Justices S R Bhat and Sudhanshu Dhulia, told Additional Solicitor General (ASG) S V Raju who was representing the ED. "Mylords are aware ... I should not say, there are instances where the CBI officers were 'gheraoed' also," Raju said.

On May 17 last year, a high voltage political drama was witnessed in Kolkata as TMC supporters held demonstrations at various places, while Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had offered to court arrest protesting detention of two West Bengal ministers in the Narada case by the CBI.

PM Modi to visit Lumbini on Buddha Purnima on May 16

It will be Modi's fifth visit to the Himalayan nation Nepal since 2014

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Lumbini in Nepal on May 16 on the occasion of Buddha Purnima at the invitation of his Nepalese counterpart Sher Bahadur Deuba. Both the leaders later will also hold bilateral meetings to review the historic ties.

Announcing Modi's schedule, the Ministry of External Affairs said here on Thursday, "At Lumbini, the Prime Minister will visit the sacred Mayadevi temple to offer prayers. The prime minister will also deliver an address at a Buddha Jayanti event organised by the Lumbini Development Trust under the aegis of the Government of Nepal."

It is Modi's fifth visit to the Himalayan nation since 2014. Separately, the prime minister will participate in the "shilanyas" (foundation stone laying) ceremony of a centre for Buddhist culture and heritage in a plot belonging to the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), New Delhi within the Lumbini Monastic Zone, the ministry said.

It said both the prime ministers will hold a bilateral meeting adding "Prime Minister Modi's visit continues the tradition of regular high-level exchanges between India and Nepal in furtherance of our

Neighbourhood First policy." The ministry statement also said "it underscores the shared civilisational heritage of the people of both countries."

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

Ahead of Deuba's visit last month, the external affairs ministry had said India and Nepal enjoy age-old and special ties of friendship and cooperation. In recent years, the partnership has witnessed significant growth in all areas of cooperation.

The upcoming visit will provide an opportunity to the two sides to review this wide ranging cooperative partnership and to progress it further for the benefit of the two peoples, it had said.

Nepal shares a border of over 1,850 km with five Indian states — Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Later this month, Modi will travel to Japan to take part in the Quad summit there. Heads of states of 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 criticized the Quad and claim it will lead to militarization of the strategic region.

400 Cong leaders gather for 'Chintan Shivir'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/UDAIPUR

Congress president Sonia Gandhi, former party chief Rahul Gandhi, the two Congress Chief Ministers and party's State presidents are amongst the 400 leaders who have gathered at the city of lakes Udaipur in Rajasthan for a three-day brainstorming session called 'Chintan Shivir' beginning Friday.

With the primary aim to focus on time-bound party restructuring and finding ways to combat politics of polarisation the grand old party will have an unfettered discussion to take on the forthcoming electoral challenges including that in Gujarat and then to be battle ready to take heads on the BJP's juggernaut led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

At a curtain raiser Press conference here, Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the 'Nav Sankalp Chintan Shivir' is also aimed at deliberating on challenges facing the country such as "freefall of the economy", increasing inequality of wealth, price rise of essential commodities, "deep-rooted conspiracy" to hand over farming sector to a select group of private corporates, "attack on India's territorial integrity by China, "attack" on

rights of Dalits, SCs/STs, minorities and attempts to divide by using Hindu-Muslim rhetoric.

Congress has chosen six subjects and constituted groups to examine and submit their primary reports on actionable for the same, he said. These groups are political, social justice and empowerment, economy, Congress organisation, Kisan and Khet Mazdoor and Youth. These groups will present their first impressions for a conclusive discussion during the 'Chintan Shivir' (brainstorming session).

The roadmap will provide a way forward not only to the Congress to meet up with the

current set of "reverses and challenges", but will also pave the way for a resilient, strong and inclusive nation, he said.

The issue of leadership in the Congress is not likely to be discussed at the Udaipur conclave, party sources said, even as several leaders at the shivir are likely to rake up the issue of Rahul Gandhi taking over the party leadership.

Former Union Minister Sachin Pilot said Congress is and will have to remain the "pivot" around which an anti-BJP coalition is formed and a "UPA plus plus" formation would be the "best one" to take on the BJP-led NDA in the 2024 general elections.

IMA writes to Health Minister to put off NEET PG 2022 exam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has written to the Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya requesting postponement of the NEET-PG 2022 examination slated to be held on May 21.

In its letter, the IMA pointed out that the NEET-PG 2021 was held 5 months after the scheduled date in September 2021. "Then the counselling scheduled to begin from October 25, 2021 was also initiated (in January, 2022) after a delay due to pending decision on seat reservations and was further delayed owing Supreme Court ruling of March 31, 2022, which ordered the cancellation and conduction of special round of counselling for the Mop-up round."

It further pointed out that, "as a result of the delayed counselling schedule, NEET PG 2022 was deferred from



April 2022 to May 2022, so that the candidates could appear for the final stray vacancy round of NEET PG 2021 and can still have plenty of time for preparation and reappearance for the next NEET PG 2022 exam, if they failed to secure a seat this year."

However, the AIQ Counselling, anticipated to be completed by the end of March 2022, is still in process and is uncertain that it will end by May 7th. Several States will also be finishing the counseling around the middle of May 2022. The difference between NEET PG 2022 exam date and completion of 2021 counseling is too short for an aspirant to

prepare and appear for an extremely difficult exam like NEET-PG, the IMA said in the letter, as it sought postponement of the examination.

Another "innocent five to ten thousand interns, who served as Covid warriors during Covid-19 pandemic, are ineligible to appear for NEET-PG due to delay in completion of their final examination and consequently their internship beyond eligibility criteria set for the examination", the letter highlighted.

"Since the NEET PG 2022 examination date is 21st May 2022, we request your timely intervention and urgent consideration of postponement of the NEET PG 2022 for a reasonable period of time, so that, the current NEET-PG2021 aspirants have adequate time to prepare and appear for the upcoming NEET-PG 2022 examination and the eligibility of all interns is also ensured," the medical body said.

Centre aims to construct 18K km highways in current fiscal year

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday said it is committed to expand the national highway and expressway networks across the country with the aim of constructing 18,000 km of highways in the current financial year at a record speed of 50 km per day. Union road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari said the government's overall target is to develop two lakh km of National Highway Network by 2025.

India's national highway construction slowed to 28.64 km a day in 2021-22 due to the COVID-19 pandemic-related disruptions and a longer-than-usual monsoon in some parts of the country. At one point of time the pace of national highway (NH) construction in the country had touched a record 37 km per day in 2020-21.

The road transport and



highways minister emphasised that constructing world class road infrastructure in a time bound and target oriented way is essential. "Ambitious targets to fulfil the ambitions of New India Under the leadership of PM Shri @narendramodiji, we are committed to expanding the NH network across the country with the aim of constructing 18,000 km of NHs in 2022-23 at a record speed of 50km per day," Gadkari mentioned in a tweet.

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)

and the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL) are primarily responsible for the construction of national highways and expressways across the country. Gadkari also informed that the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) is building over 1.47 lakh km of roads in the country. "The NHAI is also building 22 green highways and by the end of 2024, we want to expand our road network matching with the US," Gadkari stated.

Mamata asks Modi for pending NREGA funds

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has written yet another letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, this time for clearance of central funds for 100 days' work that comes under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

The Chief Minister on Thursday wrote that the Centre owed the State funds to the tune of Rs 6,500 crore out of which Rs 3,000 crore against the "wage liability" and Rs 3,500 crore against "non-wage liability."

In her letter Banerjee wrote "...wage payment is pending for more than four months as the Government of India is nor releasing funds to

the State ... you are aware that the wages for MGNREGA form an important part of livelihood of rural people and considering this importance, the Act mandates that the wages must be paid within fifteen days."

Apart from this the Chief Minister also drew the Prime Minister's attention towards the held up funds for the construction of about 32 lakh houses during 2016-2017.

"Considering the significance of the projects and the hardships being faced by the common people I would request you for your immediate intervention and direction to the concerned ministry to release the funds without any further delay," she further wrote.

Earlier in a meeting with the West Bengal Civil Services

(WBCS) officers Banerjee attacked the Centre for not releasing the funds due to the State."I have been told that the Centre is not releasing funds to the tune of Rs 6,500 crore for the payment of the poor people engaged in 100 days' work ... already these are hard times in an inflationary market ... and if the funds are blocked like then how the State will take care of those expenses," Banerjee said adding "the Centre takes away the taxes and does not release the State's share ... how we will work in this manner... not only the MNREGA funds the Centre is not clearing funds for Awaz Yojnas... this notwithstanding the fact that we have been the best performers in housing scheme."

Regarding the housing programmes she wrote in her

letter to the Prime Minister, "in Awaz Yojana, West Bengal is No. 1 in the country and from 2016-17, more than 32 lakh houses had been constructed in the state."

Despite this performance fresh allocation of funds were pending with the Ministry of Rural Development "and a long list of beneficiaries is awaiting sanction in the State," she wrote.

BJP leader and former State party president Rahul Sinha promptly reacted to Banerjee's statements saying "she is telling only the half-truth ... firstly she is guilty of diverting funds or else the NREGA expenditures would have been managed and secondly she demands for money but never accounts for it and then blames the Centre ... this is not done."

West Bengal announces same allowance for IAS, WBCS cadre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

In what is being viewed as a "special treatment" being accorded to the State rank civil services officers ahead of next year's panchayat elections and 2024 general polls, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday announced a whole range of sops for the West Bengal Civil Services officers.

The WBCS officers who are working as Block Development Officers, Sub-Divisional Magistrates and District (or Additional) Magistrates would hence forward get special allowances on par with the Indian Administrative Services Officers, the Chief Minister said amid a big round of applause. She was speaking in a meeting with the State level bureaucrats.

Banerjee also said that the officers who had reached the

maximum pay scale would get a monthly allowance of Rs 10,000 till their retirement, adding "in order to avoid stagnation in salary at the top level, we will also add four additional pay scales."

Apart from this a couple of hundred new posts would be created for the WBCS cadre, the Chief Minister said.

"The WBCS officers who are the sons of the soil are also the face of our government... they have all the capabilities to become DMs and even departmental secretaries ... we have been promoting more WBCS officers as DMs than in the earlier regime ... this will encourage the promising officers to do better work."

Banerjee also said that new posts would be created for WBCS rank so that they could be accommodated in the new districts that the State was likely to create in future. According to sources the State Government was planning to



create four more districts in addition to the present 23.

The Opposition BJP was prompt to react to the Chief Ministerial announcement, saying instead of paying the State employees the salary recommended by the seventh Pay Commission and instead of clearing their dearness allowances the Chief Minister

was trying to create a new system of State created bureau-

crats.

CPI(M)'s Sujan Chakrabarty said "while the BJP Government is trying to cover its failures by creating new controversies like demolition drive and other religious sentimental issues the Bengal Chief Minister was trying to cloak her failures by buying away the bureaucrats so that they could help her in elections.

Army chief on visit to Ladakh to review security and preparedness

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

After setting the tone of future negotiations aimed at resolving the boundary issue with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Indian Army chief General Manoj Pande Thursday arrived in Ladakh on his maiden visit to review the prevailing security situation & operational preparedness.

During his stay General Pande is expected to visit the forward areas in the eastern Ladakh sector and hold interaction with the soldiers deployed in the region.

During his visit General Pande would be briefed by the Chief of Northern Command headquarters Lt-Gen Upendra Dwivedi and 'Fire and Fury' Corps Commander Lt Gen A Sengupta on the prevailing situation along the China and Pakistan border in the region.

According to an official release, "General Manoj Pande



COAS is on a visit to Ladakh Sector to review the prevailing security situation & operational preparedness".

While referring to China during his maiden interaction with the media in New Delhi, the Army Chief had clearly stated, "The basic issue remains resolution of the border. What we see is that China's intent has been to keep the boundary issue alive."

According to official sources, on his arrival in Ladakh General Pande

reviewed the equipment used by the Army in the Ladakh sector including unmanned aerial vehicles along with other 'Made-in-India' defence equipment.

The Army Chief as a Major General had commanded the 8 Mountain Division responsible for the operations along the Pakistan border in the sector.Gen Pande's own unit 117 Engineers Regiment is also deployed in operations along the Eastern Ladakh sector.

Mayawati questions Azam's detention

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Thursday joined several other parties in their campaign to capitalise on displeasure of Mohammad Azam Khan with Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav.

Mayawati made three tweets after a long time. In these, she raised a big question on the process of keeping Azam Khan in jail for more than two years. The former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh came out in open support of Azam Khan.

The BSP chief said in a tweet on Thursday that the Bharatiya Janata Party was also following the path of Congress and targeting people in its ruled states. She said like the Congress, the BJP was harassing people in Uttar Pradesh and other states ruled by it.

Mayawati said the way the poor, Dalits, Adivasis and Muslims were being harassed by targeting them and making them victims of atrocities, excesses and fear, it was very



said.

Mayawati said that keeping senior MLA Mohammad Azam Khan in jail for about two-and-a-half years was like strangulating justice.

Khan, a senior SP leader and MLA from Rampur, is currently in jail on several charges, including corruption. He has been lodged in Sitapur jail for over two years.

In a major relief to him, the Allahabad High Court on Wednesday granted Khan bail in the case of illegal possession of enemy property. Khan, a former state minister, has got bail

in 88 out of 89 cases. He will be released from jail only after the bail is granted in the last case.

Earlier, Mayawati slammed the anti-encroachment drive carried out in some places, including the national capital, by civic authorities. "The manner in which migrants and working people are being made victims of fear and terror in the name of encroachment by adopting a malicious attitude in many states of the country and their livelihood is being snatched, raises many questions and is also a matter of concern," she said.

Pinarayi Vijayan accuses BJP of trying to derail LDF Government

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Rejuvenated and re-energised Pinarayi Vijayan, chief minister of Kerala, lambasted the BJP-led Central Government on Thursday, accusing it of resorting to dirty politics to get the Left Democratic Front Government defeated in the May 2021 assembly election. Making his first public appearance at Kochi after a three week-long treatment at Mayo Clinic in USA, Vijayan said that the Central Government had unleashed agencies like the CBI, ED and NIA against his government and officials under fictitious charges like gold smuggling and allegations of corruption in LIFE Mission, the LDF Government's flagship programme.

"What happened to those probes and investigations? The BJP Government even tried to brainwash the voters of the State by spreading falsehoods and

lies. But the good works done by the LDF Government during 2016 to 2021 made the people to re-elect the Government for another term belying the expectations of the BJP," said Vijayan while inaugurating the election convention of the LDF candidate Dr Jo Joseph at Thrikkakkara for the May 31 bye-election.

He said the continuation of the BJP Government at the Centre is a big threat and danger to the integrity and communal harmony of India. "The BJP Government has been making the rich more rich while making the poor more poor. Massive privatisation is happening across the country under the leadership of the BJP Government. They are selling off all the public sector undertakings to aid and help big corporates. But their evil designs would not work in Kerala as the LDF Government will not allow any kind of privatisation in the State," said the chief minister.

Vijayan also said that the

BJP Government was trying to sabotage the development initiatives like Semi High Speed Rail Project connecting Thiruvananthapuram and Kasaragod. "But I assure you that the Rail Project would become a reality despite the efforts of the Centre and the opposition parties in the State. Since 2016, Kerala has been witnessing unprecedented growth in all fields like agriculture, industry, education and Information Technology," he said.The chief minister also attacked the union minister of law for the reported statement made by the latter warning the Supreme Court. "The BJP is destroying the Constitutional framework by issuing threats to the judiciary. The comment by the union minister to the Supreme Court's action of freezing Section 124A of the IPC is proof of this stance," he said.

K V Thomas, former union minister and senior Congress leader took part in the convention and he was garlanded

by E P Jayarajan, the convener of the LDF. Thomas, popularly known as Thiruta Thoma, has been engaged in a war of nerves with the Congress High Command following the latter's refusal to make him a candidate in the 2019 Lok Sabha election and 2021 assembly election. The Congress has not taken any drastic action against him for participating in the recently held CPI(M) party congress at Kannur.

The May 31 bye-election was necessitated by the demise of P T Thomas, a popular Congress leader. Uma, his widow has been fielded by the Congress in its bid to retain the seat while the CPI(M) has fielded Dr Jo Joseph, a cardiologist by profession. "The bye-election offers the voters of Thrikkakkara to be a part of a historical event. A victory of the CPI(M) means the LDF would have 100 members in the legislative assembly, the effective strength of which is 140," said Vijayan.



Boys swim in the Brahmaputra River to beat the heat on a hot summer day, in Guwahati on Thursday.

PTI

1990 Maha IPS cadre Kulkarni appointed NIA's ADG

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai's former Joint Police Commissioner (Crime) Atulchandra M Kulkarni has been appointed as the Additional Director General (ADG) in the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on a deputation.

In a letter written to the chief secretary of the Maharashtra government, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Thursday announced the appointment of Kulkarni as the ADG in the NIA "on deputation against temporarily upgraded post of Inspector General for a period of one year from the date of joining the post or until further orders whichever is earlier"

A 1990 batch Maharashtra cadre IPS officer, Kulkarni was earlier the chief of Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) and State Crime Investigation Department (CID) earlier.

50% hospitalised Covid +ve have at least 1 symptom

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Around half of the Covid-19 patients who were admitted to hospital are still reeling under at least one symptom--fatigue, shortness of breath and sleep difficulties--even two years after getting the infection, according to the longest follow-up study to date, published in *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine*.

Mental health assessments of long Covid participants found 13 per cent displayed symptoms of anxiety and 11 per cent displayed symptoms of depression, while for non-long Covid participants, the proportions were 3 per cent

and 1 per cent, respectively, says the study.

Hence, while physical and mental health generally improved over time, Covid-19 patients still tend to have poorer health and quality of life than the general population, the study says.

This was specially the case for participants with long Covid, who typically still have at least one symptom even two years after initially falling ill.

The study followed 1,192 participants in China infected with SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) during the first phase of the pandemic in 2020 at Jin Yintan Hospital in Wuhan between January 7 and May 29, 2020 and then at six

months, 12 months, and two years.

Findings show physical and mental health improved over time regardless of initial disease severity, with 55 per cent reporting at least one symptom caused by the initial Covid-19 infection at two years compared to 68 per cent at six months.

"Regardless of initial disease severity, Covid-19 survivors had longitudinal improvements in physical and mental health, with most returning to their original work within two years. However, the burden of symptomatic sequelae remained fairly high. Covid-19 survivors had a remarkably lower health

status than the general population at two years," the study said.

The findings indicate that there is an urgent need to explore the pathogenesis of long Covid and develop effective interventions to reduce the risks. "Our findings indicate that for a certain proportion of hospitalised Covid-19 survivors, while they may have cleared the initial infection, more than two years are needed to recover fully from Covid-19," says Prof Bin Cao of China-Japan Friendship Hospital in China, lead author of the study.

"Ongoing follow-up of Covid-19 survivors, particularly those with symptoms of

long Covid, is essential to understand the longer course of the illness, as is further exploration of the benefits of rehabilitation programmes for recovery.

"There is a clear need to provide continued support to a significant proportion of people who've had Covid-19, and to understand how vaccines, emerging treatments, and variants affect long-term health outcomes," he added.

The authors acknowledge limitations to their study. Without a control group of hospital survivors unrelated to Covid-19 infection, it is hard to determine whether observed abnormalities are specific to Covid-19.

ED carries out search ops at properties, offices of ex-MLA Jitendra Nath Patnaik

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has carried out search operations at various offices and residential premises of former MLA Jitendra Nath Patnaik and related entities in Keonjhar and Bhubaneswar districts under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

During the searches, the agency seized cash amounting to Rs. 70 Lakh and 124 fixed deposits worth Rs 133.17 crore besides seizure of various incriminating documents and digital evidence, the ED said in

During the searches, the agency seized ₹70 lakh and 124 fixed deposits worth ₹133.17 crore

a statement.

Patnaik, popularly known as Jitu Patnaik, is a former independent MLA from the Champua assembly constituency.

Patnaik "derived undue pecuniary advantage by way of illegal mining without necessary statutory approvals," it said.

ED initiated money laun-

dering investigation on the basis of an FIR and chargesheet filed by the State Vigilance Cell of Odisha against Jitendra Nath Patnaik and others.

"As per the charge sheet filed by the State Vigilance, the accused indulged in illegal mining for a long period causing huge loss to the Government exchequer which amounts to more than Rs. 130 crore," it further said.

Through the attachments, the ED has been able to recover almost the entire amount of proceeds of crime and further Investigation is under progress, it added.

Ball is in Supreme Court

Sex is by consent, within marriage and without

Hindu marriages have evolved over the centuries. So, their values and forms are not eternal. Hindu marriages can legally end in divorce. So, they are no longer indissoluble. The two facts mean the institution of marriage is not etched in rock and was, and is, subject to amendments to see that both partners enjoy and respect equal rights in their relationship. The evidence of the evolution of the institution exists in the form of live-in relationships, inter-faith marriages, love marriages, inter-caste marriages, and same-sex marriages that come up in defiance of the patriarchal values that sustain traditional Hindu marriages. All these concepts today have protection under the law. The law even allows a registered marriage. The Arya Samaj supports a system of marriage that rejects orthodox values like customs, rituals, caste and patriarchy. Educated, economically independent and liberated women and men today decide for themselves when to marry and whom to marry. There is a clash of interests between the institution of marriage and its subscribers. More and more people, especially women, are challenging the contraction of their rights by the institution. They want to determine the character of their marriage by the values they bring to it. The question, therefore, is: In a marital dispute over sex, should the law defend the institution of marriage or respect and protect the rights and choices of one half of the couple who is undervalued by the dictates of the institution? The Delhi High Court gave a split verdict on the issue of criminalisation of marital rape.

The contentious provision under scrutiny is Exception 2 of Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code that says provided the wife is not minor, forced sex by the husband with his wife, without her consent, does not amount to rape. If the husband and wife are equal in the eyes of the law, why is there no reverse provision where the husband is duty-bound to have sex with his wife even without his consent? The fact that the Exception is one-sided exposes its patriarchal bias. That rests the argument that there is no place for Exception 2 in society because, above everything else, it violates the right of a woman to her body. In social terms, the exception insults the right to a woman's consent. The differing judges, however, allowed the petitioners to move to the Supreme Court in appeal. That is welcome. As things stand, society and its laws should respect and protect the equality of women and men. And given that patriarchal attitudes have subjugated women and trampled their rights and choices for centuries, the society and its laws have the additional duty to restore them their rights. Women once chose their husbands through marriage by "swayamvara" and later on, were robbed of their traditional independence and placed under male custodianship. As women now fight to regain their lost status, they are told marriage deems it their responsibility to bear with forced sex by their husbands?

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Nurses light candles on the occasion of International Nurses Day at Government Rajaji Hospital in Madurai

Politics of caste census

BJP leaders suspect that Nitish Kumar could use the issue of caste census to corner the saffron outfit

Bihar politics is passing through uncertain times amid growing closeness between Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and leader of opposition Tejaswini Yadav. On Wednesday, Nitish and Tejaswini held an hour-long talk, on the RJD leader's demand for an expeditious caste census in Bihar. Both Janata Dal (U) and RJD are on the same page on this issue, while the BJP is not ready to endorse any such move that could revive the Mandal Vs Kamandal debate and blunt the edge of Hindutva appeal. Tejaswini sounded satisfied with the outcome of his meeting with Nitish Kumar and decided to put on hold his proposed "padyatra" to Delhi to put pressure on the Centre to allow the caste census. BJP leaders have reasons to suspect that Nitish Kumar could use the issue of caste census to walk out of the NDA or force the saffron outfit to do likewise. With the Presidential election round the corner, BJP could ill afford to antagonize Nitish Kumar whose party could decide the fate of the NDA presidential nominee. To appease Nitish Kumar, the BJP central leadership has replaced the party's longtime Bihar in-charge Bhupendra Yadav with his ministerial colleague Dharmendra Pradhan. But that has not helped

the matter, either. The BJP leadership would do well to remember that in the 2012 presidential election Nitish Kumar, then in the NDA, voted for UPA candidate Pranab Mukherjee. Similarly, in 2017, Kumar voted for NDA nominee Ramnath Kovind even though he was part of the mahagathbandhan in Bihar.

The way things stand in Bihar, Nitish Kumar seemed to have made up his mind to explore options outside the NDA. Knowing it too well that after the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, he would become irrelevant for both the BJP and the Opposition, Nitish is making deft moves to mend fences with his political rivals. Nitish has placed special emphasis on addressing the sensitivity of the minority voters. He has strongly opposed the demand for the removal of loudspeakers from masjids and also rejected any move to bring a Uniform Civil Code. With JD(U) and BJP leaders frequently targeting each other on both political and ideological issues, the NDA is looking like an increasingly fragile force in Bihar. Nitish Kumar makes his moves after giving serious thoughts. The BJP leaders would wait with bated breaths for the next move of one of the shrewdest politicians of our times.

Imperialist China's challenges in Pak

Shari Baloch's unprecedented suicide is symptomatic of the all-pervasiveness of Sino-wariness that is gripping all strata of society in Pakistan

As the global "nursery" and fount for sanctified religio-extremism, Pakistan has paid an incalculable price towards what former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had forewarned: "Snakes in your backyard won't bite only neighbours." Couple of years back then Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan had admitted to some "30,000 to 40,000" militants on Pakistani soil! Much like its trained and armed proxies sent across the Line of Control (LoC), a UN report from 2020 stated that conversely there were 6,000 Pakistani fighters across the Durand Line (mostly affiliated to Pakistan-facing, Tehrik-e-Taliban, or Pakistani Taliban). But the terror footprint across Pakistan is not just in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab province, but also looming large across the swathes of the biggest province i.e., Balochistan. Latest report by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies reports a shocking 24 per cent increase in the number of militant attacks in April, as compared to March 2022. Unconvincingly, the official narrative in Pakistan attributes the "Indian hand" in supporting terror groups like Pakistan Taliban, ISIS-Khorasan faction!

Beyond the inevitable slide towards portents of a failed-state in terms of its unwillingness to correct the underlying roots of extremism (hence, the perennial sword of getting "blacklisted" by the global watchdog agency i.e., FATF, for supporting terror), terrorism has taken a dramatic turn with the first recorded female suicide bomber attack in Pakistan, through one Shari Baloch of the Balochistan Liberation Army. Shockwaves in terms of the target and what it signifies and augurs for the future are disconcertingly obvious. Shari specifically targeted and killed three Chinese nationals outside the University of Karachi's Confucius Institute. Significantly, Shari was not a typically illiterate, oppressed or from any unexposed background, she was a teacher with MPhil, married to a dentist with family members



well ensconced in Government jobs. Yet, Shari had perceived enough hurt and wounds from the Chinese presence in Pakistan to join the Majeed Brigade of the BLA to commit herself to the act willingly.

Contrary to the toxically anti-US line driven during the Imran Khan era, which initially had wide resonance among Pakistanis, the Chinese seem to be steadily replacing the Americans as the newly perceived imperialists and colonists on Pakistani soil. The withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan and the subsequent deterioration of relations with its own creation i.e., Afghan Taliban, and the escalation of violence on Pakistani soil is making many Pakistanis question the benefits of demonising the United States of America, in favour of extremists like the Afghan Taliban. The societal fault lines of the dangerous sectarian divide (for Shias, Ahmediyas and other minorities) in the so-called "Naya Pakistan" also widened with little respite from violence and attacks. All this mayhem combined with the backbreaking inflation and pandemic-led upheaval has made the common person feel extremely vulnerable life-threatening situation. The combustive anger is no longer

THE COMBUSTIVE ANGER IS NO LONGER THE EXCLUSIVE PRESERVE OF THE ILLITERATE AND RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISTS BUT HAS METASTASISED EVEN AMONG THOSE LIKE SHARI, WHO FEEL CHINA HAS SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY DIMINISHED THEIR COUNTRY PAKISTAN. THEY SEE THE CHINESE ON PAKISTANI SOIL AS BLOODY USURPERS AND PLUNDERERS OF THEIR LAND, RESOURCES, AND CULTURE

the exclusive preserve of the illiterate and religious fundamentalists but has metastasised even among those like Shari, who felt China has socio-economically diminished their country Pakistan, effectively vassalised by China. Native Balochis who were historically denied their fair share of development in Pakistan since independence are particularly peeved by the growing Chinese presence which they see as the bloody usurpers and plunderers of their land, resources, and culture.

Given the financial and strategic stakes involved in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) investments, the Chinese will not back down easily, and that may irk further tensions. Already the unofficial mouthpiece of the Chinese Government, Global Times, slammed, "We must warn that either in or out of Pakistan, forces targeting Chinese nationals in attacks will be stricken the hardest." However, with organisations like the Voice for Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP) claiming more than 53,000 Baloch abductions and unexplained disappearances, the anger against the increasing Chinese hubris, privilege and exclusivity over Baloch sensibilities will continue ranking



BHOPIINDER SINGH

and manifesting violently. 15,000 Military personnel of the 34th Light Infantry Division or Special Security Division responsible for protecting the CPEC assets were believed to be over-stretched and inadequate; therefore Pakistan raised the second dedicated 44th Light Infantry Division in Gwadar, Balochistan. This build-up notwithstanding, last year nine Chinese were targeted and killed in a bus carrying them in Upper Kohistan, thereafter, the Chinese expatriates in Pakistan started arming themselves. This belligerent posture with the cultural dissimilarities between the Chinese and the average Pakistani bodes ill towards building trust. It is only a matter of time before the lid on the hypocritical Pakistani stand on the beleaguered co-religionist Uyghurs in China gets blown. The return of the Uyghur resistance force i.e., East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), who were purposely driven out from Pakistan is inevitable.

Shari Baloch's unprecedented suicide is symptomatic of the all-pervasiveness and intensity of Sino-wariness that is gripping all strata of society in Pakistan. Data shows that women suicide-bombers gather eight times as much publicity as male bombers, they typically avoid suspicion and can utilise stereotypes to bypass security defences and are believed to have a kill rate four times that of men! In traditional societies like Balochistan such acts can galvanise emotions by emasculating and therefore provoking men to espouse the cause in larger numbers. This trend does not read well for the increasingly despised Chinese, who are the predominant face of exploitation and foreign interference, replacing the Americans.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RBI'S STRATEGY

Sir—The Reserve Bank of India has increased the policy repo rate, believed to be the main tool to keep inflation in check, by 40 basis points to 4.40 per cent. It was argued that the drastic rate cut would improve capacity utilisation, engineer buoyancy in export growth and shape up corporate balance sheets. Surprisingly, the RBI has chosen to increase the rates now, when, according to RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, there are signs of an incipient revival taking place in the investment cycle and a rebound in economic activity. And the emphasis now is on the "pronounced adverse effects of sustained high inflation on the poorer segments of the population."

In fact, former RBI Governor, Raghuram Rajan had refused to lower interest rates until he completed his tenure in 2016, insisting that cuts must wait until "fresh inflationary pressures" are abated. Keeping inflation within the target, while supporting growth, will be a difficult proposition, so long as "self-reliance" (atmanirbharatha) and "Make in India" in core sectors remain mere catchy phrases.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

MK STALIN ON TRACK

Sir—One year into his Chief Ministership of Tamil Nadu, MK Stalin has come up to the expectations of his electorate, given the delivery of his poll-promises. For instance: Free bus service for the women, medical care and education for the homeless, not to mention ₹1,000 per year to the home-makers. Perhaps, that's why the DMK won the local body polls without any difficulty, despite having had to successfully tackle the pandemic in the initial quarter of the year.

Like his Bengal and Delhi counterparts, Stalin cherishes a will to make his national profile and has succeeded in doing so to some extent given that he has been in news for meeting a number of big guns from several parties: Sonia Gandhi, Arvind Kejriwal, Sharad Pawar, Rahul Gandhi, Farooq Abdullah and Udhav Thackeray to name a few, with an aim to

No leniency for terrorists



This refers to the editorial 'The unexpected twist in the Kashmir tale'. The views expressed are worth considering in the prevailing circumstances, which portray the severity of the Kashmir problem, inherited from the preceding Governments as a consequence of policies adopted earlier. It is not only surprising but even shocking that those who always advocated stringent measures to be adopted and called for befitting reply to Pakistan by beheading ten soldiers in lieu of one, launching an offensive action to destroy terrorists' camps set up in Pakistan, abrogation of article 370, enforcing uniform civil code, etc, are now seeking alternative

weapons to pellet guns. It is a fact that Kashmiri terrorists call their act as jihad against kafirs for azadi. Their aim, as the writer has mentioned, is to establish a regime dictated by Sharia in which there is no place for kafirs.

No political solution can be achieved even if all the stakeholders are invited for talks because Pakistan does not want peace in the region. It has only one agenda — how to secede Kashmir from India by intensifying terror activities. Therefore, the Government should not be lenient to trouble-makers and, instead, deal with them in the most severe and effective manner. Now the only remedy is a surgical operation that will bring about the desired results. There should be no talks until Pakistan completely stops infiltration of terrorists into our country. In case Pakistan fails to do so, our Army should be entrusted with this uphill task to destroy all the terrorists camps being operated in that country.

SK Sharma | Ghaziabad

stitch an alliance of non-BJP parties well ahead of the crucial 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Most importantly, Stalin has presented the 'Dravidian Model' to obfuscate PM Modi's 'Gujarat model'. However, it is still a long way to go and, hence, Stalin needs to work like a Trojan so as to keep his recently-built image intact. Whether or not he succeeds in his mission time will tell!

Azhaz Khan | Rampur

CELEBRATING DANISH SIDDIQUI

Sir—Slain Indian photojournalist Danish Siddiqui has been honoured with prestigious Pulitzer prize 2022 for the second time for his Covid photo, this time posthumously. He, along with three other Indian journalists, was awarded. Siddiqui received his first Pulitzer in 2018 for documenting the Rohingya refugee crisis. Siddiqui's picture of an exhausted Rohingya refugee woman touching the shore after crossing the Bangladesh-

Myanmar border by boat grabbed international headlines. He worked for Reuters and was a very disciplined and dedicated journalist.

It is sad that such a bright photojournalist is no more as he was killed in July 2021, while covering a clash between Afghan security forces and Taliban fighters near a border crossing with Pakistan.

His photos are heartwarming. A journalist of international acclaim, he was part of the Reuters team that won the Pulitzer in 2018. He extensively covered the brutal second wave of the coronavirus pandemic in April and May as it ripped through India's cities and villages. His photographs of funeral pyres were well received. Those who want to become photojournalists should emulate Siddiqui.

Manoj Kumar Jena | Cuttack

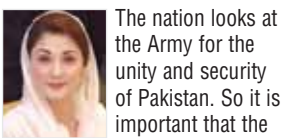
Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

We have made the highest-ever allocation to our annual healthcare budget. Our vaccination programme is the largest in the world. We have fully vaccinated almost 90 per cent of the alien population.



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



The nation looks at the Army for the unity and security of Pakistan. So it is important that the Army chief is a person who is worthy and flawless so that people salute the Pakistan Army.

PML-N Vice-president — Maryam Nawaz



I believe in Brendon and Ben Stokes — a formidable coach and captain partnership.

England cricketer — Robert Key



50 per cent Chintan Shrivastava delegates are below 40, it shows Sonia Gandhi's mind on youth leadership.

Rajasthan ex-Dy CM — Sachin Pilot

FIRST COLUMN


REGIONAL BLOC TIES VITAL IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

India has to revise its strategy to better bond with ASEAN



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

US president Joe Biden hosted eight out of ten regional leaders from ASEAN in Washington this week. This comes ahead of the President's travel to Japan and South Korea later this month, followed by QUAD leaders in person summit in Tokyo. What it certainly points to, is the importance of the Indo-Pacific in US's scheme of maintaining its position as the most powerful economy in the world. Many commentators had assumed that with the war breaking out in Ukraine, posing a direct challenge to the US-led NATO, the focus would have shifted away from the Indo-Pacific. However, it seems the US for now has decided to focus simultaneously on two most volatile regions of the world. ASEAN nations represent the crucial link between Indian Ocean and the Pacific coast. It is also a hotly contested market in the overarching US-China tango. However, China definitely seems to have swayed ASEAN countries in its favour, by muzzling in trade relations worth nearly \$700 billion annually, which is almost double of what these



countries trade with the US. India is another major Asian power that has trade relations with ASEAN, but that is quite small when compared with the US or China trade. This is the situation when India has a free trade agreement in place with ASEAN for the past 11 years. It also comes at a time when India and ASEAN are celebrating 30 years of their strategic friendship and 2022 has been declared "ASEAN India friendship year". It reflects an apathy towards the Indo-Pacific for both India's and US's foreign and economic policy. Many would have argued that India being a powerful economy in ASEAN's neighbourhood could have successfully steered the bloc's strategic decisions away from China. However, the economic relations between India and ASEAN remained much below the projected targets, primarily due to the complementarity of goods and services being traded between the two blocs. India also pulled out of the world's largest free trade agreement or the regional comprehensive economic pact after nearly a decade of negotiations primarily due to the China-heavy policy framework. Similarly, the US also doesn't have any significant trade agreements with ASEAN. However, the geopolitical compulsions are forcing India and US to have a relook at their strategies for engaging with ASEAN.

The ASEAN nations raised concerns regarding rising inflation due to high fuel costs, as result of the Ukraine crisis in Washington. They were reminded of the need to pull away from Russia dependence. Like India, many of the ASEAN nations depend heavily on Russia for their defence needs and it may take some years for them to diversify their arms supplies market. India meanwhile is also trying to play major role in the global defence marketplace and a headway could be achieved through a tacit understanding at the QUAD forum. President Biden would be in Japan later this month for an in-person QUAD meet. This will be close on the heels of his bilateral meeting with Japan and South Korea. There are expectations of concrete announcements coming out of the various work groups constituted under the aegis of QUAD to be made in Tokyo. India has an important role to play during the QUAD summit. It has to keep the messaging intact on its Ukraine strategy and, sensitise QUAD partners on its constant need to maintain a tight-lipped diplomacy on international forums with regard to Russia. On the other hand, India also has to keep its position as an important and inviolable partner for the US, Europe, Japan and Australia in the Indo-Pacific.


(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

Dealing with impact of heat waves in India

Rising surface temperatures in the Indian Ocean coupled with EI-Nino effect are responsible for heatwaves in India



YASHOBANTA PARIDA



JOYITA ROY CHOWDHURY



PRAKASH K SAHOO

Heatwaves are a common phenomenon in India during May-June. This year, summer began early due to the gradually increasing maximum temperatures in many parts of India. According to the state health department, this year's heatwaves have claimed 25 lives in Maharashtra. The number of heatwave days in India has increased from 413 over 1981-1990 to 600 over 2011-2020 (India Meteorological Department (IMD), Pune).

A sharp rise in the number of heatwaves is due to the increasing impact of climate change. The number of people killed due to heatwaves has also increased from 5457 over 1981-1990 to 11555 over 2011-2020 (Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India). Since 1967, the report also confirms that 39,815 people have been killed due to heatwaves in different states of India. Heatwave is the second most lethal disaster after the flood, which resulted in 41,333 deaths from 1967 to 2020.

Based on the geo-climatic and socio-economic conditions, the highest number of people have been killed in Uttar Pradesh (6745), followed by Andhra Pradesh (5088), Bihar (3364), Maharashtra (2974), Punjab (2720), Madhya Pradesh (2607), West Bengal (2570), Odisha (2406), Gujarat (2049), Rajasthan (1951), Tamil Nadu (1443), Haryana (1116), Telangana (1067), Delhi (996), Jharkhand (855), Karnataka (560), Assam (348), and 954 people killed across the remaining 12 states of India.


Per the data, northern India and some parts of eastern and southern India are more vulnerable to heatwaves. Mortality due to heatwaves occurs because of rising temperature, lack of public awareness programs, and inadequate long-term mitigation measures. According to the report of the Tata Centre for Development, the University of Chicago (2019), annually, more than 1.5 million people are likely to die due to extreme heat caused by climate change by 2100. IMD Pune atlas shows that 15% of the population in 13% of the districts is vulnerable to heatwaves.

The increasing cases of heatwave fatalities vary across Indian states due to their diverse geo-climatic conditions. Rising surface temperatures in the Indian Ocean coupled with EI-Nino effect are responsible for heatwaves in India. In addition, deforestation, unauthorized urbanization, rapid lifestyle changes, and higher carbon emissions are major reasons for the rising number of heatwave days and fatalities.

Heatwaves have posed severe challenges to human health and have created public health emergencies. Prolonged heat exposure causes heat strokes and heat exhaustion and causes various respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Furthermore, the frequent occurrence of heatwaves also adversely affects different sectors of the economy. For instance, the

DISSEMINATING PUBLIC AWARENESS MESSAGES THROUGH THE MEDIA, PROVIDING HEAT-PROOF SHELTER FACILITIES DURING SUMMER, EASING ACCESS TO PUBLIC DRINKING WATER, AND AFFORESTATION CAMPAIGNS CAN MITIGATE HEATWAVE FATALITIES

(Parida and Roy Chowdhury are Assistant Professors of Economics at FLAME University, Pune. Sahoo is a Lecturer of Economics at Vikram Deb (Autonomous) College, Jeypore, Odisha. The views expressed are personal.)



first Heat Action Plan in 2013, followed by the devastating heatwave-related deaths in 2010. In 2016, NDMA issued comprehensive guidelines titled 'Guidelines for Preparation of Action Plan-Prevention and Management of Heatwave' to prepare state and national level key strategies for mitigating the impact of heatwaves across Indian states. Although some preventive measures have been undertaken to mitigate and adapt to extreme weather-related shocks, such initiatives are insufficient to prevent human fatalities from heatwaves. Still, implementing preventive measures, mitigation, and preparedness actions remains difficult. The substantial loss of human lives and a consequent impact on people's livelihoods indicate that effective disaster adaptation strategies and more robust disaster management policies are required in heatwave zones to lessen the impact of heatwaves. As deaths due to heatwaves are preventable, the Government must prioritize the preparation of a long-term action plan to safeguard human lives, livestock, and wildlife.


Death from heatwaves can be prevented or minimised by installing improved early warning systems that communicate heatwave threats, recommend preventive measures, and predict disaster impact scenarios. Disseminating public awareness through print, electronic and social media, providing heat-proof shelter facilities during summer, easing access to public drinking water, and huge afforestation, particularly in urban and rural areas, would help miti-

gate heatwave fatalities. Reducing outdoor exercise during heat alerts can protect individuals from the adverse effects of extreme heat. Heatwave is India's second most lethal disaster after the flood; the government should declare it a natural disaster to prevent further losses. It helps the State and District administration prepare a heatwave action plan at the regional level. This indicative will help build resilience infrastructure, develop early warning infrastructure, and create public awareness. In order to undertake necessary mitigation and prevention measures, it is crucial to prepare a database at the district level involving the age, gender, and occupation of people who have died due to heatwaves.


Effective implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-30, which emphasizes disaster risk reduction with the state playing a leading role and sharing responsibility with other stakeholders such as local governments and the NGO sector, is now the need of the hour. Reduced emissions of heat-trapping gases such as carbon dioxide, which make the heatwaves more intense, can help protect human health and properties by reducing the effects of global warming. In sum, in the face of frequent heatwaves in many Indian states, respective state governments should coordinate with other departments in designing long-term measures to reduce heatwave fatalities. Furthermore, it is essential to create a comprehensive disaster management plan to safeguard our communities.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

“CLEARLY...(GOVT) AGREES...SECTION 124A...NOT IN TUNE WITH CURRENT SOCIAL MILIEU AND WAS INTENDED FOR...COLONIAL REGIME.”
— CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA
N V RAMANA



“...BUT THERE'S A LAKSHMAN REKHA THAT MUST BE RESPECTED BY ALL ORGANS OF THE STATE...RESPECT PROVISIONS OF CONSTITUTION (AND) EXISTING LAWS”
— UNION MINISTER FOR LAW AND JUSTICE
KIREN RIJJU



Antibiotic resistance crisis in post-pandemic world

Antimicrobial resistance stewardship programs have to be prioritised, keeping the demands of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic in context



SUJATA SHARMA

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19, the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, a pandemic. Two years later, the shadow of the Covid pandemic is still looming over us. While the world is making valiant attempts to move into the post-pandemic phase, the situation is akin to "one step forward, two step backwards", as new variants of this virus are still emerging.

COVID-19 has taken centre-stage in every facet of life. Policy makers and medical personnel are still caught up in the overwhelming task of fire-fighting and number crunching of Covid cases, deaths and vaccinations. Hence, it is not entirely surprising that the mounting shadow of another future global crisis is not being given enough focus. Antimicrobial resistance caused by microbes which are silently and surreptitiously gaining power by getting resistant to most drugs, was already a global concern even before the Covid pandemic had arrived. That was evident by the fact that the WHO had named it as a global priority for public health for the year 2020. Antimicrobial resistance is caused naturally, but is compounded due to overuse of antibiotics, non-compliance of antibiotic dose, improper dumping of untreated chemicals from factories and hospitals in the environment, random dosing of antibiotics to livestock and excessive spraying of pesticides on crops.

It had been estimated that more than one million deaths were occurring every year due to

antibiotic resistant infections in the world. It was expected that by the year 2050, this number would escalate ten times. It was already agreed upon that the time bomb of antimicrobial resistance was ticking, and there needed to be urgent, global efforts to diffuse the impending doom. Hence, the fact that several bacteria were outsmarting the conventional antibiotic mode of action had set the alarm bells ringing long before the ill-timed SARS-COV-2 made its appearance. The fear of the impending nose-dive into the 'pre-antibiotic' era in the future had forced researchers to look for urgent and alternative drug therapy for persistent and resistant bacterial infections. There was a global effort to prioritize the antibiotic stewardship program to make sure that infections are being treated as per the need and demand.

Amidst this disquieting scenario, came the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, flipping the best well laid plans on their head. It not only claimed lives and damaged economy but also derailed the global efforts being made to combat antimicrobial resistance.

The panic created by the raging pandemic led to the breakdown of planning and diversion of manpower and financial assets for the timely and urgent response to COVID-19, leading to reduced output of laboratories due to deployment of healthcare personnel to the front lines for fighting the Covid pandemic. As a result, testing and monitoring of antibiotic resistance among various strains slowed down.

The unexpected emergence of this pandemic had caught the healthcare system with surprise. That led to increased hospitalization, shortage of protective equipment, long hospital stays, increased mortality and the resultant secondary bacterial infections in Covid patients. It has been estimated that approximately 70 percent of COVID-19 patients received antibiotic therapy. In most cases, the symptoms of Covid positive patients and those of pneumonia caused by other viruses and bacteria have been similar and hard to discriminate. Also, getting infected with SARS-COV-2 further weakens the immune system, leading to more proliferative outbreaks of infections by opportunistic bacteria and fungi. At times, the delay in testing for COVID-19, especially when the pandemic was raging among populations led to indiscriminate prescribing of antibiotics upon onset of symptoms of respiratory tract infections. The problem was further compounded by lockdowns all over the world, due to which many people were not able to access the much-needed health care systems. That led to inappropriate and unnecessary self-medication with antibiotics. Several immunization programs were halted or derailed due to the pandemic, leading to outbreaks of diseases caused by drug resistant bacteria, which had been kept at bay so far.

The global efforts to combat the Covid pandemic have given an example of how the joint, proactive efforts from all the nations singularly aimed at fighting a health menace can work spectacularly. There is an urgent need to prioritise antimicrobial resistance stewardship programs with renewed vigor and revised course of action, keeping the demands of the still ongoing pandemic in context. The antibiotic stewardship programme needs to be updated and monitored for all health care systems. Additionally, the drug pipeline for new antibiotics needs to be refurbished at all the levels, beginning from basic laboratories to pharmaceutical companies.

Biden hosts ASEAN as he looks to show Pacific commitment

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden is hosting leaders from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations as his administration makes an extended effort to demonstrate that the United States hasn't lost focus on the Pacific even while dealing with Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Biden will begin his talks over dinner Thursday evening with leaders from the eight ASEAN nations attending the two-day summit. It will be the group's first meeting at the White House. Leaders will take part in more formal talks at the State Department on Friday.

The ASEAN nations include Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Leaders from the other two ASEAN members, Myanmar and the Philippines, are not expected to attend the summit.

The special summit in Washington comes before Biden departs next week for a whirlwind visit to South Korea and Japan — his first visit to Asia as president — for talks with those two countries' leaders. He'll also meet during the trip with leaders from the Indo-Pacific strategic alliance with the U.S. Known as the Quad: Australia, India and Japan.

Biden has sought to put greater focus on the Quad and improving relations with Pacific nations in the early going of his presidency as he sees a rising China as the most threatening economic and national security adversary to the United States.

Biden, who vowed to make the Pacific a greater focal point of U.S. Policy, has seen his attempt at an "Asia pivot" complicated by the most serious fighting in Europe since World War II, which has consumed much of his foreign policy bandwidth in recent months.



A top White House Asia policy adviser said the administration remains committed to stepping up relations with southeast Asian nations to address climate, economic and education initiatives.

"There has been a sense that in previous administrations that we had set off with a determined pace to focus on East Asia or in the Indo-Pacific and then find ourselves with other pressing challenges that perhaps draws (us) away a little bit," Kurt Campbell, coordinator for Indo-Pacific Affairs on the White House National Security Council, said at an event on Wednesday hosted by the U.S. Institute of Peace. "I think there is a deep sense that that can't happen again."

Outgoing Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte is skipping the summit.

The bloc has barred Myanmar — it has been gripped by crisis since the army ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021 — from sending all but nongovernmental leaders for the meetings.

The Biden administration condemned the military coup that led to the ouster of Suu Kyi. She was convicted by a military court last month of corruption and sentenced to five years in prison in the first of several corruption cases against her. Suu Kyi has denied the charges.

Biden is also expected to address the situation in Myanmar with ASEAN leaders, as well as discuss China and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Campbell said the administration expects the private talks will be "direct, polite, but maybe a little bit uncomfortable at times" as the U.S. And ASEAN members are not on the same page on all issues.

Biden has called for Russia to be disinvited from November's scheduled Group of 20 summit because of its invasion of Ukraine. ASEAN member Indonesia, which holds the presidency of the Group of 20 this year, has resisted the calls to pull Moscow's invitation.

At a virtual summit with ASEAN leaders last year, Biden said Washington would look to start talks with Pacific nations about developing a regional economic framework. Campbell said that the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework would be under discussion during this year's summit, though it was unclear how substantive the talks would be.

Japan's Washington ambassador, Tomita Koji, said at another forum in Washington earlier this week that the framework could be launched during Biden's upcoming visit to Japan.

Russia continues steel mill airstrikes as Ukraine seeks deal

AP ■ KYIV

Russian forces were continuing their airstrikes on the Azovstal steel mill in Mariupol and pressing their advance on towns in eastern Ukraine, the general staff of Ukraine's armed forces said Thursday.

The bombardment came as Ukraine offered to release Russian prisoners of war in exchange for the safe evacuation of the badly injured fighters that remained trapped inside the mill in the ruined city.

Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said that negotiations were under way to release the injured fighters who are holed up in the last bastion of Ukrainian resistance in Mariupol. She said there were different options, but "none of them is ideal."

An adviser to the Mariupol mayor said Russian forces have blocked all evacuation routes out of the city. Petro Andriushchenko said there are few apartment buildings fit to live in and little food or drinking water. He said some remaining residents are cooperating with occupying Russian forces in exchange for food.

Elsewhere, Kyiv was preparing for its first war crimes trial of a captured Russian soldier, who is alleged to have gunned down an unarmed civilian riding a bicycle. In its operational statement for Day 78 of the war, the



Ukrainian military said Russian forces also fired artillery and grenade launchers at Ukrainian troops in the direction of Zaporizhzhia, which has been a refuge for civilians fleeing Mariupol.

The military said Russian forces had fired artillery at Ukrainian units north of the city of Kharkiv in northeast Ukraine, and reported Russian strikes in the Chernihiv and Sumy regions to the north.

Across the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of eastern Ukraine, the site of sustained fighting since the war began, the Ukrainian general staff noted "partial success" in Russia's advance. It said Ukrainian forces repulsed nine attacks by Russian forces and

destroyed several drone and military vehicles. The information could not be independently verified.

Ukraine's top prosecutor said her office charged Russian Sgt. Vadim Shyshimarin, 21, in the killing of an unarmed 62-year-old civilian who was gunned down while riding a bicycle in February, four days into the war. Shyshimarin, who served with a tank unit, was accused of firing through a car window on the man in the northeastern village of Chupakhivka.

Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova said the soldier could get up to 15 years in prison. She did not say when his trial would start. Venediktova's office has said it

G7 foreign Mins meet to discuss Ukraine war

AP ■ BERLIN

Top diplomats from the Group of Seven wealthy nations are gathering in northern Germany to discuss the war in Ukraine, energy and food security, relations with China and climate change during a three-day meeting starting Thursday.

The foreign ministers of Ukraine and neighbouring Moldova, which fears becoming Russia's next target of aggression, have been invited to attend as guests. Indonesia's foreign minister, whose country chairs the Group of 20 major economies this year, plans to take part remotely to discuss the global impacts of the war. The meeting is taking place at the Baltic Sea resort of Weissenhaus northeast of Hamburg. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, who is hosting her G-7 counterparts, recently returned from a trip to Kyiv, Ukraine's capital.

has been investigating more than 10,700 allegations of war crimes committed by Russian forces and has identified over 600 suspects.

‘Russian Aerospace Forces strike Ukrainian military targets’

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Russia on Thursday said high-precision air-based missiles of the Russian Aerospace Forces have hit four command posts, 34 areas of concentration of Ukrainian manpower and military equipment, as well as two ammunition depots near Novhorod-Siverskyi, Chernigov Region, during the day.

"The attacks have resulted in the elimination of more

than 320 nationalists and up to 72 armoured and motor vehicles," said Dmitry A Solodov, Press Secretary of the Russian Embassy here quoting the Russian Defence Ministry.

Amid the continuing special military operation in Ukraine, operational-tactical and army aviation of the Russian Aerospace Force have hit 120 areas of concentration of Ukrainian manpower and military equipment, he further said.

In addition, one Ukrainian

S-300 anti-aircraft missile system radar station near Odessa and one missile and artillery weapons depot near Krasnopavlovka, Kharkov Region, have also been destroyed, according to the Russian Defence Ministry.

Missile troops and artillery have hit 405 areas of manpower and military equipment concentration, 12 command posts and 26 artillery units at firing positions. One S-300 anti-aircraft missile system has been destroyed near



Koroych, Kharkov Region. 3 Smerch multiple-launch rocket launchers and two ammunition depots of the Ukrainian armed forces have also been destroyed near Razdolie in Kharkov Region and Slavyansk in Donetsk People's Republic.

"Air defence means have shot down 13 Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicles near Velikie Prokhody, Velikaya Kamyshhevakh in Kharkov Region, Panteleimonovka, Avdeevka and Dolya in

Donetsk Region, Oknino and Fabrichnoe in Lugansk Region, Glubokoe in Chernigov Region, Barvinok and Vladimirovka in Dnepropetrovsk Region.

One Bayraktar-TB2 unmanned aerial vehicle has been shot down near Snake Island," the Press Secretary said in the statement.

Also, 14 Ukrainian Smerch multiple-launch rockets have been intercepted in the air over Zavody, Sukhaya Kamenka, Pimonovka, Izyum, Malaya

Kamyshhevakh in Kharkov Region, as well as Goncharovka, Topolskoe and Donetsk, he said.

In total, 164 Ukrainian aircraft and 125 helicopters, 821 unmanned aerial vehicles, 303 anti-aircraft missile systems, 3,013 tanks and other armoured combat vehicles, 364 multiple launch rocket systems, 1,471 field artillery and mortars, as well as 2,824 units of special military vehicles were destroyed during the operations in Ukraine till now.

Rights group: Israel approves over 4,000 new settler homes

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel advanced plans for the construction of more than 4,000 settler homes in the occupied West Bank on Thursday, a rights group said, a day after the military demolished homes in an area where hundreds of Palestinians face the threat of expulsion.

It was a jolting illustration of Israel's policies in the territory it has occupied for nearly 55 years. Critics, including three major human rights groups, say those policies amount to apartheid, a charge Israel rejects as an attack on its



very legitimacy.

Hagit Ofra, an expert at the anti-settlement watchdog group Peace Now, told The Associated Press that a military planning body approved 4,427

housing units at a meeting on Thursday that she attended. "The state of Israel took another stumble toward the abyss and further deepened the occupation," she tweeted.

Spokespeople for the Israeli government and the military body in charge of civilian affairs

in the West Bank did not respond to requests for comment.

It's the biggest advancement of settlement projects since the Biden administration took office. The White House opposes settlement construction and views it as an obstacle to any eventual peace agreement with the Palestinians.

There was no immediate comment from the administration on Thursday's decision. But last week, when the first reports emerged of the impending settlement approval, State Department spokeswoman Jalina Porter reiterated that the U.S. "strongly" opposes settlement expansion.

Most of the international community considers the settlements illegal and supports a two-state solution to the conflict. But neither the United States nor other world powers

have given Israel — the stronger party — any incentive to accede to such an arrangement. Israel says Palestinian leaders have rejected proposals by previous governments that would have given them a state.

Israel views the West Bank as the biblical and historical heartland of the Jewish people. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, who once led the main settler organization, is opposed to Palestinian statehood, but his government has taken steps to improve economic conditions for Palestinians.

Israel approved some 3,000 settler homes in October, brushing aside a rebuke from the U.S., its closest ally. Peace talks with the Palestinians broke down more than a decade ago, in part because of Israel's continuing construction on lands the Palestinians want for a future state.

On Wednesday, Israeli troops demolished at least 18 buildings and structures in the West Bank following a Supreme Court decision that would force at least 1,000 Palestinians out of an area Israel designated as a firing

zone in the early 1980s.

B'Tselem, another Israeli rights group, said 12 residential buildings were among the structures that were demolished, in villages in the arid hills south of the West Bank city of Hebron.

Residents of the Masafer Yatta say they have been living in the region, herding animals and practicing traditional desert agriculture for decades, long before Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 war. The Supreme Court sided with the military, which says there were no permanent structures in the area before it was designated a training zone.

"What's happening now is ethnic cleansing," Sami Huraini, an activist and a resident of the area, told the AP. "They are trying to expel the people from this land, saying they never lived here permanently, which is a lie."

He said residents of the area where the demolitions were carried out are determined to remain there. "The people are staying on their land and have already started to rebuild," he said.

North Korea fires 3 ballistic missiles amid 1st virus outbreak

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea fired three short-range ballistic missiles toward the sea on Thursday, South Korea's military said, in the latest of a series of weapons demonstrations this year that came just hours after it confirmed its first case of the coronavirus since the pandemic began.

The launches could underscore North Korea's determination to press ahead with its efforts to expand its arsenal despite the virus outbreak to rally support behind the leader, Kim Jong Un, and keep up pressure on its rivals amid long-dormant nuclear diplomacy.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement the three missiles launched from the North's capital region on

UK warns ‘no choice but to act’ to change Brexit deal

AP ■ LONDON

Britain's foreign secretary warned the European Union on Thursday that the UK will have "no choice but to act" to revoke parts of a Brexit agreement on Northern Ireland if the EU does not show flexibility.

Post-Brexit arrangements for border and customs checks in Northern Ireland have become "the greatest obstacle" to forming a new government in Belfast, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said during a call with European Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic.

Border issues between Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom, and EU member Ireland have long posed the thorniest problems in the U.K.'s divorce from the EU.

They resurfaced after the Democratic Unionist Party refused this week to help form a power-sharing government with Irish nationalist party Sinn Fein unless the post-Brexit arrangements were substantially changed or scrapped.

An open Irish border is a key part of the peace process that ended decades of violence in Northern Ireland, which is the only part of the U.K. To share a land border with an EU country. The EU and the U.K. Agreed to keep the Irish border free of customs posts and other checks after Brexit, which became final at the end of 2020.

Instead, there are checks on some goods, such as meat and eggs, entering Northern Ireland from elsewhere in the U.K. The Democratic Unionist Party is strongly opposed to the rules, saying the checks have created a barrier that undermines the British identity of its members.

Truss' office said Sefcovic reiterated to her Thursday that "there was no room to expand the EU negotiating mandate or introduce new proposals to reduce the overall level of trade friction."

"The foreign secretary noted this with regret and said



the situation in Northern Ireland is a matter of internal peace and security for the United Kingdom," the Foreign Office said in a statement.

"If the EU would not show the requisite flexibility to help solve those issues, then as a responsible government we would have no choice but to act," the statement said.

Tensions over the trade rules, known as the Northern Ireland Protocol, were ramping up even before Northern Ireland held its assembly elections last weekend.

Northern Ireland has been without a functioning government since February, when the DUP's leader at the time, Paul Givan, quit as first minister in protest over the trade rules.

U.K. Officials have repeatedly warned they might unilaterally suspend the arrangements if the EU did not agree to major changes.

British media reported that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson could announce next week that his government would legislate to override parts of the Northern Ireland deal.

The Times newspaper reported Thursday that Britain's Attorney General, Suella Braverman, issued advice saying that such a move would be legal because the EU was undermining Northern Ireland's Good Friday peace agreement by creating a trade barrier in the Irish Sea.

Any move by Britain to unilaterally rewrite the rules would bring legal action from the EU that could escalate into a trade war.

BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II, DELHI
4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi- 110001.
O.A. No. 234/2020 Date: 15.03.2022
Axis Bank Ltd. (Applicant) Versus Pravesh Kumar & Ors. (Respondent)
To, Defendants 2. Gayatri Developers Pvt. Ltd., Pawan Jitendra Hardware Store 37/173 Galiar Road Opposite Parag Dairy Agra UP Also At: Gayatri Developers Pvt. Ltd., 1 5th Floor Raman Tower Near ICICI Bank Sanjay Place Agra-282002
Whereas the above named applicant (s) has/have instituted a case for recovery of **Rs. 35,09,957/- (Rupee Thirty Five Lakhs Nine Thousand Nine Hundred Fifty Seven Only)** against you and where as it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on **17/05/2022 at 10.30 A.M.** (for further details kindly visit DRT website www.etribunal.gov.in Phone Number : 011-23748473).
Due to ongoing Pandemic situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose : (i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex" application/Software; (ii) "Meeting ID" and "Password" for the date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Registrar/Recovery Officer-II and Recovery Officer-II shall be displayed in the daily cause list itself at DRT Official Portal i.e. drt.gov.in (iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates/ Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. 011-23748478. Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal this the 15th day of March, 2022.
By Order of The Tribunal , Assistant Registrar, DRT-II, Delhi

NORTHERN RAILWAY
OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE
The Sr. Divisional Engineer-II, Northern Railway, Delhi Division invites E-Tender for the following work.

1	Name of work	Improvement of drainage system along 6th line and provision of sump well in NDLs yard with connection drainage pipe in the section of SSEW/NDLS under ADEN/NDLS.
2	Approx. cost of work	Rs. 54,99,548.76 (Rupees Fifty Four Lakh Ninety Nine Thousand Five Hundred Forty Eight and Seventy Six Only)
3	Earnest Money to be deposited	Rs. 1,10,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Ten Thousand Only)
4	Cost of tender document	Rs. 0.00/-
5	Date & Time of submission of tender bid and opening of tender	03.06.2022 @15:00 Hrs.
6	Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen	www.ireps.gov.in

The tenderer/s must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement system (IREPS) site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for participating in the e-tender system.
For all terms and conditions please refer tender document.
No manual offers are acceptable.
Cost of tender document and Earnest money will be acceptable through net banking or payment gateway only.
No.: 128-W/280/e Tender Notice/NIT/13/2022-23/W-3 Dated: 11.05.2022
11/3/2022
Serving Customers with a Smile

PUBLIC NOTICE
My client, Sunita Panchal, who is a owner and in possession of the property bearing number 1/1536, Plot No. C-7, out of Kharsa No. 310 & 313 Village Chandrawali alias Shandara Mansarovar Park, Shandara, Delhi, vide registered Family GPA dated 01.02.2022 vide registration No.19 at SR-IVA, Shandara executed by Krisma Devi alias Krishana Devi W/o late Sh. Dharam Pasi Panchal. The last chain document of the property i.e. registered sale deed executed by Roshan Lal S/o Sh. Karam Chand in favour of Hari Chand Panchal via document number 7501 dated 17.05.1971 has been lost and in the regard NCR has also been filed vide LR No. 389733/2022 dated 10.05.2022. The said property is under sale which is going to be mortgaged with IFL Home Finance Limited by the purchaser. Any person/bank/financial institution having any claim/right, lien any objection whatsoever in regard to above property, should notified to the undersigned/Adv. Vishal Mehra, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 along with documentary evidence under address through registered A/D within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived.
Vishal Mehra (Advocate)
E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092
Mobile No. 9811215181

BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II, DELHI
4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi- 110001.
O.A. No. 373/2020
Axis BANK (Applicant) Versus Saumil Gupta (Defendants)
To, 1. Saumil Gupta, 7/56, 3rd Floor, Subhash Nagar West Delhi Tegore Garden New Delhi-110027. Also At : D-180, Sector -63 Noida Uttar Pradesh-201301 Defendant 1.
2. Sonam Agrawal, 7/56, 3rd Floor, Subhash Nagar West Delhi Tegore Garden New Delhi-110027. Defendant 2. 3. Masscon (India) Pvt. Ltd. Through Its Directors, Regd Office - A -122, Singharj Complex, 1st Floor, Chandra Vihar, I.P. Extension Delhi-110092. Also At : Commercial Plot No-1, Sector -5, Vasundhara Plaza Vasundhara Ghaziabad U.P. Defendant 3.
Whereas the above named applicant (s) has/have instituted a case for recovery of **Rs. 38,73,874/- (Rupee Thirty Eight Lakhs Seventy Three Thousand Eight Hundred Seventy Four Only)** against you and where as it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on **17/05/2022 at 10.30 A.M.** (for further details kindly visit DRT website www.etribunal.gov.in Phone Number : 011-23748473).
Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence.
Due to ongoing Pandemic situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose : (i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex" application/Software; (ii) "Meeting ID" and "Password" for the date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Registrar/Recovery Officer-II and Recovery Officer-II shall be displayed in the daily cause list itself at DRT Official Portal i.e. drt.gov.in (iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates/ Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. 011-23748478. Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal this the 16th April of 2022. Respondent may contact under mention Phone number for further enquiry Mr. Amit K.Dar, Ld. Registrar, DRT-I, New Delhi, Ph. No : 011-23748473. Email : drt1delhi-dfs@nic.in
By Order of The Tribunal, For Registrar

Travel ban imposed on ex-PM Mahinda, 16 others in Lanka

PTI ■ COLOMBO

A Sri Lankan court on Thursday imposed a ban on overseas travel on former prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, his son and MP Namal Rajapaksa and 15 others in view of investigations against them for the deadly attack on peaceful anti-government protesters in Colombo this week.

The Fort Magistrate's Court asked them to surrender their passports to the court due to the investigations taking place on the attacks on the GotaGoGama and MynaGoGama peaceful protest sites on Monday. At least nine people were killed and over 300 others injured in the violence.

The magisterial order came as a response to a request by the police's criminal investigation division who are conducting the investigations into the Monday's violence. The court issued the bans on 13 legislators representing the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), including Johnston Fernando, Sanath Nishantha, Pavithra Wanniarachchi, C B Ratnayake, and Sanjeeva Edirimanne. Senior Deputy Inspector General (SDIG) of the Western Province Deshabandu Tennakoon is also in the list of people who need to remain in the country for investigations into the violence.

The group was accused of brutally assaulting protesters opposite Mahinda Rajapaksa's prime ministerial residence and near the secretariat of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. Mahinda Rajapaksa, in a show of political strength, rallied his



grassroots supporters to force him not to resign his position as the prime minister. By then the pressure had mounted on him from within the ruling coalition to resign to make way for the formation of an interim all-party government.

He made a passionate speech and the charged up supporters attacked the protesters who had been for weeks demanding the resignation of the Rajapaksas, blaming them for the country's worst economic crisis.

A number of government MPs' homes and offices were torched by enraged mobs around the country Monday and Tuesday, in a wave of spontaneous violence that was triggered by the attack on anti-government protestors by sup-

porters of Mahinda Rajapaksa. Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned a few hours later and a curfew was imposed across the country.

Mahinda Rajapaksa, known for his brutal military campaign against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) during his presidency from 2005 to 2015, saw his private residence set on fire on Monday. He, along with his wife and family, fled his official residence - Temple Trees - and took shelter at the naval base in Trincomalee after a series of deadly attacks on his supporters.

In a late-night televised address to the nation on Wednesday, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa said action would be taken against the instigators of Monday's "inci-

dent". 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.

Thousands of demonstrators have hit the streets across Sri Lanka since April 9 seeking the resignation of the Rajapaksa brothers.

The powerful Rajapaksa clan has dominated Sri Lankan politics for years. Gotabaya is the last Rajapaksa family member in office and the resignation of his brother as prime minister did nothing to placate demonstrators or bring calm in the island nation.

Parliament to discuss no-trust motion against President Rajapaksa on May 17

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lankan Parliament will debate a no-confidence motion against President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on May 17, the Speaker's Office confirmed on Thursday, amid the ongoing political turmoil triggered by the worst economic crisis plaguing the debt-ridden country.

The decision was taken during the party leaders' meeting on Thursday. The motion would be taken up for debate after obtaining special approval from Parliament, the Daily Mirror newspaper reported.

Speaking at a press conference after the party leaders met at the Parliament complex, Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena said that the proposal submitted by the leaders will be prepared and handed over to the president.

The proposals, including the formation of a stable government and the security of the members of parliament, will be handed over to President Rajapaksa.

Parliamentarian MA Sumanthiran emphasised that a stable government was necessary for the country to move forward.

Sumanthiran noted that while a stipulated time duration has not been given for the resignation of the president, action must be taken soon with regard to the appointment of the prime minister, News First website reported.

Parliamentarian Mano Ganeshan added that no one should suddenly intervene and take up the position of the prime minister, and the president must respect the repeated calls for his resignation by the people, the report said.

Sri Lanka's main Opposition party SJB on Friday announced that it will move a no-confidence motion against the government of President Rajapaksa and is prepared to impeach the embattled leader if he fails to address the concerns of the public facing hardships due to the worst economic crisis.

As protests continued across the country, demanding the resignation of



the President and the entire Rajapaksa family from the government, Opposition leader Sajith Premadasa also called for the Executive Presidency to be abolished, saying power should be divided between the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary.

"The government must pay heed to the public demand for the Rajapaksas to quit, if not we will bring a no-confidence motion," the leader of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) told Parliament.

Premadasa said that he cannot agree to an interim government with Rajapaksa remaining as the president. The SJB said that it was also prepared to impeach the president. He also submitted a set of proposals to Parliament on behalf of the SJB to address the economic crisis in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka is facing its worst economic crisis since independence from Britain in 1948. Clashes broke out on Monday after government's supporters attacked peaceful anti-government protest sites in

Colombo and elsewhere, killing at least 8 people and leaving over 200 others injured in the violence.

Sri Lanka's worst economic crisis has provoked widespread protests calling for political reform and the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. On April 1, President Rajapaksa imposed a state of emergency, lifting it five days later. The government reimposed a state of emergency on May 6 after police fired teargas and arrested students protesting near parliament, which was adjourned until May 17.

Although the protests have been overwhelmingly peaceful, the police fatally shot a protester on April 19, and on several occasions have used teargas and water cannons against protesters. The authorities have made numerous arrests and repeatedly imposed curfews.

The political crisis was triggered in late March when people hurt by long hours of power cuts and essential shortages took to the streets demanding the resignation of the government.

President Rajapaksa sacked his cabinet and appointed a younger cabinet as a response to the demand for resignation. A continuous protest opposite his secretariat has now gone on for well over a month.

Last Monday, his brother Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned as the prime minister to make way for the president to appoint an interim all political party government.

Sri Lankan authorities on Wednesday deployed troops and military vehicles in the streets to ensure public security in the Capital amidst nationwide protests over the government's failure to tackle the worst economic crisis.

The deployment came a day after the country's Ministry of Defence 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.

Will consider restricting executive power: Gotabaya; mum on resignation



PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's embattled President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, under immense pressure from the public and the Opposition to quit over the island nation's worst economic crisis, said on Thursday that the abolition of the executive presidency, a move that will curb his powers, will be considered by Parliament.

Abolishing the presidential system of governance, in existence in the country since 1978, and replacing it with a system that reinforces constitutional democracy, has been one of the key demands of the Opposition.

In a series of tweets, the President outlined the steps to be taken to end the current political impasse after his elder brother and prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned on Monday.

"Steps will be taken to form a new gov to prevent the country falling into anarchy & to maintain the affairs of the state that have come to a halt," Gotabaya said on Twitter.

"A PM who commands majority in Parliament & is able to secure the confidence of the people will be appointed within this week," he said.

The new government will be given the opportunity to present a new programme and empowered to take the country forward, he said.

"Further, steps will be taken to amend the constitution to re-enact the contents of the 19th Amendment to further empower the Parliament.

"Calls from various factions for the abolition of the executive presidency will be

nance, in existence in the country since 1978, and replace it with a system that reinforces constitutional democracy.

While the president will remain the head of state and the commander in chief, the president has no personal discretion in appointing or dismissing the prime minister, according to the proposal.

The prime minister shall be the head of the Cabinet of ministers and the ministers are to be appointed by the president on the prime minister's advice, it added.

The amendment, while seeking to annul the 20th Amendment adopted in 2020, aims to restore the 19th Amendment to the Constitution to curb the powers of the president and empower Parliament.

The 19A adopted in 2015 pruned presidential powers by empowering the 225-member Parliament above the executive president.

However, the 19A was scrapped after Gotabaya Rajapaksa won the November 2019 presidential election.

The powerful Rajapaksa family had tightened their grip on power after their massive victory in the general elections in August 2020 which allowed them to amend the Constitution to restore presidential powers and install close family members in key positions.

Mahinda, the 76-year-old Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP) leader known for his brutal military campaign against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) during his presidency from 2005 to 2015, resigned on Monday.

He is being protected at the Trincomalee naval base after he was evacuated from his official residence, Defence Secretary Gen (ret'd.) Kamal Guneratne said on Wednesday.

Mahinda, who served as the country's prime minister three, saw his private residence set on fire on Monday. He, along with his wife and family, fled his official residence - Temple Trees - and took shelter at the naval base in Trincomalee after a series of deadly attacks on his supporters.

Probe ordered whether Lankan prison inmates employed to attack anti-Govt protesters



PTI ■ COLOMBO

An investigation has been launched by Sri Lanka's jail authorities on the allegations that a group of inmates from a prison camp in the island nation were used to attack anti-government protesters in Colombo this week, according to a media report on Thursday.

Violence erupted in Sri Lanka on Monday after supporters of former prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa attacked peaceful anti-govern-

ment protesters demanding his ouster over the country's worst economic crisis that led to acute shortages of staple food, fuel and power.

Over 200 people have also been injured in the violence in Colombo and other cities.

Sri Lanka prisons have launched an investigation on the allegations raised claiming that a group of inmates from the Watereka Open Prison Camp were used to attack protesters in Colombo recently, Commissioner General of

Prisons Thushara Upuldeniya was quoted as saying by the News First website.

Footage posted on social media following the attack on peaceful protests showed locals detaining a group of men who later claimed that they were prisoners from the Watereka Open Prison Camp, the report added. It was observed that the pants worn by the group of

detained men were identical to those worn by people who were among the group that attacked peaceful protests on Monday in Colombo.

The Commissioner-General of Prisons said that the men were not wearing prison fatigues, but were wearing a uniform provided to them by the institutions that employed their services.

The Commissioner-General of Prisons, and another officer will be present at the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka on Thursday for an inquiry over the matter.

Several people sustained injuries as the supporters from the ruling SLPP, armed with poles and other objects, attacked 'GotaGoGama' protesters in Galle Face.

Ranil: A politician who could manage economy with far-sighted policies

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's new Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, a lawyer-turned politician who has been in Parliament for 45 years, has made a remarkable come back nearly two years after his United National Party (UNP) was routed and failed to win a single seat in the general election held in August 2020.

The 73-year-old leader, who is believed to be close to India, was appointed as the 26th prime minister of Sri Lanka by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa amidst the worst economic crisis in the country. He is widely accepted in political circles as a man who could manage the economy with far-sighted policies.

His appointment fills the void of a leadership as Sri Lanka was without a government since Monday when Gotabaya's elder brother and prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned after violent protests following an attack on the anti-government protesters by his supporters.

Wickremesinghe, who is perceived as the Sri Lankan

politician who could command international cooperation, has held many important posts during his political career spanning four and half decades. He built a personal rapport with Sri Lanka's immediate neighbour India and visited the country on four occasions — October 2016, April 2017, November 2017 and October 2018 — during his previous term as the prime minister.

During the same period, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made two visits to Sri Lanka and he also responded to a personal request from Wickremesinghe to help the island nation set up the 1990 ambulance system - a free health care service which became immensely helpful during Covid 19.

Despite the opposition from then President Maithripala Sirisena, Wickremesinghe had backed the deal with India on the Colombo port's eastern terminal which the Rajapaksas reneged in 2020.

His party UNP, the oldest party in the country, had failed to win a single seat in 2020 parliamentary polls.

BSES Yamuna Power Limited, New Delhi ... A joint venture with Govt. of NCT of Delhi						
TENDER NOTICE						Date: 13.05.2022
Sealed tenders under two Bid System (Unpriced & Priced) are invited for following jobs from all bidders						
NIT No.	Brief Item Description	Estimated Cost (₹)	Cost of EMD (₹)	PRE BID Meeting	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
CMC/BY/22-23/RB/VS/AS/12	Award of work for Repairing & servicing of Damaged/Failed oil Filled distribution Transformers of various ratings at BYPL's workshop for 2 year	₹3.5 Cr	₹7 lac	23.05.2022 14:00 HRS	02.06.2022 15:00 HRS	03.06.2022 15:30 HRS
Cost of Tender Document : ₹1180/- For details in respect of Equipment/BOM/Services, Qualifying requirements, Terms & conditions, purchase/submition of tender documents etc. please visit our website www.bsesdelhi.com --> Tenders--> BSES YAMUNA POWER LIMITED Open						
Tenders.						Head (Contracts & Materials)
Regd. Off: BSES Yamuna Power Ltd, Shakti Kiran Building, Karkardooma, Delhi-110032 CIN: U40109DL2001PLC111525 TEL: 011-41247111 Fax-011-4124 7787 Website: www.bsesdelhi.com						

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

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 (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Jagjeet Singh/ Surjeet Kaur/ LBFDB00001481472	House No. 1A/122, Nit Faridabad/ May 10, 2022	August 30, 2021 Rs. 5,58,477/-	Delhi/ NCR
2.	Rakhi Gupta/ Nakul Gupta/ Veleno Inc/ LBDEL00002356623	Unit No 22185, 22nd Floor, Mangrove, Mahagun Mywood, Phase III, Mahagun India Pvt Ltd, Plot No Gh 04, Sector 16c, Greater Noida Noida/ May 10, 2022	September 27, 2021 Rs. 30,66,513/-	Delhi/ NCR
3.	Rukhsar/ Zaminuddin/ LBFDB00004142008	Plot No-4821, Ground Floor, Ownership No-12, Tp Scheme No.3 (Part 1), Sector-49, Forming Part of Khasra No 391, 392, 393, 369 Min of Village Nawada Koh, Faridabad, Tehsil Badkhal Distt, Indraprastha Extension, Faridabad/ May 10, 2022	October 16, 2021 Rs. 25,23,368/-	Delhi/ NCR
4.	Satish Kumar Mishra/ Abha Mishra/ LBFDB00001796400/ LBGUR00002045339	Unit No-506, Zinnia Tower on 5th Floor, Green Valley Situated At Sec-41-42 Urban Estate, Faridabad (Haryana)/ May 10,2022	July 06, 2021 Rs. 25,93,149/-	Delhi/ NCR
5.	Vinay Kumar/ Jyoti/ LBGHZ00002206043	Fiat No-2648, 25th Floor, 16th Park View, Tower-F, Township Gaur Yamuna City, Pocket-3, Mirzapur Site, Sector-19, Jaypee Sports City East, Yeida, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, Noida/ May 10, 2022	August 30, 2021 Rs. 19,20,654/-	Delhi/ NCR
6.	Saurabh Sharma/ Anita Sharma/ LBFDB00004920510	Plot No-4824, Second Floor, Sector-49, Indraprastha Extension At Ownership No-12 At Ownership No-12 Tp Scheme No-3 (Part- I) Faridabad/ May 10, 2022	November 15, 2021 Rs. 44,16,480/-	Delhi/ NCR
7.	Rajnikant G/ Suman Sharma/ LBDEL00005341987/ LBGHZ00004082559	Unit No S-59, 2nd Floor, Situated At Ls-01, Sector- Beta-1, Plaza Shops, Greater Noida- 201308/ May 10, 2022	November 15, 2021 Rs. 16,80,298/-	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 13, 2022

Place: Delhi NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

‘₹12 lakh cr expenditure on urban schemes since 2014’

8 times more than UPA: Govt

New Delhi: Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Thursday said the government has incurred expenditure of close to Rs 12 lakh crore in the last eight years on urban development schemes as compared to Rs 1.57 lakh crore during the ten years of the UPA rule.

The minister was speaking at 'PlumbEx India', a three-day exhibition on plumbing, water, and sanitation products, organised by Indian Plumbing Association (IPA) at Pragati Maidan here.

Puri launched 'Bharat Tap' initiative by IPA, which aims to reduce water consumption, and said his ministry will join this campaign to save water. Bharat Tap is a concept to use low flow tap and fixtures.

He also launched NAREDCO MAHI's (women wing of realtors body NAREDCO) initiative 'Nirmal Jal Prayaas' to

save water.

"In the ten years of previous government 2004-2014, the total amount of expenditure incurred on all the urban schemes taken together was Rs 1.57 lakh crore," he said. The expenditure under the Modi government has increased by eight times, he added.

"It (expenditure on urban schemes) should be eight times, close to Rs 12 lakh crore," Puri said, adding that the number keeps changing every day.

The outlay for Amrut 2.0 and Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0 is Rs 4.71 lakh crore, the minister said.

The major programmes under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs are Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban), Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM-U), Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) among others.

Citing major urban development projects being undertaken across various states, Puri noted that the urban space in India is slowly acquiring a

new look.

The 'Nirmal Jal Prayaas' scheme was launched in the presence of NAREDCO President Rajan Bandelkar and NAREDCO Mahi (women wing) President Tara Subramaniam.

"I am pleased to be launching NAREDCO Mahi's Nirmal Jal Prayaas Mission. I am informed that this initiative will also lead to saving almost 500 crore litre of water per year," Puri said.

Bandelkar said, "It is well-acknowledged that water conservation is the need of the hour. The real estate industry and allied stakeholders, need to be sensitized in this regard. With our quest for innovation in real estate and related accessories, NAREDCO has always strived to save every drop of water possible and promote recycling of water." Subramaniam said The importance towards water conservation and efforts to promote saving in homes is well-embedded in our plans and it is one of core targets. **PTI**

Sensex sinks for 5th day as US inflation spooks global markets

Mumbai: The Sensex nose-dived over 1,150 points while the Nifty crashed below the 16,000-level on Thursday, extending their losing streak to the fifth straight session, as world markets were unnerved by elevated US inflation which triggered concerns of accelerated rate hikes.

The forex market too bore the brunt of heightened risk aversion, with the rupee plunging to a fresh lifetime low of 77.63 per US dollar intra-day amid foreign capital outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 1,158.08 points or 2.14 per cent to finish at an over two-month low of 52,930.31.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty tanked 359.10 points or 2.22 per cent to 15,808.

Barring Wipro, all Sensex constituents finished in the red.

IndusInd Bank lost 5.82 per cent, followed by Tata Steel, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, HDFC, Titan and L&T.

In value terms, HDFC twins and Reliance Industries were the top drags on the



benchmark.

Global markets were hampered by a fresh wave of selling after US reported consumer inflation of 8.3 per cent in April, slightly lower than the level in March but still way beyond the Federal Reserve's target of 2 per cent.

"Yesterday's release of higher-than-expected US CPI data suggests that the inflationary pressure will persist in the near term. However, it is presumed to have peaked and

will gradually decline in-line with the ongoing fall in crude and other commodity prices, and slowdown in the economy.

"The Fed surprised the market with a hawkish stance, limiting liquidity, which limits further setbacks in the future. We can expect the market to stabilize as FIIs may reduce selling factoring inflation and Fed policy," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. **PTI**

Investors' wealth tumbles ₹18.74 lakh crore in five trading sessions

New Delhi: Equity investors have become poorer by more than Rs 18.74 lakh crore as the market continued to remain bearish for the fifth session on the trot on Thursday.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 1,158.08 points or 2.14 per cent to end below the 53,000-level at 52,930.31 points on Thursday.

Markets have been falling for five straight sessions and the BSE benchmark has tumbled 2,771.92 points or 4.97 per cent during this period.

A weak trend in equities have eroded Rs 18,74,689.98 crore from the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms in five days. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms is now at Rs 2,40,90,199.39 crore.

"Markets continued to remain under pressure in sync with global markets slump, as worries of more interest rate hikes coupled with sluggish economic growth going ahead weighed on sentiment. The ongoing conflict and lockdowns in China due to virus spread is promoting investors

to shun equities," Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail) at Kotak Securities Ltd, said.

Among the Sensex firms, IndusInd Bank declined the most by 5.82 per cent on Thursday, followed by Tata Steel, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, HDFC, Titan and L&T.

Only Wipro ended higher from the 30-share BSE benchmark pack. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge tanked 2.24 per cent and small-cap declined 1.96 per cent.

All BSE sectoral indices ended lower, with power falling 4.11 per cent, followed by utilities (3.90 per cent), metal (3.75 per cent), bank (3.14 per cent), finance (3.14 per cent) and telecom (2.81 per cent).

"Inflation continues to be a major concern for the markets. Weakening economic growth outlook, prolonged Russia-Ukraine War, volatility in commodity prices, continued FIIs selling and rising bond yields have dented investors' sentiments. **PTI**

Gold jumps ₹241; silver declines by ₹729

New Delhi: Gold in the national capital on Thursday jumped Rs 241 to Rs 50,797 per 10 grams, supported by a sharp fall in rupee, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had ended at Rs 50,556 per 10 grams in the previous trade.

In contrast, silver declined by Rs 729 to Rs 60,158 per kg from Rs 60,887 per kg in the previous trade. Snapping its two-day winning streak, the rupee slumped by 15 paise to end at 77.40 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday.

"Gold prices traded marginally down with spot gold prices at COMEX trading at USD 1,851 per ounce on Thursday.

Gold prices witnessed knee-jerk reaction post US inflation data," said Tapan Patel, Senior Analyst (Commodities), HDFC Securities. **PTI**

Number of subscribers under PFRDA pension schemes up 23% to 5.23 cr

New Delhi: The number of subscribers under the two flagship pension schemes of PFRDA increased nearly 23 per cent to over 5.23 crore by April-end 2022.

The subscriber base of the two schemes combined was 4.26 crore in April last year, Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) data showed.

The flagship schemes -- National Pension System (NPS) and Atal Pension Yojana (APY) -- had total asset under management of Rs 7,38,765 crore at April-end 2022, rising by 25.25 per cent from the year-ago period.

"The number of subscribers in various schemes under NPS rose to 523.87 lakh by end-April 2022 from 426.75 lakh in April 2021 showing a year-on-year increase of 22.76 per cent," it said.

The number of subscribers under APY grew nearly 30 per cent to 3.65 crore by April this

APY is mainly targeted towards providing a social security benefit after retirement to those who work in the unorganised sector and form a large chunk of employment in the country

year. The rest 1.58 crore subscribers belonged to various categories under NPS -- the pension scheme which mainly caters to the government sector and corporate sector employees.

APY is mainly targeted towards providing a social security benefit after retirement to those who work in the unorganised sector and form a large chunk of employment in the country. **PTI**

Industrial production grows 1.9 % in March, 11.3% in 2021-22

New Delhi: India's industrial production rose 1.9 per cent in March 2022, according to official data released on Thursday.

As per the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), the manufacturing sector's output grew 0.9 per cent in March 2022. Mining output climbed 4 per cent, and power generation increased 6.1 per cent.

The IIP had grown by 24.2 per cent in March 2021.

During 2021-22, the IIP grew 11.3 per cent as against an 8.4 per cent contraction in 2020-21.

Industrial production has been hit due to the coronavirus pandemic since March 2020, when it had contracted 18.7 per cent. It shrank 57.3 per cent in April 2020 due to a decline in economic activities in the wake of the lockdown imposed to curb the spread of coronavirus infections. **PTI**

Sebi mulling framework to encourage more ETFs in debt segment: Barua

Mumbai: Capital markets regulator Sebi is planning to come out with a framework to encourage more exchange-traded funds in debt securities to increase retail investors' interest in the market, a senior official said on Thursday.

The regulator wants to replicate the story as seen in the equity segment, where the ETFs and index funds have deepened retail investors' participation in the markets, Sebi's Wholetime Member Ananta Barua said.

"...there is a thrust. We will come up with a framework which will encourage more

ETFs in debt securities and index funds," Barua said, speaking at an event on corporate bond development conducted by industry lobby Assocham. Barua said Sebi is also looking at implementing other measures as announced in the annual budget by Finance Minister Nirmala

Sitharaman.

He expressed satisfaction with the bond market development, saying the total issuances came at over 16 per cent of the GDP last fiscal from a slow start.

Sebi has laid down all the necessary frameworks for raising money from the bond market, including newer instruments like municipal bonds and green bonds, Barua said.

He said the overall outstanding bonds had stood at Rs 40.17 lakh crore at the end of FY22 against Rs 36 lakh crore in the year-ago period.

There is a need for pulling in the retail investors towards the bond markets, he said, adding the new framework is in the works.

Barua also mentioned venture debt as an interesting instrument, hinting that startups, especially those were promoters, are unwilling to dilute their holdings. **PTI**

PNB shares tumble nearly 14 pc after Q4 earnings

New Delhi: Shares of Punjab National Bank (PNB) on Thursday tumbled nearly 14 per cent after the company reported over 60 per cent decline in standalone net profit for the quarter ended March 2022.

The stock tanked 13.60 per cent to end at Rs 28.60 apiece on the BSE. During the day, it tumbled 13.89 per cent to its 52-week low of Rs 28.50.

On the NSE, it plummeted 12.53 per cent to settle at Rs 28.95 apiece.

In volume terms, 171.82 lakh shares were traded on the BSE and over 20.34 crore shares on the NSE during the day.

On Wednesday, state-owned Punjab National Bank posted a 66 per cent decline in standalone net profit at Rs 202 crore for the quarter ended March 2022 due to a higher amount parked towards provisioning, even as the NPA levels declined. **PTI**

Best Agrolife to manufacture crucial corn herbicide

PNS ■ New Delhi

Best Agrolife Ltd Gets Registration For The Indigenous Manufacturing Of Crucial Corn Herbicide Best Agrolife Limited, one of the leading player in the Indian agrochemical industry, on Friday has been granted the registration for the indigenous manufacturing of Tembotrione technical 94% u/s 9(4) by the Central Insecticides Board & Registration Committee in the 439th meeting.

The company has a pivotal positioning in Rice and Soybean crops and this registration will help it in consolidating its portfolio in the herbicides segment further.

The company has decided to launch its commercial formulation under the brand name 'Tombo' in early June,22. **PTI**

Tata Motors Q4 consolidated net loss narrows to ₹992 cr; revenue down at ₹78,439 cr

New Delhi: Homegrown auto major Tata Motors on Thursday reported narrowing of consolidated net loss at Rs 992.05 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 2022.

The company had posted a consolidated net loss of Rs 7,585.34 crore in the same period last fiscal, Tata Motors said in a regulatory filing.

Its total consolidated revenue from operations stood at Rs 78,439.06 crore in the fourth quarter as against Rs 88,627.90 crore in the year-ago period, it added.

On a standalone basis, the automaker reported a net profit of Rs 413.35 crore in the period under review as against a net profit of Rs 1,645.68 crore in the fourth quarter of 2020-21. Standalone total revenue from operations stood at Rs 17,338.27 crore in the fourth quarter as compared to Rs



13,480.42 crore in the same period previous fiscal, Tata Motors said.

The company's British arm Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) posted revenue of 4.8 billion pounds in the fourth quarter and retail sales of vehicles

stood at 79,008 units.

For FY22, JLR's revenue was 18.3 billion pounds, down 7 per cent from the prior year. Retail sales were at 3,76,381 units, down 14 per cent compared to FY21, the company said. **PTI**

Consumer durables to see 3-5% price hikes as costlier imports amid rupee fall add to input costs

New Delhi: Prices of home appliances and consumer electronics, including TV, washing machines, and refrigerators, are expected to go up by 3 to 5 per cent from May end or the first week of June as manufacturers pass on the impact of rising input costs to buyers, according to industry players.

Moreover, the depreciating Indian rupee against the US dollar has put further woes on manufacturers as imported components have become costlier, with the industry largely

being dependent on imports for key components.

Adding to the challenges, there has been shortage of parts triggered by piling up of containers at Shanghai port due to strict lockdown in the city following the surge in COVID-19 cases.

This has put pressure on the inventory of the manufacturers, and several top line products that have lesser domestic value addition and are largely dependent on imports are not available in the market. **PTI**

Fortis gets World Stroke body Diamond status

Noida: Fortis hospital Noida has bagged the World Stroke Organization Angels Diamond status in all four quarters of 2021 despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 in treatment of non-communicable diseases. The stroke program at Fortis Noida led by Dr Jyoti Bala Sharma was realigned to the new safety protocols amidst covid and was crucial in saving life of stroke patients.

Drug Administration (USFDA), UK drug regulator MHRA and European Medicines Agency.

Speaking at the India-Oman business council meeting, Oman's Minister for Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef invited Indian businesses to explore opportunities. He is leading a 40-member delegation to India.

Vikramjit Singh Sahney, Chair - FICCI India-Arab Council and Chairman, Sun International, said there is huge potential for both the countries to further strengthen economic ties. **PTI**

Vummidi partners with Akshaya

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vummidi Bangaru Jewellers, a legendary brand known for its elegance and finesse, has partnered with Akshaya.io, World's first 'Phygital' platform to develop virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR) assets for its designs. Akshaya.io will also be developing a Metaverse store for VBJ to showcase and trade in its exquisite and exclusive pieces of jewelry, and their original designs as Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs).

While the technology world has been talking about augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), machine learning (ML), and artificial intelligence (AI), the emergence of Metaverse, which can be defined as a simulated digital environment using all the earlier mentioned tools along with blockchain, is all set to mimic the real world.

Flavoured tea market fast growing in India

Kolkata: With several organised players in the industry entering the fray, the flavoured tea market is fast growing in India, mostly among the youth, a Tea Board official said on Thursday.

The demand for such functional or herbal teas has increased in the country particularly after the onset of Covid-19, as tea with spices and natural herbs has proved to boost immunity against the virus, he said.

The size of the flavoured tea market in terms of volume and price is around 60 million kilograms and Rs 3600 crore respectively. This is, however, an approximate value taking the flavoured tea market to be 10 per cent of the entire packet tea consumption, the official said.

Kamakshya Singh, head (business development) of Luxmi Tea, said that functional and herbal tea consumption



has gained momentum in recent years.

"The younger audiences are indulging in wellness that came due to the pandemic. Brands are now focussing on holistic wellness which covers an active lifestyle for which such tea blends are gaining popularity," he said.

Singh said that e-commerce volumes for selling such tea online are rising 30 per cent each year while the estimated share of the herbal or functional tea market would be less than two per cent. **PTI**

Campbell Wilson appointed CEO and MD of Air India

Mumbai: Tata Sons on Thursday announced the appointment of Campbell Wilson as the Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director (MD) of Air India.

The Air India board approved the appointment of Wilson subject to requisite regulatory approvals, the company said in a statement.

Wilson, 50, is the CEO of Scoot, the wholly-owned low-cost subsidiary of Singapore Airlines. He has 26 years of aviation industry expertise across both full service and low-cost airlines, it added.

Tata Sons and Air India Chairman N Chandrasekaran said, "I am delighted to welcome Campbell to Air India. He is an industry veteran having worked in key global mar-



kets cutting across multiple functions. Further, Air India would benefit from his added experience of having built an airline brand in Asia. I look forward to working with him in building a world-class airline."

Earlier in February this year, Tata Sons had announced the appointment of former chairman of Turkish Airlines Ilker Ayci as the CEO and MD of Air India. **PTI**

We may consider preferential trade pact with Oman: Goyal

New Delhi: India may consider negotiating a preferential trade agreement (PTA) with Oman to further boost economic ties between the countries, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday. India is also under active discussions with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) for a comprehensive trade agreement, the minister said.

GCC is a union of six countries in the Gulf region, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

"We may consider doing a preferential trade agreement with Oman to begin with

because we are looking for a comprehensive agreement between the GCC region and India, (which is) under active discussion," Goyal said.

In a PTA, trading partners reduce import duties on certain identified products to boost trade. He also said that there is a vast potential to boost bilateral trade and investments between the countries.

The bilateral trade has increased from USD 5.4 billion in 2020-21 to USD 9.94 billion during 2021-2022. Oman has also agreed to fast-track approval for Indian pharma products that are already registered by the US Food and

Punjab Kings look to halt RCB's passage to playoffs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Royal Challengers Bangalore, who have found much-needed momentum towards the business end of IPL, will back themselves to ride past an inconsistent Punjab Kings and get closer to a play-off spot here on Friday.

Having put up complete performances in their last two games, RCB seemed to have figured out their best combination.

Barring Virat Kohli, all of their batters are in top form with uncapped Rajat Patidar and Mahipal Lomror complementing seasoned pros like skipper Faf du Plessis, Glenn Maxwell and Dinesh Karthik, who has been among the best finishers in the tournament alongside Gujarat's Rahul Tewatia.

The bowling packs a punch too in the presence of in-form pacers Josh Hazlewood and the ever-reliable Harshal Patel. Mohammad Siraj has not been at his best but trust him to deliver when the team wants it the most.

Maxwell has been handy with his off-spin, both in powerplay and middle overs, while Wanindu Hasaranga is among the leading wicket-takers in the tournament with 21 scalps including a five-wicket haul.

"What we are trying to get better as a team is making sure that one of those top-four creates a bit of a base. We have got some really strong hitters at the back.

"The games where we didn't do so well, there was a big cluster of wickets in the power-play. Obviously need some stability but at the same time you gonna make sure you don't go into defensive mode," said du Plessis after the massive win over SRH.

Kohli, who is in the middle



Bangalore vs Punjab
Live from 7:30pm IST
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

of his worst IPL season, is due for an impact knock and that could come against Punjab. A win on Friday would take RCB to 16 points though 18 seems to be a safe number for a play-off berth.

Punjab, who have three games left, need to win all to have a shot at the top-four finish. They had started their campaign with a win over RCB and are on 10 points with five wins and six losses.

The fact that they have not been able to win two games in a row sums up their inconsistent run.

Shikhar Dhawan and Bhanuka Rajapaksa have delivered at the top, so has Liam Livingstone and Jitesh Sharma

in finishing the innings. Jonny Bairstow finally got runs after being promoted to open the innings alongside Dhawan.

Skipper Mayank Agarwal, who has moved himself down the order, needs to lead from the front.

On the bowling front, Sandeep Sharma has been tidy but could do with some wickets in the powerplay. Lead pacer Kagiso Rabada has done well to take 18 wickets but has gone for close to 9 runs per over.

Arshdeep Singh has been brilliant, especially in the death overs, and has impressed many with his ability to land yorkers at will.

Despite a solid squad at their disposal, Punjab have flattered to deceive and they must raise their game before it is too late yet again.

CHENNAI OUT OF IPL

► pointstable

Po.	TEAM	M	W	L	NR	Pts	NRR
1.	GT (Q)	12	9	3	0	18	0.376
2.	LSG	12	8	4	0	16	0.385
3.	RR	12	7	5	0	14	0.228
4.	RCB	12	7	5	0	14	-0.115
5.	DC	12	6	6	0	12	0.210
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	12	4	8	0	8	-0.181
10.	MI	12	3	9	0	6	-0.613

► boundarymeter

4s	1621
6s	835

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians on Thursday snuffed out defending champions Chennai Super Kings' faint hopes of making the Indian Super League play-offs with a five-wicket win in a low-scoring match here.

Opting to bowl, MI shot CSK out for 97 with pacer Daniel Sams (3/16 from 4 overs) running though the MS Dhoni-led side's top-order with three quick wickets in a fiery opening spell, and then huffed and puffed to overhaul the small target of 98 with 31 balls to spare.

MI were four wickets down for 33 runs in the fifth over before Tilak Varma (34 not out off 32 balls) and Hrithik Shookan (18) calmed the frayed nerves with a 48-run stand for the fifth wicket. MI reached 103 for 5 in 14.5 overs.

Tim David remained not out on 16 off just seven balls.

With their eighth loss in 12 matches, CSK are out of reckoning for a play-offs berth. They remained at ninth position with eight points.

Already out of reckoning for a play-offs berth long time ago, MI remained rooted at the 10th and bottom place with three wins from 12 matches.

Both CSK and MI have two inconsequen-



tial matches left to be played. It will be the first time in IPL history that neither MI nor CSK would be part of the play-offs.

Defending 97, Mukesh Choudhary (3/23) struck in the fifth ball of the opening over as Ishan Kishan (6) poked well away from his body to see a thin edge go through to Dhoni behind the stumps.

MI captain Rohit Sharma found a four each off Choudhary and Simarjeet Singh in the next two overs. But Simarjeet had the last laugh in the fourth over, having Rohit caught by Dhoni.

Choudhary then raised hopes of a CSK miracle by having Daniel Sams (1) and Tristan Stubbs (0) in the space of three balls in the fifth over.

MI were 36 for 4 after powerplay and Hrithik Shookan survived after a review.

Moeen Ali broke the fifth-wicket partnership between Varma and Shookan by having the latter in the 13th over but it was too late as MI needed just

17 runs from 7.2 overs.

Earlier, Sams tore apart the CSK top-order from which the Dhoni-led team never recovered.

Riley Meredith and Kumar Kartikeya chipped in with two wickets apiece while Jasprit Bumrah and Ramandeep Singh got one each as CSK innings folded in 16 overs.

CSK's woes were compounded with the non-availability of Decision Review System (DRS) due to power cut at one of the floodlight towers at Wankhede Stadium after the start of their innings during which they lost three wickets, with two being LBW decisions.

Captain Dhoni played a lone hand for CSK with a 33-ball 36 not out with the help of four boundaries and two sixes. None of his colleagues gave him company in a pathetic batting display.

Dwayne Bravo (12), who shared 39 runs with Dhoni for the seventh wicket, the best partnership in the CSK

innings, was the second best batter. But for the 15 extras Mumbai bowlers conceded, the CSK total would have been much lower.

In the end, Dhoni ran out of part-

ners. Conway, who played a match-winning knock of 87 in CSK's match against Delhi Capitals, was struck on the pad off the second ball of the innings bowled by Sams. The umpire raised his finger though the ball hit him just below the knee-roll and looked to be going down the leg. There was no DRS, and Conway had to go for nought.

Two balls later, Moeen Ali (0) edged another Sams delivery for Hrithik Shookan to take a catch at short mid-wicket, as CSK were down two wickets for five runs in the opening over.

It was the turn of Bumrah to join the party as he dismissed Robin Uthappa (1) who could not ask for DRS review of the LBW decision.

KKR acquire Abu Dhabi franchise in UAE's T20 league

PTI ■ DUBAI

Kolkata Knight Riders have acquired the rights to own and operate a franchise in the UAE's upcoming T20 league and it will be based in Abu Dhabi.

The franchise will be named Abu Dhabi Knight Riders.

The investment by the Knight Riders Group, which is led by actor Shah Rukh Khan, along with Juhi Chawla and her husband Jay Mehta, will thus establish their fourth T20 franchise around the world in IPL, CPL, MLC and now in UAE's T20 league.

After establishing Kolkata Knight Riders in 2008 in the Indian Premier League, the Knight Riders became owners of the Trinbago Knight Riders in the Caribbean Premier League in 2015.

Recently, the Knight Riders Group made a significant investment in Major League Cricket (MLC) in the USA and intends to set up a franchise in the greater Los Angeles area.

Savita sets sights on top-four finish at women's hockey WC

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Indian women's hockey team goalkeeper Savita on Thursday said the side's aim is to "make it to the next level" in this year's FIH World Cup after finishing in the last eight stage four years ago.

The event will be jointly hosted by the Netherlands and Spain in July.

In the 2018 edition of the showpiece in London, India lost 1-3 to Ireland in penalty shoot-out to crash out of the competition.

But this time around, Savita says India are well prepared to make the medal rounds.

"With more players getting international exposure, and having gained confidence to play top teams in big-match scenarios, we are heading in the right direction of building a strong team for the World Cup," the senior player said.

"We made it to the quarterfinals last time in London, and the aim this time is definitely to make it to the next level."



The World Cup will be played from July 1 to 17 but before that the Indians will gain valuable exposure in the FIH Pro League matches in Belgium, where they will take on the hosts on June 11 and 12.

The two matches will be followed by weekend games in the Netherlands, where India will play Argentina on June 18 and 19 and the United States on June 21 and 22.

The Indian women are placed in Pool B in the World Cup along side England, China and New Zealand. They will open their campaign against England on July 3 in Amstelveen.

Savita said healthy competition for places among the junior and senior players augurs well for India.

"With new players coming into the group by virtue of good performances in the Pro League and Junior World Cup, there is healthy competition within the group and this is helping in bringing out the best in each one of us."

'Ill' Prithvi Shaw out of IPL, hints Watson



PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

Shaw, who has been down with a fever and admitted to a hospital, last played on May 1, against Lucknow Super Giants.

"I don't know his diagnosis exactly," Watson told the Grade Cricketer.

"But he has just had this underlying fever for the previous couple of weeks, which they've had to really get to the bottom of it to find out exactly what it was."

"It's not looking great for him to be available for the last couple of games, which is a big shame because he is an incred-

'Hasaranga is a good cricketer, as is Yuzi'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

RCB's Mike Hesson-led support staff feels Sri Lankan leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga has done more than what was expected of him in the ongoing IPL, having entered the team as a direct replacement for Yuzvendra Chahal.

The second highest wicket-taker in the current edition of the league, Hasaranga recently took a five-for to lead his team to victory over SRH.

"From the start, Hasaranga was always getting big players out, he was getting wickets in the middle that got us back in the game, even though he

might have got one for 28 which does not cause highlights. He was actually doing a nice job for us," said director of cricket Hesson on RCB Bold Diaries.

Chahal, one of RCB's best bowlers in the last few years, left for Rajasthan Royals ahead of ongoing IPL season to leave a void that was wonderfully filled by the Lankan.

"It was very hard to replace one of our all-time greats and someone like Yuzi, he is an icon at RCB. Hasaranga comes in as his replacement, as the tournament's gone they work out he is a good cricketer as is Yuzi," Hesson said.

ably skilful young batter taking the best bowlers in the world down a lot of the time."

"It's a big loss for us to not have him. The last couple of weeks he has been under the weather. Hopefully, he gets back to full health soon, but

unfortunately, it's not going to be in time for the minimum of last two games that we've got."

Shaw had himself shared an Instagram post from his hospital bed, saying he is hopeful of coming back soon.

McCullum hired to coach Eng Test team

AP ■ LONDON

New Zealand cricket great Brendon McCullum was hired as head coach of England's Test team on Thursday in another bold appointment coming soon after the decision to select all-rounder Ben Stokes as captain.

The 40-year-old McCullum, who currently coaches IPL team Kolkata Knight Riders, has never been in charge of a Test team and only retired from playing in 2019.

He was regarded as the catalyst behind New Zealand's emergence as a major force in the Test game — the Black Caps won the inaugural World Test Championship last year — and his preference for attacking cricket will be welcomed by Stokes at the start of a new era for England.

"I believe in Brendon and Ben Stokes — a formidable coach and captain partnership,"



said Rob Key, director of men's cricket at the England and Wales Cricket Board. "Time for us all to buckle up and get ready for the ride."

McCullum's first series with England will be against his native New Zealand in June, with the opening test beginning June 2 at Lord's.

England has won only one of its last 17 Tests, a run that includes a humiliating 4-0 series loss in the Ashes Down Under. That sparked a rush of dismissals and resignations — at one stage, England didn't have a captain, coach or head of men's cricket — but the leadership roles have been filled now, with Stokes replacing Joe Root as captain and Key the replacement for Ashley Giles.

McCullum takes the position previously held by Chris Silverwood, who oversaw the Test and limited-overs teams. The ECB has decided the red-ball and white-ball duties should

be split going forward.

"In taking this role on, I am acutely aware of the significant challenges the team faces at present," McCullum said, "and I strongly believe in my ability to help the team emerge as a stronger force once we've confronted them head-on."

"I've enjoyed several robust conversations with Rob Key about the direction of travel for the team and have found his enthusiasm contagious. I'm no stranger to bringing about change within a team environment, and I can't wait to get started."

McCullum described Stokes as "the perfect character to inspire change around him."

"I look forward to working closely with him to build a successful unit around us," McCullum said. McCullum will travel to England after the KKR complete their IPL group campaign on May 18, subject to obtaining a working visa.

India assure of Bronze at Thomas Cup

PTI ■ BANGKOK

The Indian men's badminton team scripted a memorable 3-2 win over Malaysia to enter the semifinals of Thomas Cup for the first time in 43 years but the women's side bowed out after losing 0-3 to Thailand in the Uber Cup here on Thursday.

India is thus assured of at least a Bronze at the Thomas Cup. The country has not won a medal at the event since 1979.

India had bagged three Bronze in the past when they reached inter-zonal finals. However, it is the first time since the change in the qualifying format that the country won a medal at the prestigious tournament.

Up against a team that has won the title five times, the world number 8 pairing of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, world championships Silver medalist Kidambi Srikanth and HS Prannoy rose



to the occasion to see India home.

India will next take on either Korea or Denmark.

A lot of expectation rode on world championships Bronze winner Lakshya Sen but he couldn't go the distance in the opening singles, losing 21-23, 9-21 to reigning world champion Lee Zii Jia in 46 minutes.

With the Malaysian fans thronging the Impact Arena, Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy took to the court and the duo dished out a superlative performance to outwit world number 13 Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin 21-19, 21-15 to bring India back in the five-match tie.

Srikanth rode on his superior and varied strokeplay to outclass world number 46 NG Tze Yong 21-11, 21-17 and give India a 2-1 lead.

The world number 45 combination of Krishna Prasad Gauda and Vishnuvardhan Goud Panjala were handed the task of taming Aaron Chia and Teo Ee Yi and the Indian pair produced a good effort before losing 19-21, 17-21 as the match went into the decider.

World number 23 HS Prannoy was all fired up in the final contest as he secure a 21-13, 21-8 win over 22-year-old Jun Hao Leong.

FOUR-GOAL WONDER

De Bruyne takes Man City closer to Premier League title

AP ■ WOLVERHAMPTON

Kevin De Bruyne's four-goal haul kept Manchester City on course for the Premier League title as the defending champions thrashed Wolves 5-1 at Molineux on Wednesday.

Pep Guardiola's men move three points clear of Liverpool with two games to play and boosted their goal difference to seven superior to the Reds.

City need just four points from Sunday's trip to West Ham and the visit of Aston Villa on the final day of the season to be crowned champions for the fourth time in five years.

And with De Bruyne on this form, they will take some stopping as the Belgian produced his brilliant best to blow away the hosts with a hat-trick inside 24 minutes.

City broke the news on Tuesday that they have beaten Europe's top clubs to the signature of Erling Haaland.

However, even the Norwegian goalscoring phenomenon would struggle to match the range of finishes off both feet dispatched by De Bruyne.

In keeping with their form in recent weeks, City looked to have dispelled any early nerves by scoring first as Bernardo Silva teed up De Bruyne to fire first time across Jose Sa.

The visitors, though, were without three key defenders in Kyle Walker, John Stones and Ruben Dias through injury and it showed.

Aymeric Laporte had to make a desperate last-ditch challenge to deny Chiquinho before Wolves levelled on 11 minutes.

Pedro Neto was allowed to gallop clear into the City box and picked out Leander Dendoncker to slot past Ederson.

Parity only lasted another five minutes as De Bruyne was both creator and executioner of City's second.

Raheem Sterling failed to connect with his pass through the heart of the Wolves defence, but Sa could only turn the ball back into De Bruyne's path and



he made no mistake.

The best was yet to come from the 30-year-old as he took aim from outside the box and arrowed a shot into the bottom corner to complete a hat-trick, with all three goals scored by his supposedly weaker left foot.

De Bruyne's was the third quickest

hat-trick in Premier League history and his first since he played for Genk 11 years ago.

But there was even more to come after the break as he slotted home on his right foot after Phil Foden's cross was deflected into his path.

An injury to Laporte was the only

Haaland will make Man City even more prolific: Guardiola

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Erling Haaland's arrival at Manchester City will make the English champions an even more ruthless attacking force, said Pep Guardiola after seeing his side thrash Wolves 5-1.

Haaland's £51 million signing ends City's search for a recognised striker to replace the departed Sergio Aguero.

"Definitely he could help us score more," said Guardiola when asked how many his side would have scored with Haaland up front.

"Big congratulations to the club. It is a signing for the next years. We are very pleased he decided to come to join us.

"Next season we will work together, we will help him to settle quickly in Manchester. I'm sure he is going to adapt quickly to the way we want to play."



negative of the night for City as he limped off after a heavy challenge from Raul Jimenez.

Yet, any defensive deficiencies are being masked by the firepower of Guardiola's men at the moment.

Since a 2-2 draw with Liverpool left the title race still on a knife edge last

Chelsea consolidate top-4 place

AP ■ LONDON

Chelsea moved to the brink of qualifying for next season's Champions League as they pushed Leeds closer to relegation from the Premier League with a 3-0 victory on Wednesday.

Thomas Tuchel's side won for the first time since Todd Boehly's consortium agreed a deal to buy Chelsea from Roman Abramovich last week.

Mason Mount opened the scoring in the early stages at Elland Road and Leeds suffered another blow when Daniel James was sent off.

Christian Pulisic bagged Chelsea's second goal after half-time and Romelu Lukaku wrapped up the Blues' first win in four games.

Third-placed Chelsea are now eight points clear of fifth-placed Tottenham and will be guaranteed a top-four finish if Antonio Conte's team fail to beat fourth-placed Arsenal on Thursday.

Arresting their worrying recent slump was the ideal preparation for Chelsea ahead of Saturday's FA Cup final against Liverpool at Wembley.

While Chelsea look to end the season on a high, Leeds are in grave danger of relegation.

Jesse Marsch's men sit third-bottom of the table, behind fourth-bottom Burnley on goal difference.

Burnley have three games left compared to only two for Leeds, who host Brighton and travel to Brentford in the matches that will decide if their two-season stay in the top flight is destined to end with a return to the Championship.



Leeds fell into the bottom three for the first time since October 30 after losing at Arsenal on Sunday and the lack of composure that unhinged them on that occasion was quickly visible again.

Everton moved two points clear of Leeds after a 0-0 draw at relegated Watford. Frank Lampard's side have lost just once in their last six matches to climb out of the relegation zone.

They also have a game in hand on Leeds in the fight for survival, but will feel like a point was a disappointing return against a Watford team with nothing to play for. Jamie Vardy scored twice and James Maddison also netted as Leicester beat relegated Norwich 3-0 at the King Power Stadium to end a run of seven games without a win.

De Bruyne nearly had time for a fifth of his own in the final minute as he curled off the post.

However, another five-star performance was more than enough for City to give Liverpool little sign of encouragement they will cede ground down the home straight.

Inter win Coppa Italia final

AP ■ ROME

Inter Milan claimed their eighth Italian Cup on Wednesday after overcoming old foes Juventus 4-2 in an extra-time victory full of incident and controversy.

Ivan Perisic secured a thrilling win with a double in the first half of extra time but the match hung on the awarding of a soft-seeming penalty which Hakan Calhanoglu smashed in to take the match past 90 minutes.

Juve had been deservedly leading through quickfire goals from Alex Sandro and Dusan Vlahovic early in the second half and referee Paolo Valeri's decision to give the spot-kick after Lautaro Martinez fell following a slight touch from Leonardo Bonucci enraged Juve.

For Inter it is another success over Juve after winning the Italian Super Cup earlier in the season and will boost them in their Serie A title defence.

Inter trail AC Milan by two points and could hand their local rivals the Scudetto if they don't beat relegation-threatened Cagliari on Sunday.

Nicola Barella gave Inter the lead in the sixth minute with a long-range effort.

However from then on Juve were the better team and soon



turned the match on its head though, with Sandro levelling the scores five minutes after the break when his shot slipped through Handanovic's hands as Alvaro Morata tried to deflect the ball.

The Juve fans were jumping and their end of the ground exploded with joy seconds later, Vlahovic ending a four-match dry spell in front of goal after being sent flying through on goal by Dybala.

The Serbia forward sent Danilo D'Ambrosio packing and although his first effort was kept out, he made no mistake on the rebound.

Juve looked to have the game under control until referee Valeri handed Inter an ill-deserved lifeline.

Calhanoglu rifled home from the spot and an already fired-up Juve team then lost control when De Ligt was ruled after a VAR check to have

chopped down Stefan de Vrij.

Perisic stepped up to smashed in the penalty in the 98th minute and once the Croat's decisive second flew in from distance there was chaos, with Massimiliano Allegri sent off and players and officials tussling on the sidelines.

However Juve couldn't launch a fightback and Inter took the honours with the league season climax around the corner.

Ten Hag's Ajax seal 36th Dutch title

AP ■ AMSTERDAM

Ajax secured a second straight Dutch Eredivisie title on Wednesday with a 5-0 thrashing of Heerenveen at the Amsterdam Arena.

The club's 36th league crown is the third in charge for outgoing coach Erik ten Hag, who will end his five-year stint at the helm after this season to become Man Utd manager.

Ajax have a four-point lead over second-placed PSV Eindhoven, who beat Nijmegen 3-2, with one match remaining.



PSV missed the chance to cut the gap to two points last weekend when they conceded two late goals in a 2-2 draw at Feyenoord.

Nicolas Tagliafico and Steven Berghuis calmed any home nerves by giving Ajax a two-goal lead.

Sebastien Haller netted a penalty before half-time to score his 34th goal in all competitions this season. Brian Brobbey and Edson Alvarez added further gloss to the scoreline late on as Ten Hag's final home game ended in celebration.

Celtic win Scottish title

AP ■ GLASGOW

Celtic reclaimed the Scottish League title from fierce rival Rangers after drawing 1-1 against Dundee United on Wednesday. It is a 10th Scottish Premiership title in 11 years — and 52nd in total — for Celtic,

its only blot in more than a decade of dominance coming last year when Rangers won the league under then-coach Steven Gerrard. Celtic only needed a point at Tannadice to take an unassailable lead over second-place Rangers.

INJURED FABINHO OUT OF FA CUP FINAL

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Liverpool midfielder Fabinho is facing a race to be fit for the Champions League final after injuring his hamstring in Tuesday's win over Aston Villa.

A scan revealed that the Brazilian suffered a hamstring strain that'll keep him out of Saturday's FA Cup final against Chelsea and Liverpool's final two Premier League matches of the season.

His potential absence in the Champions League final against Real Madrid on May 28 would be a huge blow for



the Reds. Fabinho has been a regular at the heart of Jurgen Klopp's midfield and would likely be in the starting line-up if fit.

The injury is also a damaging blow for Liverpool's chances of catching Premier League leaders Manchester City.

Liverpool take on Southampton and Wolves to conclude their Premier League campaign.

Curtis Jones or James Milner will likely see an increase in playing time and could be called into action in the FA Cup final.

CHIELLINI LEAVING JUVE AFTER 17 YEARS

AP ■ ROME

Giorgio Chiellini will leave Juventus at the end of the season, the veteran defender said Wednesday after his team lost the Italian Cup final to Inter Milan.

Juve captain Chiellini said he would quit the club where he has won a host of trophies once they complete their final two games of the current Serie A season.

"We've had 10 magnificent years, now it's up to the young lads to carry things on. I've done all I can, I hope I've left something behind," Chiellini told Mediaset after the 4-2 defeat to Inter. "On Monday I will say goodbye to the (Allianz) Stadium (against Lazio)... It's 100 percent my decision."

Chiellini said later that he did not know whether he would be retiring from the game completely after leaving Juve.

"I don't know ... I need to think about it with my family. I'm happy to leave Juve this sea-



son while I'm still at a high level," he told reporters.

The 37-year-old will end his international career this summer after Italy face Argentina in the Finalissima match at Wembley, where last July he won Euro 2020 with Italy. He has won nine league titles since arriving from Livorno, as well as five Italian Cups.

UEFA considering preseason tourney with top UCL teams

AP ■ LONDON

Four of the Champions League's top-performing clubs could headline a new annual preseason tournament in the United States.

The mini-tournament would reportedly run as an appetizer to the Champions League each season and feature the four teams that finish atop the competition's new 36-team standings. The preseason tournament could replace the International Champions Cup, which serves as a top destination for clubs on tour during the off-season. UEFA is also discussing changes to the Super Cup, which pits the reigning Champions League and Europa League champions against each other in a one-off match every August. If UEFA proceeds with the preseason event, the Europa League and Europa Conference League winners could play in the Super Cup instead.

Atletico seal Champions League place

AP ■ MADRID

Atletico Madrid secured qualification for the Champions League on Wednesday as a 2-0 victory away at Elche guaranteed their place in La Liga's top four.

Matheus Cunha and Rodrigo De Paul were both on target as Atletico pulled six points clear of Real Betis in fifth, with two games left to play. Atletico also have the superior head-to-head record over Betis.

Sevilla, though, failed to make sure of their top-four spot as the team's poor end to the season had earlier continued with a goalless draw at home to struggling Mallorca.

Atletico look likely now to finish third and although the defence of their league title has been hugely disappointing — they are 14 points behind Real Madrid — Diego Simeone's side have at least avoided missing out on the Champions League, which for a while seemed a very real possibility.

In December, Atletico lost four league games in a row for the first time ever under Simeone, before defeat by Levante, who sat bottom of the table, prompted crisis talks between coach and players in February.

But five consecutive victories in



March proved crucial and while there has been another dip in recent weeks, Atletico have done just enough to seal Champions League qualification for a 10th consecutive year.

Cunha gave Atleti the lead in the 28th minute as Antoine Griezmann picked out Renan Lodi's run down the left and Cunha was in the right place to divert in the cross to the near post.

The visitors made it two shortly after the hour, De Paul finishing off a superb move after a slick exchange with Lodi, who had again broken through the Elche defence.

Atletico play at home on Sunday to Sevilla, whose stalemate against Mallorca at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan could only delay their qualification given they sit five points clear of Betis, with two games left to play.

Sevilla will need only one more point to guarantee they finish ahead of Betis, as they also have the better head-to-head with their city rivals.

But Julen Lopetegui's side do have two tricky last games, with Sunday's trip to the Wanda Metropolitano coming before a final match at home to Athletic Bilbao.

And even if they get over the line, Sevilla are ending what was once a promising campaign with a whimper.