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NEW DELHI, THURSDAY AUGUST 3, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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Capital on high alert

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the aftermath of violence in some districts of neighbouring Haryana, the Delhi was put on alert and the police announced increased security measures at sensitive locations in the national Capital.

The Haryana Police reported that mobs vandalised shops, leading to communal violence spreading from Haryana's Nuh to neighbouring Gurugram, resulting in a death toll of six.

The disturbances extended to Gurugram's Badshahpur, where fourteen shops were vandalised in the main market, and in Sector 66, seven stores were set ablaze. The mob chanted 'Jai Shri Ram' in front of a mosque in Badshahpur, according to news agency PTL.

The Delhi Police stated, "Keeping in view the violence in some districts of Haryana, adjoining Delhi, elaborate security arrangements have been made at all sensitive places in Delhi and additional police forces have also been deployed where necessary. Any attempt to harm Delhi's security and communal harmony will be dealt with strictly."

The Hindu outfits Bajrang Dal and Vishva Hindu Parishad organised protests across the national Capital in response to the violence in Haryana under tight security.

Protesters carrying saffron flags and chanting slogans of 'Jai Shri Ram,' 'Har Har Mahadev,' and 'Vande Mataram' staged a sit-in at the Badarpur border, blocking the road and disrupting traffic movement from Faridabad to Delhi.

The Delhi Police deployed increased security measures, including the use of drones to monitor the protests.

The VHP also held a demonstration in Uttar Pradesh's Noida, violating pro-



A protest march against the violence that erupted in Haryana's Nuh district, in Delhi on Wednesday Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

hibitory orders, and demanded financial aid for the families of two Bajrang Dal members who they claimed died in Monday's clash.

Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), which prohibits assembly of more than four people, is in effect in Gautam Buddha Nagar district, where Noida falls.

Hundreds of members and supporters of the VHP and the Bajrang Dal participated in a rally that started from the Noida stadium in Sector 21A and culminated near the district magistrate's office in Sector 27.

Meanwhile, Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and its youth wing Bajrang Dal organised demonstrations in various parts of the country against the attack on a religious procession in Haryana's Nuh by the right-wing group.

VHP working president Alok Kumar claimed that these demonstrations were held "successfully" across all districts in the country with the participation of "lakhs of people."

The communal violence began in Haryana's Nuh district on Monday, when a mob attempted to halt a VHP procession by pelting stones and setting cars on fire. The violence then spread to neighbouring Gurugram on Tuesday, with mobs killing a Muslim cleric, torching an eatery, and vandalising shops. The Haryana Government reported six deaths, with 116 people arrested and 90 detained in connection with the incidents.

"The VHP and the Bajrang Dal had called for demonstrations in every district of the country today against the violent attacks... On peaceful pilgrims in Haryana's Nuh... These demonstrations were held successfully with the participation of lakhs of people at hundreds of places across the country," stated the right-wing group in a statement.

VHP working president Kumar emphasised that a large number of people participated in "nationwide" protests against Monday's attack. He also mentioned that some secular

groups had filed a petition in the Supreme Court to stop the VHP and the Bajrang Dal from holding protests and demonstrations and to restrain any mahapanchayat. However, the Supreme Court refused to allow the plea.

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Culprits won't be spared, will help Raj nab Monu: Khattar

Dy CM Dushyant blames organisers of Shobha Yatra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi took stock of the violence in Haryana and Gurugram, Lok Sabha MP and Union Minister Rao Inderjit Singh met and briefed him on the situation in Nuh and Gurugram districts, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Wednesday informed that 20 companies of Central forces were deployed in the State, 116 people arrested and asserted that "culprits will not be spared".

While Khattar offered to provide all possible help to the Rajasthan Govt to nab cow vigilante Monu Manesar, whose reported presence in the religious process is believed to have triggered the riots, Singh wondered why weapons were



Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal addresses a press conference, at Haryana Niwas in Chandigarh, on Wednesday PTI

given to the yatris carrying out the procession in Nuh. "Who goes to a procession carrying swords and sticks? This is wrong," he said.

He also assured strict action will be taken against the culprits behind the violence.

On Tuesday, while speaking on the communal violence in Nuh, Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala blamed the organisers of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) Shobha Yatra. At least six people — two home guards and four civilians — were killed in two-day communal violence in Haryana.

Khattar has announced that loss of movable and immovable properties will be compensated by the Government and asked people to register their cases on the State portal. He said upto ₹50 lakh to Rs 1.50 crore could be given after proper examination by the Government officials.

"In the case of movable property, if the loss is 5 lakh, the Government will provide 80 per cent coverage. If the loss is between 5 to 10 lakh, 70 per cent will be covered. For losses between 10 to 20 lakh, 60 per cent will be covered," he said.

Addressing a press conference, Chief Minister Khattar said that the violence that broke out in Nuh was "unfortunate" and that strict action would be taken against the accused persons.

On the role of "outsiders", Khattar said "call records are being examined and the process of probe is on".

"In Nuh cow protection is a big issue... many Muslims are for cow protection... if Muslims come forward for cow protection, we will make new planning for it", said the Chief Minister.

He appealed to the public to maintain peace and social

harmony which "will lead to security of people" as "police and army cannot be everywhere".

Termining it "an unfortunate incident", he said, "A yatra was being organised during which some people conspired an attack on the yatris and the police. Violent incidents were reported at several places. There seems to be a big conspiracy behind this", he said.

The Chief Minister said, "What happened in Nuh is unfortunate and this incident has resulted in the tragic loss of six lives, which includes two home guard personnel and four civilians. Besides this, a number of individuals have sustained injuries and are currently receiving treatment at medical facilities such as Nalhar Hospital, Medanta Hospital in Gurugram, and other hospitals."

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Ensure no hate speech made, SC tells Govts as it allows VHP rallies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With communal clashes claiming six lives in parts of Haryana, the Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered enhanced deployment of security personnel in sensitive areas and a crackdown on hate speech but refused to stop the proposed rallies by VHP and Bajrang Dal in the NCR.

Observing that hate speeches vitiate the atmosphere, a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and SV Bhatti also ordered installation of CCTV

cameras in vulnerable places. The CCTV footage and the video recording will be preserved, the apex court said.

In an unusual move, Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, who was heading a Constitution bench of the Supreme Court on Article 370 related petitions, interrupted the arguments and rostered an urgent hearing for a petition on the riots in Haryana's Nuh district on Wednesday.

Coming back to the atmosphere, the bench set up by the CJI said, said, "During the course of hearing, it is



Locals look at burnt items at a shop which was set ablaze by miscreants in a fresh case of communal violence after Monday's attack on a VHP procession in adjoining Nuh district, in Gurugram, on Wednesday PTI

accepted and admitted that the directions given in the order dated October 21, 2022, as extended have to be complied. We hope and trust that the State Governments, including the police authorities, will ensure that there are no hate speeches against any community and there is no violence or damage to properties. Wherever required, adequate police force or paramilitary forces will be deployed.

The SC directed the order be communicated by the Registry to the standing counsel for the Governments of

Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and the Delhi. The apex court directed Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the Centre, to immediately get in touch with authorities and ensure no untoward incident takes place anymore. Raju submitted he has not gone through the averments made in the plea and sought time from the court to seek instructions.

Reiterating that rule of law has to be maintained, the top court said, "This cannot be treated as an adversarial litigation."

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ED charges conman Sanjay faking PMO links under PMLA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a chargesheet under the anti-money laundering law against conman Sanjay Prakash Rai, also known as Sanjay Sherrpuria, for "cheating" several people by falsely claiming to be close to the PMO, senior bureaucrats, and politicians, the ED announced on Wednesday.

The money laundering case originated from an FIR filed by the Lucknow Police, which alleged that Rai duped a large sum of money from the general public by portraying himself as being associated with senior politicians and bureaucrats, an influencer, a social worker, and having connections with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The ED had arrested Rai a few months back following searches conducted at 42 locations in Delhi, Gurugram, Faridabad, Noida, Ghazipur, Pune, and Gandhidham. Prior to that, the agency had attached assets worth more than Rs 14.54 crore belonging to Rai.

One instance involved Rai allegedly defrauding businessman Gaurav Dalmia and his family of Rs 12 crore by instilling fear of arrest in an ongoing ED investigation.

Out of the total amount, Rs 6 crore was received in the bank account of the Youth Rural Entrepreneur Foundation (YREF) in January 2023 from Dalmia Family Office Trust, wherein Gaurav Dalmia serves as a trustee, as per the ED.

Rai had incorporated the YREF under the Companies

Act as a not-for-profit company on February 16, 2019, with the registered address in Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh. However, the actual operational activities of YREF were conducted from Rai's residential address, house No. 1, Delhi Riding Club, Safdarjung Road, New Delhi. Despite not holding any official position in YREF, Rai controlled the day-to-day affairs and was the ultimate beneficiary.

The payment of Rs 6 crore was received by Rai under the guise of a donation in YREF from Dalmia Family Office Trust. Rai is alleged to have forged documents to conceal the true nature of these transactions. Additionally, Rs 6 crore was received in cash by Rai from Dalmia, which was then layered and placed in the bank accounts of his sons, Yash Sanjayprakash Rai and Sujal Sanjayprakash Rai, through accommodation (hawala) entries from certain Delhi-based jewelers, disguised as the sale of old jewelry.

In another case, Rai is accused of cheating Mohit Singh, Managing Director of Shipra Estate Ltd, by falsely claiming connections with senior politicians and bureaucrats and duping him of Rs 1 crore through false promises. The payment of Rs 1 crore was received in the bank account of YREF under the garb of a donation, as per the ED.

Rai allegedly defrauded Naveen Kumar Malhotra, Director of Bindu Fashion Pvt Ltd, of Rs 1 crore and Sunil Chand Goyal, Director of Metadesign Solution Pvt Ltd, of Rs 51.50 lakh by impressing them with false promises.

Opp section mulls motion against VP

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

As the Congress-sponsored no-confidence motion against the Modi Government awaits discussion in the Lok Sabha, a section of the newly formed INDIA coalition has proposed a similar motion against Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankar.

The Lok Sabha is scheduled to take up the no-confidence motion against the Government on August 8, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi expected to respond on August 10, according to sources.

During a meeting of floor leaders and a Manipur delegation, attended by Congress Parliamentary Party chief Sonia Gandhi, some members of the INDIA coalition raised concerns about Dhankar's management of the upper House during the ongoing Monsoon session, which started on July 20.

They alleged that the proceedings under his chairmanship have shown little consid-

eration for the Opposition camp.

Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge also expressed his reservations and raised objections to the Chair's conduct, claiming that he has been humiliated on multiple occasions in the past week, with his microphone being switched off whenever he attempts to speak.

"The new Opposition alliance under the banner of INDIA should continue with the same solidarity and move a no-confidence motion in the Rajya Sabha to show their disapproval of the House's management."

"Several Bills are being passed, and it is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure fair discussion and equal treatment for both the Treasury and the Opposition sides. The presiding officer should work towards avoiding member discontent rather than resorting to suspensions," said a member of the INDIA bloc and a Rajya Sabha member.

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Opp meets Prez, seeks PM remark in Parl on Manipur

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leaders of the Opposition bloc INDIA met President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday and submitted a memorandum urging Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make a statement in Parliament regarding the situation in Manipur.

The Opposition leaders also called for concrete steps to restore peace in the violence-hit State and demanded that the Prime Minister visit Manipur to appeal to warring communities to end violence and foster brotherhood.

In the memorandum presented to the President, 31 leaders from the Opposition rank also highlighted the issue of communal tension in Haryana's Nuh. They expressed concern that the Central Government appeared indifferent to the developments happening "barely 100 km from the Prime Minister's Office."

After the meeting with the President, Congress chief



Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge with other I.N.D.I.A leaders address a press conference after a meeting with president Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi, on Wednesday Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Mallikarjun Kharge addressed the media, informing them that the delegation, which included MPs who recently visited Manipur, briefed the President on the State's situation and shared their observations from the affected areas.

Kharge emphasised the severity of the violence in Manipur, stating that atrocities

against women, including incidents of parading them naked, were ongoing. He disclosed that over 5,000 houses had been burnt, more than 200 people killed, and over 500 others injured so far. Additionally, around 60,000 people had been displaced due to the violence.

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SC begins hearing pleas against Art 370 revocation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court's five-judge Constitution Bench initiated the hearing on a series of petitions challenging the revocation of Article 370 by allocating more than 60 hours for arguments. During the proceedings, the Bench, headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, questioned the power of Parliament to recommend the revocation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, especially when no Constituent Assembly exists there.

The Constitution Bench, also comprising Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai, and Surya Kant, directed the advocates to adhere to the time limit for their arguments. The hearing is expected to span over 20 days, with daily sessions.

The primary focus of the SC questioning was the temporary nature of Article 370, as specified in the Constitution.

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Anti-corruption cell opened in Guv House, Didi slams Bose

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The months-long fragile truce between the Raj Bhavan and State secretariat tended to break down on Wednesday with Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee slamming Governor House for unnecessarily poking its nose in the matters of administration.



face is coming out of it," she said adding it was the BJP's hand that was pulling the strings from behind.

Referring to her Government's choppy relationship with former Governor and present Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Banerjee said, "during the time of Dhankhar ji we had difference of opinion on several issues but he never

intruded in the matters of administration like this." While launching the anti-corruption cell the Governor said, "here at the anti-corruption cell, we are trying to give voice to the voiceless. In the days of violence, Raj Bhavan is trying to be a friend of the unfriended poor. When the 'Peace Room' was set up, there were apprehensions. What did the 'Peace Room' achieve? We will not try to infringe on the turf of others. There is something called 'Lakshman Rekha'.

We will certainly try to confine ourselves within the Lakshman Rekha." Bengal was suffering from two ailments: "Violence and Corruption" which had to be fought up as first priority, the Governor said. On Banerjee's show of displeasure about the launching of the anti-corruption cell the Governor reminded how she had during a speech at Cooch Behar asked people not to give money to anyone. "Do not give money to anyone. We will not allow that.

Riots incited in Manipur, Hyr before polls: Mamata

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday launched a scathing attack on the BJP government for trying to ignite conflicts throughout the country before the general elections. Her immediate point of reference was the Haryana violence where several people have been killed.

"You can see how Manipur is burning, Haryana is burning ... and rioters are on rampage everywhere" Banerjee said stopping short of referring to the saffron outfit.

"It is clear that like their usual practice they have started igniting riots when the elections are but a few months away ... this is a part of their

politics," Banerjee said adding, "I want to remind them about a famous saying that you can make fool of some people for some time but not all the people for all the time." The Chief Minister also attacked the Centre for stopping Bengal's funds. "All the States like UP, MP, Rajasthan, Haryana, Odisha etc are getting their dues but they have stopped Rs 7,000 crore meant for MNREGA, Prime Minister's housing scheme etc," Banerjee said asking "why the State funds will be stopped like this?"

Claiming that though the Bengal Government had won a number of awards as the best performer in "ease of doing business ... development of handlooms and textile sector" the BJP Government was stopping its funds.

Debt-trapped film art director hangs self

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Debt-trapped national award-winning Bollywood Art director Nitin Chandrakant Desai — who had worked as a creative director for iconic films like "Devdas", "Lagaan", "Jodhaa Akbar", "Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam" and Prem Ratan Dhan Payo" — was found dead at his studio in Raigad district of Maharashtra on Wednesday.

A week after the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) ordered the initiation of Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) against his company over repayment of accumulated debt totalling to Rs 252 crore, Nitin Chandrakant Desai — better known as Nitin Desai — was found hanging at his N.D. Studios at Karjat in Raigad district in the early hours of Wednesday.

Being a suspected case of suicide, the Karjat police have registered an accidental death report and are investigating if there was any foul in Desai's death. Unconfirmed reports said that Desai was under tremendous mental pressure over the insolvency proceedings launched against him. He



Real estate scam haunts TMC MP Nusrat Jahan

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

As though the corruption charges against a bevy of Trinamool Congress ministers were not enough there was a new entrant in the list of alleged "corrupt leader" in the form of Nusrat Jahan the Bengali actress turned TMC MP from Basirhat in North 24 Parganas.

According to allegations leveled by State BJP leader Sankudeb Panda Jahan who functioned as a director of a real estate company Seven Sense International had duped its investors worth crores. Most of the people thus allegedly cheated are former employees of a nationalized bank.

"They are 429 former bank employees who were promised apartments and money to the tune of Rs 5.50 lakh were taken as advance from each of them in 2014," Panda said.

Hindus turn against Kerala Speaker for insult to Ganesh

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The CPI-M, the ruling party in Kerala, finds itself in a man's land following the public outcry by Hindus against a reported statement made by A N Shamsair, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, last week.

The temperamental Shamsair, while addressing school children in Ernakulam district told them about the significance of scientific temper and not to believe in characters like Lord Vigneswaran (Ganapathi) and the pushpak aircraft mentioned in Ramayana.

"All these are non-sense as we live in era of artificial intelligence. How is it possible for a person to have head of elephant and the body of human being?" asked Speaker. Various Hindu

groups came out in open challenging Shamsair's contention and some of them filed cases against him for hurting the religious sentiments of Hindus. Though controversy subsided within two days, the over enthusiasm shown by some of the Marxist leaders in justifying Shamsair's stance vitiated the atmosphere further.

A veteran Marxist leader, P Jayarajan, went to the extent of warning Sangh Parivar that if they attempt to attack Shamsair, they would end up in mortuary. Former cultural minister A K Balan, the Harijan face of CPI-M too warned Hindus against issuing statements against the Speaker. G Sukumaran Nair, the general secretary of Nair Service Society, an apex body of Nair community, said on Wednesday that Shamsair has hurt religious sentiments of Hindus by ridiculing Ganapathi.

Capital on high alert

From Page 1

On Tuesday, the VHP likened the violence in Nuh to a "terror attack" and called for a probe by the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

During a Press conference, VHP joint general secretary Surendra Jain alleged that the attacks were carried out against Hindu devotees in a "pre-planned manner" and that the attackers were "incited" by some Haryana Congress leaders.

Jain further claimed an intelligence failure on the part of the state police, stating that the rioters used sophisticated weapons and regular firearms to attack Hindu devotees during the procession.

Opp meets Prez...

From Page 1

He expressed concern about the lack of proper living and medical facilities at the rehabilitation camps housing the affected people. "We met with the President to draw her attention to the issues in Manipur and Haryana violence," Kharge stated.

The main demand in the memorandum was that the Prime Minister should address Parliament urgently on the prevailing situation in Manipur and outline steps to bring peace and relief to the state's people.

The Opposition bloc implored the President to intervene and establish peace and harmony in Manipur without delay. They called for accountability for the devastation of the past 92 days and urged both the Union and state governments to fulfill their duty in providing justice to the affected communities.

Kharge later confirmed that the President had assured them of considering their memorandum and demands. The delegation accompanying

the Congress chief included leaders like Tiruchi Siva, Kanimozhi, Rajiv Ranjan 'Lallan' Singh, Adhir Ranjan Choudhury, Gaurav Gogoi, Sushil Kumar Gupta, Sushmita Dev, Jayant Singh, Manoj Jha, among others. Kharge lamented that the Prime Minister had not been present in the House and had not made any statement regarding the measures he intends to take to restore peace and normalcy in Manipur.

He also pointed out that the Opposition has been urging for a discussion in both Houses of Parliament on the Manipur crisis, but the Government has been disallowing it.

Trinamool Congress leader Sushmita Dev also raised an important suggestion during the meeting with the President. She urged the President to nominate two Manipuri women from different communities to the Rajya Sabha to help address the "grievous harm" inflicted on women in the State.

Culprits won't be spared, will help Raj nab Monu: Khattar

From Page 1

He informed that 116 people have been arrested. Khattar said people will be given financial relief for their losses.

"We have passed an Act wherein it provides for any loss, the Government issues compensation for the loss to public property, but as far as private property is concerned, those who caused the loss are liable to compensate for it.

So, we will provide compensation for losses to public property, and for private property, we will say that compensation be collected from those who are liable for it."

Khattar said adequate forces have been deployed in the State to enforce law and order. "Twenty companies of Central forces deployed in Haryana, fourteen of them in Nuh, three in Palwal, two in Gurugram, and one in Faridabad," he said.

Asked about the whereabouts of the cow vigilante Monu Manesar who is also suspected to be having a hand in the current and the past incidents, the Chief Minister said Rajasthan Government has registered a case against him

and the Haryana Government would offer all help to nab him. During the day the Prime Minister was visited by Union Minister and Gurugram MP Singh who briefed Modi on the situation in Haryana.

After meeting the Prime Minister, Singh said that "I met PM Narendra Modi to invite him to the inauguration of AIIMS in Haryana."

On being asked about the violence in Haryana, He said, "If both the communities had arms with them, then it is a matter of inquiry as to how they got those arms and why they created such an atmosphere. The Haryana Government will conduct an inquiry."

Earlier, Singh questioned why weapons were given to the yatris carrying out the procession in Nuh. Reflecting his CM's view, Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij said he smelled conspiracy behind the communal tension that erupted in Nuh on Monday and later spread to Gurgaon on Tuesday. "The way stones, weapons, and bullets were found, it seems there is a mastermind behind this," he said.

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NOTICE General Public is hereby informed through this notice that Dr. Attam's Nursing Home situated at 19 Bhera Enclave, New Delhi-110087 is going to destroy its Medical admission records from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020, as per record destruction rule, if any body is interested in obtaining the records of this period. Please contact the Nursing Home within 7 day of appearance of this notice.

Opp section...

Complaints against Dhankhar range from alleged partisanship and non-consideration of legitimate demands to humiliation of the Leader of the Opposition.

Kharge questioned the logic behind naming only ruling party members when giving suspension of business notices while avoiding mention of the Opposition members responsible. "Even when the issue was raised, an opposition member was taken to task," he added.

In September 2020, a no-confidence motion was moved against Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Hariharan Narayan Singh over the passing of two farm Bills. However, the motion was rejected by then Chairman Venkaiah Naidu on the grounds that it was in the "wrong" format. While a resolution is in effect for the

removal of the Rajya Sabha Chairman, who also serves as the Vice-President of India, the Chairman cannot preside over the upper house during such a situation, although they can be part of the house.

Prominent leaders from the Opposition, including Priyanka Chaturvedi from Shiv Sena (Uddhav) and Manoj Jha from RJD, expressed concern over the historic number of suspension notices given to the Chair for a discussion on the Manipur crisis in the presence of Modi, which they consider unprecedented in independent India.

Jha and Chaturvedi highlighted the lack of cognisance by the Chair despite presenting documented evidence of the historic suspension notices. The Opposition bloc is now closely evaluating the prospect of moving a no-confidence motion against Dhankhar.

SC begins hearing pleas against Art...

From Page 1

And how it could be considered permanent after the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly ceased to exist in 1957. The Bench referred to proviso 3 of Article 370, which stipulates that the President may declare the article inoperative or operational with certain exceptions and modifications, subject to the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the State.

Chief Justice Chandrachud raised a crucial question, asking what should be done when the tenure of a Constituent Assembly comes to an end. He pointed out that no Constituent Assembly can have an indefinite life, and the provision requires the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly to be obtained before the President can issue any notification.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing the petitioners, emphasized that their entire case revolves around the fact that the President cannot revoke Article 370 without the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly. Justice Gavai intervened to clarify

whether the argument made was that nothing could have been done about Article 370 after 1957, when the tenure of the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly concluded. Sibal asserted that the court is presently interpreting a constitutional provision and not legitimizing an unknown process. He argued that Article 370 was removed through a political act and not a constitutional one.

Parliament assumed the role of a Constituent Assembly and revoked Article 370, claiming it was fulfilling the will of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Sibal questioned the legitimacy of exercising such power without the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly.

The Supreme Court is conducting day-to-day hearings, excluding Mondays and Fridays reserved for miscellaneous matters, on the issue. Earlier, the court clarified that the Centre's affidavit concerning the situation in Jammu and Kashmir after August 5, 2019, notification revoking Article 370 would not impact the constitutional issue under scrutiny by five-judge bench.

LG OK's hike in fee for Advocate Mediators

Honorarium for those working in Mediation Centres in Delhi District Courts had remained stagnant since 2014

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) VK Saxena has given his approval to a long-pending proposal for the enhancement of honorarium to be paid to Advocate Mediators working in the Mediation Centres across Delhi District Courts. This decision comes as a relief for those Advocate Mediators whose remuneration had remained stagnant since 2014.

The revised honorarium, which will come into effect from May 7, 2022, will see Mediators receive Rs 5,000 in cases of settlement through Mediation, and Rs 1,000 per case subject to a maximum of Rs 3,000 in connected cases. However, in instances where parties fail to reach an amicable settlement despite three effective hearings, the Mediators will receive Rs 2,500 as compensation. It is important to note that earlier, no honorarium was applicable in case of



no settlement.

Going back to April 4, 2014, the Mediation and Conciliation Project Committee (MCPC) of the Supreme Court decided that, with effect from April 1, 2015, Rs 3,000 per case (with a maximum of Rs 4,000 in cases with two or more connected cases) would be paid to Mediators on settling mediation matters related to matrimonial cases (including criminal), custody, guardianship, probate, partition, and possession. For all other matters, Rs 2,000 per case (with a maximum of Rs 3,000 in cases with two or more connected cases) would be paid.

According to the 2014 decision, Rs 500

per case, subject to a maximum of Rs 1,000 regardless of the number of connected cases, was to be paid to the mediators, and no honorarium was applicable in case of no settlement.

The decision to enhance the honorarium payable to the Mediators was brought to the attention of the L-G by the Principal District and Sessions Judge in a letter dated July 14, 2022. The Mediation and Conciliation Project Committee, Supreme Court, had noticed during a meeting held on 15.12.2021 that there had been no increase in honorarium payable to the Mediators since 2014.

Subsequently, during a meeting held on March 23, 2022, the MCPC resolved that the decision to enhance the honorarium was recommendatory, and it was up to the concerned High Courts and State Governments to accept the proposal contained in the resolution dated December 15, 2021, subject to adequate funds being made available by the concerned State Government for Mediation.

Delhi High Court has now accepted the recommendation of the MCPC, and the enhanced honorarium for Mediators will be applicable from May 7, 2022. This move is expected to boost the morale of Advocate Mediators and encourage the effective resolution of cases through Mediation in the Delhi District Courts.

Delhi Govt draws up dengue combat plan

5% reserved beds, daily reporting of cases on portal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

From reserving five per cent beds at hospitals for dengue patients to providing information daily on such cases there, on the city Health Department's portal, are among the slew of measures the Delhi Government has undertaken to check its spread, officials said on Wednesday.

Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj held a meeting with medical directors and superintendents of various hospitals in the city on Monday and discussed protocols that need to be formulated on dengue amid a spike in its cases in the national Capital.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the Delhi Health Department said, instructions have also been given to authorities to provide dengue test reports within 6-8 hours for timely treatment.

He has instructed all hospital authorities to provide information daily on dengue patients admitted to their hospitals, on the city Health Department's portal, similar to how all medical facilities used to report COVID-19 data daily during the pandemic. This practice will help the Government stay informed about the current situation of dengue in Delhi and enable them to make well-organised arrangements to tackle any potential emergencies effectively, the statement said.

Delhi reported 56 fresh dengue cases in the past week, taking the tally to more than 240, according to a municipal corporation report released on Monday.

The Minister said the Health



Department has ramped up efforts to combat dengue and other vector-borne diseases in the Capital, and as part of which he conducted a surprise inspection of the LNJP Hospital on Tuesday.

During the meeting, Bhardwaj individually inquired about the current situation of dengue in each of the hospitals.

It was told that preparations to combat dengue are underway in almost all hospitals, and they "appear to be well-prepared to handle dengue cases", the statement said. However, no hospital official mentioned any emergency-like situation related to dengue so far.

"Based on the information shared during the meeting by the officials, it can be stated that the current situation in Delhi regarding dengue is normal," the statement said.

Directions have been issued to all hospitals to "reserve five per cent of their beds for dengue patients," the statement quoted Bhardwaj as saying.

The health minister also instructed hospital authorities to "establish separate wards for dengue patients" in their respective hospitals.

This segregation will protect other patients from the risk of dengue spread and ensure that dengue patients receive prompt and adequate treatment with dedicated doctors and nursing staff, the statement said.

Bhardwaj also directed that mosquito nets be placed around beds of all dengue patients to prevent spread of dengue.

According to the latest report issued by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, the dengue tally was at 243 till July 28.

DREDGING OF HIGHLY-POLLUTED DRAIN FROM SONIPAT TO DELHI

NGT forms panel to take remedial action

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Wednesday formed a panel to "verify the factual position" and "take appropriate remedial action on an urgent basis" while hearing a petition seeking directions to the authorities for dredging or cleaning a drain passing from Sonipat in Haryana to Delhi.

It also issued notices to authorities, including the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Haryana Chief Secretary.

The green panel was hearing a petition that claimed that the drain — passing from Sonipat via the Barota and Piau Maniyari villages in Haryana to Delhi — was filled with trash, silt and sludge



because of which it leached and overflowed into another drain merging into the Yamuna River. Besides, the "highly polluted wastewater" reached the national Capital, forcing the closure of water treatment plants in Delhi, the petition claimed.

A Bench of Judicial Member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and Expert Member A Senthil Vel said, "We consider it appropriate that a joint committee be constituted to verify the factual position and take appropriate remedial action on an urgent basis."

"Accordingly, we constitute a joint committee comprising the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Central Pollution Control Board, Haryana State Pollution Control Board and DJB and direct the same to meet within one week, undertake visits to the site..." the Bench added.

The committee has to submit a factual and action-taken report within a month, it said.

The tribunal also sought a response from the DJB CEO, Haryana Chief Secretary, the State's engineer-in-chief in the irrigation and flood control department, the State's Pollution Control Board and the Sonipat District Magistrate. The matter has been posted for further proceedings on November 8.

De-seal Uphaar cinema, says court

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi court on Wednesday ordered the de-sealing of Uphaar cinema hall, where 59 cinemagoers were killed in a massive blaze in 1997, saying "absolutely no purpose would be served to keep the property sealed".

The court noted that the CBI, Delhi Police and Association of Victims of Uphaar Tragedy (AVUT) president Neelam Krishnamoorthy have already given their "no objection" to the Supreme Court to return the theatre to the applicant.

The application was moved by Ansal Theatres and Club Hotels Private Ltd, whose former directors were real estate barons Sushil Ansal and Gopal Ansal, who were convicted in the fire tragedy case.

"Since the trial has reached finality, absolutely no purpose would be served to keep the property sealed. The application is thereby allowed and

property in question be de-sealed and released to the applicant being the rightful owner," the judge said.

The judge rejected Krishnamoorthy's submission seeking appropriate action against the applicant for filing a copy of a judgment of the Supreme Court in the case but deliberately, to misguide the court, leaving out a few lines at the bottom of a page. The judge said it was done "inadvertently".

Krishnamoorthy alleged the applicant tampered with the judicial record. She pointed out that an FIR was registered against the directors of the applicant company for tampering with judicial records in the case for which they were even convicted.

The judge noted the submission of the counsel for the applicant, who claimed there was "no deliberate attempt to conceal these lines from the said judgment and it happened inadvertently".

UGC declares 20 universities 'fake'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The UGC on Wednesday declared 20 universities as "fake" and not empowered to confer any degree with Delhi having eight such institutions.

"It has come to the notice of the UGC that a number of institutions are offering degrees in contrary to the provisions of the UGC Act. Degrees awarded by such universities shall neither be recognised nor valid for higher education or employment purpose. These universities are not empowered to confer any degree," UGC secretary Manish Joshi said.

Delhi has eight "fake" universities — All India Institute of Public and Physical Health Sciences; Commercial University Ltd, Daryaganj; United Nations University; Vocational University; ADR-Centric Juridical University; Indian Institution of Science and Engineering; Viswakarma Open University for Self-Employment; and Adhyatmik Vishwavidyalaya (Spiritual University), according to the UGC.

Interstate gang of vehicle lifters busted in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Police have busted an interstate gang of thieves who targeted luxury cars and recovered 25 stolen vehicles worth more than Rs 13 crore, officials said on Wednesday. According to the police, luxury cars were frequently being targeted by auto lifters.

Police conducted multiple raids in Goa, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu in the last two and half months and recovered 18 cars. Similarly, raids were conducted in Delhi, Punjab, Chandigarh, Goa and Karnataka and seven vehicles were recovered.

Delhi HC directs IAS officer to vacate Govt bungalow

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed suspended AGMUT cadre IAS officer Udit Prakash Rai — accused of demolishing a palace from the Pathan period and the only remnant of the Khizrabad city founded by Khizr Khan of the Sayyid dynasty and constructing a Government accommodation — and his family to vacate his official bungalow in Delhi and asked the authorities to allot him another accommodation.

Rai, who was allotted a bungalow in Jal Vihar when he was the CEO of the DJB is currently posted as a Secretary in Mizoram. His wife Shilpi Udit Rai, who is residing in the Delhi

bungalow along with children, had approached the High Court with a petition challenging a July 28 notice issued by DJB asking them to vacate the premises in 15 days. The lawyer representing Rai's wife submitted they will make a representation to the Principal Secretary of the PWD within a week for allotment of a house.

Justice Jalan said, "Principal Secretary, PWD, is directed to dispose of the representation within two weeks thereafter by allotting an accommodation in accordance with rules."

The HC also asked Rai's wife, signed by the couple, to give an undertaking before it within a week stating that they will vacate the accommodation.

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TDP to back Centre on Services Bill, Trust vote



After Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and YSR Congress, former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's Telugu Desam Party (TDP) has also decided to back the Government on the NCT Delhi (Amendment) Bill 2023, boosting prospects of the Bill getting passage in the Upper House where ruling party doesn't have its majority.

The Bill seeks to 'override' Supreme Court's order to give the powers to transfer bureaucrats in Delhi to the Kejriwal-headed Delhi Government and replace the ordinance promulgated in May to empower the Centre to keep its authority over officials.

The TDP, an erstwhile partner of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), also plans to vote in support of the Government against the Opposition on the motion of no-confidence. The TDP had exited the NDA in 2018 and brought a no-confidence

motion against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Government after it fell-out with it on the financial package to the new state of Andhra Pradesh. With three MPs in the Lok Sabha and one MP in the Rajya Sabha, the TDP's support will increase the government's tally in both the houses.

Two regional parties — YSR Congress and BJD with 18 crucial votes in the Rajya Sabha have already declared their support for the contentious legislation, ensuring its passage in Parliament. The support of three regional partners has come as a setback to the

Aam Aadmi Party in its fight against the Delhi services bill. The BJD, with nine MPs in the Rajya Sabha, will help the government cross the halfway mark in the upper house, where the BJP-led NDA does not have a full majority on its own.

The YSR Congress Party of Jagam Reddy has nine members in the Rajya Sabha and 22 in the Lok Sabha. The majority mark in the Rajya Sabha is 120, and with support from the BJD, YSRCP, TDP, and Mayawati's BSP, the BJP-led government may be able to muster support of around 127 MPs in the upper house.

'India can use 25% land for organic farming safely'

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

India can afford to put one-fourth of its cultivation area under organic or natural farming (ONF) by 2032-33, without risking food security given that the food grain output is likely to register growth of 3.5% in the next decade and food demand to grow between 2.5% and 3% annually, NITI Aayog has said.

The suggestions come in the wake of the growing demand for organic food in the domestic and global market which is expected to grow at a CAGR of about 20.5% to reach about USD 2601 million by 2026.

However, warning that India should tread cautiously, the Government's top think tank in its report 'From Green Revolution to Amrit Kaal: Lessons and Way Forward for Indian Agriculture' released recently has also advised that any further decision on promoting natural or organic farming should be taken based on the experience of these ten years.

The report said that organic farming is expected to replace around 20% of area from conventional farming to natural farming by 2030, while maintaining the balance between growth in demand and supply of agri-food," the document suggested.

Clearly, the idea is to ensure that the government tread cautiously and strike a balance between the production of safe, healthy, quality and environmentally sustainable food on the one hand and adequate food on the other. They have reasons. "The food and economic crisis in Sri Lanka caused by the ban on synthetic fertilizer and agro chemicals

and 30 per cent yield penalty in organic farming, India can safely shift 2 per cent area each year from conventional farming to organic farming without creating any shortfall in supply to meet domestic demand," said the document prepared by NITI Aayog member Ramesh Chand and consultant Jaspal Singh.



in 2021 underscores the need for adopting a cautious approach in curbing the use of agro chemicals," points out the authors.

"Though the per hectare use of agro chemicals in India is still much lower than in most developed nations, there has been growing awareness about the adverse effect of agrochemicals on human health, soil, environment and sustainability and the overall safety and benefits of food grown using natural inputs or organic products," emphasized the document. Moreover, some

consumers are willing to pay higher prices for food produced without using agro chemicals. Many countries are promoting the use of bio control methods against pests and diseases, it noted.

While this looks desirable, there are concerns about the reduced or zero use of agro chemicals, including inorganic fertilizers leading to a fall in yield, said the report even as it did not rule out the importance of agro chemicals in enhancing yield as well as a protective role against attacks by insects, pests and diseases. While highlighting

the scientific evidence in India and globally about non-use of agro chemicals or their replacement by natural and organic inputs and methods of production leading to reduction in yields, the report pointed out that data on cost of cultivation shows nil use of agrochemicals on 6% of total area under cultivation.

NIA makes one more arrest in Coimbatore bomb blast case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday said it has arrested another person in the ISIS-inspired Coimbatore car bomb blast case, in which the prime accused was killed in the terror explosion triggered by a Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (IED).

"Mohammed Idris alias Idris, a resident of Coimbatore, has been arrested for conspiring with other accused persons to commit the terror attack, which took place in front of the ancient Arulmigu Kottai



Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge with other INDIA leaders, after a meeting with President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi on Wednesday

MoRTH, Telecom Min ties ensure cells work on NHs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways VK Singh on Wednesday said that the telecommunication network is being used in a big way along the National Highways to provide better services.

Highlighting the achievements of the telecommunications department and their impact on all other Ministries and departments, Singh said MoRTH is coordinating with the department of telecommunications to ensure that there is an uninterrupted mobile phone network along the National Highways.

"An initiative is underway to expand 4G coverage in uncovered villages by installing mobile towers to ensure 4G services reach every nook and corner of the country. This will directly benefit our road network, enabling us to prevent accidents and mishaps effectively," the minister said at a

ED attaches assets worth ₹25 cr of Hero Moto Corp chairperson

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday said it has attached foreign and Indian currencies besides gold and diamond jewellery worth about Rs 25 crore apart from "incriminating" documents after raids on Hero Moto Corp executive chairperson Pawan Kant Munjal and some others.

The agency raided the residences and offices of the 69-year-old billionaire businessman, the promoter of world's largest two-wheeler automobiles manufacturer, in Delhi and neighbouring Gurugram apart from that of some other entities on Tuesday.

Jaipur-Mumbai train shooting: No mental condition detected in med test of accused: Railways

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Railways on Tuesday said the RPF constable accused in the Jaipur-Mumbai train shooting incident kept the treatment he would have been undergoing for any mental condition a "secret" and no such ailment was detected in the last periodic medical examination for the force's personnel.

Railway Protection Force (RPF) Constable Chetan Singh (33) is accused of gunning down his senior colleague Tika Ram Meena and three passengers aboard the moving train near Palghar railway station on the outskirts of Mumbai in the early hours of Monday with his automatic weapon, officials had said. He was nabbed later.

Following media reports claiming that the constable suffered from "abnormal hallucinations" and was diagnosed with serious anxiety disorder, the Ministry of Railways in a

RS OK's Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill 'Cheetahs getting thick fur to combat African winter proving fatal in India'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha on Wednesday passed the Forest Conservation Amendment Bill, 2023, which exempts land within 100 kilometres of the country's borders from the purview of conservation laws and permits setting up of zoos, safaris and eco-tourism facilities in forest areas.

The Upper House passed the Bill after a brief debate, though opposition members had walked out over the ethnic violence in Manipur. The Bill was passed by Lok Sabha on July 26.

During the debate, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said the Bill exempts certain types of land such as forest land along a rail line or a public road maintained by the government and providing access to a habitation or a rail and roadside amenity up to a maximum size of 0.10 hectares.

intention of this bill is to declare zoo and eco-tourism as a non-forest activity. We want to create an atmosphere where local people will be able to generate an income and they will participate in more and more eco-tourism activities. They have traditional knowledge about all wild animals," Yadav said.

During the discussion, BJP member Sushil Modi said the time for forest clearance for various projects has been reduced to 180 days and the process should be further expedited.

YSRCP's S Niranjana Reddy requested the government to enforce restrictions in the strictest manner for forest conservation. Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) MP Hishey Lachungpa requested to unclassify land meant for public utility purposes from the purview of Forest Conservation Act 1980 and transfer it to the state.



The natural process of cheetahs developing thick coats of fur in anticipation of African winter appears to be proving fatal in India's wet and hot conditions, international experts involved in the Project Cheetah have said.

In a report to the government, they suggested interventions such as shaving off the winter coats to deal with fatal infections and prevent any more death. Six of the 20 adult cheetahs relocated to the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh from Africa have died since March this year — the latest being on Wednesday.

RS OK's Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill



connectivity and connection can also go rapidly," Yadav said. Exempted forest land includes land situated within 100 kilometres of international borders, Line of Control and Line of Actual Control, and proposed to be used for the construction of strategic linear projects for national security.

The Bill also exempts land, up to 10 hectares proposed to be used for constructing security-related infrastructure, land proposed to be used for defence-related projects or paramilitary forces' camps and public utility projects, as specified by the Centre, not exceeding 5 hectares in a left wing extremist-affected area.

Varanasi tops on UP health ranking dashboard

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Varanasi has once again secured the first position in the state by securing an 80 per cent score in the health ranking dashboard. The district has come first in the health ranking dashboard for the third time in a row. For this achievement, District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam and Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal praised the Health department and encouraged them to provide quality services in future. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said that recently the ranking of all the districts has been displayed in the health ranking dashboard (June) of the state. By working according to the continuous guidelines given by the DM, the district has secured the first position in the state for the third time in succession.

"The health facilities being provided in the district are being supervised by the CDO, as a result of which Varanasi's achievement so far in this financial year is 74 per cent. The achievement of the state in the month of June is 63 per cent and that of the financial year is 54 per cent. If seen in this way, the condition of Varanasi is much better than the achievement of the state," the CMO said.

According to the monthly dashboard, Dr Chaudhary said that the district has achieved 100 per cent success in antenatal check-up (hemoglobin) in pregnancy, 100 per cent in home-based newborn care, temporary means of family planning (Antara, Chhaya, Copper-T, PPIUCD and IUCD), 98 per cent in complete immunisation, 73 per cent in institutional deliveries apart from caesarean deliveries relative to CHC deliveries, the

district has been ranked first for performing better on 16 indicators.

This time, he said that Pindra block has secured first place while Harhua and Chiraigaon second and third respectively whereas Araziline is fourth, Sewapuri fifth, Cholapur sixth, Kashi Vidyapeeth seventh, Badagaon block eighth and district headquarters ninth. On this achievement, the CMO has congratulated the health workers of all the urban and rural level Primary and Community Health Centres (PHCs/CHCs) and Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) of the district and encouraged them to maintain the quality of services.

The CMO said that quality medical and health services of mother-child health and family welfare programmes are being provided at all government hospitals, CHCs, PHCs and HWCs and sub-

centres of the district. For this, the team has performed well under the collaborative supervision of Dr HC Maurya, ACO (RCH) and Santosh Kumar Singh, District Programme Manager (DPM) of National Health Mission (NHM). "ASHA workers and ANMs have an important role to play in improving the indicators. ASHA workers mobilise the beneficiaries from the community and bring them to the medical units. This ranking of the Varanasi is an honour for the frontline workers," he said, appealing to all health workers to maintain the quality of activities related to maternal health, child health, newborn health and nutrition. The department is constantly making efforts to provide medical and health benefits to the last person of the community. This is the aim of the government and the department, he added.

Meri Mati Mera Desh campaign begins

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Meri Mati, Mera Desh campaign was launched from the banks of the river Ganga here on Wednesday when the soil of the villages was collected in the Amrit Kalash in the memory of the martyrs. The programme was organised in response to the call given by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his monthly radio address 'Mann Ki Baat' recently.

The campaign will be organised in the memory of the immortal martyrs across the country as part of the preparations for Independence Day. The 'Meri Mati, Mera Desh' campaign began here in the morning on the stage of Subhe-Banaras at Assi Ghat. The participants paid tributes to the brave sons who sacrificed their lives for the sake of the country. In the presence of coordinator of Namami Gange (Kashi region) Rajesh Shukla, the participants also remembered the valour of the people who sacrificed their lives for the nation.

Prof Suresh Sharma, Director, North Central Zone Cultural Centre (NCZCC), Prayagraj, Vinay Gupta, Director G- 20 Team, Dr



Meri Mati Mera Desh campaign being held at Assi Ghat in Varanasi on Wednesday.

Ratnesh Verma, city convenor of Namami Gange Shivdutt Dwivedi, co-ordinators Sarika Gupta and Bina Gupta, Kiran Baranwal, Pooja Maurya, Pankaj Aghari, Sushma Kaushik, Vinay Tiwari, Dr Preetesh Acharya, Abhay Srivastava and many others present to collect the soil. The work of saving the spiritual and cultural image of Kashi and the soil of the villages is being done by the team of Union Ministry

of Tourism and Culture, New Delhi.

Rajesh Shukla said that under the campaign, village panchayats across the country will lay special inscriptions and take out Amrit Kalash Yatras. Under this, 7,500 urns with soil from villages in different corners of the country will be brought to Delhi. Saplings will also be brought from different parts of the country in this journey. An Amrit Vatika

will be developed from this soil and plants near the National War Memorial. This will be another great symbol of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' he said, adding that last year the whole country was associated with the tricolour campaign and this year also the PM has appealed to the people to hoist the tricolour flags at their homes with full enthusiasm on the occasion of Independence Day.

Complete ABSS works on time: DRM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Vineet Kumar Srivastava directed the concerned officers to complete all the beautification and renovation works being done under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS) at Azamgarh railway on time, maintaining quality. Various state-of-the-art redevelopment works will be done at this station of Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) under the ABSS at a cost of ₹ 27.05 crore. The DRM reached Azamgarh railway station during his window trailing safety inspection after covering the Gorakhpur-Bhatni rail section on Tuesday.



DRM VK Srivastava inspecting Azamgarh railway station of Varanasi Division (NER) on Tuesday.

maps to redevelop Azamgarh station under the ABSS. He directed the concerned officers to do various tasks of the ABSS by marking the places as per instructions of the video conferencing of the Prime Minister. After this, the DRM inspected the station panel, station building, platforms, passenger sheds, foot over bridge, food and vending stalls, waiting hall,

circulating area, entry and exit, cleanliness and maintenance etc at Azamgarh station.

During this, he also inspected the relay room, IPS room, points crossing, key transfer, maintenance register, cancellation counter and register etc related to security and instructed the concerned personnel to strictly follow the security rules.

During his inspection, he was accompanied by Additional Divisional Railway Manager (Infra) Rahul Srivastava, Chief Project Manager (Gati Shakti) Kaushalesh Singh, Senior Divisional Engineer (Coordination) Rakesh Ranjan, Senior Divisional Engineer-I Rishi Srivastava, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Sheikh Rahman, Senior Divisional Operations Manager Ajay Pratap Singh, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (General) Pankaj Keshwani, Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-II Yashveer Singh, Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (C&W) Abhinav Pathak, Senior Divisional Security Commissioner Dr Abhishek, Senior Divisional Personnel Officer Sameer Paul, Deputy Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer (Project) Muzamil Jamal, Deputy Chief Engineer (Gati Shakti) IC Subhash and others.

Send chargesheet of PWD AE to govt: DC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Divisional Commissioner (DC) Kaushal Raj Sharma has directed the officers concerned to send the chargesheet of the assistant engineer of the PWD to the government and also issued a show cause notice against him when he found the progress of work on Kali Mata Mandir-Ring Road route unsatisfactory.

Reviewing the works of PWD and Bridge Corporation at his office on Tuesday, the DC also directed the officers

concerned to impose a penalty on the implementing agency.

Reviewing the works on Ashapur-Sandaha route, Mohansarai-Cantt route, etc, the DC directed for imposing a penalty on the implementing agencies for showing laxity.

The DC directed the chief project manager of Bridge Corporation to chalk out DPR of new projects and send them to the government for approval on the priority basis. The tree plantation should be made on the under construction and proposed routes at grand level, he directed.

The DC directed the PWD officers to complete the road widening work with the coordination of Smart City to avoid the damage of optical fiber. He also directed the officers of the PWD to ascertain the completion of the works in progress within a stipulated time under a well planned action plan.

Meanwhile, chairing another meeting held to review the Namoi Ghat redevelopment works, the DC directed the implementing

agency to construct a cobble pathway on the approach road from the entry point of Namoi Ghat to Adi Keshav Ghat for the smooth traffic of heavy vehicles.

To plant trees in the premises of this ghat and develop a green area, he directed, adding that to conduct a study in this area before the tree plantation so that the planted trees could remain alive even after the rise in the level of Ganga. To complete the works on time under a well planned action plan, he directed.

CRACKDOWN ON ATIQ'S ILLEGAL EMPIRE

Properties worth ₹12.43 cr to be attached

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

As part of its crackdown on illegal empire of Atiq Ahmed, the Prayagraj police are all set to attach properties worth ₹12.43 crore belonging to slain ganglord at Kathula Gauspur village in Sadar tehsil under the Gangsters Act.

Investigations have revealed that Atiq had allegedly purchased the properties of 14 people, spreading over 23,447 sqm on August 14, 2015 at a throwaway price and got them registered in the name of a mason who recently informed the police in writing that he has nothing to do with the property and that it belonged to the slain gangster.

A senior police official said while probing a case registered under Gangsters Act in 2015 against Atiq, cops came to know about these issues.

Cops claimed that Atiq had accumulated these properties through illegal means and at that time the price of the same was around ₹5 crore. Now, these lands were identified by the Revenue department which calculated its worth to be around ₹12.43

crore. Following which, the DCP (City) has sent a report to the commissioner of police with an objective to attach the same under section 14 (1) of Gangsters Act.

Meanwhile the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL), Lucknow has informed the Prayagraj police that the two 0.45 bore Colt pistols recovered from two separate places — the partially-demolished old office of slain gangster Atiq Ahmed at Chakia and Kasari Masari area in the city — were the ones used in the murder of lawyer Umesh Pal and two of his police gunners. Both the pistols, costing around ₹12 lakh each, were hidden by the members of Atiq gang at the two places after the killing of Umesh Pal and his police gunners, police claimed on Tuesday. The ballistics report of FSL, submitted to the Prayagraj police late on Monday, has also revealed that the empty cartridges seized by the police from the crime spot after the killing of Umesh Pal, matched with the 0.45 Colt pistols. The bullets of 0.45 Colt pistols were recovered from the bodies of Umesh Pal and one

of his gunners during autopsy.

The ballistics report of two more 0.32 bore country-made pistols, recovered by the police from the encounter sites at Dhoomanganj and Kaudhiyra from the possession of slain criminals Arbaaz and Usman, were also used by the criminals in the killing of Umesh Pal.

The two criminals had used the pistols in murdering Umesh and his gunners and for firing on the police, the report confirmed.

Atiq's lawyer Vijay Mishra was sent to jail in the Umesh Pal shootout case. But, before sending him to jail, he made many sensational revelations during interrogation. The matter of connection of Atiq with two builders has also come to the fore. It is learnt that Atiq was close to both these builders. Atiq was about to deal with them for his benami property worth ₹12.42 crore. The deal was almost final. The papers had also been signed by Atiq's henchman. The matter just got stuck on ₹5 crore. Zainab Fatima was adamant on ₹20 crore following the orders of her sister-in-law Shaista Parveen. But, the buyers were

not ready to pay beyond 15 crores. The police is now looking for those two builders. Some locations have also been raided. STF sources have told many shocking things about Atiq's wife Shaista and Ashraf's wife. According to this, if the deal had been finalised and the money had been received, Shaista and Zainab would have fled abroad.

Police sources said that Mishra was also going to get a hefty amount of ₹7 crore in this land deal. But before that he was arrested. Sources said Mishra had also approached Mohammad Muslim, but he refused to buy this land.

ED will now take action against Vijay Mishra. The STF and the police have strong evidence of complicity in the purchase and sale of lands against Vijay Mishra. After Umesh Pal's murder, Vijay Mishra spoke to Ashraf and Atiq on FaceTime more than 40 times.

The ED has asked the police to give details of the cases registered against Vijay Mishra. ED is continuously taking action against Atiq Ahmed and his gang IS-227 members.

Wrestlers in Catch-22 situation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The dying art of 'dangal' (wrestling competitions) has left city-based wrestlers in Catch-22 situation.

With a handful of wrestlers practicing for local 'dangal' competitions to be held on the occasion of upcoming festival of Nag Panchami, the thin attendance of men and women wrestlers has dampened the spirit of organisers in the city. Dangal matches are organised during the month of Shrawan

and especially on Nag Panchami across the state.

President of District Wrestling Association (DWA), who also runs the railway akhara in Jhansi, Mukesh Kumar, said, "Gone are the days when wrestlers came to 'akhara' for competitions in large numbers. The strength of local wrestlers has now declined and very few people come to learn wrestling skills now."

Kumar said "The craze for fitness clubs and state-of-the-

art gymnasiums has increased so much that left youngsters are shy to visit traditional 'akhara' and go to fitness clubs instead."

Mukesh said despite the heavy decline in number of people practising wrestling in past three years, the craze is still alive in villages.

He said "Currently, there are only four to five local akhara operating in city, where over two dozen wrestlers are preparing for 'dangal' matches." Anupam, a wrestler, said "Very

few people look forward to traditional wrestling these days. Once the dangal matches are organised on Nag Panchami, we are keen to participate in it whenever it is organised."

However, old wrestlers claim that traditional wrestling has its own charm. It is not easy fighting in loose mud and sand, but a wrestler finds it worth it when spectators turn up to cheer them. They stressed upon the need to make traditional wrestling popular among masses.

PCS (J) main exam results declared

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission (UPPSC) declared the results of PCS (J) main examination 2022 on Tuesday evening on its website. As many as 909 candidates have been declared successful in main examination against 303 posts.

The date of interview has not been announced so far.

Over 50,000 candidates had appeared in the preliminary examination on February 12 this year. The final selection of 303 candidates will be

done through interview.

DC TO CONDUCT INQUIRY: Prayagraj divisional commissioner has been entrusted with the job of conducting an inquiry into the allegations of accepting bribe against PCS Jyoti Maurya.

Besides many personal allegations levelled by Alok Maurya, husband of Jyoti, he had also complained that Jyoti had been accepting bribe.

Home ministry took the complaints seriously and decided to constitute a probe to dig out the truth. Divisional Commissioner

Vijay Vishwas Pant has been directed to conduct inquiry against SDM Jyoti Maurya.

ARRESTED: The complainant himself was the culprit in a fake loot case. The police arrested him and interrogated him as the CCTV footage was telling a totally different story.

Suraj Bind, collection agent of a finance company, in an FIR lodged at the Industrial Area police station of the trans-Yamuna segment told the police that while returning after collecting Rs 1.80 lakh three armed miscreants, rid-

ing two motorcycles, intercepted him and fled with the bag containing the collection.

Because his statement was not firm and changing frequently, the police doubted the complaint and interrogated him thoroughly.

The CCTV footage of the spot from the nearby cameras was also observed carefully but no such loot was visible.

When Suraj Bind was grilled after preliminary investigation, he broke down and told the police that the loot story was concocted.

Hindi elocution contest held



Hindi Elocution held at GHS & College, Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Girls' High School and College organised Hindi elocution for students.

The Hindi elocution was organised for students of all the classes starting from the senior school and college section on July 28, middle school on Tuesday 31, classes III to V on Tuesday, primary and pre-primary section and the pre-primary section on Wednesday.

Elocution is the art of careful public speaking, using clear pronunciation, grammar, style and tone. It gives students the

platform to combat their biggest fear i.e. stage fear. All the students participated with great zeal. The judges were: Senior School and College Section: Amjana Srivastava (SJC), Purnima Shukla (ECPS) and Priyanka Thomas (JCJS).

Middle section- Anita Joseph, Anupama Anthony (SJC) and Anulata Upadhaya (ECPS). Junior school- Agnes Collis (SJC), Shabnam S Singh (ECPS) & MS Jeet (JCJS) Sub Junior- Anjula Sethna (GHS), Madhulal (JCJS) and Ruby Lartius (GHS)

The programme com-

menced with a word of prayer followed by a reading from the Scripture. The teachers from different schools were invited to judge the students on their diction, memory, pronunciation, expression and presentation.

The results were announced and certificates and books were handed over to the prize winners by the judges.

Principal Rev Dr Vinita Eusebius felt proud to see the students perform exceptionally well. The list of the prize winners is as follows:- College

Section- Class 11 -B Devanshi Singh, class 12-D Anshika Pandey, class 9 -E Sharanaya Srivastava, class 10 - Ojasvi Gupta, Middle Section- Class 6-A Samridhi Chaturvedi and Sanvi Ghosh 6-E, class 7-D Zainab Seemab and Class 8-B Pakhi Singh, Junior Section- Class 3-C Shasvati Jaiswal class 4-A Kritika Pandey class 5-D Samridhi Tripathi, Primary Section- Class 1-C Shafeeqa Saiyada, Class 2-A Adviak Srivastava, Class-3-C Shasvati Jaiswal, Pre-Primary Section- UKG F Nistha Singh, LKG-E (Group Elocution).



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Flaring up

As if Manipur was not enough, we have Nuh district in Haryana up in flames of communal violence

In a distressing turn of events, the tranquil district of Nuh in Haryana has been marred by a troubling outbreak of communal violence, highlighting the urgent need to address the underlying causes and punish the guilty. At least five lives have been lost and the situation is far from normal. In the heart of our nation, where unity in diversity has been our strength for centuries, it is disheartening to witness the recent eruption of communal violence in Nuh. The clashes that unfolded in this region have not only shaken the local populace but have also raised crucial questions about our society's resilience and harmony. Nuh, often referred to as the 'Mecca of Meos,' has historically been home to diverse communities living side by side. However, recent events have shown that beneath the surface of coexistence, simmering tensions and misunderstandings were lurking. As always, the administration and police slept over the events that eventually led to the flare-up. For two days, before a communal attack, threats were openly made on social media while Haryana police's cyber units remained unaware of it. A political activist posted on Facebook that "Monu Manesar is coming", referring to the controversial leader of the gau rakshak network operating in Haryana. Monu is one of the accused in the murder case of two men from Rajasthan — Nasir (26) and Junaid (35) — whose charred bodies were found this February in Bhiwani. Much before the violence erupted, social media was rife with threats urging supporters to join the Brij Mandal Jalabhishek Yatra. The videos set off a swirl of reactions and counter-reactions. Some users from another community warned against Monu Manesar's presence in Nuh. Others threatened "consequences" and some threatened retaliation. In the hours after the attack on the yatra in Nuh, a mob went on the rampage at Sohna, and incidents of communal violence were reported from Faridabad and Palwal as well. Members of both communities have been spreading disinformation. In the wake of administrative lethargy, communal violence was inevitable.



Political expediency and manipulation can burn any city, Nuh is no exception. Moreover, the efforts of certain sections to polarise people cannot be overlooked. Communal violence is often fuelled by vested interests seeking to exploit religious or ethnic identities for personal or political gain. Inflammatory speeches and divisive narratives circulated through social media can incite emotions and lead to a breakdown of the social fabric, turning neighbours into enemies. The role of law enforcement and community leaders cannot be undermined in addressing and preventing such outbreaks. Political leaders should prioritise the well-being of the community over personal gains and work towards unity. Only through open dialogue, economic empowerment, and political integrity can we hope to prevent the recurrence of such unfortunate incidents and ensure a brighter, united future for our nation where peace prevails.

Workers clean the Gandhi statue ahead of the Assembly session, in Hyderabad

Workers clean the Gandhi statue ahead of the Assembly session, in Hyderabad

PICTALK



Workers clean the Gandhi statue ahead of the Assembly session, in Hyderabad

A potential harbinger of a sustainable future



TANKESHWAR KUMAR

NEP-2020 focuses on holistic education, multidisciplinary approach, diversity, multilingualism and cherishes Indian knowledge & traditions

The second decade of the twenty-first century culminated with the appearance of National Education Policy 2020 as a vision document for the sustainable future of the nation. NEP-2020 has not only ignited hope and aspirations among the students, parents, teachers and academic leaders but has also led to an era of enlightenment in the Indian as well as International public sphere. It has set the tone for the legislators, policymakers and educationists to revamp the entire system of education to provide education of international standard and at the same time focus on the Indian tradition of knowledge. The Policy has paved the way for a swift transition from the Western model of education to a system that integrates the essence of Indian thought in the planning and dissemination of knowledge, cherishing great respect for ancient Indian discoveries, Indian languages, philosophers, thinkers, artists, scientists and legends.



ONE OF THE STRIKING FEATURES OF THE NEP-2020 IS THAT IT EMPHASISES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO ESTABLISH A SUSTAINABLE CONNECTION FROM LAB TO LAND AND FROM LAND TO THE LAB FOR BETTER OUTPUTS IN THE INTEREST OF THE SOCIETY

A diligent study of the policy suggests that Indian Knowledge System forms the foundational feature of the document, underlining the importance of reviving the valued past of India when it was universally hailed as the Visva Guru, and it rightly emphasizes that conservation and resurrection of Indian heritage and values are quite crucial for the self-esteem of a nation at the moment when India is aspiring to become "Aatamnirbhar" in all important spheres including science and technology, economy, diplomacy, trade and commerce and defence infrastructure. It is heartening to note that the UGC Guidelines on Indian Knowledge System and MulyaParvahare being deliberated, adopted and implemented with unmatched excitement on the campuses of higher education institutions. Such steps are energy boosters for the sensitive citizens who wish to cherish and nourish special respect for the golden ancient past of the country nurtured by unparalleled visionaries, statesmen, thinkers and true intellectuals in various domains of knowledge. The concepts of Professor of Practice, artists on campus, and inclusion of indigenous Indian knowledge into the curriculum are immensely helpful in the restoration and revival of interest in the inherent beauty of our rich culture and heritage.

Aspects, by bridging the gap prevailing among different groups of learners through adequate use of Technology-based education platforms such as Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA), Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM), SWAYAMPARBHA, and other innovative platforms under the ambit of National Educational Technology Forum (NETF). Considering the student as the fulcrum of the education system, the Policy focuses on fostering the unique capabilities of each student by providing flexibility, choice and freedom for the learners to choose their learning trajectories and interests. To address the problem of student dropouts for varied reasons, NEP-2020 provides a unique solution through the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) that facilitates Multiple Entry and Multiple Exit options for students at different levels of education through assignment, accumulation, storage, transfer and redemption of credits. These initiatives shall help the learners to enjoy the freedom of horizontal and vertical mobility across disciplines and institutions while motivating them for lifelong learning opportunities. Released in April 2023, National Credit Framework (NCRF) also reiterates mainstreaming of vocational education with general education by presenting a unified credit accumulation and transfer framework for both vocational and general education, starting from school education to higher education. As a breakthrough, the NCRF institutionalises mobility and equivalence between general and vocational education, recognition of prior learning and experiential learning, promotion of lifelong learning and continuous professional development of the learners. Similarly, the ambitious provision of the National Research Foundation (NRF) shall boost vibrant research and innovation culture across higher education institutions by funding competitive research, to promote research culture in academic institutions, through proper coordination between researchers and relevant branches of government and industry partners. The institutional support of NRF is sure to sustain the ecosystem of outstanding research in the universities through funding, a database of research to avoid duplication and to facilitate the latest research breakthroughs in the areas of national interest. It is heartening to share that the Central University of Haryana has been a pioneer university in the phased implementation of NEP-2020. Some of the major initiatives of the university include—the introduction of B.Sc.-M.Sc Integrated programmes; 4-year UG programme(s); 4-year B.A.-B.Ed programme; adoption and implementation of Academic Bank of Credits and Multiple Entry and Multiple Exit options in UG, PG and integrated programmes; courses on Indian Knowledge System and Mulya Pravah; necessary NEP-2020 driven amendments in academic ordinances; adoption of UGC Guidelines for pursuing two academic programmes; Samarth-EGov Project for e-governance; Initiating appointment of Professors of Practice; curricular reforms in tune with UGC Curriculum and Credit Framework for UG Programmes; Archaeological Museum to conserve and preserve historical artefacts; Vice Chancellors' Workshop on National Credit Framework; Office of International Affairs; and many more.

As the first instance, the university exercised the provision of Multiple Entry and Multiple Exit options by allowing a B.Tech student to exit to enable him to join as Agniveer with permission to re-join if the term of his professional commitment in defence services is over after 4 years. The three-year journey of NEP-2020 has taught us that it is a multifaceted document that requires rigorous brainstorming. One of the striking features of the policy is that it emphasises community engagement. It is rightly said that the future of a country is shaped in its classrooms, and with NEP-2020 as the guiding document focusing holistic education, multidisciplinary approach, diversity, multilingualism, advanced global skills, respect for indigenous values, Indian knowledge tradition, integrated approach to learning, quality research, equity and inclusion, capable faculty, internationalisation of higher education, robust students support system, and futuristic curriculum and pedagogy, India cherishes the vision to build its future on the strong foundation of education. Moreover, the gradual execution of NEP-2020 shall significantly augment the impact of India's journey (Amritkaal) to its centenary year in 2047. (The writer is the vice Chancellor of the Central University of Haryana. Views are personal)

A guide to thrive as a female entrepreneur

Having more women running businesses will not only improve gender equality but will also benefit the economy

Indian women entrepreneurs have been setting and achieving groundbreaking goals in the dynamic startup ecosystem of 2023, and this is the growth momentum the country needs to achieve its \$5 trillion economy mark. While more colleges are developing mentorship programs to nurture the startup mindset among women, a few challenges remain that require speedy resolution.

TECH LANDSCAPE

India achieved milestone growth in the startup ecosystem over the last few years. In 2021 the country minted 44 unicorns with a total valuation of \$93 billion becoming the third largest tech ecosystem next to USA and China. With a surge in internet penetration and the Govt's Digital India initiatives, technology has become a significant growth catalyst.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Even though India is a hotbed of startup activity, backed by the rise of digital infrastructure, progressive government policies, and the growing presence of international venture capitalists, certain hurdles mark the path for



Indian women entrepreneurs. According to the Creating 10X Women Founders in India study, out of the 28,000 active technology start-ups in the country, only 18% have women as founders or co-founders. Women make up only 13.76% of the total entrepreneurs in the country. In raising funds, women are also behind males.

KEY LESSONS

Helming the challenges on the path of entrepreneurship requires some conscious actions. As a woman on the journey, here are a few learnings I have picked up on the way.

- Embrace risk and failure: With India becoming the centre of attraction for international investors, there are plenty of financial opportunities for the country's women. To make the most of this opportunity, women entrepreneurs must pull up their risk appetite.

preneurs must pull up their risk appetite.

- Networking is essential: Effective networking can open doors to potential investors, mentors, and customers. Participate in startup events, industry conferences, and online communities. Remember, people invest in people first and ideas later.

- Focus on your customers: Prioritize them, and they will support your business. It's vital to hear their challenges and deliver solutions to build a mutually conducive relationship that will eventually boost your business.

- Empower other women: As a woman in a leadership role, you can create a supportive environment for other women. Encourage diversity in your team, and mentor other aspiring women entrepreneurs.

- Embrace humility: Tech advancements are moving at faster speeds than ever before. At such a rate, today's innovation may fall flat tomorrow.

- Be assertive, not aggressive: Being assertive doesn't have to come across as "macho" or intimidating.
- Become vocal about

your business: As a woman entrepreneur, you must speak up about your business and vision when opportunities present themselves. You never know who your next client will be.

- We need a pipeline of women investokrs: India needs a few more leaders like Vani Kola, Bharati Jacob, and Ankita Vasishtha to strengthen the pipeline of women investors further. Subsequently, the government's policies, like the Bharathiya Mahila Bank Business Loan, Mudra Yojana Scheme, and Stree Shakti Yojana, among others, encourage more entrepreneurial women to launch their ventures.

India needs more women at the top supporting women's businesses to make a significant impact.

- Last but not least, have fun while working hard and chasing your dreams. Create a thriving culture by investing in your team that will support your business success and ultimately contribute towards a booming economy created by trailblazing women. (The writer is the founder & CEO, of Contentstack)

LOKMANYA TILAK AWARD FOR MODI

Sir — The Lokmanya Tilak Award conferred on prime minister Narendra Modi at the hands of the Nationalist Congress Party chief in Pune on Monday, August 1, made an interesting event. Pawar shared the stage with Modi after eight years amid protests by both the Congress and the Shiv Sena (UBT) that his sharing the stage with Modi would be bad optics and send out the wrong message towards Opposition unity. However, Pawar, who had accepted the invitation long ago did not cancel but used the opportunity to make a dig at Modi to his face. While shaking his hand and sharing smiles with the Prime Minister, who claims to be a great admirer of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the NCP chief said, "Shivaji never snatched lands belonging to somebody else." It was an oblique reference to how Modi and the BJP have both been breaking up other parties with the threat of criminal action against them to form or bolster their government. Modi did not respond to the dig. Before he arrived in Pune, Modi was faced with slogans and placards put up by opposition parties led by the Congress such as "Crime Minister Go Back!" With this, all was not well for the PM in Pune and great embarrassment. Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

NATIONAL GREEN HYDROGEN MISSION

Sir — Green hydrogen, a clean and sustainable type of hydrogen produced from renewable energy sources like solar, wind, or hydropower, is gaining momentum worldwide as an alternative to fossil fuels due to its zero greenhouse gas emissions when utilized. In India, the pursuit of green hydrogen is driven by the National Green Hydrogen Mission, which seeks to establish India as a prominent producer and supplier of green hydrogen globally by 2030. The mission aims to achieve various objectives, including export opportunities, reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels, promoting domestic manufacturing capabilities, attracting investments and businesses, generating employment and economic growth, as well as supporting

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pendency in courts



The issue of pendency in courts at various levels has once again hogged the limelight. More than 4 crore cases are waiting to be disposed of in India's lower courts, and the number stands at 59 lakhs at High Courts. Lack of adequate infrastructure, paucity of funds, shortage of manpower, procedural delays, lackadaisical attitude of the government, and the government versus judiciary confrontation have overburdened Indian courts. It is as if the government has intentionally ignored the judiciary through an equally diffident judiciary is

research and development projects. To facilitate innovation and deployment of green hydrogen technologies, India plans to establish a Green Hydrogen Innovation Centre and a Global Biofuel Alliance for energy transition. These collaborative efforts will accelerate progress and promote complementary options, such as biofuels, to further decarbonise the transport sector. Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribag

ISRAEL'S CONTROVERSIAL BILL

Sir — After all, bypassing the biggest protest in the history of Israel's formation, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu got the judicial reform bill passed by the Knesset, strangling democracy. Is Israel a viable country for the Jews after this? Because not only the opposing politicians but all the citizens associated with civil society are opposing this bill. Be it the army, businessmen, industrialists, workers, students, religious leaders or doctors, all have come against it. Yet Netanyahu's ultra-

loathe to reach out to the government. The proposal of the Law Commission of India to increase the judges' strength five-fold has been lying in cold storage.

While the Law Commission has mooted 50 judges per million population, the country has a dismal 15 judges per million. As former Chief Justice NV Ramana had pointed out, a trial court judge in India handles as many as 1000 cases a day—a disturbing number. Some solutions put forward from time to time, apart from augmenting the strength of judges, are increasing the age of superannuation of judges, asking former high court judges to come out of their retirement, restricting the judges' vacations, morning and evening courts and so on. However, all these will come to naught if there is a lack of transparency, accountability and mutual trust in the dealings between the judiciary and the government. KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

nationalist right-wing government hasn't budged an inch. Knowing that whenever the next elections are held, they will have to face a heavy defeat. Israel is also facing a huge shortage of doctors, now thousands of doctors there have made up their minds that they no longer want to live in that dictatorial country.

A WhatsApp group set up to help doctors who want to leave the country has gained over 1,000 members in 24 hours. Sensing the delicacy of the opportunity, UAE and Bahrain have urged those doctors to come and serve in their country, along with citizenship, they have also been announced to pay three times more salary than Israel. All the living facilities will also be provided. If all the doctors leave like this, then what will happen to the medical service of the country? Who would want to live in that country?

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

ARE BANK DEPOSITS COMPLETELY RISK-FREE?

The depositors do not take into account the effect of inflation on their earnings



S KALYANASUNDARAM

It was Day 1, Session 1 in the new school for Anand. The teacher was casually asking the students, what they would like to be when they grow up. Different students described their desire to become doctors, engineers, businessmen etc. Anand told the teacher that he would like to be a Cricketer. Then the teacher asked the role he would like to have in cricket. He said that he would be a bowler. The teacher was curious as generally, students want to be great batsmen. When asked for the reason, Anand said that a bowler can never be made 'out' whereas a batsman can be out in several ways. Anand perceived the role of the bowler as a risk-free one. No one sends him out during an over. It has not struck him that his every delivery may result in up to six runs to the opponent.

BANK DEPOSIT

Bank depositors feel that they do not lose their money as banks are well regulated and no customer of any commercial bank has lost money in the last sixty years. They fail to notice the difference between real interest and nominal interest. They do not take into account the effect of inflation on their earnings.

From Jan to Dec 2022, the weighted average term deposit rates (percentage) month-wise for scheduled commercial banks were 5.03, 5.02, 5.03, 5.03, 5.07, 5.13, 5.20, 5.27, 5.39, 5.49, 5.62 and 5.78 respectively. During the same period month, wise inflation figures (percentage) were 6.00, 6.10, 7.00, 7.80, 7.00, 7.00, 6.70, 7.00, 7.40, 6.80, 5.90 and 5.70 respectively. Hence month wise inflation-adjusted return works out to -0.97, -1.08, -1.97, -2.77, -1.93, -1.87, -1.50, -1.73, -2.01, -1.31, -0.28 and 0.08 percentages respectively.



This has been worked out based on weighted average term rates provided by RBI. When we incorporate the monthly inflation rate, we can notice for most of the months, the real interest is negative. This means that term deposit customers (as a whole) of banks are losing their money continuously. When this is so for term deposits, one can imagine the negative return that accrues on savings bank deposits. Keeping money in savings accounts may be beneficial for the banks and not for customers. Hence it is advisable to hold only the minimum that is required for day-to-day expenses in a savings account.

RATE AND PERIODICITY MATTER

Though there may be a small difference in the interest rates between banks, in the long run, it matters more. For example, Rs.1 lakh deposit for 10 years at 5 per cent interest with monthly interest will provide a maturity value of Rs.164700. If the interest rate is 6 per cent, the maturity value will be Rs.181930. Though the RBI has permitted banks to pay interest every month, banks pay interest every quarter only and when they pay every month, it is with a discount on the quarterly rate. However, banks charge interest on their loan books every month.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- There may be a further increase in the deposit rate and hence one need not block their funds for the long term now.
- One can compare the rates offered by different banks and go in for the best rates. From the point of view of safety, there is not much difference between banks as the bank deposits are covered by deposit insurance up to Rupees five lakhs. Most of the Small Finance banks are offering better rates than commercial banks.
- Calculate the real rate of interest after adjusting for inflation and taxes
- Bank deposits score the best for liquidity.
- Persons who intend to be covered under the old income tax regime may take into account the deposits/schemes which provide deductions for such investments.

(The writer is a retired banker)

Agri-trade: Hamstrung by state laws

To unshackle the agri-trade the states should recognise traders' licenses of other states and allow hassle-free movement of the produce



UTTAM GUPTA

To boost inter-mandi and inter-state trade in agricultural commodities, a high-level Expert Committee set up by the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has recommended the creation of a specialized Market Yard of National Importance (MNI) which could complement e-NAM (electronic National Agriculture Market). It has proposed the creation of MNIs for selected commodities in six states.

According to the committee, "MNI could be construed as a specialized extension of e-NAM". At the outset, it is important to understand what is e-NAM. What is it that e-NAM hasn't been able to achieve? How can MNI make up and fill the void? Launched in April 2016, e-NAM is an online trading platform for agricultural produce aiming to help farmers, traders, and buyers with online trading and getting a better price by smooth marketing. Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) is the lead agency for implementing e-NAM under the aegis of MoA&FW.

For decades, the 'smooth marketing' of agriculture products and 'better price' for farmers has been alien to the Indian agricultural landscape. This is because agriculture marketing is carried out under the respective state laws viz. APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) Act which has widely varying provisions. This hampers the free movement of agri-produce between different states.

For the administration of marketing, every state is further divided into several market areas. Farmers in a given area can sell their agri-produce only at the designated APMC Mandi. Each mandi has its market regulations. This leads to fragmentation of markets thus hindering the free flow of agri-produce even within the state.

At the mandi, a cartel of licensed traders and commission agents (known as artisans in local parlance, their job is to facilitate transactions between the farmer and the buyer) rules the roost. They make sure that the farmer doesn't get a fair price. At local markets also, this very cartel forces the more vulnerable farmers (read: small and marginal farmers) to sell their crops at throwaway prices. Besides, multiple handling of agri-produce and multiple levels of mandi charges/fees lead to an increase in price to the consumers even as the farmers receive a low price.

How does e-NAM address these problems?

e-NAM seeks to create a unified market via an online trading platform both at the state and the national level. A prerequisite for this is that farmers irrespective of their location within the state should be able to sell their agri-produce on the platform. This would require that the designated APMC mandi where a farmer is required to sell - as per the extant regulations - doesn't object to such transgression.

The other fundamental requirement is that a trader intending to purchase on the e-NAM platform need not have to take a license from all mandis in the state ('all states' in case of cross-border movement is involved). In other words, the agricultural marketing law of the state should provide for a single trading



DURING THE LAST SEVEN YEARS THUS, E-NAM HAS EMBRACED JUST ABOUT 12 PER CENT OF THE FARMERS AND THE VALUE OF TRADE

(The writer is a policy analyst)

licence that is valid for the entire state (pan-India license for cross-border movement). The law should also have a provision for a 'single-window' levy of fees.

The states also need to make necessary amendments in their laws to provide for electronic trading in agri - produce. The APMCs should take steps to set up an e-auction platform. With the above prerequisites in place, e-NAM should help farmers in getting a better price from sale vis-à-vis what they get from selling at the mandi. This is because unlike the mandi, where they are coerced to sell to a few licensed traders, on e-NAM, they get multiple options as a large number of buyers from different markets can bid (in a transparent manner) which enhances the former's negotiating power.

Moreover, the platform provides them with a variety of services and information including commodity arrivals, prices, buy & sell offers, e-payment directly into farmers' accounts, infrastructure for quality testing etc all through a 'single window'. All this helps in reducing costs and better realization for the farmers.

For states used to controlling almost everything when it comes to marketing agri-produce, it was a bit too much to give the desired relaxations. So, what is the outcome? Since its launch, so far, 1361 mandis of 23 states and 4 UTs have been integrated into the e-NAM platform. This is just about 19.5 per cent of 6,946 regulated wholesale APMC mandis (as on March 2018). The farmers registered on the e-NAM portal

are 17.5 million which is around 12.5 percent of the total 140 million. As for agri-business transacted on the portal, this was Rs 74,000 crore during 2022-23. This comes to 12.3 per cent of the total value of annual trade in agricultural commodities (excluding dairy and meat products) of Rs 600,000 crore.

During the last seven years thus, e-NAM has embraced just about 12 per cent of the farmers and the value of trade. At this pace, it would take more than 50 years to get all farmers and all of the agri-commodity transactions integrated into the platform. The idea of MNI is merely a specialized extension of e-NAM. It won't make any material difference to the situation on the ground.

The crux of the problem has to do with the continued stranglehold of the states on APMCs. In fact, for almost everything that stakeholders need to do for transacting business on e-NAM be it pan-state/India license for traders, unshackling farmers, fees and so on, they need to take permission from the state authorities. To cap it all, extant laws don't permit private entities to engage in agri-marketing.

Even for warehouses, cold storages and Farmers Producers Organizations (FPOs) and other similar institutions to be allowed to act as a platform for agricultural marketing by getting 'deemed' marketing yard status, prior approval of the political brass in the state is necessary. And, that isn't easy to get.

The Expert Committee has urged states to initiate a series of

measures, which include "recognizing traders license of other states, declaring warehouses and cold storages as market yards, prompt system for dispute settlement and allowing hassle free movement of the produce". Thus, even the committee recognizes that for the specialized MNI to work, states should loosen the strings.

The big question is: when the states haven't loosened the strings to let e-NAM work, there is little hope that they would do it for specialized MNIs to take off in a big way. For giving the intended boost to e-NAM and in the larger interest of helping farmers especially the more vulnerable small and marginal farmers fetch a good price, it is necessary to develop agri-markets other than APMC mandi in a big way. A Model Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (Promotion and Facilitation) Law passed by Modi Government in 2017 gave more options to farmers for selling besides a 'single pan-State license' for traders buying from anywhere in the State. But, this was ignored by the states.

In September 2020, the Union government enacted three central farm laws which allowed it to regulate inter-State trade and intra-State trade and enable the purchase of specified farm commodities directly from farmers anywhere in the country. The laws legitimized sales on all non-APMC platforms such as private traders, processors, aggregators, exporters and so on. But, these had to be withdrawn following farmers' protests.

Encroachment on the riverbed areas leads to flooding

Governments, corporations, and individuals must join hands and invest in initiatives aimed at rejuvenating and maintaining our river ecosystems

In a tragic turn of events, flash floods and landslides caused by heavy rain in northern India have claimed the lives of over 40 individuals (according to media reports) and a large part of the National Capital was flooded.

This recent calamity emphasizes the man-made crisis of encroachment on riverbeds and catchment areas. Residential buildings and other constructions that have encroached upon these vital areas have amplified the impact of natural disasters, leading to the loss of life and property. This dire situation underscores the pressing need for humans to acknowledge their role in this catastrophe and take immediate corrective measures.

The devastating floods



SANJAY OJHA

(The writer is vice president, of corporate communications, at Bajaj Group)

that have wreaked havoc in various regions can be attributed to the encroachment and alteration of river ecosystems. Rapid urbanization and population growth have driven the construction of buildings, infrastructure, and industrial facilities without adequate consideration for the natural flow of rivers and their floodplains. As a result, the capacity of rivers to handle heavy rainfall and maintain a sustainable watercourse has been significantly diminished.

The flash floods and landslides serve as a sombre reminder of the consequences of human actions on the environment. The loss of life and destruction of homes and infrastructure are stark consequences of our failure to pri-

oritize the preservation of river ecosystems and the need for sustainable development.

Now, more than ever, it is imperative for humanity to recognize its responsibility in this crisis. Governments, urban planners, and citizens alike must acknowledge the urgent need for corrective action. Steps must be taken to restore the natural flow of rivers, reclaim encroached riverbeds, and establish buffer zones to mitigate the impact of future flooding events.

Efforts should focus on sustainable urban development practices that prioritize the preservation of river ecosystems. This includes implementing stricter regulations on construction near water bodies, promoting the use of flood-resistant mate-

rials, and establishing effective drainage systems to manage excess water during heavy rainfall. It is crucial to strike a balance between development and environmental conservation to prevent further disasters of this magnitude.

Education and awareness campaigns must also be launched to highlight the consequences of encroachment on river systems and the importance of protecting these natural resources. The engagement of local communities, environmental organizations, and government bodies is paramount in instilling a sense of responsibility and collective action.

The recent flash floods and landslides also serve as a wake-up call, reminding

humanity of the devastating consequences of its actions on the natural world. It is high time for society to acknowledge the fault and take the necessary steps to rectify the situation. While the road to recovery may be long and arduous, it is better late than never to ensure the sustainable coexistence of man and river. Only by addressing this man-made crisis head-on can we hope to protect lives, property, and the fragile ecosystems that sustain us.

We have the example of the Yashoda River. After the monsoon season, the riverbed has almost no water. In 2010, when we began our work on the rejuvenation of the Yashoda River basin in Wardha district Maharashtra, the area experienced severe

flooding during the monsoon season, impacting hundreds of families. However, after concerted efforts, including desilting and restoration of the river, flooding has become a thing of the past. Today the river bed has water around the year.

By implementing similar measures across various regions, we can mitigate the risks associated with encroachment and ensure the long-term resilience of communities. Reclaiming and preserving riverbeds and catchment areas must become a priority, as it directly impacts the safety and well-being of those residing in flood-prone regions.

Governments, corporations, and individuals must join hands and invest in ini-

tiatives aimed at rejuvenating and maintaining our river ecosystems. By incorporating sustainable practices, adhering to strict regulations, and fostering community engagement, we can establish a harmonious relationship between man and river, preventing future tragedies and securing a better future for generations to come.

I can say acting today can yield significant positive change. Let us draw inspiration from success stories of river rejuvenation towards creating encroachment-free river basins and catchment areas, ensuring the safety and prosperity of our communities in the face of climate-related challenges. The time to act is now, and the stakes have never been higher.

Trump indicted for efforts to overturn poll result

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Donald Trump has been indicted on four counts by a federal grand jury for plotting to overturn his 2020 election defeat, the third time this year the former US president has been criminally charged as he seeks to retake the White House in 2024. The 45-page indictment was filed by Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith after the grand jury heard months of testimony from some of Trump's closest associates of how Trump tried to overturn his loss to Democrat Joe Biden, who became the U.S. president in January 2021. Trump, 77, was charged with conspiracy to defraud the United States, witness tampering, conspiracy against the rights of citizens, and obstruction of an official proceeding.

These charges relate to Trump's actions over a period of more than two months from soon after election day (November 3) until the day he left the White House on 20 January 2021. The plot to overturn the 2020 election culminated in an unprecedented physical assault by Trump's supporters on the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, as Congress met to certify Biden's victory. Despite having lost, the defendant was determined to remain in power. So for more than two months following election day on November 3, 2020, the defendant spread lies that there had been outcome-determinative fraud in the election and that he had actually won. These claims were false, and the defendant knew that they were false," the indictment reads. Trump in a statement to his supporters said that he did nothing wrong and the charges against him were politically motivated.

The indictment was issued by a grand jury of citizens in the District of Columbia and sets forth the crimes charged in detail. It caps an inquiry into events surrounding the January 6, 2021 riot at the US Capitol.

Trump lashes out at indictment

Washington (PTI): A day after his third indictment, a defiant Donald Trump on Wednesday said he has "never had so much support" as he gears up for the next year's race for the White House. The 45-page indictment alleges that the former US president, a Republican, plotted a conspiracy aimed to keep him in power after he was defeated by Joe Biden, a Democrat, in the 2020 general election.

It accused Trump, 77, of knowingly spreading "pervasive and destabilising lies" about election fraud that threatened the presidential election and therefore American democracy. But in an all-caps post on his Truth Social platform, Trump wrote that he has "never had so much support" as he does after the latest federal charges against him. Referring to the indictment as "unprecedented", Trump said it "has awoken the world to the corruption, scandal, & failure that has taken place in the United States for the past three years." Thanking his supporters for rallying to his defence, Trump described his indictment as "unprecedented" and vowed to make America great again. "America is a nation in decline, but we will make it great again, greater than ever before. I love you



all!"

He is expected to appear before a judge on Thursday in his first court appearance in the case. Trump's attorney slammed special counsel Jack Smith for indicting his client in the January 6 probe, saying it's a "terribly tragic day." John Lauro said the 45-page indictment shows that political speech has been "criminalised." "Joe Biden's running against Trump and losing currently. And now we have [the] Justice Department indicting President Trump for actions that he took as the executive, as the chief executive of the United States with respect to public policy matters," he told Fox News. "So now we have the criminalisation and the weaponisation of public policy and political speech by one political party over another," he was quoted as saying.

"The attack on our nation's capital on January 6, 2021, was an unprecedented assault on the seat of American democracy. As described in the indictment, it was fuelled by lies," said Special Counsel Smith. "Lies by the defendant targeted at obstructing a bedrock function of the US government, the nation's process of collecting, counting, and certifying the results of the presidential election," he said. While the indictment affirms Trump's right

to free speech, it claims the former president "pursued unlawful means of discounting legitimate votes and subverting the election results". According to the indictment released by the Department of Justice, the former president is charged with a conspiracy to defraud the US "by using dishonesty, fraud and deceit to obstruct the nation's process of collecting, counting, and certifying the results of the presidential election."

Russian drone strikes Ukrainian port on Romania's border

AP ■ KYIV

Russian drones on Wednesday hit a Ukrainian port city along the border with Romania, causing significant damage and a huge fire at facilities that are key to Ukrainian grain exports.

The attacks followed the end of a deal with Russia that had allowed Ukrainian shipments to world markets from the Black Sea port of Odesa.

Since scrapping the deal, Russia has hammered the country's ports with strikes, compounding the blow to the key industry. In the past two weeks, dozens of drones and missile attacks have targeted the port of Odesa and the region's river ports, which are being used as alternative routes.

The head of the Ukrainian president's office, Andriy Yermak, said the city of Izmail was hit in the strikes. Izmail is on the Danube River that forms part of the Ukraine-Romania border. Video obtained by The Associated Press showed explosions and a large fire in the distance on the Danube, captured by fishermen in Romania, a NATO member, on the other side of the river. Three Ukrainian ports along the Danube are currently operating. "The goal of the enemy was clearly the facilities of the ports and industrial infrastructure of the region," Ukraine's South operational command wrote in an update on Facebook. As a result of the attack, a fire broke out at industrial and port



facilities, and a grain elevator was damaged.

Ukraine's air force intercepted 23 Shahed drones over the country overnight, mostly in Odesa and Kyiv, according to a morning update. All 10 drones fired at Kyiv were intercepted, said Serhii Popko, the head of Kyiv City Administration. Numerous loud explosions were heard overnight as air defence systems were activated. Debris from felled drones hit three districts of the capital, damaging a nonresidential building, Popko said.

"Russian terrorists have once again targeted ports, grain facilities and global food security," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy posted Wednesday morning on Telegram. "The world must respond." He confirmed that some drones hit their targets, with the most "significant damage" in the south of Ukraine. Wheat prices rose about 3 per cent and corn prices were

up nearly 2 per cent on Wednesday following the new attacks, showing the continued volatility in world markets as Russia targets Ukraine's ports and agricultural infrastructure. Ukraine is a major supplier of wheat, corn, vegetable oil and other agricultural products important to the Middle East, Africa and parts of Asia where people are struggling with high food prices and hunger. Ukraine also can export by road and rail through Europe, but those routes are more costly than going by the Black Sea and have stirred divisions among nearby countries.

Russia and Ukraine agreed a year ago on a deal brokered by the United Nations and Turkey that reopened three Ukrainian Black Sea ports blocked by fighting and provided assurances that ships entering the ports would not be attacked.

Russia declined to renew the agreement.

Thai reformist party excluded from coalition to form next govt

AP ■ BANGKOK

The progressive political party that won the most seats in Thailand's general election has been excluded from a coalition to form the next government, its former ally said Wednesday.

Conservative lawmakers strongly oppose the party over its proposed reform of a law banning criticism of the country's monarchy.

Thailand has struggled for nearly three months to form a government and select a new leader since its election in May.

Move Forward Party, the surprise winner, pulled together an eight-party coalition with 312 seats in the 500-member House. However, under the military-enacted constitution, confirming a new prime minister requires a majority vote by both the elected House and the 250-member Senate, which was appointed by a previous military government.

An initial bid last month by Move Forward leader Pita Limjaroenrat fell short by more than 50 votes, largely because only 13 senators backed him. His second bid the following week was blocked by a procedural vote in Parliament, which said his name could not be nominated again.

Parliament plans to convene on Friday for its third attempt to select the country's 30th prime minister despite a pending court decision that could delay the vote again.

The Constitutional Court is to meet on Thursday to decide whether to accept a petition from the state ombudsman seeking a ruling on whether Parliament's rejection of Pita's renomination was unconstitutional. If accepted, the court could order the vote to be postponed until it issues a ruling. After its two failed attempts, Move Forward handed over the lead in forming a new government to the

populist second-biggest party in the coalition, Pheu Thai. Chonlanan Srikaew, Pheu Thai's leader, said at a news conference Wednesday that after talking with other parties and senators, it was clear that Move Forward's stance on the monarchy, which he called "the important institution of our country," was a major obstacle for the coalition in rallying enough votes in Parliament to confirm a new prime minister.

Move Forward, whose agenda appealed greatly to younger voters, also seeks to reduce the influence of the military, which has staged more than a dozen coups since Thailand became a constitutional monarchy in 1932, and big business monopolies.

Chonlanan said Pheu Thai will attempt to form a coalition government without Move Forward and would nominate real estate tycoon Srerthta Thavasin for prime minister. The party will announce its new coalition partners on Thursday, he said.

"The Pheu Thai party would like to express its sincerity to our friends in all political parties and the Senate, including the people, that this is the way we can preserve the important institution of the country as the cornerstone of all people in the nation, and at the same time push forward the demands of the people under these restrictions," Chonlanan read from a party statement. Chaitawat Tulathon, Move Forward's secretary general, said Pheu Thai did not ask it to back down from its monarchy reform policy, but that all parties it had spoken to did not want Move Forward in the government.

Move Forward has filed a petition in Parliament seeking to amend the constitution to eliminate the unelected Senate's ability to veto prime ministerial candidates, which also will be debated on Friday.

US completes 2nd lottery round for H-1B visa

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The US has completed a second round of random lottery selection for the much sought-after H-1B work visa for foreign guest workers and the successful applicants have been notified, according to a federal agency.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. "We now have randomly selected, from the remaining FY 2024 registrations properly submitted, a sufficient number of registrations projected as needed to reach the cap," US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) said on Tuesday. All the successful applicants eligible for the H-1B visas for the fiscal year beginning

October 1, have been notified about it, said.

USCIS had to conduct an unprecedented second round of the H-1B lottery, which is held in the first week of April, mainly because of a large number of unqualified applications that were successful in the first H-1B lottery. "The large number of eligible registrations for beneficiaries with multiple eligible registrations - much larger than in previous years - has raised serious concerns that some may have tried to gain an unfair advantage by working together to submit multiple registrations on behalf of the same beneficiary," USCIS said.

"This may have unfairly increased their chances of selection. We remain committed to deterring and preventing abuse of the registration process, and to ensuring only those who follow the law are eligible to file an H-1B cap petition," it said.

French reporters end strike

Paris (AP): Journalists at France's emblematic Sunday newspaper Le Journal du Dimanche ended a 40-day strike Tuesday after unsuccessfully protesting the appointment of an editor-in-chief they denounce as a far-right supporter.

It was the longest journalists' strike in France in decades. The newspaper, also known as the JDD, was absent from newsstands for the sixth week in a row Sunday. The newspaper's owner, the Legardere group, said the printed version would resume publication in mid-August.

The journalists had denounced the appointment of Geoffroy Lejeune, known for his far-right political views, which they say is putting the editorial independence of the newspaper at risk.

European militaries evacuate foreigners from Niger as regional tensions rise after coup

AP ■ NIAMEY/NIGER

Foreign nationals lined up outside an airport in Niger's capital on Wednesday morning to wait for a French military evacuation flight, while a regional bloc continued talks about its response to the military coup that took place last week.

France, Italy and Spain all announced evacuations for their citizens and other Europeans in the capital, Niamey, following concerns that they could become trapped after soldiers detained President Mohamed Bazoum and seized power.

The Biden administration has yet to announce any decision on evacuation for American forces, diplomats, aid workers and other US citizens in Niger, an important counter-terror base for the United States in the Sahel.



Some Americans, however, have left with the help of the Europeans.

France's first two flights evacuated more than 350 French nationals, as well as people from Niger and at least 10 other countries, the French Foreign Ministry said. The Paris airport authority said two more evacuation flights are

scheduled to land Wednesday afternoon.

Some 1,200 French citizens are registered at the French Embassy, said the Foreign Ministry, and about half have asked to be evacuated.

An Italian military aircraft landed in Rome on Wednesday with 99 passengers, including 21 Americans and civilians

from other countries, said the Italian defence ministry. Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said, "In some way, we were authorised by the new government, which gave permission for the operation." Germany, which has encouraged its civilians in Niger to evacuate on French flights, said that it does not currently see any need to evacuate the approximately 100 troops it has in the country, largely connected to the UN mission in neighbouring Mali.

Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said he spoke with the German commander at the air base in Niamey on Tuesday, and he told me clearly they are not at all worried about their safety at the moment; they are in close contact with the Nigerien military; they are driving out accompanied by the Nigerien military." Supplies also are assured, he said.

US proposes UN resolution for Kenyan-led mission against Haitian gangs

United Nations (AP): The United States said Tuesday it will put forward a UN Security Council resolution that will authorise Kenya to lead a multinational police force to help combat gangs in Haiti that control much of the capital and are spreading through the Caribbean nation.

US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told a news conference at the start of the U.S. presidency of the council this month that "we welcome Kenya's decision to lead the multinational force (and) we will be working on a resolution to support that effort."

Haiti's Prime Minister Ariel Henry sent an urgent appeal last October for "the immediate deployment of a specialized armed force, in sufficient quantity" to stop the gangs. U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres had been appealing unsuccessfully since then for a lead nation to help restore order to Latin America's most impoverished country.

More than nine months later, Kenya was the first country to "positively consider" leading a force, offering to send 1,000 police to help train and assist the Haitian National Police to "restore normalcy in the country and protect strategic installations." Kenya's Foreign Ministry said Saturday it plans to send a task force to Haiti in the next few weeks to assess operational requirements for the police mission.

Thomas-Greenfield said the United States will work with other council members on a resolution "that will give the Kenyans what they require to establish their presence in Haiti."

She gave no timetable but expressed hope that a resolution will be adopted unanimously, as the last two Haiti resolutions were.

An October 2022 resolution demanded an immediate end to violence and criminal activity in Haiti and imposed sanctions on individuals and groups threatening peace and stability — starting with a powerful gang leader, Jimmy "Barbecue" Chérisier.

Weather hampers search for missing plane carrying Indian student

Manila (AP): A small plane carrying a Filipino trainer pilot and an Indian student is missing in the northeastern Philippines and the search is being hampered by bad weather, civil aviation officials said Wednesday. The Cessna 152 left from Laoag city in northern Ilocos Norte province around noon Tuesday but failed to land three hours later as expected in Tuguegarao city in Cagayan province, said the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines, which did not immediately identify the two people on the plane.

The search efforts by the Philippine air force, army troops and other government personnel Tuesday were hampered by bad weather.

A coast guard helicopter and a private helicopter cut short their search flights Wednesday due to bad weather, the civil aviation agency said.

Pope Francis urges Europe to work for peace

AP ■ LISBON

Pope Francis challenged Europe to retake its role as a peacemaker and bridgebuilder as he arrived Wednesday in Portugal to open World Youth Day, hoping to inspire the next generation of Catholics to work together to combat conflicts, climate change and other problems facing the world. Francis was spending five days in Lisbon, blending a state visit and pilgrimage to the Catholic shrine at Fatima with the raucous trappings of World Youth Day, the Catholic jamboree that aims to rally young Catholics in their faith.

More than 1 million young people from around the world were expected to attend the gathering, which culminates with a papal Mass on Sunday.

As he was travelling to Lisbon, Francis vowed to continue urging young people to "make a mess" — a reference to his now-famous exhortation at his first World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro in 2013. It was a call for young people to shake things up in their parishes, and has come to symbolise Francis' own revolutionary reforms that have shaken up the church at large. Francis' first stop was at the Belem National Palace, the official presidential residence in Belem, west

of Lisbon, from where Portugal's maritime explorers of the 15th and 16th centuries set sail.

Francis referred to Portugal's seafaring history, its place in Europe and its openness to others in his opening remarks to Portuguese government authorities and the diplomatic corps at a nearby conference centre.

"We are sailing amid storms on the ocean of history, and we sense the need for courageous courses of peace," he said. "It is my hope that World Youth Day will be, for the Old Continent, the aged continent, an impulse towards universal openness."

Citing Russia's war in Ukraine, global warming and Europe's demographic decline, he urged young people in particular to take up the mantle to build a future together. "I dream of a Europe, the heart of the West, which employs its immense talents to settling conflicts and lighting lamps of hope," Francis said. "A Europe capable of recovering its youthful heart, looking to the greatness of the whole and beyond its immediate needs. A Europe inclusive of peoples and persons, without chasing after ideologies."

Later Wednesday, Francis was heading to the 16th-century Jeronimos Monastery and church,

WORLD YOUTH DAY



arguably Portugal's greatest monument. There, he was meeting with Portugal's Catholic hierarchy, who recently began the process of reckoning with their legacy of clergy sexual abuse.

Francis is widely expected to meet in private with abuse survivors this week and could well refer to the problem in his public remarks, as he has done during past foreign trips. Portuguese bishops were widely criticised for their initial response to the

findings of an independent commission, which reported in February that at least 4,815 boys and girls were abused in the country since 1950, most of them ranging in age from 10 to 14.

The bishops long insisted there were only a handful of cases, and they initially balked at suspending active members of the clergy who were named in the commission's report. They also flip-flopped on paying reparations to victims, at first insist-

ing they would only pay if ordered to by court rulings.

The Portuguese Catholic Church also promised in March to build a memorial to victims that would be unveiled during World Youth Day, but organisers scrapped the plan a few weeks ago.

In its place, victims' advocates launched a campaign called "This is our memorial." Hours before the pope arrived, they put up a billboard in central Lisbon reading "4,800+ Children Abused by the Catholic Church in Portugal."

They said it was paid for by a crowdfunding campaign that was so successful that organisers have enough money to put up more around the city, though it wasn't clear if Francis would see any during his visit.

St. John Paul II launched World Youth Day in the 1980s as a way to invigorate the next generation of Catholics in their faith, and the event is returning to European soil for the first time since 2016. Ukrainian and Russian youths were expected to attend, and the war in Ukraine will likely take centre stage Saturday when Francis visits Fatima, the Catholic shrine which for over a century has been associated with an apocalyptic prophecy about peace and Russia.

Sharif invites Turkey to join China-Pak Economic Corridor

PTI ■ KARACHI



Pakistan Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif on Wednesday invited Turkey to join the ambitious China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), turning it into a trilateral arrangement so that all three friendly nations could benefit from its potential.

CPEC, Shabbaz said turning the multi-billion dollar infrastructure project into a trilateral arrangement would bring regional prosperity and empower people through the best facilities, including education and health.

Indian woman who went missing from cruise ship is dead, says son

Singapore (PTI): The 64-year-old Indian woman who had gone missing after she fell overboard from a ship as it sailed through the Strait of Singapore from Penang, the northern island state of Peninsular Malaysia, has died, her son said on Wednesday.

Death toll rises to 63 in Pakistan suicide blast

Peshawar (PTI): The death toll from the powerful blast triggered by an Islamic State suicide bomber at a convention of a hardline Islamist party in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has risen sharply to 63, authorities said on Wednesday.

A total of 123 people were injured in the suicide blast and are undergoing treatment in different hospitals in the province, the hospital administration said.

SC rejects Khan's plea for Toshakhana case trial stay

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD



Pakistan's Supreme Court rejected for a second time on Wednesday former prime minister Imran Khan's plea seeking a halt on the trial court's criminal proceedings against him in the Toshakhana corruption case.

Justice Afridi urged the PTI chief's counsel to "think more" about the case, the report said.

still entertained it and issued orders. We do understand the situation. We had expected that the high court would issue better orders for you," Justice Afridi said.

B'desh court jails acting oppn BNP chief, wife

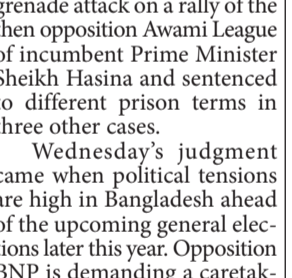
PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh court on Wednesday sentenced "fugitive" acting chairman of the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Tarique Rahman to nine years in jail and his wife to three years for accumulating wealth beyond their declared income.

Both Rahman and Zubaida are living in London since 2008.

Ranil Wickremesinghe to pursue 13th amendment for Tamil reconciliation

PTI ■ COLOMBO



Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe plans to press ahead with his quest for the full implementation of the 13th Amendment as part of his reconciliation efforts with the country's minority Tamil community, presidential officials said on Wednesday.

that cross-party consensus was needed through parliament and urged parties to come on board to settle the issue.

'Climate change worsens July heat for 4 out of 5 humans'

AP ■ NEW YORK



Human-caused global warming made July hotter for four out of five people on Earth, with more than 2 billion people feeling climate change-boostered warmth daily, according to a flash study.

The study is not peer-reviewed, the gold standard for science, because the month just ended. It is based on peer-reviewed climate fingerprinting methods that are used by other groups and are considered technically valid by the National Academy of Sciences.

More than a year ago Climate Central developed a measurement tool called the Climate Shift Index. It calculates the effect, if any, of climate change on temperatures across the globe in real time, using European and US forecasts, observations and computer simulations.

degrees Celsius) cooler to find out the chances that the heat was natural.

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PUBLIC NOTICE: Plot/Property No. DPT- 246 was registered in the name of Mrs. Rajeshwari Singh...

MEYER APPAREL LIMITED: CIN: L18101HR9393PLC032010. Regd. Office: No.3 & 4, Mustil No.19, Killa No. -5 Opposite Tata Consultancy N.H-8, Village Narsinghpur, Gurugram - 120004, Haryana, India.

NOTICE: Notice is hereby given pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015...

FOR MEYER APPAREL LIMITED: Charu Sharma, Company Secretary & Compliance Officer.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Notice is hereby given to the general public at large by Mrs. Sushma Sharma who Mr. Prakash Chand Jain (as partner of M/s. Royale Sportswear)...

NOTICE INVITING TENDER: SSA-15015/38/2023/236595/2023. Dated 01.08.2023. Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha Axom, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam invites following bids through GeM portal.

Shivalik Agro Poly Products Limited: CIN: U15131HP1976PLC003703. Registered office: Plot No. 1, Sector-3, Industrial Area, Panwaroo (H.P.)-173220. Corporate Office: B-45, Phase III, Industrial Area, Mohali (Punjab)-160055.

NOTICE: (For kind attention of the equity shareholders of the company) Subject: Transfer of unclaimed dividend (F.Y. 2015-16) and corresponding equity shares of the company held by the shareholders to the account of Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF) Authority.

RBI likely to maintain status quo on interest rates: Experts

PTI ■ KOLKATA

With inflation inching up, experts feel that the Reserve Bank of India is likely to maintain the status quo on key interest rates.

The six-member Monetary Policy Committee, headed by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, will hold the meeting from August 8 to 10.

Prof N R Bhanumurthy, Vice Chancellor, Dr B.R. Ambedkar School of Economics University, Bengaluru told PTI, "Though the consumer inflation is inching up mostly fuelled by food inflation, the demand for credit remains healthy... I do not think the RBI will spoil the party. It will probably go in for a status quo on interest rates."

Bhanumurthy, formerly of the National Institute for Public Finance and Policy, a think tank funded by the Union finance ministry, said that his belief was that the RBI would study the nature of inflation and its trajectory and take a call in the October monetary policy review.

"International factors lead me to believe that the CPI which may be around 5.5 per cent is impacted by a seasonal variation and if we cut that out it may come down to nearer 4-4.5 per cent,"



the economist said. Bandhan Bank's chief economist Siddhartha Sanyal said curiosity around the next MPC meeting has certainly increased.

"After a spell of rate hikes during the large part of the last financial year, the MPC maintained the status quo on rates in April and June. This pause was vindicated by softening of CPI inflation to below five per cent during the summer months," he said.

Since May 2022, RBI had hiked the short-term lending rate (repo) cumula-

tively by 250 basis points to check inflation, before hitting the pause button in April.

In the previous bi-monthly policy reviews in June, the benchmark rate was retained.

Of late, inflation has again inched higher and the key global central banks, such as Fed, have again embarked on raising rates reflecting concerns on the rate of price hikes, Sanyal said, adding that this backdrop has certainly led to a rise in the probability of future monetary tightening in the near term.

Recently, the US Federal Reserve increased interest rate by 25 basis points to 5.25-5.5 per cent, taking it to a multi-year high.

The European Central Bank had also announced a new rate increase of a quarter percentage point, bringing its main rate to 3.75 per cent.

"The MPC will keep its strong vigil on inflation and another hike in the coming months cannot be ruled out. My baseline expectation is that of a pause in August," he said.

India's Consumer Price Index looks set to hover below five per cent during the current quarter, and the bulk of the price rise would come from food prices, he said.

The country's retail inflation based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose to a three-month high of 4.81 per cent in June, mainly on account of hardening prices of food. The inflation, however, remains within the RBI's comfort level of below 6 per cent.

Also, the external sector balance improved materially in recent months and the rupee stayed resilient, Sanyal said. "Overall, one expects the RBI to stay cautious and be emphatic in its strong vigil on inflation", he stated.



Markets crash: Investors' wealth falls by ₹3.46-L cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth eroded by Rs 3.46 lakh crore on Wednesday as equity markets took a sharp tumble amid weak global trends and foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell by 676.53 points or 1.02 per cent to settle at 65,782.78. During the day, it plunged 1,027.63 points or 1.54 per cent to 65,431.68.

In line with the weak trend in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs 3,46,947.54 crore to Rs 3,03,33,258.69 crore.

"After the euphoric June and July, we are witnessing some healthy corrections today in Indian markets, due to the downgrade of the US rating by Fitch. Frankly, the market was waiting for some reason to correct in the last few days as it was in an extremely over-bought zone, and it found its reason. The impact on the Indian market should also be short-lived, soon focus will come back on earnings, infra investments, and fund flows," said Vikram Kasat, Head Advisory at Prabhudas Lilladhar.

Fitch Ratings has downgraded the US government's credit rating, citing rising debt at the federal, state, and local levels and a "steady deterioration in standards of governance" over the past two decades.

The rating was cut on Tuesday one notch to AA+ from AAA, the highest possible rating.

The Indian market witnessed a broad sectoral slide, affected by weak global market trends. Negative news regarding the US rating downgrade on fiscal concerns, coupled with weak factory activity data from Eurozone and China, led to widespread worries across the globe. Additionally, prolonged

FII selling, triggered by a rise in US bond yields, has disrupted the mood of the domestic market," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

From the Sensex pack, Tata Steel declined 3.45 per cent, followed by Tata Motors 3.19 per cent. Bajaj Finserv, NTPC, State Bank of India, JSW Steel, Larsen & Toubro and Bharti Airtel were among the other major laggards. Nestle, Hindustan Unilever, Asian Paints, Tech Mahindra and UltraTech Cement were the gainers.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge fell by 1.39 per cent and smallcap index declined 1.18 per cent.

All indices ended lower with metal tumbling 2.45 per cent, utilities falling by 2.32 per cent, power (2.31 per cent), telecommunication (2 per cent), capital goods (1.83 per cent), auto (1.52 per cent), oil & gas (1.47 per cent), industrials (1.46 per cent), financial services (1.33 per cent) and commodities (1.22 per cent).

"A sharp sell-off in Asian and European markets gave investors a reason to encash on the recent upsurge. FIIs seem to have sold off local equities after the record rally last month," said Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd.

A total of 2,353 stocks declined while 1,240 advanced and 139 remained unchanged. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were trading in the red. The US markets ended mostly in the negative territory on Tuesday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 92.85 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

P-note investments touch over 5-year high of ₹1.13 lakh crore at June-end



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Driven by stable macroeconomic fundamentals, investment in the Indian capital markets through participatory notes rose to Rs 1.13 lakh crore in June-end, making it the highest level in five-and-a-half years.

This includes the value of P-note investments in Indian equity, debt, and hybrid securities. Also, this marks the fourth consecutive monthly increase in the investment level through this route, data with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) showed.

Participatory notes (P-notes) are issued by registered Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) to overseas investors who wish to be part of the Indian stock market without registering themselves directly. They, however, need to go through a due diligence process.

According to Sebi data, the value of P-note investments in Indian markets -- equity, debt, and hybrid securities -- stood at Rs 1,11,291 crore at the end of June as compared to Rs 1,04,585 crore in May-end.

In comparison, the investment through the route was Rs 95,911 crore in April-end, Rs 88,600 crore in March-end, Rs 88,398 crore in February-end and Rs 91,469 crore in January-end.

The flow in the month of June was the highest level since January 2018, when investment through the route stood at Rs 1.19 lakh crore.

The growth in P-notes generally aligns with the trend in FPI flows, when there is a global risk to the environment, investment through this route increases and vice-versa.

Market analysts said one of the prime factors for the growth in P-notes investment is the stable Indian economy amid an uncertain global macro backdrop. In addition, the slowdown in the Chinese economy has also led investors to shift their focus toward India.

Of the total Rs 1.11 lakh crore invested through this route till June this year, Rs 1,00,701 crore was invested in equities, Rs 12,382 crore in debt and Rs 203 crore in hybrid securities.

Rupee falls 38 paise to close at 82.60 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

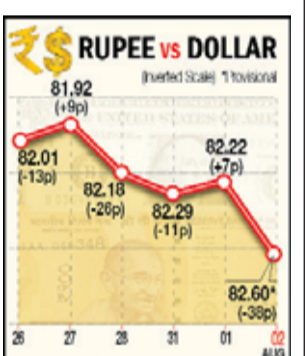
The rupee fell 38 paise to settle at 82.60 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday on weak domestic equities and elevated crude prices in international markets.

Rupee is trading in a negative note on risk aversion in global markets and weak Asian currencies. There is also downside pressure on the local unit due to foreign fund outflows.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 82.38 against the dollar and finally ended the day at 82.60 (provisional), registering a fall of 38 paise from its previous close.

During the session, the local unit touched a peak of 82.37 and hit the lowest level of 82.62. On Tuesday, the rupee had settled at 82.22 against the dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on risk aversion in global markets and weak Asian currencies. "Though the US dollar



declined on a credit rating downgrade by Fitch, safe-haven demand amid risk aversion in global markets is providing a shield to the greenback," Anuj Choudhary — Research Analyst at Sharekhan by RNP Paribas, said.

According to him, investors may also remain cautious ahead of the Bank of England's monetary policy. "We expect the USD-INR spot to trade in the range of 82.20 to 83 in the near-term," he added.

Adani Wilmar reports ₹79 cr loss in April-June quarter

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Edible oil major Adani Wilmar on Wednesday reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 79 crore in the first quarter of this fiscal year due to lower income amid fall in prices of cooking oils.

The company had posted a net profit of Rs 194 crore in the year-ago period.

Total income fell 12 per cent to Rs 12,928 crore during the April-June period of this fiscal from Rs 14,724 crore in the corresponding period of the previous financial year, Adani Wilmar said in a regulatory filing.

Adani Wilmar sells edible oils and other food items under Fortune Brand.

In volume terms, the company achieved 25 per cent growth to 14.9 lakh tonnes from 11.9 lakh tonnes.

"Our margins during the quarter got impacted by high-cost inventory in a falling edible oil price environment and disaligned hedges compared to spot prices of physical commod-

ity," said Anshu Mallick, MD & CEO of Adani Wilmar, said.

However, he said: "We have regained the momentum in our edible oil business with the decline in the edible oil prices. The soft prices of edible oil are expected to augur well for the industry."

The company is gaining good share from regional brands in the under-indexed customer segments with marketing and sales focus on specific geographies and oil categories, Mallick added.

To capture the opportunity in the value-added blended oils, Mallick said the company is investing in this segment under Xpert brand.

Across different business segments, Adani Wilmar reported a 14 per cent fall in revenue from edible oils business to Rs 9,845 crore in the first quarter of FY24 from Rs 11,511 crore in the previous year.

The turnover of industry essentials segment fell 3 per cent to Rs 1,986 crore from Rs 2,353 crore.

However, the revenue of food and FMCG segment rose 28 per cent to Rs 1,097 crore from Rs 860 crore.

Elaborating on the performance, Adani Wilmar pointed out that since the first quarter of the last fiscal year, "the price of edible oils has been declining. This trend continued during Q1'24 with the price of edible oils experiencing further decline, in the range of 5 per cent to 20 per cent (Q1'24 vs Q4'23), before recovering as the quarter came to a close."

This reduction has been attributed to a combination of factors, including the decline in consumer demand in developed economies, easing of supply at the Black Sea region and robust production of oilseeds globally, the company noted.

Adani Wilmar, a 50:50 joint venture between business conglomerate Adani Group and Singapore-based Wilmar, got listed on the stock exchange last year after raising Rs 3,600 crore through an Initial Public Offer (IPO).

Tomato prices spike again on tight supply; Mother Dairy stores selling at ₹259/kg

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tomato prices have again hit the roof in the national capital with Mother Dairy selling the key kitchen staple at a whopping Rs 259 per kg on Wednesday via its Safal retail stores.

Tomato prices have been under pressure for more than a month now on account of supply disruptions caused due to heavy rainfall in the key producing regions.

With central government's intervention through sale of tomatoes at a subsidised rate since July 14, retail prices in the national capital had begun softening recently but have again firmed up due to short supply.

As per the data maintained by the consumer affairs ministry, retail price of tomato touched Rs 203 per kg on Wednesday, whereas at Mother Dairy's Safal retail outlets, the price was ruling at Rs 259 per kg.

"Tomato supply has been affected across the country for last two months owing to weather abnormalities. In the last two days, arrivals in Azadpur, which is the main feeder for Delhi, has also dropped drastically. Due to short supply, prices have sharply shot up in wholesale, resulting



in impact at retail prices too," a Mother Dairy spokesperson said.

Wholesale prices of tomato at Azadpur mandi here, Asia's largest wholesale fruits and vegetables market, were on Wednesday ruling at Rs 170-220 per kg, depending on the quality.

According to Azadpur Tomato Association President Ashok Kaushik, "In the last three days, the arrival of tomatoes has reduced as the crop has been damaged in the growing regions because of heavy rainfall."

Azadpur mandi saw arrival of only 15 per cent tomatoes on Wednesday as only six small trucks could get the supplies from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, he said, adding this has led to firming up of prices. Kaushik however said the supply situation is expected to improve in the next ten days.

Unifi Capital, 7 others pays ₹38 lakh to settle case with Sebi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Unifi Capital and seven individuals have settled with capital markets regulator Sebi a case pertaining to the alleged violation of AIF rules on payment of Rs 38 lakh.

The individuals are: Sarath Chandra Reddy Kakani, Krishnamurthy Narendranath, Govindasamy Maran, Christopher Vinod, Sandeep Nadigadda Reddy, M S Sundararajan and Rajgopal Santhanam, Sebi said in the order.

The order came after the notices proposed to settle the instant proceedings "without admitting or denying the find-

ings" through a settlement order.

The adjudication proceedings initiated against the notices (Unifi Capital, Kakani, Narendranath, Maran, Vinod, Reddy, Sundararajan and Santhanam) vide show cause notice dated October 19, 2022 is disposed of, Sebi's Adjudicating Officer Biju S said in the settlement order passed on Tuesday.

In the show cause notice (SCN) issued to the notices, it was alleged that Unifi runs a category III AIF, in which it invested in the mutual funds categorised as large capital funds in violation of AIF norms.

As per the norms, AIFs have to invest in securities list-



ed or unlisted companies or derivatives or complex structured products, as per Sebi.

Also, the regulator alleged that the AIF failed to disclose to the investors the level of lever-

age arising from position held in futures as on June 30, 2020.

Further, the AIF had allegedly delayed the implementation of guidelines of Sebi's redressal of investor grievances through the SCORES platform, the order said.

Subsequent to the issuance of the SCN, the notices filed settlement applications with Sebi, which recommended to settle the matter on payment of Rs 38 lakh (including the amount for settlement of suo moto application filed by Unifi AIF), it added.

Consequently, the notices paid the amount and settled the case with Sebi.

Meesho delists 52 lakh counterfeit, restricted products in six months

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

SoftBank-backed e-commerce firm Meesho has delisted nearly 42 lakh counterfeit and infringing product listings and 10 lakh restricted products in the past six months, the company said on Wednesday.

The total deactivated products account for less than 5 per cent of the total products listed on Meesho's platform, a company official said.

Meesho said its "Project Suraksha" systems has detected and blocked over 12,000 bad actor accounts from accessing the platform.



"The project has yielded impressive results, with nearly 42 lakh counterfeit and infringing product listings and 10 lakh restricted products deactivated in the past six months. Since February, there has been a 80 per cent reduction

usually fortify quality checks and effectively identify counterfeit products and bad actor sellers.

"We also have a dedicated quality and compliance team that proactively cross verifies automated signals and in turn enables us to combat fraudulent practices which builds trust with our users," Barnwal said. Meesho has created a Suraksha List comprising around 1,800 brands which have been identified as high-risk for infringement and counterfeiting.

"By continuously investing in technology, enhancing quality checks, and forming strategic brand partnerships, we have significantly improved our ability to detect counterfeit products and protect our users from potential harm," Meesho CXO for Business, Utkrishta Kumar said.

Gold falls ₹180; silver declines ₹400

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price fell by Rs 180 to Rs 60,250 per 10 gram in the national capital on Wednesday amid weak global cues, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had closed at Rs 60,430 per 10 gram in the previous trade. Silver also declined Rs 400 to Rs 76,700 per kilogram.

In the overseas market, gold and silver were quoting lower at USD 1,949 per ounce and USD 24.29 per ounce, respectively. Gold faced selling pressure following a weak demand outlook and a firm US dollar. Investors are now looking at the US ADP non-farm employment change report, which is due later on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, despite a downgrade to the US credit rating, the dollar is hovering around 102 level, Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst — Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

BUSINESS BRIEF

EX-DIRECTOR OF AIIMS RAIPUR JOINS SRMCHC

New Delhi: Professor Dr Nitin Madhusudan Nagarkar who is the former director of AIIMS Raipur has now joined SRM Medical College Hospital and Research Centre as a dean recently. The doctor has a profound standing in the medical field with an experience of more than three decades. SRM Medical College Hospital and Research Centre also popularly known as SRMMCCHRC is a multi-speciality hospital located at Kattankulathur near Chennai in Tamil Nadu. Dr Nitin was director of AIIMS Raipur for a duration of 11 years.

TITAN Q1 NET PROFIT DIPS 4% TO ₹756 CR

New Delhi: Leading jewellery and watchmaker Titan on Wednesday reported a 4 per cent drop in its consolidated net profit at Rs 756 crore in the June quarter. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 790 crore in the April-June period last fiscal.

ALUMINIUM FUTURES FALL ON LOW DEMAND

New Delhi: Aluminium prices on Wednesday fell by Rs 1.60 to Rs 201 per kilogram in the futures market as participants trimmed their positions on a weak trend in the spot market. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, aluminium for delivery in August declined by Rs 1.60 or 0.79 per cent to Rs 201 per kg in 3,306 lots.

DIANI SCORES A HAT-TRICK AS FRANCE BEATS PANAMA 6-3



AP ■ SYDNEY

Kadiatou Diani scored a hat trick as France advanced to the knockout stage of the Women's World Cup on Wednesday after a 6-3 win over Panama. The world's No. 5-ranked team recovered from the shock of going behind to Marta Cox's 30-yard (meter) free kick after two minutes at Sydney Football Stadium to finish atop Group D. Jamaica

placed second in the group after a 0-0 draw with Brazil. France, which had also been held to a 0-0 draw against Jamaica in its opening game, advanced after back-to-back wins against Brazil and Panama. The French only needed a draw to guarantee their place in the round of 16 for the fourth time in succession. But France was given an early scare when Cox whipped the ball into the top corner,

beyond the reach of goalkeeper Pauline Peyraud-Magnin. France responded impressively to that early setback by going into the break with a 4-1 lead. Panama's Deysire Salazar lashed the ball into her own net when trying to clear Maelle Lakrar's header in the 21st. Diani scored her first goal seven minutes later, and converted from the spot in the 37th after a handball.

Lea Le Garrec's made it 4-1 in the fifth minute of first half stoppage time. Diani scored her second penalty seven minutes after the break after another handball. Panama, ranked 52nd by FIFA, pulled a goal back with a penalty, converted by Yomira Pinzon in the 64th. Lineth Cedeno scored another for Panama with a header in the 87th and Vicki Becho hit France's sixth in the 10th minute of stoppage time.

Italians in tears after shock loss knocks them out of WC

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Italy's players dropped to their knees, buried their faces and tearfully wondered how their tournament had suddenly ended following a shocking upset to South Africa in the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023. The 54th-ranked team in the world stunned Italy, ranked 16th by FIFA, with a 3-2 victory over the Italians in Wednesday's Group G finale. South Africa won with a stoppage-time goal by Thembi Kgatlang. South Africa was ecstatic as players screamed and danced and said thankful prayers in the hallway leading to their locker room. The Italians left in tears and were unable to explain the upset. "I really don't know," goalkeeper Francesca Durante said after the match. "I don't know what didn't work." Nearly every player took the blame for the early elimination, even Arianna Caruso, who scored both of



Italy's goals. "I don't think I can find the right words at this moment," Caruso said. "I am not happy because we scored two goals and we didn't do anything." Italy's problems against South Africa began before Wednesday night's game: a brutal 4-0 loss to Sweden was perhaps too difficult to overcome, even with a spot

in the round of 16 at stake. "I'm sure that the game against Sweden and all the goals we conceded affected our trust, our confidence, our peace of mind," said Italy coach Milena Bertolini. "I think it's clear that today the emotional side was actually an important factor." The Italians were slowed by more than their emotions.

An own goal from Benedetta Orsi came from poor communication in the backfield and allowed South Africa to regain momentum after falling down by a goal. Then, Italy's inability to close out the match allowed Kgatlang to take the game away after a nice pass from Hildah Magaia. Put simply by Bertolini: "I think that South Africa played better than us and deserved to win." It was Italy's fourth Women's World Cup, where it has twice made the quarter-finals, most recently in 2019. The loss doesn't destroy the future of Italian women's soccer, though. The Italians fielded 16-year-old Guiliana Dragoni, one of the tournament's youngest stars, in all three of their matches. So, as difficult as the loss was, Italian women's soccer could be set for a rebuild. "It's a fig that is hard to swallow," Bertolini said. "I believe that as far as the future of Italian female soccer is concerned, I think we do have a future."



Defending champion Carreno Busta out of ATP Toronto Masters

AFP ■ TORONTO (CANADA)

Defending champion Pablo Carreno Busta, Australian Nick Kyrgios and Canadian Denis Shapalov have all withdrawn from the ATP Toronto Masters, organizers confirmed Tuesday. Carreno defeated Hubert Hurkacz 3-6, 6-3, 6-3 in last year's Canadian final in Montreal to capture the first Masters 1000 title of his career. But a nagging injury has seen him play just four matches this season, most recently a three-set defeat to France's Richard Gasquet in Rotterdam in February. Kyrgios, meanwhile, missed Wimbledon and his title defense in Washington this week with a wrist ligament injury. Organizers said Shapovalov, who

made it to the round of 16 at Wimbledon, pulled out because of a knee injury. In a statement released by organizers the home hope said he had been "doing everything possible" to be fit for the tournament but the injury "needs more time." As a result of the withdrawals, organizers said, Finland's Emil Ruusuvuori, American JJ. Wolf and Japan's Kei Nishikori will have automatic entry into the main draw. The hard court tournament, one of the key tune-ups for the US Open starting at Flushing Meadows on August 28, had already lost world number two Novak Djokovic. The 23-time Grand Slam champion, who fell to Spain's Carlos Alcaraz in the Wimbledon final, withdrew on Sunday citing fatigue.

Alba targets trophies after re-uniting with Messi in Miami

AFP ■ FORT LAUDERDALE (UNITED STATES)

Spain full-back Jordi Alba says he is targeting more trophies after re-uniting with former Barcelona teammates Lionel Messi and Sergio Busquets at Inter Miami. Alba is available for a possible Inter Miami debut in Wednesday's Nations League Cup match against Florida rivals Orlando City after arriving in Miami at the weekend. The 34-year-old won five Spanish league titles and a Champions League title during his time with Barca and a European Championship and Nations League with Spain. "I have come here to compete, to win everything," Alba told a press conference after training on Tuesday. "I've been fortunate to win everything with Barcelona and almost everything with the national team...it was the right decision to come here to a very exciting project." Alba said the impact of Messi and Busquets, who led Miami to back-to-back wins over Cruz Azul and Atlanta in the group stage of the competition, has already been

evident. "I think the arrival of Busi (Busquets) and Leo (Messi) has made the team grow a lot, Alba said. "And I'm going to be the same player I've been in Europe, I'm going to have the same demands of myself." Alba said that despite not having played since Spain's Nations League final victory over Croatia on June 19, he has kept himself in good condition and is ready to hit the ground running. "I have trained quite well in Barcelona for many days. It is true that it is not easy to train alone, but I got in touch with the (athletic staff) here, from Inter Miami, and well, they made it very easy for me," he said. "I worked hard to be able to compete when I got here and I couldn't wait to train with my teammates, to know how they were personally." The left back has been greeted warmly. "They have welcomed me spectacularly," he said. "The truth is that I am very happy to be here. And well, physically I feel good, I am sure that with the passing of the weeks I will feel much better, and the change of climate is



important but I feel good and strong. "I've been here three days and it feels like I've been here my entire life." Inter head coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said that he was impressed with Alba's shape but that he would wait until Wednesday before deciding if Alba would play against Orlando. With three top talents having joined a team that is bottom of the standings in MLS, it has been a challenge for Martino to create a cohesive team. But he said he has been impressed by the way the players have responded to Messi, Busquets and Alba in the dressing room. "What we have seen so far is that they are growing. They are not overshadowed by the greatness of the three players that we are talking about, but instead are focused on being able to learn from everything that they have done their careers," said the Miami coach. "It is not easy for the players that we have here to receive players with so much history, with so many titles, with such good ability, with such a legacy in world football. In that sense, I think we are on the right track."

Sadio Mane joins Ronaldo at Saudi side Al Nassr

AFP ■ RIYADH

Saudi side Al Nassr confirmed the signing of Bayern Munich striker Sadio Mane on Tuesday as the Senegal star prepares to team up with five-time Ballon d'Or winner Cristiano Ronaldo. The twice African footballer of the year is the latest high profile player to join the cash-rich Saudi league. "I'm really happy to be part of you guys, I can't wait to see you," Mane said in a video addressed to Al Nassr supporters on the club's social media accounts. Both clubs announced the transfer involving the former Liverpool star which German media estimated at around 30 million euros on a three-year deal with an annual salary for Mane of 40 million plus 10 million in results-based bonuses. Earlier Tuesday Mane, 31, ruded his departure with two years of his contract at Bayern remaining. "Leaving Bayern hurts me. I would have wished for a different ending," he told Sky Germany.



Those sentiments were echoed by Bayern boss Thomas Tuchel when he spoke in Singapore on the eve of his side's friendly against Liverpool. "We had a long, big hug and we both agreed that we don't like what's happening now, but we think it's for the best in this situation," said the Bayern coach. "Sometimes things don't work out as everybody wants it to work out. In person I have always had a very good relationship with him and this will stay. "I can totally understand that he feels hurt and I also

wouldn't feel happy if things like this happened. "Obviously it's something that we didn't bring into the full potential, which is my job and my responsibility, but in this particular situation, it was the best solution to untie the knot." Mane moves to the club that instigated the first coup of a raft of signings by Saudi clubs with the capture of Ronaldo on a four-year contract. Mane won the Champions League and Premier League in six seasons with Liverpool and was a key part of Jurgen Klopp's

devastating front three with Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino. When Liverpool won their first English league title for 30 years in the pandemic-disrupted 2019-2020 season, Mane scored 18 goals. But in the summer of 2022, Mane decided he wanted a new challenge -- unconfirmed rumours said he had tired of sharing the limelight with Egypt's Salah at Anfield. Bayern made a big play for Mane, promising to make him the focal point of an attack which had just lost the services of Robert Lewandowski to Barcelona. After a strong start to the season at Bayern, it soon became clear that Mane was not clicking in Bavaria. "New start" In a Bundesliga game against Werder Bremen in November, Mane suffered an injury to his fibula and his season was put on hold. The injury forced him to miss the World Cup in Qatar at the end of last year in a crushing blow to Senegal's chances. Bayern CEO Jan-Christian

Dreesen reflected on Mane's difficult spell in Germany. "It certainly wasn't an easy year for him, getting injured just before the World Cup and being unable to take part in it with Senegal," he told Bayern's website. Dreesen added: "Because of his long lay-off he also couldn't have the impact at FC Bayern that we all and he himself had hoped for. "That's why we came to the joint decision that he'll begin a new chapter in his career and make a new start at a different club." While Mane returned to the Bayern team in 2023, his problems were underlined when he became involved in a physical altercation with teammate Leroy Sane following a Champions League defeat to Manchester City. Bayern reportedly fined Mane around 350,000 euros (\$385,000) and gave him a one-match suspension for his part in the incident. He ended the season with an underwhelming 12 goals in 38 games across all competitions.

India look to give final touches to Asian Games preparation in ACT

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Tournament favourites and three-time champions India will look to give final touches to their Asian Games preparation and address the areas of improvement in the Asian Champions Trophy men's hockey tournament, beginning here on Thursday. World number four India are the highest ranked side in the tournament and will open their campaign against China at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium here, which will host a major event for the first time since 2007. It is also the first time India would be hosting the ACT since the tournament's inception in 2011. For India, the primary objective in the tournament would be to test the players and get a fair bit of idea about their Asian rivals ahead of the Asian Games to be held in Hangzhou, China from September 23 to October 8. With the Asian Games



providing a direct ticket to next year's Paris Olympics, India are expected to test their resources in the ACT while also playing a balancing act to keep their players fresh and free from injuries ahead of the all-important continental showpiece. While the scheduling of the ACT just five weeks before the Hangzhou Games has drawn some criticism from the visiting sides, India head coach Craig Fulton does not seem to be too offended by the prospect of featuring in this event. "... It's something that you have to do. But we need the

games. So, it's important that we play it. It's even better that it's in India," Fulton told reporters on Tuesday. "We are looking forward to the positives and negatives. But, at the same time, we get to look at a few extra players as well, which is important for us. Injury is never nice for any team or player. So, yes, I understand the clash and the timing." India captain Harmanpreet Singh has already clarified that the team will have to be smart in this tournament and will not go all-guns-blazing as its priority is the Asian Games.

ALL-ROUND INDIA TROUNCE WINDIES TO SEAL SERIES

PTI ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

A clinical India outclassed West Indies by a whopping 200 runs in the third ODI to win the series 2-1 but the lingering questions on the team combination ahead of the World Cup remained in the horizon despite four half-centuries and a top notch bowling effort here on Tuesday.

Skipper Rohit Sharma and senior pro Virat Kohli once again opted out to give World Cup hopefuls a fair go but the dominant result isn't a good enough indication that all boxes have been ticked as the team looks far from settled.

Shubman Gill, who has had a quiet Caribbean sojourn so far, finally found some rhythm with 85 off 92 balls and his opening stand of 143 with an in-form Ishan Kishan (77 off 64 balls) set the platform for a commanding score of 351 for 5 after being put into bat.

Sanju Samson (51 off 41 balls) made a compelling case to be picked as a reserve middle-order batter while skipper Hardik Pandya's (52-ball-70 not out) five sixes and four boundaries added the finishing flourish on a good batting strip.

The chase was always out of question and Mukesh Kumar's (3/30 in 7 overs) three-wicket burst with some quality seam bowling in the first Powerplay dashed West Indies' hopes as they were shot out for 151 in only 35.3 overs.

Gudakesh Motie (39 not out) and Alzarri Joseph (26) delayed the inevitable with a 55-run stand for the ninth wicket. Shardul Thakur (4/37 in 6.3 overs), Jaydev Unadkat (1/16 in 5 overs) and Kuldeep Yadav (2/25 in 8 overs) were also among the wickets as the series decider turned out to be a lopsided contest.



But there would be questions that will beg answers ahead of the upcoming Asia Cup and subsequent World Cup at home.

For Kishan, the performance in this series will keep him in good stead ahead of Asia Cup but the bigger question remains about his batting position in case KL Rahul isn't fit for the tourney.

The chances of Rohit Sharma sacrificing his place at the top of the order to accommodate Kishan are slim.

And then if Kishan is asked to bat in the middle-order — No 4 or 5, would it be fair to ask him to perform at that slot straight-away?

Samson, one of the contenders for the No. 4 slot in case Shreyas Iyer doesn't get fit in time for the World Cup, gave a good glimpse of his talent and enthralled his millions of followers on social media.

His innings had four lusty sixes — three off leg-spinner Yannic Cariah, where he got his front-foot out of the way to hit some glorious inside-out shots.

But just as it has been Samson's bane, he failed to convert his fourth half-century into a big one despite a whole lot of time at his disposal.

Suryakumar Yadav (35) did hit his customary pick-up shot — a six behind square with lit-

tle width to manoeuvre and also a slashed six off Jayden Seals but once again wasted a golden opportunity to make a mark.

Hardik announced his arrival with a picturesque off-drive and a straight six off Cariah was equally eye-pleasing. Hardik and Suryakumar added 65 runs in 8.1 overs for the fifth wicket but the latter will only have himself to blame or not making most of the opportunities.

Not scoring a fifty against this West Indies attack can surely come back to haunt him in case both Rahul and Shreyas Iyer get fit. Similarly in bowling department, not picking Yuzvendra Chahal for a single game was

slightly baffling as now only nine matches (if they play Asia Cup final) are left before World Cup starts.

With Ravindra Jadeja picking himself as the first spinner, there is no way that Axar Patel can make it to the playing XI.

Similarly, Mukesh Kumar despite his performances at best could be in list of five stand-bys if Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj and Shardul Thakur are picked in the squad of 15. The fifth seamer has to be a left-arter with variation and Jaydev Unadkat, despite his serious limitations, is likely to be persisted with till the end of World Cup.

India can pick even a third XI: Lara tells Gill, Kishan



PTI ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

The Indian cricket landscape is bursting at the seams with young talent and batting great Brian Lara feels the country's senior men's side can field not two but "even a third XI" at the moment.

Lara, one of the game's greatest batters, said this during an interaction with Shubman Gill and Ishan Kishan, the dominant players in the 200-run drubbing of the West Indies in the series-deciding third ODI.

"Well, India is like a second home to me. Looking at the young promising cricketers in India, it is something that I've grown up doing..."

"...And just to see the talent here with this Indian team and so many different teams that they have at the moment, they can pick a second XI and even a third XI. Just to see these guys on this international stage here at the acad-

emy, I feel very, very proud," Lara said during the chat, the video of which has been posted by the BCCI on its website.

India won the third ODI sans stalwarts Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma.

Lara asked Kishan for his advice to young cricketers in the West Indies, a team in perennial decline.

Kishan said when young players in the West Indies have someone like Lara, they don't need to look elsewhere for help.

"I think hunger is the most important thing when it comes to this game. You want to perform well for the team, for yourself, for your family, especially having so many great players here in West Indies they can always interact with them, like you guys," said Kishan.

"They can come to you (Lara) and talk about it at this beautiful academy, they will get to learn a lot with your experience and everything, so these

are little things that will help youngsters."

When it was Gill's turn to talk, he said Lara's flamboyant batting inspired him a lot.

"All my memories of him is smashing the bowlers and taking on the bowlers whenever I used to see him, especially in red ball.

"You used to be one of those people who used to go and straightaway, from ball one, you would take on the bowlers and take on the challenge, and that really inspired us as a kid, to be able to... How to dominate the game in all formats," Gill said.

Lara said he was "so happy" to have these two young men "at the stadium, or the academy in my name".

During the interaction, Kishan also said that he had once received a message from Lara on Instagram, which left him "shocked" as he was not expecting something like that from a player of his stature.



India again firm favourites, T20 series to provide platform to youngsters

PTI ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

Less than 48 hours after their Lodi series triumph, India will switch to T20 mode, again as overwhelming favourites against the West Indies in a five-match rubber starting here from Thursday, which will provide an ideal platform to the youngsters to express themselves.

In the preceding three-match 50-over rubber that had some context in the year of the ODI World Cup, India emerged victorious 2-1 after a shock defeat in the second match and the fancied visitors will have their tails up in the T20 series, too.

Led by dynamic all-rounder Hardik Pandya, India will look to give opportunities to hungry guys such as Yashasvi Jaiswal, Tilak Varma and Mukesh Kumar in these five matches beginning with the opener at the Brian Lara Stadium.

It was their stellar performances in the Indian Premier League that have earned the likes of Varma and Jaiswal a maiden call-up to India's T20I squad and they will certainly look to make the most of it.

On the other hand, the selectors, in the first meeting with Ajit Agarkar as their chairman, brought back Sanju Samson, and the seasoned swashbuckler batter-cum keeper will strive to make the opportunity count and see where he stands as far his place in the ODI World Cup squad is concerned.

Given the West Indies' terminal decline across formats in recent times, the Indians are expected to call the shots.

Ravi Bishnoi is also back in the squad with Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav, who will be the spin options alongside Axar Patel.

With Hardik and his deputy

for the series — the last two matches of which will be held in Florida — Suryakumar Yadav occupying two slots in the middle-order, and the likes of Ishan Kishan, Shubman Gill and Jaiswal at the top, it makes for an intimidating batting line-up and the Indians are expected to rake up big totals if the coin lands in their favour at the toss.

Besides newcomer Mukesh, whose three-wicket burst rocked the West Indies top-order in the final ODI here on Tuesday, India will have the trio of Arshdeep Singh, Umran Malik and Avesh Khan shouldering the pace bowling responsibility.

With the T20 World Cup scheduled next year, these men will be motivated to perform and cement their places in the team. As far as the West Indies are concerned, they are coming into the rubber on the back of defeats in the Test and ODI series and will also not find it easy in the slam-bang format, their strongest suit.

Wicketkeeper-batter Shai Hope and fast bowler Oshane Thomas have been recalled to strengthen the 15-member West Indies team led by Rovman Powell.

The 29-year-old Hope, West Indies captain in the three-match ODI series, last played a T20I in February last year in Kolkata during the tour of India.

The 26-year-old Thomas, on the other hand, is coming back after playing his last T20I in Karachi in December 2021.

Kyle Mayers has been named vice-captain of the squad that is aiming for next year's T20 World Cup. After the opener, the teams will move to the Guyana National Stadium for the second and third fixtures on August 6 and 8. The series will conclude with the matches at the Broward County Stadium, Lauderhill, Florida on August 12 and 13.



Ashes star Woakes grateful for Broad and Anderson input

AFF ■ LONDON

Chris Woakes believes his England career has benefited from the knowledge he has gained from Stuart Broad and James Anderson rather than been hampered by the presence of the veteran pacemen.

Despite his outstanding Test record on home soil, double World Cup-winner Woakes has often found himself on the outside looking in when it comes to red-ball cricket being the enduring careers of Anderson and the now retired Broad, who bowled out after the Ashes finale at The Oval. Injuries too, including a knee problem in the Caribbean in March 2022, have also restricted 34-year-old seamer Woakes to 48 Tests.

"The last three weeks have been a bit of a whirlwind and it's just amazing to be a part of,"

Woakes said. "I think I'm just proud of myself to be able to keep going."

"I feel very lucky to have played with Stuart, Jimmy's the same. The stuff that I've learned from them has had a huge impact on how I've bowled about over the years. It's been an honour."

He added: "It's extended my international career, if anything. We won't know what would have been if they hadn't been around, but I only have good things to say in terms of the knowledge they've passed on."

Woakes could now have become a more established member of the side in England at least, given he averages 21.88 in home conditions.

But after more than a year out of the side, he made a huge impact in the Ashes, taking 19 wickets at a stunningly low average of 18.14 in the final three Tests against Australia.

The all-rounder also made a valuable 32 not out in the third Test at Headingley to see England to a three-wicket win before taking 4-50 with the ball at The Oval on Monday in a 49-run victory as the hosts ended the series all square at 2-2.

Such was Woakes's impact he received the prestigious Compton-Miller medal for players of the series even though he did not feature in the first two Tests.

"I want to play for England for as long as possible. Still, for me, playing international cricket is the pinnacle. You want to be a part of days like (the last day of the fifth Ashes Test)."

"You don't get it anywhere else, so you want this to last for as long as possible whilst you're still performing."

But that bowing average rockets to a far more expensive 51.88 from 20 Tests overseas, leaving Woakes uncertain about his involvement when England next play Test cricket on a tour of India in the new year.

"I think that's a question for another day," he said. "Let's let this sink in. I have no idea. We all know my record away from home, so I think we'll come to that if it happens."

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Pakistan await security delegation nod for WC in India



PTI ■ KARACHI

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is expected to get clearance for sending its national team for the 50-over World Cup, provided that a security delegation visits India first and gives its nod.

Prime minister Shehbaz Sharif has formed a committee to review and decide on Pakistan's participation in the World Cup. The committee is due to meet for the first time on Thursday under the chairmanship of foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto.

Zaka Ashraf, the chairman of the PCB Management Committee, will also attend the meeting.

"The committee is expected to recommend that a high-level security delegation be sent to India to visit all the venues, where the Pakistan team is scheduled to play its World Cup matches and review all the security and

other arrangements," a source close to the committee said.

The 14-member committee includes various ministers and advisers, including the foreign minister, the interior minister, the law minister, the Inter-Provincial Coordination minister, the information and broadcasting minister, adviser on Kashmir affairs, adviser on establishment, the foreign secretary, PSPM, as well as representatives from secret agencies and other sensitive departments.

The source added that in principle, there was no objection to Pakistan playing in India, but the committee wanted assurance that the players, officials, fans and media would not face any problems.

Pakistan last travelled to India during the 2016 World T20 Cup. The two countries have not engaged in bilateral cricket since 2012-13 and the last Test series was held in India in 2007.

Red-hot South Zone hold edge over competitive East Zone in final

PTI ■ PUDUCHERRY

The formidable South Zone will be eyeing their second national title in three weeks when they face an equally combative East Zone in the Deodhar Trophy final here on Thursday.

South Zone, who had won the Duleep Trophy last month in Bengaluru, have entered the title round with an all-win record in the league stage, and hold a slight edge.

South will be looking to add a ninth Deodhar Trophy to their cabinet, while East Zone will be gunning for their sixth title in the competition.

However, recent form favours South Zone as the Mayank Agarwal-led side emerged winner over East in the league stage on July 30.

The core strength of South is their batting and bowling units which are in perfect sync with each other.

Openers Agarwal (278 runs, Avg: 69.50) and Rohan Kunnummal (204,



Avg: 51) have been consistent for South and they will be looking for another fruitful outing in the final.

Their middle-order has been served well by B Sai Sudarshan, who

has made 185 runs from just two matches with a hundred and a fifty while averaging 185.

The Tamil Nadu youngster joined the team late as he was playing for

India A in the Emerging Asia Cup in Colombo. But he has more than made up for his delayed arrival.

But East will bank on Riyan Parag for another blistering effort. After a

tepid beginning to the tournament, the 21-year-old Assam player has come into his own with two centuries against North Zone and West Zone.

Parag, now, has 259 runs from four matches at an average of 86.33, and stands fourth on the run-makers list.

While South might just have an upper hand over East in the batting department owing to the presence of multiple match-winners, the teams' bowling is rather evenly-matched.

Pacer Vidwath Kaverappa and left-arm spinner R Sai Kishore have guided South's bowling impressively, taking 11 and 10 wickets respectively.

They have also received solid support from pacers Vasuki Koushik (7 wickets) and Vysakh Vijayakumar (6 wickets).

East Zone are capable of strong reply as the trio of left-arm spinner Shahbaz Ahmad (10), leg-spinner Parag (9) and pace bowler Manishankar Murasingh (8) have been among wickets.