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HP battles nature wrath

Severe rainfall in parts of N India wreaks havoc, 37 killed in 2 days; 50-year record broken in HP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/SHIMLA

Severe rainfall in parts of North India, particularly Himachal Pradesh, continues to wreak havoc, claiming four more lives in fresh landslides and raising the toll of rain-related incidents in the hill State to 17 fatalities. A total of 37 people have been killed in landslides and other rain-related incidents in the last two days in north India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday held discussions with senior Ministers and officials to assess the gravity of the situation.

The heavy downpour has caused rivers, including the Yamuna in Delhi, to overflow. Many roads and residential areas across the region are submerged in knee-deep water, overwhelming the strained civic infrastructure.

The record-breaking rainfall on Sunday surpassed the capacity of the local systems to cope.

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge has urged the Central Government to provide additional relief from the PM CARES Fund for the States affected by the torrential rain. In response, the PMO announced that the Prime Minister has held discussions with senior Ministers and officials to evaluate the impact of the excessive rainfall.

Local administrations, along with the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) teams, are working tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of those affected.

Meanwhile, heavy rainfall broke 50 years record in Himachal Pradesh. Landslides claimed four more lives in Shimla, and the Shimla-Kalka highway remains blocked, causing significant disruption. Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said 16 to 17 people have lost their lives in rain-related incidents in the state over the past two days.

On Monday morning, a landslide struck a house in Theog subdivision of Shimla, claiming three lives in Pallavi village. The deceased persons have been identified as Deep Bahadur, Devdasi, and Mohan Bahadur. Additionally, the body of an elderly woman, trapped under debris following



Locals cross a bridge over the swollen Beas river during heavy rainfall, in Kullu district, on Monday

a landslide in Rajhana village on the outskirts of Shimla city, was recovered on Sunday night, hours after her granddaughter's body was found at the site.

The meteorological department has issued a "red" alert for "extremely heavy rain" on Monday morning, following a day of relentless downpour that triggered landslides and caused significant damage to houses. Rail operations on the Shimla-Kalka route, a UNESCO world heritage site, have been suspended until Tuesday due to landslides blocking the tracks. Educational institutions across the State have been instructed to remain closed on Monday and Tuesday.

The Shimla-Kalka National Highway, near Shoghi, located approximately 16 km from the capital city, remains blocked due to a landslide on Monday.

The district reports over 120 blocked roads, and 484 water supply schemes have been affected. Incidents of uprooted trees, roof collapses, and property damage have been reported, with 10 houses and 20 vehicles affected, said Shimla police officials.

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Yamuna in spate, breaches danger mark in Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid relentless rainfall, the Yamuna River in Delhi surpassed the danger mark of 205.33 metres on Monday, following three consecutive days of heavy downpour in the upper catchment areas. The river exceeded expectations by breaching the danger mark earlier than anticipated, as it was predicted to do so by Tuesday afternoon.

The evacuation of residents in low-lying areas of the Yamuna floodplains began on Monday evening. More than 3,000 people residing near Yamuna Khadar in Mayur Vihar Extension have been instructed to vacate the area as the water level of the Yamuna approaches the danger mark in Delhi.

Presently, the authorities have not communicated any emergency shelter informa-



Boats being anchored near the bank of Yamuna in New Delhi on Monday

tion to the affected individuals, but they have been advised to seek refuge under a nearby fly-over.

According to the Central Water Commission's flood-monitoring portal, the water level at the Old Railway Bridge had reached 205.4 metres by 5 pm, following increased water releases from the Hathnikund

barrage in Yamunanagar, Haryana. The water level is projected to rise to 206.65 metres on Tuesday before receding.

The irrigation and flood control department said the flow rate at the Hathnikund barrage increased to 3,05,768 cusecs at 5 am on Monday.

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SC refuses freeze on Delhi Ordinance

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday declined to provide an interim stay on the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023, which was promulgated by the Centre on May 19 concerning the control of services in the national Capital.

The bench, comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices PS Narasimha, issued a notice to the Centre and requested senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, representing the AAP Government, to amend the plea and include the Lieutenant Governor as a party in the case.

"We will issue notice," stated the bench, scheduling the hearing for July 17.

In its plea, the Delhi Government argues that the ordinance is an "unconstitutional exercise of executive fiat" that seeks to "override" the



Supreme Court and the basic structure of the Constitution. Along with seeking the quashing of the ordinance, the Delhi Government has also requested an interim stay on its implementation.

On May 19, the Centre promulgated the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023, which aims to establish an authority for the transfer and posting of Group-A officers in Delhi. The AAP Government considers this move a contradiction of the Supreme Court's verdict on

control of services.

The ordinance was issued a week after the Supreme Court granted control of services in Delhi, excluding police, public order, and land, to the elected Government.

It proposes the establishment of a National Capital Civil Service Authority to handle the transfer and disciplinary proceedings of Group-A officers from the DANICS cadre, which includes Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep, Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli (Civil) Services.

Manipur clash rages on, man killed, 2 hurt in 2 districts

PTI ■ IMPHAL

A civilian was killed and two were injured on Monday in violent clashes in two villages located along Manipur's Imphal West and Kangpokpi districts, officials said.

There was a brief lull between 3 am and 6 am before the sounds of indiscriminate firing from Phayeng and Singda villages in the Kangchuk area along the two districts resumed.

Earlier officials had said that a policeman had died in the violence but it was later clarified that the victim was a civilian, who was carrying a .303 rifle believed to have been stolen from the police armoury.

"Joint search of the area of Geljang was carried out and one body along with a .303 rifle was recovered from the spot", officials said.

Tension prevailed in Imphal city following the incident and paramilitary forces were deployed in the affected area. Shops and other business establishments remained shut.

Don't use SC to stoke Manipur fire: Apex court

Court urges warring ethnic groups to exercise restraint

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday observed that it should not be exploited as a platform to fuel tensions in Manipur and called upon the warring ethnic groups to exercise restraint during court proceedings.

The court further clarified that it cannot assume the responsibility of law enforcement and security measures to resolve the ongoing ethnic strife and violence in Manipur. The duty to ensure security lies with the Centre and the State Government.

"We do not want these proceedings or this court to be misused as a catalyst for escalating violence and exacerbating existing problems in the

State. We are not in a position to take control of law and order and security mechanisms. It is the responsibility of the Union of India and the Manipur Government to ensure security. This is a humanitarian issue," said Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice PS Narasimha, addressing senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, representing the NGO Manipur Tribal Forum.

After reviewing the latest status report submitted by the chief secretary of Manipur, the bench requested Gonsalves and other lawyers from various organisations advocating for the ethnic Kuki and Meitei groups, as well as other concerned entities and the Manipur High Court bar association, to carefully review the updated report.

They were asked to provide constructive suggestions by Tuesday, aimed at bringing an end to the violence.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

MAN STABS EX-FIANCÉ TO DEATH IN G'GRAM

Gurugram: A man stabbed his former fiancé to death in broad daylight here on Monday, with the entire incident caught on CCTV, officials said, adding that the accused has been arrested. Family members of the girl had broken off the engagement between the victim Neha (19) and the accused Ram Kumar (23) earlier, police said.

RS POLLS: DEREK, SAKET, DOLA AMONG TMC PICKS

Kolkata/New Delhi: Derek O'Brien, Sukhendu Sekhar Ray, Dola Sen and Saket Gokhale are among the six candidates announced by the Trinamool Congress on Monday for as many Rajya Sabha seats in West Bengal that will go to polls later this month.

Modi, Pawar to share dias in Pune, 1st time after NCP split

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a development that is bound to spark a political debate across the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will share stage with beleaguered NCP chief Shradh Pawar at a function organised in Pune to confer the Lokmanya Tilak National Award to the former (Modi) "in recognition of his supreme leadership and for awakening the feeling of patriotism among citizens".

Announcing the decision to choose Modi as the nominee for this year's Lokmanya Tilak National Award, the Tilak Smarak Mandir Trust president Deepak Tilak said in Pune: "Our Trust (Hind Swaraj

Sangh) will confer the Lokmanya Tilak National Award upon Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 1, the 103rd death anniversary of Lokmanya Tilak".

The news release announcing Modi's nomination for the prestigious award — content of which is bound to trigger a fierce political discourse in the country — said that "India climbed the ladder of progress under the supreme leadership of the PM under the concept of Atma Nirbhar Bharat".

"Prime Minister Modi awakened the feeling of patriotism among citizens and put India on the global map. Considering his perseverance and efforts, and highlighting

his work, the trustees of the Tilak Smarak Mandir Trust have unanimously selected him for this award," the release said. Deepak Tilak, who is the great grandson of iconic freedom fighter Lokmanya Balgandhar Tilak, said that Sharad Pawar, who has been close to the Tilak family for several years, had been invited to the award ceremony as the chief guest.

Interestingly enough, the other invitees to the August 1, 2023 ceremony would include Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy Chief Ministers Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar.

Continued on Page 2

26 Rafale Marine, Scorpene deal likely during Modi's France visit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Giving a major boost to their bilateral defence and strategic ties, India and France are likely to sign two deals for acquisition of 26 Rafale Marine fighter jets and three Scorpene submarines for the Indian Navy during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to Paris starting July 13.

The total cost of the two deals is over ₹80,000 crores. Modi is the guest of honour for the French National Day on July 14. The two countries are celebrating 25 years of their strategic partnership.

The Scorpene submarines will be constructed at the



Mazagon Docks, Mumbai where the two countries earlier built six Scorpene class submarines now named Kalvari class of submarines. It will be a Government to Government deal, sources said here on Monday.

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) is likely to approve the Acceptance of Necessity for the two projects

in the next few days before the Prime Minister's visit.

The three additional Kalvari class submarines will be fitted with air independent propulsion (AIP), which has been designed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) but will be tested and validated by the French Naval Group.

The AIP gives longer endurance to a normal diesel attack submarine and allows it to remain submerged for over a week without the need to surface to charge its batteries.

Continued on Page 2

Foxconn junks \$19.5 bn chip JV with Vedanta

New Delhi: Taiwan's Foxconn has withdrawn from a \$19.5 billion semiconductor joint venture with mining baron Anil Agarwal's Vedanta Ltd as the venture struggled to get a technology partner to make chips that are used in mobile phones to refrigerators and cars. In a statement, Foxconn, the world's largest contract electronics maker, said it "has determined it will not move forward on the joint venture with Vedanta."

Agarwal's metals-to-oil conglomerate responded saying it was "fully committed to its semiconductor fab project and we have lined up other partners to set up India's first foundry".

Detailed report on P10

L&T-Spain's Navantia to bid for ₹50,000 submarines contract

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Private sector conglomerate Larsen and Toubro (L&T) and Spain's defence major Navantia on Monday inked a 'teaming agreement' here to jointly bid for Indian Navy's prestigious P75 (I) submarine programme. The proposed project is worth over Rs 50,000 crores.

The Defence Ministry is in the process of procuring six domestically built conventional submarines for the Indian Navy as part of the Strategic Partnership programme. The construction of the submarines will take place in India and is expected to have significant local content. Last month, German defence major Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems



(TKMS) and state-run Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL) inked a framework agreement to bid for the mega project. "Larsen & Toubro and Navantia, Spain signed a Teaming Agreement (TA) today for the purpose of submission of a techno-commercial bid for the Indian Navy's prestigious P75 (India) submarine programme," the

L&T said in a statement. The pact was signed at a ceremony in Delhi in the presence of S N Subrahmanyam, L&T CEO and MD, Augustin Alvarez Blanco, Naval Construction Vice President and Member of the Board of Navantia, and Spanish envoy Jose Maria Ridao Dominguez. The submarines will be built under the much-talked-about strategic partner-

ship (SP) model that allows domestic defence manufacturers to join hands with leading foreign defence majors to produce high-end military platforms to reduce import dependence. The bidding process for the project called P-75 India ends in August. The defence ministry is likely to finalise the winner of the contract by the end of this year or early next year, officials said.

According to the agreement, Navantia would carry out the design of 75(I) submarines based on its S80 class of submarines, the first of which was launched in 2021 and is undergoing sea trials prior to its delivery to Spanish Navy at the end of 2023. Apart from S80 class, Navantia has been involved in the design and construction of Scorpene class

of submarines together with DCNS (Now Naval Group) of France, which have been exported to Chile and Malaysia.

Navantia has also been involved in the Scorpene submarines (Kalvari class) built in India including handholding of the Indian yard. Speaking on the occasion, S N Subrahmanyam said his company is proud to collaborate with Navantia for this prestigious programme of strategic importance for the nation's security. "Navantia's glorious 300-year-old track record in naval construction and technical expertise gives us a competitive advantage in this programme and offer the Bio-Ethanol Stealth Technology (BEST) and environmentally Green AIP solution," he said. "We are committed to pro-

viding the most contemporary solution for Indian Navy's requirements at a competitive price," the L&T CEO said. Alvarez Blanco said: "It gives us great joy to be in a position to be the design and technology partner for P75(I). We are also in collaboration with L&T for the Landing Platform Dock (LPD) programme whose tender is eagerly awaited."

"With these two prestigious programmes for the Indian Navy, Navantia is proud to be making a key contribution towards fulfilling the defence needs of India, a nation with which Spain shares an excellent relationship," he added. Meanwhile, a US navy ship USNS Salvor, a Safeguard-class rescue and salvage ship arrived at Kattupalli shipbuilding yard near Chennai for

repairs under the Master Ship Repair Agreement (MSRA) between India and the US, a senior official of Larsen and Toubro (L&T) said on Monday. The five-year agreement will see the India's leading private defence company repair the US vessels, said Arun Ramachandran, executive vice-president and head, L&T.

The Military Sealift Command's rescue and salvage ship USNS Salvor (T-ARS 52) arrived at L&T Kattupalli shipyard, for voyage repairs on July 9. It is the third US Navy ship visiting the L&T shipyard for voyage repairs, after USNS Charles Drew and USNS Matthew Perry. The USNS Salvor was welcomed with a ceremony at the shipyard on Monday, and it is the first ship to arrive after the signing of the

Master Shipyard Repair Agreement (MSRA). US Consul General in Chennai Judith Ravin, US Embassy New Delhi's Office of Defence Cooperation chief Captain Michael L Farmer, senior US Embassy officials, and L&T leadership participated.

"This Master Shipyard Repair Agreement is yet another milestone in our ever-expanding U.S.-India partnership. This historic agreement is a direct outcome of 2022 US-India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue and demonstrates US commitment to utilise repair facilities on a regular basis at the L&T shipyard in Kattupalli," Ravin said. This agreement will serve to strengthen two nations' strategic partnership and contribute to a free and open Indo-Pacific, she said.

EC has no power to change name of party, says Uddhav

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra's former chief minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray too strong exception the Election Commission of India (ECI) renaming his party as the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) and said that if any thing that the ECI could allot the poll symbol to a party, but it had no powers to effect a name change of a political party.

Taking to media persons at Amravati where he reached as part of the ongoing state-wide awareness yatra undertaken by him in the wake of recent rebellion within his party, Uddhav said: "My party was christened as the Shiv Sena by



my grandfather, Keshav Sitaram Thackeray, alias Prabodhankar Thackeray and I will not allow anybody to steal the name of the party's name from me". It may be recalled that after the June 2023 split, the ECI had in February this year intervened and formalised the split and awarded the name 'Shiv Sena' and its symbol 'Bow-and-Arrow' to the breakaway faction led by chief min-

ister Shinde. The Thackeray faction was allotted new name 'Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray)' and the symbol of 'Flaming Torch' in the interim orders of the ECI. "How can the ECI change the name of a political party? I shall not tolerate anybody trying to steal the party and its name," Uddhav asked.

The Supreme Court is expected to hear the Shiv Sena (UBT)'s plea on July 31, challenging the ECI's February order on the party name-symbol. Among other things, the Shiv Sena (UBT) has contended that the ECI's order is "completely illegal" in view of the May 11 2023 verdict of the SC Constitution Bench verdict on the Sena versus Sena case.

Shinde seeks a week to reply on disqualification

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena MLAs will seek extension in the time limit to reply to the notices issued by Speaker Rahul Narvekar on the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena's plea seeking the disqualification of 16 Sena MLAs over their rebellion against Uddhav in June last year.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde — who engineered the rebellion, and 15 other Sena MLAs with the help of the then Opposition BJP — are among the 54 Sena MLAs who were issued show-cause notices by the Speaker on Saturday last on why their Assembly membership cannot be revoked. The MLAs, belonging to both the ruling Shinde Sena and

Opposition Sena Uddhav factions, who were issued show-cause notices, had been given one week's time by the Speaker to file their replies to the notices.

The Shinde Sena MLAs — MLAs Ganjay Shirsat and Bharat Gogawale — both of whom figure in the Uddhav Sena's plea seeking disqualification of 16 Sena MLAs who had gone away with rebel leader Shinde who mustered a strength of 40 rebel Sena MLAs and teamed with the Fadnavis-led BJP and toppled the Uddhav Thackeray led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government and formed his own government in last week of June 2022. "We will request the Speaker to extend the time-limit at least by a week to enable

us file our say properly," Shirsat said.

Apart from chief minister Shinde, Shirsat and Gogawale, the 13 other Sena MLAs who are facing the axe of disqualification are: former ministers Tanaji Sawant, Sandeepan Bhumre, Abdul Sattar; MLAs Yamini Jadhav, Prakash Surve, Mahesh Shinde, Lata Sonawane, Balaji Kinikar, Ramesh Bornale, Sanjay Raimulkar, Chimanrao Patil and Balaji Kalankar.

On its part, the Shiv Sena (UBT) has claimed that despite a party whip, these MLAs failed to attend the meeting convened by the then CM Thackeray in June 2022, which amounted to anti-party activity and attracted disqualification as per the rules.

Thousands flee homes as post-poll WB riots on

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Violence continued unabated in rural Bengal post panchayat elections forcing thousands of people to flee their homes — some even to neighbouring States or even Bangladesh — reports trickling in from various parts of the State claimed.

No less than 5,000 people from Balbuth region alone had left Bengal in a single night taking shelter either in neighbouring Assam or Bangladesh. Balabuth is a large village in Tufanganj block of Cooch Behar district in North Bengal.

Their fault: they had defied Trinamool Congress' warning and taken part in the panchayat elections.

While about 120 families

have crossed the barbed fence over to Bhurudhamari area of Bangladesh more than 1,100 families have taken shelter in Chatrashal, Bhalakuda, Batherhat, Banpagali areas of neighbouring Assam, sources said adding the Assam Congress MLA Abdul Sobhan Sarkar had assured all help to the "refugees" migrating from Bengal.

"Nothing is left ... they have pulled down our houses, stolen our savings, jewelry, utensils and even livestock ... we have nothing to fall back on ... and now they are threatening us with murder and false police cases ... so we have decided to leave our villages," said Bilal and Subhankar, former a CPI(M) supporter and the latter a BJP member.

DDA site gets 13 lakh hits for flats

New Delhi: More than 500 flats have been booked under a housing scheme of the DDA that was launched on June 30, officials said on Monday. Ever since the booking window was opened on DDA's website starting 12 noon on Monday, the number of hits on the website has crossed the 13-lakh mark, they said.

The DDA on June 30 had launched on a first-come, first-serve (FCFS) basis a housing scheme that will include 5,500 flats across all categories at various locations in Delhi. Booking of flats commenced from 12 noon onwards on July 10. A good response has been received from public for this scheme.

The website received a hit of more than 11 lakh by 5.30 pm, which later grew to over 13 lakh, a senior official said. More than 500 flats had been booked, he said. By 5.30 pm, 305 flats had been booked, while 7,324 registrations had been done till that period. SR

28-year-old med officer found hanging in Delhi hotel

New Delhi: A 28-year-old medical officer was found hanging inside a hotel room in east Delhi's Mayur Vihar area. Police received information that a woman was found hanging inside a room in Holiday Inn hotel around 3.30 pm on Sunday.

According to police, Ashna Beema Seethy, a resident of Jangpura, Pant Nagar, checked in at the hotel on Friday for a one-day stay. Later, on Saturday, she extended her stay for another day, they said.

On Sunday around 2.30 pm, when the hotel staff followed up with her for the payment of the extended stay, there was no response from the room. The staff entered the room using a master key and found her hanging from the water sprinkler in the room with the help of a white scarf, a senior police officer said.

The woman was working at a Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) dispensary in Jangpura as a medical officer, police said. Police said that she was in a relationship with a person but her parents were opposed to it. SR

HP battles nature...

From Page 1

Rescue efforts are underway to help those stranded in various parts of the state. On Monday, the Home Guards successfully rescued 20 persons from Manali, while around 300 people remained stranded in different locations.

The 14th battalion of the NDRF conducted a late-night operation on Sunday, employing anchored ropes, harnesses, and cranes to rescue six individuals stranded in Nagwayin village due to rising water levels in the Beas River.

Chief Minister Sukhu, in a video released on Monday morning, appealed to the public to avoid venturing out in heavy rains, particularly near rivers and nullahs, and to remain vigilant for the next 24 hours as the Meteorological Department has warned of continued heavy rainfall.

He also urged all MLAs to stay in their respective constituencies and assist the people during this distressing time. The state government has established three helpline numbers (1100, 1070, and 1077) to aid those in distress.

Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri said 4,680 schemes of the Jal Shakti Department have been damaged, resulting in an estimat-

ed loss of Rs 323.30 crore. The Chandigarh-Manali National Highway remains blocked due to landslides and flooding at multiple locations, while the Shimla-Kinnaur road is closed to vehicular traffic due to slides and falling rocks.

Superintendent of Police Mayank Chaudhary confirmed the safety of all stranded individuals, ensuring that food and essential medicines have been arranged.

Once the roads are restored, rescue operations will commence. The heavy rains have also severely impacted transportation, with 876 bus routes of the Himachal Road Transport Corporation affected and 403 buses stranded at various locations.

During the monsoon season from July 1 to July 9, Himachal Pradesh received 271.5 mm of rainfall, surpassing the normal rainfall of 160.6 mm by a significant 69 per cent.

In Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath directed all concerned departments to remain alert due to the potential swelling of rivers from heavy rains in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. In a review meeting, officials were instructed to closely monitor the situation,

especially river embankments. The NDRF, SDRF, and disaster management teams have been put on high alert.

Punjab and Haryana have also experienced relentless rainfall for the third consecutive day, resulting in widespread flooding. Authorities are actively engaged in rescue operations to relocate people to safer areas.

In view of the prevailing situation, the Punjab government has ordered the closure of schools in the state until July 13.

Chandigarh, the capital city, has also witnessed record rainfall over the past three days, leading to water accumulation on some roads.

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann urged the people of Punjab not to panic as heavy rains caused flooding in certain areas of the state. Among the worst-affected districts are Mohali, Patiala, Rupnagar, Fatehgarh Sahib, Panchkula, and Ambala.

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar canceled all pre-scheduled programmes and called for an emergency meeting with senior officials from various departments, including Chief Secretary Sanjeev Kaushal, to assess the situation.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mrs. Nidhi D/o Mr. Vinendra Patel who is purchasing Plot of land measuring 70 sq. yds. out of Khasra No. 31, Village Surapur, Pergana Dadi, Tehsil & District Gautam Budh Nagar U.P. from Mrs. Vati w/o Mr. Pappu, who is owner of the aforesaid property vide Sale Deed dated 28.10.2022 (Document No. 23659), and same to be financed & mortgaged by India Shelter Finance Corporation Ltd. That the Original Sale Deed dated 24.04.2013 executed by Mr. Amit Kumar Garg s/o Mr. Prakash Garg in favour of Mrs. Nidhi w/o Mr. Anand Kumar (Document No. 8479) is misplaced/lost and FIR has lodged on dated 29.06.2023 with L.A.R. No. 2023000408545 for loss of document. If any Person having any type of claim/right/interest over the property may inform in writing at the address mentioned below, about his objections within 07 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien, Charge, disputes etc.

Lucem Legal LLP
B-93B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank, Sector 2, Noida, UP - 201301, Contact: 0120-4269379

PUBLIC NOTICE
Be it Known to all that, my client MR. DHIRUJ SHIVHARE S/o. SH. RADHE SHYAM, R/o G-117, G/F, near by Savitri Public School, Sangam Vihar, Deoli, South Delhi, Delhi-110062 have disowned his son MR. SUNIL KUMAR SHIVHARE severed all his relations social and financial with him due to his disobedience. He has debarred him from inheriting his properties movable and immovable. He shall not be responsible for any of his acts, deeds and things. Anybody dealing with him shall be doing so at his/her own risk.
Lovedeep Raghav (Advocate)
Enroll. No. D/8497/2018

26 Rafale...

From Page 1

Sources said the DAC is likely the give the nod for acquisition of 26 Rafale-M aircraft for aircraft carriers INS Vikrant and INS Vikramaditya and the price, terms and conditions will be negotiated after this through the Government-to-Government route with the French Government. The Indian pilots will be trained in France as well as on advanced simulators in Goa.

It was also learnt, the two countries are also likely to ink a defence-industrial road map to push India to scale up its manufacturing of hardware platforms through indigenously developed engines and technologies.

Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron will also unveil a bilateral road map for the Indo-Pacific with specific

steps to ensure freedom of navigation and maritime security for sea lanes in the area contested by a rising China.

The proposed Rafale deal includes 22 single-seater and four double-seater trainer versions, sources said adding the three additional submarines and the likes of his party's rebel leader Ajit Pawar and other key players involved in the recent revolt within the NCP like Fadnavis of the the BJP and Modi who is being seen as the top most leader who is pulling the strings to create disturbances with the Opposition parties is of considerable political significance.

Instituted by the Tilak Smarak Mandir Trust in 1983, the Lokmanya Tilak National Award is given every year to an Indian who has dedicated his life to strengthening the country's democratic principles and contributed to Tilak's dream of a strong and modern India.

Modi, Pawar to share dias...

From Page 1

The coming together of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar and the likes of his party's rebel leader Ajit Pawar and other key players involved in the recent revolt within the NCP like Fadnavis of the the BJP and Modi who is being seen as the top most leader who is pulling the strings to create disturbances with the Opposition parties is of considerable political significance.

France has also offered to co-develop and manufacture higher thrust engines in India to power the future twin engine combat aircraft developed by the DRDO and this issue may also figure during Modi's visit, sources said.

Don't use SC to stoke Manipur fire: Apex court

From Page 1

Gonsalves highlighted that the State Government had previously stated that 10 people lost their lives in the conflict, but the death toll has now risen to 110, with violence continuing unabated. "Your doubts cannot lead us to take control of law and order.

That is the responsibility of the Central and State Governments. This is why elected Governments exist. We are very clear about the role of the Supreme Court.

At most, we can issue directions to the authorities to ensure security, and for that, we require cooperation from the

parties involved," the bench informed the senior lawyer. The Supreme Court is currently examining a series of petitions filed by various NGOs, including one filed by the Manipur Tribal Forum, which seeks Army protection for the Kuki tribe.

Dinganglung Gangmei, the chairman of the Hills Area Committee of the Manipur Legislative Assembly, has also challenged the high court's decision to designate the Meitei community as a scheduled tribe.

Additionally, the high court bar association and other organisations have filed peti-

tions. During the hearing, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the State Government, said that an updated status report had been submitted as per the court's directions.

He claimed that the situation is gradually returning to normal due to concerted efforts by the Central and State Governments.

When Gonsalves alleged that everyone in the State was against the Kuki tribe, the bench restrained him from further statements, asserting that the court cannot be exploited as a platform to escalate tensions in the State.

Evacuation from Yamuna bank once river touches 206-metre mark: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday announced that evacuation of people from low-lying areas around Yamuna will start once the river touches the 206-metre mark, while assuring the people that flood situation might not arise in the national Capital now because of Yamuna's water level rising after two days of non-stop rain in the Capital.

Amid the heavy rain, waterlogging and road cave-ins in Delhi, Kejriwal said Delhi's systems are not designed to take such unprecedented rain and urged all political parties on Monday to come together to help people, saying that it was not the right time to point fingers at each other. "I want to thank all the leaders, ministers and MLAs including those from other parties for stepping on to the ground and helping the people out at this time. I know there are officials who were working all night to avoid any kind of mishap," he said.

Earlier, the chief minister held a meeting with his senior officers, cabinet ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bhardwaj and Mayor Shelly Oberoi to review the situation in Delhi. The BJP on Friday came down



The Yamuna River swells up, crossing its danger mark

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

heavily on AAP convener and Delhi CM, who went to Haryana to address a meeting heavy rains and water logging issues in the national capital.

After the meeting, Kejriwal addressed a press conference, stating that the government was closely monitoring the situation and was fully prepared to tackle it.

"Delhi received 153 mm of rain in 24 hours after 40 years on July 8-9, before that in 1982 Delhi had received 170

mm of rain. Delhi has handled 100-125 mm of rain over the years, but 153 mm of rain was unexpected, that's why people faced problems," Kejriwal said adding Delhi government is prepared for all emergencies though according to the weather predictions, the intensity of the rain will gradually decrease.

"Not only in Delhi, but the entire North India received unprecedented rain. People are facing difficulties everywhere. This is not a time to point fin-

gers that why this happened. I believe all parties and all governments are working their best in the affected areas," Kejriwal said adding that all efforts are less given the situation. "Potholes can not be repaired during rains, as an immediate measure, potholes will be filled with stones. Roads have caved in at three places, thorough investigation has been ordered to ascertain the reason behind it. Directions issued to stop construction

works immediately so that any blocked drains can be cleared out," he said.

Kejriwal further stated that traffic police has been asked to deploy more force at vulnerable points to avoid jam on the road.

The chief minister said they were in touch with the Central Water Commission and asserted that weather predictions indicate that even though there will be more rains, they would not be quite heavy.

"Due to rains, there might have been some potholes that could have formed on roads. They will be filled with stones to avert any untoward incident. We have also ordered an inquiry into incidents of road cave-in. The area under New Delhi Municipal Council, which is a VVIP area, witnessed waterlogging. We have asked waterlogging. We have asked NDMC to resolve the issues," he said.

Revenue Minister Atishi who took ride on board in Yamuna and also inspected preparations for the flood said in light of the rising water levels of the Yamuna, all departments concerned are geared up and over 50 motor boats have been deployed for rescue and relief operations.

Rain chokes Capital

Kejriwal calls emergency meeting, orders probe into three-road cave-in incidents

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Heavy traffic jams and congestion in several parts of Delhi were reported on Monday after heavy rain continued to batter for the third consecutive day, causing waterlogging with the drainage system overwhelmed by unprecedented rainfall.

As pictures and videos of commuters wading through the submerged stretches flooded social media, the chief minister called an emergency meeting of officials from all departments and announced an inquiry into three road cave-in incidents.

As pictures and videos of commuters wading through the submerged stretches flooded social media, the chief minister called an emergency meeting of officials from all departments and announced an inquiry into three road cave-in incidents. "There could be several reasons such as poor quality of the road, or a burst in the pipeline below the road," he said.

Waterlogging was reported from key stretches including Dhaura Kuan, Okhla underpass, Jangpura, Mundka, Nigam Bodh Ghat, Khirki Extension, Malviya Nagar, Kirti



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addresses a Press conference on Monday
Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Nagar Industrial Area, Mayur Vihar and Banda Bahadur Marg. A scooter driver fell in the 4 feet drain in Rohini sector 21 on Monday.

The three days of downpour, however, brought relief from the summer heat as mercury settled at 31.4 degree Celsius, four notches below the season's average. The national capital recorded 153 mm of rainfall on Saturday and 107 mm of precipitation on till 8.30 am on Monday. Between 8.30 am and 5.30 pm on Monday, 2.9 mm of rainfall was recorded.

According to the Public Works Department (PWD), 48 complaints of waterlogging

were received. Some of these were repeated while some pertained to other agencies.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Traffic Police said they received calls about traffic congestion, failure of signals, waterlogging, potholes on roads and uprooting of trees.

The Delhi Police received 13 calls related to waterlogging from across the national capital, including the Pragati Maidan Tunnel, Tikri Kalan, Sawaran Park in Mundka, Nigam Bodh Ghat, Boulevard Road in Front of Tis Hazari Court, it added.

Incidents of power failure were reported in many parts of the city also on Monday.

Inundated Pragati Maidan tunnel shut

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Heavy traffic jam was reported on Monday morning after Pragati Maidan tunnel was closed for vehicular movement due to waterlogging on the stretch. Delhi Police have put up barricades on the entry points of the tunnel to restrict the traffic movement. A security guard posted at the Pragati Maidan tunnel gate said that this was closed by the police on Sunday night.

According to Public Works Department (PWD) officials, work is underway to pump out the water to ensure that the tunnel can be opened for traffic movement by Tuesday.

The tunnel connecting Pragati Maidan to the transit corridor is temporarily closed due to the occurrence of significant waterlogging, the Delhi

Traffic Police said. "The heavy downpour in the area has resulted in the inundation of the tunnel, rendering it inaccessible for public use. To mitigate the waterlogging situation, an extensive pumping operation is currently underway by Delhi Police and tunnel maintaining authorities i.e. PWD etc.

"In the meantime, we kindly request commuters to utilise alternative routes and modes of transportation available. Adequate signage and information boards have been placed at strategic locations to guide commuters towards the alternative options," it said.

According to traffic police officials, the heavy downpour in the area has resulted in the inundation of the Pragati Maidan tunnel, rendering it inaccessible for public use.

In a tweet, the Delhi Traffic



Police said, "Movement of traffic is restricted at Pragati Maidan tunnel due to waterlogging. Commuters are advised to plan their journey accordingly."

The PWD officials said they are working to solve the problem but added that the waterlogging was due to water being released from NDMC

areas.

They also explained that the water from the basement of the convention centre, which is under construction, is pumped out into the tunnel. The PWD has written to the India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO), flagging the issue multiple times, they said.

Meanwhile, the tunnel's

closure causes commuters a great deal of inconvenience and raises questions about the overall safety of the region. One of the commuters on social media asked about the route to reach central Delhi. The commuter stated that every route had the same issue and asked the police to issue diversion routes.

Another stated that due to the closure of the tunnel, he had to go to Sarai Kale Khan, come back to the India Gate circle through Bhairon Marg and then take a U-turn from Nizamuddin. Traffic was also affected in other parts of the city, including the busy ITO intersection.

According to reports, authorities are likely to evaluate the situation and take the required action to resolve the waterlogging problem in the tunnel. However, the shut-

down serves as a reminder of the difficulties presented by torrential rain and the requirement for sturdy infrastructure to survive such conditions.

The closure of the tunnel is alarming as it could not stand even a single monsoon.

It was aimed to provide hassle-free and smooth access to the new world-class exhibition and convention centre being developed at Pragati Maidan. It was also aimed to facilitate easy participation of exhibitors and visitors in the programmes being held at Pragati Maidan.

The tunnel also promised to guarantee trouble-free vehicular movement, significantly reducing commuters' costs and time. It was part of the government's primary vision to ensure ease of living for people through transforming urban infrastructure.

Parking attendant dies in wall cave-in

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 32-year-old parking attendant died while a 'paan' shop owner was injured after a boundary wall collapsed due to heavy rain in Sunder Nagar, police said on Monday.

According to police, information was received on Sunday that a boundary wall at Mathura Road, Sunder Nagar has collapsed due to heavy rain.

"Our team reached the spot, hired a private JCB excavator machine and started to remove the debris of the wall. Two people were rescued in an injured condition and sent to hospital," Deputy Commissioner of Police (southeast) Rajesh Deo said.

Out of them, Rakesh Kumar Misra, a resident of Purnia district in Bihar, was



declared brought dead, while Ashok Chand Misra (50), a resident of Mithapur, is under treatment, the DCP said.

A case under sections 336 (act endangering life or personal safety of others) and 304A (causing death by negligence) of the IPC has been registered and investigation of the case is in progress, Deo said.

Rakesh was working as parking attendant in MCD parking, while Ashok runs a paan shop, police added.

₹3,000 cr scam in drains desilting, alleges BJP



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP on Monday protested near the AAP office at Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, ITO alleging a scam in desilting of city drains. The BJP has accused the AAP of siphoning off of funds up to Rs 3,000 crore, meant for desilting by the Public Works Department as well as the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) both of which are led by the AAP at the city government and the civic level.

The BJP protesters trying to march from ITO towards the AAP office were stopped at a barricade by the Delhi Police. Those trying to cross the barricade were detained by the security personnel. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva alleged a "scam" in desilting of drains in the city. "It is clear that the drains have not been cleaned and the budget for the same has been misappropriated as roads, colonies and markets in the city are submerged," he said.

Taking a dig at the Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi BJP president addressing the protesters, also attacked AAP convener and

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for doing political campaigning while the city was battling massive waterlogging and traffic mess.

"Yesterday when Delhi was struggling with waterlogging, Kejriwal was campaigning in Haryana's Panchkula. He should be ashamed for making people face traffic jams and waterlogging. I had not witnessed such a mess in Delhi before...As is visible across the city in the last two days," he claimed.

Sachdeva said till now Delhi has witnessed Kejriwal government's liquor scam, Sheesh Mahal scam, Jal Board and D.T.C. Delhi was plagued with scams but now Delhi is shocked to see the scams done by the Kejriwal Government's Public Works Department, Jal Board and MCD in the name of pre-monsoon cleaning of colony drains, sewers and large drains.

The Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri also hit out at the Kejriwal government and demanded a high level probe into alleged corruption in desilting of drains.

MCD urged to audit weak, dangerous buildings

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP leader Praveen Shankar Kapoor on Monday demanded that the Municipal Corporation of Delhi carry out a survey of "weak" and "dangerous" buildings to prevent any untoward incident amid heavy rainfall in the city.

In a letter to MCD commissioner Gyanesh Bharti, Kapoor urged him to order a survey of weak and dangerous buildings in the national capital to prevent accidents that occur every year during and after monsoon.

He said, in view of the raging monsoon this year, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) should immedi-

ately conduct a real survey of the dangerous old buildings and shift those living in them to safer places so that any accident due to the collapse of buildings during the monsoon can be prevented.

The BJP spokesperson also claimed that the civic body surveyed the buildings in the past for the sake of it and that as recently as Sunday, various incidents of house collapse, balcony collapse and school wall collapse were reported from Civil Lines, Mukundpur, Seelampur and Srinivaspuri regions of the city.

According to Kapoor, it is hilarious that only 57 buildings are in dangerous category in Delhi as per the MCD survey.

Govt, MCD schools closed today after heavy rain forecast

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

All schools run, aided or recognised by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi will be closed on July 11 in view of heavy rainfall in the city and adverse weather conditions forecast, according to an official order issued on Monday.

The order issued by the education department of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), however, mentioned that these schools shall be closed only for students. Department heads and teachers shall come to schools, and all offices will also be functional, it said.

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

Several parts of Gurugram remained waterlogged on Monday even as the intensity of rains reduced over the past 24 hours. The city received light showers on Monday afternoon but no traffic congestion was reported.

Despite water being drained out from the main carriageway of the Delhi-Jaipur highway and some other roads, several parts of Gurugram, including Mahavir Chowk, Arjun Nagar, Sector 51, Sohna Road, Pratap Nagar, and low-lying houses in DLF phases 1 and 3, Palam Vihar, Sectors 4, 5, 9, 10A, 48 and Suncity

PWD for emergency response teams to deal with accidental cases in city

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Public Works Department (PWD) of the Delhi government has directed for the constitution of emergency response teams (ERTs) to deal with accidents in the aftermath of two deaths at different work sites of the agency.

The teams shall submit a preliminary report on such incidents, along with geo-tagged photographs of the sites, to the PWD Secretariat within four hours of the incidents, according to an official communication, which also said that deaths on account of any incident will invite blacklisting of the contractor.

A labourer was electrocuted while working at an under-construction building



on the premises of the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash (LNJP) hospital here earlier this month.

In another incident reported on June 30, Ajit Sharma (51) was returning home after dropping a passenger in east Delhi's Bhajanpura when his autorickshaw got stuck in a ditch filled with water near Wazirabad. When he got out of the vehicle to push it, he fell into the ditch and drowned.

"To effectively deal with emergency situations and accidents, Emergency Response Teams (ERTs) shall be constituted immediately in each of the civil and electrical divisions engaged in construction and maintenance of buildings, roads and flyovers etc.," a circular issued by PWD Special Secretary Shashanka Ala read.

The ERTs will comprise three members -- the executive engineer, the assistant engineer and the junior engineer concerned.

According to the circular, the first priority of the teams would be to undertake restoration and rehabilitation measures in coordination with other agencies or departments to avoid further damage.

The PWD Secretariat and

SE (Works) will be informed over the phone following any such incident. They shall immediately reach the spot of incident (within two hours of report of the incident) and coordinate with other agencies like Delhi Police, Disaster Management, Delhi Fire Services etc. For rehabilitation measures, ERT shall submit a preliminary report along with geo-tagged photographs of the incident to the PWD Secretariat within four hours of the incident," the circular read.

A detailed inquiry is to be conducted by the teams headed by the superintending engineers concerned with other members within 24 hours of such incidents. The inquiry reports have to be submitted to the PWD Secretariat.

Parts of Gurugram remain waterlogged

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

Township remained waterlogged on Monday. Many roads near the Gurugram Interstate Bus Terminal bus are submerged but no arrangements have been made so far by the administration to drain the water, locals said.

The roads leading to Sector 10 from Pataudi Road are also flooded, hindering pedestrian movement. Following an alert by the Meteorological Department for heavy rains in many districts of Haryana, the state government has advised people not to venture out unless necessary. Guidelines have been issued to shut schools if required.

LG OK's translocation of 292 trees for defence, rlys projects

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has approved the recommendation for the transplantation and translocation of 214 and 78 trees respectively for the defence and railway projects at Tughlakabad and Shakurbasti area in the national capital.

Giving details on Monday, the Raj Niwas said Saxena has granted permissions for transplantation and afforestation of 214 trees for the construction of building for the defence project at Tughlakabad and 78 trees for the construction of maintenance depot for Vande

Bharat trains at Shakurbasti under DPTA, 1994.

While the defence project at Tughlakabad involves 2.15 hectares of land area, the railway project at Shakurbasti involves a total of 10.12 hectares.

The compensatory plantation of 2140 and 780 saplings (10 times the number of trees permitted for transplantation/translocation) for both the projects consisting of species Neem, Amaltas, Peepal, Pilkhan, Gular, Bargad, Desi Kikar and Arjun along with other native species shall be carried out by the user agencies for the two projects. The user

agencies have deposited the compensatory cost for this purpose.

The applications of the concerned agencies of the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Railways had been submitted on 19.01.2023 and 21.02.2023 respectively.

It may be noted that similar central government projects, that included construction of Metro Phase-IV, UER, IIT-Delhi, RRTS, GPRA Colony and Delhi-Dehradun Expressway were pending in want of permissions by the Delhi Government for more than three years in many instances.

BJP forms MPs panel to probe WB polls violence

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A committee of BJP MPs headed by former law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad will visit West Bengal to investigate the cases of violence during the panchayat polls in the state and present "at the earliest" a report to party president J P Nadda.

The team would meet the families of the victims, record their statements and probe the "complicity" of state administration and alleged "non-action", sources in the party said.

While Prasad is the "fact-finding" committee's convener, the other members are former Mumbai police commissioner Satyapal Singh, Rajdeep Roy and party vice-president Rekha Verma. The delegation will reach the state on Tuesday and has been asked to submit its report at the earliest. At least 15 people were killed in the violence during polling in West



Bengal on Saturday, BJP has accused the state's ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) of using violence as its "guarantee" to stay in power.

The party last week alleged that bullet has overtaken ballot in the TMC-ruled West Bengal and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee-led government had been using criminals for violence during the elections by giving them protection

Condemning the wide-spread violence in the Panchayat elections, Union Minister Anurag Thakur had accused that administration in Bengal was acting at the behest of the TMC.

He indirectly also alleged that the Congress and left were "hand-in-glove" with the TMC and wondered "why Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi are silent".

India, Malaysia vow to expand def ties

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/KUALA LUMPUR

In an effort to further boost India's "Act East policy" and strengthen bilateral defence ties with Malaysia, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday held extensive discussions with his Malaysian counterpart Dato' Seri Mohamad Hasan in Kuala Lumpur. He also called on Prime Minister Y B Dato' Seri Anwar bin Ibrahim, besides meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia Dato' Seri Diraja Zambry Abd Kadir.

Both sides discussed initiatives to further expand bilateral defence ties, with particular focus on identifying ways to strengthen industrial cooperation during talks between the two Defence Ministers.

They reaffirmed their commitment to fully implement the Enhanced Strategic Partnership based on mutual trust and understanding, common interests and shared values of democracy and rule of law, defence ministry officials said



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Prime Minister of Malaysia Anwar Ibrahim during a meeting, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Monday

in New Delhi. The two Ministers agreed to the next Malaysia-India Defence Cooperation Committee (MIDCOM) meeting which is being planned in India later this year.

Rajnath highlighted the potential of the Indian defence industry with capacity and capability to cooperate with Malaysian Armed Forces in its inventory modernisation and maintenance plans. Both Ministers approved

amendment in the Memorandum of Understanding on Defence Cooperation between India and Malaysia signed in 1993, through 'Exchange of Letters' (EoL).

This amendment will act as an enabler to expand bilateral defence cooperation in the areas of mutual interest. Later, Rajnath called on the Malaysian Prime Minister and conveyed warm greetings of Prime Minister Narendra

Modi. Recalling his successful visit to India in 2019, the Malaysian Prime Minister reciprocated the greetings by highlighting that he has great love for people of India and that Prime Minister Modi is his personal friend.

The Malaysian Prime Minister expressed appreciation of the strong cultural bonds between both nations. Rajnath briefed the Malaysian Prime Minister about the fruitful and productive defence dialogue held earlier in the day.

The meeting focused on measures to realise the full potential of Enhanced Strategic Partnership. Rajnath also met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia Dato' Seri Diraja Dr Zambry Abd Kadir, during which they exchanged views on matters of bilateral importance and cooperation in international fora.

India's recognition of ASEAN centrality and importance of peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo Pacific region were discussed. The meeting concluded with India's assurance to partner Malaysia

in its efforts to accelerate self-reliance of the Malaysian Defence Industry. Later, Rajnath felicitated Second Lieutenant Sundaram, a 99-year old Indian National Army (INA) veteran, who fought alongside Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at Burma border. This is the first bilateral visit after the establishment of Enhanced Strategic Partnership, which was announced during the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Malaysia in 2015.

"Called on the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mr @anwaribrahim in Kuala Lumpur. Deeply appreciate his positive approach and interest towards further deepening India-Malaysia bilateral relations," Rajnath tweeted.

"Had an excellent meeting with the Defence Minister of Malaysia, Mr. Mohamad Hasan in Kuala Lumpur today. We reviewed the diverse pillars of the extensive bilateral defence engagement and discussed the roadmap for the 4th Decade of India-Malaysia Defence Cooperation," he said.

Divyangs protest over lack of social security

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Braving rain and hardships, several persons with disabilities (PwDs) from across the country on Monday assembled at Jantar Mantar in the national capital on Monday seeking social security measures such as better pension; provision of Antayodaya Anna Yojana cards for the disabled; jobs under MNREGA, problems with the Unique ID for persons with disabilities etc which were must to live a dignified life.

The protest was organised by the National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled (NPRD), an affiliating body of state level disability rights organizations. Muralidharan, General Secretary of the NPRD said that a memorandum was also submitted to Secretary of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with



Disabilities (DEPwD) Rajesh Aggarwal wherein his attention was drawn to various problems being faced by the sector. For instance, they said that since 2011 there has been no upward revision in the pension amount given under the Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension scheme. It has been stagnant at a miserly Rs 300.

"Also, the criteria is so stringent and exclusionary that the overwhelming mass of the disabled population is left out

of its ambit. To avail this pension, one has to have a disability of 80% or more and his family should have a BPL card. As a result, a mere 3.8% of the disabled population identified by the 2011 census is covered," said Muralidharan.

Given the high cost of living as also the added burden induced by disability needs, we demand that the minimum pension should be fixed at Rs. 5,000/- with a guarantee of periodic revision linked with

the cost of living index. The criteria should be revised to cover all those with 40% disability and above.

While Section 24 of the Act also provides for caregiver allowance, unemployment allowance etc. at the ground level no scheme has been launched. "The primary caregiver in overwhelming number of cases is always the mother, who has to give up her employment to look after the disabled child and has to face additional burdens. It is to tide over at least part of this loss that the caregiver allowance becomes necessary," the memorandum pointed out.

The disability rights experts also sought delinking of schemes from Aadhar as in many States the exemptions in biometrics granted to disabled are not followed in many places, leading to hardships in procuring Aadhar by the disabled.

Jaishankar files nomination for Rajya Sabha from Guj

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar filed his nomination papers for the Rajya Sabha elections from Gujarat, while the Trinamool Congress announced six candidates, including Derek O'Brien, for the upcoming elections on July 24.

The Election Commission of India has set the last date for filing nominations as July 13, with the withdrawal deadline on July 17. The elections will be held for 10 Rajya Sabha seats in Goa, Gujarat, and West Bengal.

Out of the 11 seats from Gujarat, eight are held by the BJP, including Jaishankar, and polls will be conducted for these three seats. Accompanied by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and BJP Gujarat unit



president C R Paatil, Jaishankar submitted his nomination papers to Returning Officer at the state Assembly complex. The Congress on Friday said it would not field candidates for polls to three Rajya Sabha seats from Gujarat as it did not have enough MLAs in 182-member state Assembly. The BJP won a record 156 seats in the Gujarat Assembly polls held last

year, while the Congress could win just 17 seats. Meanwhile, The Trinamool Congress has announced the names of six candidates, including party spokesperson Derek O'Brien, for forthcoming Rajya Sabha elections. The others include Dola Sen, Sukhendu Sekhar Ray, Samirul Islam, Prakash Chik Baraik and Saket Gokhale.

Centre gets 4 weeks to reply to plea seeking review petition of master plan of Himalayan Region

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday granted four more weeks to the Centre to file its response to a plea seeking assessment of carrying capacity and master plans of Indian Himalayan Region spanning across 13 States and Union Territories. A bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha, which issued notices to the government on February 17, took note of submission of Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhatia who sought time to file the reply.

Carrying capacity is maximum population size that an ecosystem can sustain without getting degraded. The apex court was hearing a plea filed by Ashok Kumar Raghav seeking assessment of carrying capacity and master plans prepared for Indian Himalayan Region. PNS

PM degree row: Delhi HC refuses to advance date of hearing of plea

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday refused to advance the hearing of a petition by Delhi University (DU) challenging the Central Information Commission's order directing the varsity to allow inspection of records of all students who had passed the BA exam in 1978, the year Prime Minister Narendra Modi had graduated from there.

Justice Subramonium Prasad issued notice to DU on an application seeking early hearing in the case and listed it for October 13, the date already fixed in the main petition.

The High Court had stayed the Commission's order dated December 21, 2016 on January 23, 2017. Besides DU's challenge to the Central Information Commission order, the court was also hearing other petitions which raised similar legal issues pertaining to disclosure of details of results of certain examinations.

The CIC order was passed on the request of Neeraj's application under the Right to Information Act, seeking details related to students who had appeared for the Bachelor of Arts examination conducted by DU in 1978.

During the hearing, senior advocate Sanjay Hegde, appearing for Neeraj, submitted since the matter was pending for a long time, an early hearing was warranted.

"The matter is listed in October. Take it from me, it will be disposed of then, provided I continue in the roster. It does not impress why it (rescheduling of the hearing date) should be done," the judge said.

In its challenge to the CIC order, DU has contended that the order of the RTI authority is "arbitrary" and "untenable in law", as the information sought to be disclosed is "third party



personal information".

The DU said in its plea that "it was completely illegal for the CIC to direct the petitioner (DU) to disclose an information which is available to it in its fiduciary capacity, that too without rendering any finding pertaining to any pressing necessity or overwhelming public interest warranting disclosure of such information on account of overwhelming/larger public interest sought to be achieved through such disclosure."

Delhi University has earlier told the court the CIC order has far-reaching adverse consequences for the petitioner and all universities in the country which hold degrees of crores of students in a fiduciary capacity. It has claimed the RTI Act has been reduced to a "joke" with queries seeking records of all students who had passed the BA examination in 1978, including that of Prime Minister Modi.

The CIC, in its order, had asked DU to allow inspection of the records, while rejecting the contention of its Central Public Information Officer that it was third party personal information, saying there was "neither merit, nor legality" in it.

It had directed the university to facilitate inspection of the relevant register where complete information about the results of all students who passed the Bachelor of Arts examination in the year 1978 with their roll numbers, names, the names of their family.

Cong invites Kejriwal for B'luru Opp meet

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to avoid being labeled as an obstacle to Opposition unity, the Congress has extended an invitation to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for the second meeting of Opposition parties in Bengaluru scheduled later this week.

However, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), led by Kejriwal, has yet to respond to the invitation. The party said that its decision would depend on the advance announcement of the Congress' stance regarding the contentious ordinance that limits the control of the Delhi government over bureaucrats. AAP MP in Rajya Sabha Raghav Chadha said that accepting the invitation to the Bengaluru meet on July 17-18 would hinge upon the Congress' assurance of publicly



announcing its stance "at least 15 days before the Parliament's Monsoon Session."

"Chadha stated, "We need to recall the Patna Opposition meeting when its leaders stated that the Congress would announce its stance well before the Parliament Session, 15 days prior to the session. Any discussions regarding attendance will occur only after their announcement opposing the ordinance."

He claimed that during

the June 23 Patna meeting, Congress leaders said they would announce their opposition to the ordinance soon. The June 23 meeting had encountered difficulties after a heated exchange between Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and Kejriwal on the issue. Kejriwal had urged the Congress to publicly declare its stance against the ordinance during the press conference following the Patna meeting, but the Congress expressed its reluctance to do so. Kharge informed Kejriwal and other leaders that the party needed to follow its internal processes before taking a stance on the matter.

Following the meeting, the AAP released a statement saying it would not be part of any Opposition meeting or alliance where the Congress is present, as the latter was not willing to announce its stand.

Tirupati Infra CMD arrested for duping banks of ₹289.15 cr

New Delhi: The CBI on Monday said it has arrested a Chairman and Managing Director of a Mumbai-based private company for defrauding a consortium of banks to the tune of Rs 289.15 crore.

The agency arrested Jag Mohan Garg, Chairman and Managing Director of Tirupati Infraprojects Private Limited and produced him before a special CBI court that sent him to the agency's custody till July 13.

The CBI registered an FIR against the company on May 25, 2022 for allegedly causing a loss to the tune of Rs 289.15 crore to a consortium of banks comprising the Bank of India, the Union Bank of India, the Canara Bank, the Bank of Baroda and the UCO Bank by illegally diverting loan funds.

The consortium led by the Bank of India had granted a term loan of Rs 300 crore to the company between 2009 and 2014 for the construction of a hotel at Paschim Vihar, New Delhi, along with commercial spaces.

"It was further alleged that the accused had sold several commercial/retail/office spaces of the said hotel-cum-commercial building to various parties without intimating the lender banks and funds obtained from these buyers were diverted/siphoned off," the CBI said in a statement.

After the registration of the FIR, the agency conducted searches at premises of the accused on May 27 last year, leading to recovery of several incriminating documents. PNS

ED raids in fake website scam case, freezes ₹1.3 cr

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday said it has conducted searches at various places in Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra in connection with Fake Website Scam, which has resulted into seizure of cash amounting to Rs 1.3 crore as well as freezing of bank accounts having balances amounting to Rs 15.8 lakh.

The ED initiated investigation under the Prevention Money Laundering Act (PMLA) on the basis of an FIR registered by Uttarakhnad police against various persons regarding cheating through the fake website www.glc.ltd.

During the investigation, it has come to light that the website www.glc.ltd along with other individuals was involved in luring various persons to invest in different trades through the website and cheat

them, the ED said in a statement.

The funds so collected were further transferred to other companies/individuals and thereafter these amounts were laundered outside India in the guise of remittance for import through the companies Digital Media and Entertainment, Irongate Productions Pvt. Ltd., Shelly Cargo & Transport Private Limited and Sunheri Exim Pvt. Ltd. among others having bank accounts with the State Bank of Mauritius, Nariman Point, Mumbai, it said.

"The action has resulted in seizure/ freezing of cash as well as bank balances amounting to Rs 1.46 crore along with various incriminating documents and corroborative evidence to prove the offence of Money Laundering u/s 3 of PMLA, 2002," it said. PNS

Shah to launch conclave on strengthening PACS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah will inaugurate a day-long mega conclave in the national Capital next week, aimed at spurring the cooperative movement in the country. The conclave, titled "Strengthening PACS through FPOs", will focus on ways to enhance the strength of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) through Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) to fulfill Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "Sahakar se Samridhhi."

The National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) will host the conclave in collaboration with the Union Ministry of Cooperation on July 14, 2023. The event will witness the participation of a panel of experts from the sector and members from FPOs

across the country. Recognizing FPOs as a significant driver of agricultural transformation, the Modi Government has undertaken various initiatives in recent years to tap into their potential. These collective entities formed by farmers are viewed as crucial for achieving the goal of a USD 5 trillion economy.

Under the "Formation and Promotion of 10,000 FPOs" scheme, spearheaded by the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, and with the support of Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah, the NCDC has been entrusted with the task of establishing 1100 new FPOs in the cooperative sector.

The scheme aims to strengthen such entities to enable small and marginal farmers/producers to access better prices, reduce transportation costs, and enhance

overall productivity. Each FPO receives financial assistance of Rs. 33 lakh under the FPOs Scheme. Additionally, Cluster Based Business Organizations (CBBOs) receive Rs. 25 lakh per FPO to promote and provide guidance to the FPOs. The government has been actively promoting the integration of PACS into the FPO scheme, allowing farmers to expand their range of activities, including the supply of production inputs, agricultural equipment, and processing and value addition services such as cleaning, sorting, grading, packaging, storage, and transportation. With a massive membership base of around 13 crore farmers, PACS primarily engage in short-term credit and the distribution of seeds, fertilizers, and other agricultural necessities. Currently, more than 86% of farmers in country are classified as small and marginal.

1 more arrested in 2022 seizure of explosives in WB

New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Monday arrested one more person in the June 2022 West Bengal case related to the seizure of a huge cache of electric detonators, Nonels (non-electric detonators) and explosives. This takes the total number of arrests in the case to seven.

The NIA arrested Manoj Ghosh, a resident of district Birbhum, West Bengal from Bahadurpur on the basis of disclosures by three previously arrested accused, Rintu SK, Merajuddin Ali Khan alias Meraj Khan and Mir Md. Nuruzzaman alias Romeo. The NIA had chargesheeted Meraj and Prince on June 28 in the case. Manoj has been identified as one of the illegal miners (illegal operator of a stone quarry)

to whom Rintu SK used to supply gelatin, detonators and ammonium nitrate. A raid conducted at Manoj's illegal godown on June 28, 2023 had led to the seizure of one pistol along with ammunition, 16.25 kg of gelatin sticks (total of 130 in number) and one bag containing 50 kg of ammonium nitrate, the NIA said.

The case was registered in September 2022 following the seizure of around 81,000 electric detonators from a vehicle in the Md. Bazar police station area in Birbhum by a team of STF, West Bengal. The vehicle's driver, Ashish Keora was also arrested, and subsequent searches had led to the seizure of another 2,525 electric detonators, 27,000 kg of ammonium nitrate and 1,625 kg of gelatin sticks from an illegal godown. PNS

Lakhs of devotees throng Kashi Vishwanath Temple

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Rarely such a huge rush of devotees was seen at one of the dwadasa jyotirlingas Kashi Vishwanath Temple (KVT) temple as it was witnessed during the day when not only from Godowlia and Maidagin but also from the river side, long queues of people crawled towards the temple throughout the day on the first Monday in the auspicious month of Shrawan. As expected the rush of devotees was in lakhs as even during the midnight hours, there were more than a kilometre long lines from Dashashwamedh ghat via Godowlia side and Maidagin. Even the lines of devotees from Lalita Ghat were long.

Besides, thousands of saffron-clad kanwariyas also thronged there and the echoes of traditional slogan 'Har Har Mahadev', along with 'Bol Bom' rent in the air throughout the day. As this year, due to 'adimas' (extra month), the Shrawan will be of two months long in which there will be eight Mondays and it is expected that during the Shrawan this year, the number of devotees may cross one crore mark and on every Monday, the number of devotees is expected to be between seven to 10 lakh. It was the second Shrawan since the inauguration of the sprawling Kashi Vishwanath Corridor



Rush of devotees at Kashi Vishwanath Temple on first Monday of auspicious Shrawan month in Varanasi.

(KVC) by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 13 in 2021 when the KV temple was directly linked with the river Ganga at Lalita Ghat. In view of this rush, elaborate security arrangements were made and no vehicles were allowed to move between Godowlia and Maidagin throughout the day. To maintain law and order, the devotees were checked at many places through metal detectors. Senior administrative and police officers were present there to keep watch on the stock of situation in KVC premises. All the activities were also watched through various CCTV cameras. To avoid congregation the devotees were asked to move towards Gyanvapi only through barricading and Rapid Action Force (RAF), para-military and PAC jawans were deployed both inside and outside of the premises.

Right from the early wee hours after Mangla Aarti, the devotees started thronging the temple and there were continuous lines of devotees on both sides of the temple including Maidagin and Godowlia as well as Lalita Ghat. A large number of saffron-clad kanwariyas turned out this year from Prayagraj and other places. For the conveniences of the devotees, at several places big LED screens were installed to display the activities of garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum) as the devotees were not allowed to touch the Shivling and they offered jalabhishek through big metal structure from outside the garbhagriha.

Devotees throng Shiv temples

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Long queues were formed at Manakameshwar temple here on the first Monday of the auspicious month of Shrawan. Devotees started reaching there at 3.00 am to be the first to offer milk and 'bilva patra' on the Shiv Linga there. By 7 am the queue was more than one kilometre long.

For the convenience of devotees the temple administration and police asked them to form two separate queues for women and men.

Besides Manakameshwar temple thousands thronged other Shiv temples, including Dashashwamedh, Veni Madhav Mahadev, Someshwar Mahadev, Padila Mahadev, Haatkeswar Nath and the shivalaya at Civil Lines Hanuman Mandir.

All big and small temples of Lord Shiva were over crowded on Monday where people performed 'jalabhishek', 'dugdhabhishek' and other worships.

Kanwariyas too were in full swing on Monday. Clad in saffron from top to bottom, they reached Dashashwamedh ghat with decorated vehicles, bands and DJ to collect Gangajal in their pots.

Immediately after filling pitchers and other pots, the Kanwariyas left for Varanasi, mainly on foot, to offer the Gangajal of Prayagraj to Kashi



Kanwariyas filling pots with Gangajal

Vishwanath. One side (three lanes) of GT Road has been reserved for the Kanwariyas who match

towards Varanasi from Prayagraj in the holy month of Shrawan. Devotees arrange for the stay and food for the

Kanwariyas on their way to Varanasi. Bhajan and kirtan is arranged there the whole night.

Pushp Varsha on Shiv bhakts from copter

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

For the first time, Pushp Varsha (showering of flowers) was done on the Shiv bhakts from the helicopter on the first Monday of the auspicious month of Shrawan. Earlier, such Pushp Varsha by the copter was seen on the doctors and para-medical staff of some of the leading local hospitals of the city including Sir Sunderlal Hospital in Banaras Hindu University (SSH BHU) during the corona pandemic period.

Boarding on a helicopter, the Divisional Commissioner (DC) Kaushal Raj Shama, Commissioner of Police (CP) Mutha Ashok Jain, District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam and others from the Police Lines helipad, carrying about two quintals of flower petals of rose, marigold etc reached famous Markandey Mahadev Temple on the Varanasi-Ghazipur road, located near the confluence of rivers Ganga



DC, CP and DM going to board a helicopter at Police Lines for Pushp Varsha on Shiv bhakts in Varanasi on Monday.

and Gomti, about 25 kilometres from here in Kaithi, and did the Pushp Varsha on the devotees lined up there. Lakhs of devotees were lined up there reaching from different adjoining districts of this region of Purvanchal (eastern UP).

Then the helicopter flying over the Shri Kashi Vishwanath

Dham (corridor) showered the flower petals on the devotees. Seeing the copter, the entire area echoed with the slogans of Har Har Mahadev and Bol Bom. Later, the officers reached on Kanwar Yatra route on Varanasi-Prayagraj highways in Mohansarai areas and did the Pushp Varsha again. A

large number of saffron-clad kanwariyas come here to offer jalabhishek at Kashi Vishwanath Temple during Shrawan after carrying sacred Gangajal from Sangam, confluence of rivers Ganga, Yamuna and invisible Saraswati, from Prayagraj district after walking over 120 kilometres.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Cloud burst over the hills and overflowing dams and barrages have cautioned the administration here in Prayagraj where water level of the Ganga and the Yamuna--are bound to swell in the days to come.

The Hathini Kund Barrage of Haryana has released 45,000 cusecs of water in the Yamuna which will arrive here on Wednesday.

Dams and barrages on the twin rivers are almost full owing to heavy rains on the hills in Uttarakhand. Same is the condition in Himanchal Pradesh. Now the dams and barrages have started releasing

water in bulk. Though the rivers in the plains are not flooded, so the impact of this water release will not be very serious, still flood level will rise suddenly and people have to shift to safer places.

Rains in the plains are bringing enough water in the tributaries of Ganga and Yamuna, so these rivers will also swell.

NARROW ESCAPE: Head constable Himmat Singh and his family members had a narrow escape when a portion of official residence in Khuldabad police station premises collapsed on Sunday night following heavy downpour. He is posted at present at Mutthiganj police station, but

resided in block A of type two quarters at Khuldabad police station.

Family members were sleeping when the balcony and some other portions of the house collapsed with a deafening sound. People from other quarters also came out and were relieved to know that all members of Himmat Singh's family were safe.

TWO BOYS DROWN IN RIVER: Two boys drowned in the Yamuna on Sunday evening. Their bodies could be fished out after two hours by the police and the local divers.

Sumit Hela (15) and Praveen Sonkar (17) of Gol Park, Attarsuiya reached Baluaghat in the evening and

entered the river through Baradari. Suddenly Sumit slipped and went into the deep water. Praveen, in an attempt to save his friend also moved forward and both the boys drowned.

Children playing near the Baradari raised alarm. The divers and police reached the spot and made all possible efforts to trace the boys and could fish out their bodies after two hours. By then their family members had reached Baluaghat. They rushed the boys to SRN Hospital where doctors declared them as brought dead. Sumit was a student of class IX while Praveen used to sell vegetables in Attarsuiya itself.

Religious fervour grips Kashi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Religious fervour gripped this city of Lord Shiva on the first Monday in the auspicious month of Shrawan when heavy rush of people was seen not only at one of the dwadasa jyotirlingas Kashi Vishwanath Temple but also at several other famous temples located in the city as well as its outskirts. Maximum rush was seen at Markandey Mahadev on Varanasi-Ghazipur highway located near the confluence of rivers Ganga and Gomti at Kaithi. This temple is known as parallel to jyotirlingas.

Besides, there was heavy rush of devotees at all famous temples including Mahamritunjya Mahadev (Daranagar), Gauri Kedareswar (Kedar Ghat), Jogeshwar Mahadev (Ishwargangi), Omkleshwar Mahadev (Chittanpura), Teel Bhandeshwar (Pandey Haveli), Sarangnath Mahadev (Sarnath) and many others in the city areas. In the outskirts, a heavy rush of devotees was also seen at all the Shiva temples located on Panchkoshi Marg including Karmdeswar Mahadev, Bhim Chandi, Rameshwar Mahadev, Paach Pandev and Kapildhara. Apart from these famous temples, heavy rush of devotees was also seen at Vishwanath temple in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) premises and Shool Tankeshwar Mahadev and scores of all others as the city is famous for having the replicas of all the dwadasa jyotirlingas.

Meanwhile, various social organisations served the devo-



Heavy rush of devotees at Markandey Mahadev temple at Kaithi in Varanasi on Monday.

tees and kanwariyas by providing them drinking water, refreshment and other facilities on the occasion. The wardens and volunteers of Civil Defence were deployed in Shiva temples on the first Monday for security arrangements and assistance to the visitors. There was a huge crowd of visitors in the Sarangnath Mahadev Temple in Sarnath so the volunteers of the Civil Defence remained deployed there with promptness under the leadership of divisional warden Sanjay Kumar Rai. Arvind Kumar Vishwakarma, Ajay Srivastava, Ayan Bose, Vijay Kumar, Rajesh Srivastava, Sachchidanand Devvanshi and other volunteers were engaged in security arrangements at the temple.

YADAV BANDHUS TAKE OUT PROCESSION: Maintaining their nine decades old tradition, the Yadav Bandhus offered jalabhishek at nine leading Shiv temples including Kashi Vishwanath

Temple on the occasion of first Monday in the auspicious month of Shrawan. Rush was seen in the procession where the participants were also seen dancing on the beat of traditional instruments. Even during the corona pandemic period, they had maintained tradition with just a participation of a few in the procession carrying flags of Chandravanshi Gop Seva Samiti.

However, like last year, hundreds of participants were seen in the procession carrying Gangajal (sacred water of holy river Ganga). After carrying sacred water of river Ganga at Kedar Ghat, the Yadav Bandhus first visited Gauri Kedareswar. After that they reached Teel Bhandeshwar (Pandey Haveli) and Sheela Mata (Dashashwamedh Ghat) and offered prayers there.

Then after visiting Aadleshwar Mahadev, they reached Kashi Vishwanath Temple and offered prayers. For the procession, special securi-

ty and other arrangements were made. Continuing their procession ahead, the Yadav Bandhus reached Maha Mrityunjaya Mahadev and then they offered prayers at Trilochan Mahadev and Omkleshwar Mahadev. They ended their pilgrimage journey at Laat Bhairav. However, many of them also reached Sarangnath Mahadev (Sarnath) where they concluded their journey.

The Yadav Bandhus started their traditional procession in 1932 by five friends of the samaj when the country faced an acute drought but after offering prayers at different temples, the areas had experienced three days of good rains and since then they are maintaining this tradition. The procession was led by samiti chief Lalji Yadav and attended by Ayushman Yadav Chandravanshi, Vinay Yadav, Abhishek Yadav, Manoj Yadav and Sharad Yadav and many others.

Book on agricultural development released

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Senior Executive Director (Unit Head) IFFCO Pulpur Ghyanagar Sanjay Kudesia released a book 'A Critical Appraisal of India Self-Reliance in Agriculture' written by Dr Pradeep Kumar Rai, Nano Lab technician and other co-authors.

This book is based on India's agricultural development and agricultural self-reliance. It throws light on achievement of food security, green economy, unexpected growth in the production of oilseeds, pulses, wheat and rice and its reasons.

JGM Nano Arun Kumar, DGM P&A Shambhu Shekhar, PRO Sonu Tiwari, PC Mishra congratulated the author Dr Pradeep Kumar Rai on the release of the book.

FIR LODGED: A coaching owner in Rambagh locality allegedly cheated students and handed them over fake appointment letters of Metro Rail Corporation after pocketing over Rs 10 lakh. An FIR in this regard has been lodged with the Georgetown police by the victims.

Shrawan Singh of Ghazipur a student of the above coach-



ing institute he returned home after one year. Suddenly he received a phone call from the coaching owner Sukumar Sarkela. He told Shrawan that one of his friends was there in Metro Rail and he is willing to appoint some hands. Shrawan arrived here with his friend Aman and Abhishek for this purpose. The coaching owner met them at Balson crossing and asked them to transfer money. He assured that appointment letters will arrive within two days. They paid Rs

10.30 lakh and received appointment letters. A day before joining date, they were told that the joining had been postponed. This happened almost every time. When they asked him to repay the money, he switched off the phone. On being contacted on WhatsApp, he started abusing and refused to repay the amount.

The Georgetown police said that an FIR in this regard has been registered and investigation is on.

EMINENT NAKKARA

PLAYER PASSES AWAY: Eminent Nakkara player of Prayagraj Master Phool Chand breathed his last here on Monday morning at SRN Hospital of Moti Lal Nehru Medical College after prolonged illness. He was around 80. Though he lived in Phaphamau, his last rites were performed in his village in Soraoon. Phool Chand had become the synonymous with nakkara here and he performed on his drums (nakkara) in hundreds of nautankis all around India. He had also participated in a good number prestigious music concerts in Taal Vadya Kutcher with other percussion instruments. He had been associated with All India Radio for several years. For the past one decade he had been actively performing in nautankis and musical plays staged by Vinod Rastogi Smriti Sansthan. He had toured to Jaipur with this team in October 2022. His last performance was with the North Central Zone Cultural Centre where Padmashri Ram Dayal Sharma had been invited to direct nautanki Sultana Daku. Just a couple of days after this show, Phool Chand faced a paralytic attack and his condition continued to deteriorate.

Minister inspects site of overbridge

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Anupriya Patel inspected the site of the overbridge at Aamghat railway crossing on Sunday. She said after construction people will get relief from frequent congestion. About the project she said it was to be constructed at a cost of Rs 60.07 crore which will include approach roads along with the overbridge. The minister said the work was to start on August

1 and was to be completed by March next year. During the inspection the minister was accompanied by MLA Dr Vinod Kumar Bind, district president BJP Brijbhushan Singh and Apna Dal workers.

SIX COUPLES REUNITE: Under Project Milan programme six couples reunited on Sunday. A family counselling centre is functioning in Police Lines in which cases of family disputes are being settled through counselling. The counsellors hold

meetings of couples who are living separately due to misunderstandings. The counsellors succeeded in convincing six couples to live together and extended best wishes for their bright future. The entire process was conducted in the presence of the centre incharge sub-inspector Shashi Tiwari, counsellors Nirmala Rai, Parwati Pandey, Dr Krishna Singh and others.

FOUNDATION DAY: Principal Medical College Dr RB Kamal at a function organ-

ised under the aegis of Bharat Vikas Parishad on the occasion of its foundation day on Sunday said the culture in children was a must.

He said being a doctor he believed immunity is necessary for a healthy life and for it balanced diet was necessary. Chairman Nagar Palika Parishad Mirzapur Shyam Sundar Keshari as the guest of honour while stressing on sanitation said cleanliness of the city was not possible without proper support of public.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Veggie blight

Soaring vegetable prices inconvenience homes, but the Govt chooses to look away

In a groundbreaking turn of events that can only be described as the ultimate triumph of culinary capitalism, vegetable prices have reached astronomical levels, leaving consumers in a state of bewilderment and their wallets woefully famished. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, brace yourselves for the mind-boggling reality of vegetable inflation, a rather infrequent phenomenon that has taken the country by storm and left the government scratching its head, wondering how on earth the prices shot up despite adequate rainfall. Now you have to give due respect to veggies as you give to petrol, edible oil, pulses and so on. The price tags have turned vegetables into a luxury reserved for the elite. Gone are the days when one could saunter into a local market armed with a few rupees, confidently purchasing a cornucopia of fresh greens. Now, a humble chilli could water your eyes without even eating it and tomatoes could mock you red. The vegetable march to respect started with tomatoes but



has now been followed by ginger, garlic, chillies and the humble coriander. Who knew that the key to financial success lay not in stocks and bonds, but rather in investing in a thriving vegetable market? Today a man who grows tomatoes in his backyard is likely worth more than the guy who owns Tata Motors shares.

As the prices of these green gems skyrocket, consumers have been desperately seeking answers from the government. Alas, their pleas fall upon deaf ears, for the government is far too busy devising ingenious strategies to justify the prices or give plausible reasons for it. They would be soon coming up with the

logic of why costly veggies are better than cheaper veggies and that it is ultimately in our own good and how we are better off than Pakistan in this regard as well. But let us not be too hasty in criticising our government. After all, it has shown unparalleled mastery of raising prices without raising a finger at petroleum products, grocery items or electricity. It may soon announce a series of committees and subcommittees to analyse the root cause of the rise in prices and give recommendations that could be implemented in the next Five-Year Plan. The Government claims that the rise is due to factors beyond its control, such as climate. But we, the citizens, know better, don't we? We can see through their web of deceit and realise that it is their insidious machinations and hoarding that have led us to this difficult situation. The price hike of everyday items has become normal and the government seems least bothered about it. It is the common man who is worst hit by such sharp hike in consumable items. His budget goes haywire as does his patience. As we navigate this vegetable-induced economic turmoil, we can't help but only pray to God for a good monsoon and a good crop so that the prices come down; pleading with the Government won't work.

PICTALK



The Beas river flows above the danger mark following heavy monsoon rains, in Mandi

PTI

India's debt is within manageable limits

If we compare ourselves with the debt levels of emerging market economies then we are over-leveraged

Then finance minister Piyush Goyal stated in his 2019 budget speech that along with the completion of the fiscal deficit consolidation programme, India will focus on debt consolidation. After four years, the opposition has trained its gun on the rising debt and questions are raised on India's debt servicing capacity. It is simple economics that a higher liability requires more outlays towards interest and thereby reducing the resources available for general economic purposes. A higher debt level for the country will impact the borrowing costs also. More than the economics of debt, this has become a tool for the opposition to divert Modi's attack on the politics of freebies.

An analysis that is solely based on absolute numbers hides more than uncovering the underlying factors and impacts. India's internal debt increased from Rs. 16.91 lakh crores in 2004 to Rs. 54.85 lakh crore in 2014, an increase of 224 per cent. On a comparative term, internal debt registered an increase of 171 per cent over 9 years in the Modi era and stood at Rs. 148.88



lakh crores in March 2023. Similarly, there was a 66 per cent rise in external debt during the UPA era (USD 268 billion in 2004 to USD 446 billion in 2014) while it noted a modest increase of 36 per cent in the NDA era (USD 606 billion in March 2022) [source - RBI data].

Overall outstanding liabilities to GDP ratio of the central government stood at 50.5 per cent in 2014 which has gone up to 59 per cent in 2023 (source - Economic Survey 2022-23). It may be noted that external circumstances like the economic impact of the Covid pandemic and the committed amount of GST compensation to the state governments had majorly contributed to this increase. Centre's liabilities peaked in 2020-21 due to the Covid pandemic and thereafter it has come down. This rise was in line with the global trend

when public debt peaked in 2020 and came down in the next year, except in China & Germany where it continued to increase in 2021 as well (source - IMF).

The Covid pandemic resulted in an increase in central government debt from 50.9 per cent of GDP in 2019-20 to 61 per cent in 2021. Covid impact was on multiple fronts decline in tax collection, increase in government expenditure to support the economy, ad hoc expenditure on vaccination & free rationing to the poor, ongoing payout of committed compensation at the time of GST rollout, lower proceeds from disinvestment (non-tax receipts) due to deterioration of overall economic conditions etc.

If a natural calamity that shook the world is not considered while pulling the triggers on the Modi government for an increase in debt then it is blatant dishonesty of the opposition to mislead the people of this country. Pre Covid level debt of the centre was pretty much at the same level of 2014. From an overall debt perspective (centre & state both), India's debt-to-

GDP ratio increases marginally from 81 per cent in 2005 to 84 per cent in 2021.

Having identified the factors causing the increase in liability on the government's balance sheet, it is appropriate to benchmark ourselves with peers and discuss the way out. Comparing India's debt level with major economies of the world is misleading as their economy is more formal and thereby their ability to raise resources is better as compared to ours. If we compare ourselves with the debt levels of emerging market economies then we are over-leveraged.

Emerging market debt to GDP level was ~60 per cent in 2021 which was much lower as compared to ours. This higher debt proportion requires a higher payout towards debt service. Indian policymakers understand the importance of the need to bring it down. Now it is time for better resource allocation, improved tax administration and fast-track reforms are the keys to come out of the situation before it entrap us.

(The writer is Chartered Accountant, Author, and Public Policy Analyst)



SHASHANK SAURAV

At the national level, the BJP is yet to recover from the recent defeat in the Karnataka state polls. It depends on the potential for improvement in

the other poll-bound states of Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan. They comprise almost 50% of the Lok Sabha seats. Congress is ruling in Rajasthan and Chattisgarh, while BJP holds Madhya Pradesh.

At another level, the NCP split has sent shock waves to the Opposition camp. It hinders the Opposition's efforts to unite anti-BJP forces ahead of Lok Sabha polls. Sharad Pawar is one of the key players in the unity move.

Recently, Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar convened a meeting of non-BJP leaders in Patna, where 16 opposition parties participated. They presented a united front and promised to cooperate to achieve their common objective of defeating the BJP. Another meeting is scheduled for next month but has been postponed twice.

Bihar could be the next to face instability. The JD(U) had been a long-time BJP ally in Bihar. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar dumped the BJP last year and formed a government with the RJD, Congress, the Left, and other parties. If enough JD (U) MLAs defect, the BJP could form a govern-

ment in Bihar, significantly weakening the Opposition unity move. Bihar has 40 seats.

West Bengal could be another target as the BJP has tried hard to penetrate, only in vain. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is one of the active members of the proposed non-BJP coalition. The ongoing political uncertainty in Maharashtra may prolong due to legal battles in courts and the Election Commission. The decision of Speaker Narwekar could also be delayed. There are speculations that this rebellion might have happened with Pawar's blessings and that Sharad may have a secret plan up his sleeve.

Despite his numerous challenges, Pawar has proven to be a resilient and formidable figure. Pawar may have lost the battle against his nephew and a conniving BJP, but will he eventually win the war to reclaim his party and reputation? Is the fight over? Of course not. It is a no holds barred, winner takes it all war that would be fought in the 2024 polls.

(The writer is a well-known columnist. Views expressed are personal)

Agghadi coalition government. As part of the revenge, the BJP split the Sena and installed Sena rebel Eknath Shinde as chief minister last year. Now it was the turn of the NCP to face a split.

Ajit, nursing chief ministerial ambition, will have to work alongside BJP leader Devendra Fadnis, who also holds the same position. Chief minister Eknath Shinde apprehends that Ajit Pawar might be made the chief minister. Shinde and the other Sena rebels are facing a disqualification case, and the verdict is expected in August.

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NCP: Round one goes to Ajit Pawar

Sharad Pawar may have lost the battle against his nephew and a conniving BJP, but can he win the war to reclaim his party and reputation?



KALYANI SHANKAR



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AFTER THE NCP SPLIT, THE POLITICAL DYNAMICS IN MAHARASHTRA SHIFTED IN FAVOUR OF THE BJP

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SCIENCE IS A BOON

Sir — That science is a boon or bane hinges on its application either for constructive or destructive purposes. If we follow the former path it can be turned into a blessing. It is the strong and wealthy nations that are using it to make or mar their future prospects. However, for poor and lower income countries scientific developments have contributed little in improving their lives.

Now, major breakthrough is on the cards as the HO, Global Vaccine Alliance (Gavi) and UNICEF, have joined hands to administer 18 million doses of the first ever malaria vaccine over the next two years across 12 countries. The Mosquirix vaccine given to more than 1.7 million children in Ghana, Kenya, Malaysia have already shown positive results. This path breaking discovery of malaria vaccine is particularly relevant to poor countries.

There was a time when millions of people succumbed to death due to lack of medical facilities and technological knowledge.

That malaria vaccine could uplift millions of people who reside on the margins of human tapestry is a boon. Thanks for such discoveries as with their timely and proper application mankind can overcome such lethal diseases that once ravaged mankind. It is through global cooperation and alliances that such menacing diseases like Smallpox, tuberculosis, Typhoid faded away into oblivion from collective social memory. Now, Malaria is set to join the elite group of those rare diseases that can be wiped out from the face of the earth.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

VEGETABLE STATE

Sir — It has been observed in big cities that vegetable vendors, are hiring bouncers or security guards to keep the customers at bay to avert public unrest and violence due to soaring prices of tomatoes nationwide. The angry people are indulging in violence and looting tomatoes which are selling for Rs 170 to 230 per kg. People are buying 50 or 100 gms and not more than that as they cannot afford the price.

No relief for Rahul Gandhi



The Gujarat High Court order declining to stay the conviction of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in a defamation case is quite unreasonable and borders on the fanciful. The court has controversially ruled that the statement has defamed a determinable group of people, referring to those with the surname 'Modi'. It has thus

rejected the key argument that 13 crore people with the surname could not have been aggrieved by that sentence. How the court concluded that a large number of people were aggrieved is not clear when no one except the complainant has claimed harm to the reputation. It is disconcerting that court after court has endorsed a punishment tailored specifically to disqualify a Member of Parliament.

The High Court has also ignored the argument that a legislator cannot be pushed out of the House and barred from the electoral contest for an offence that was neither serious nor involved moral turpitude. Instead, it has made a fanciful claim that the law's object is to maintain purity in politics and cited the pendency of other cases against Mr Gandhi to decline to stay the conviction. It has even referred to a complaint by V.D. Savarkar's grandson against Mr Gandhi, as though a political remark could add another layer of gravity to the offence. The extent to which a judicial order can go to make a defamation case sound like a horrific crime against society at large is quite astounding.

TKR.Noori | Hyderabad

In the past few days, tomato prices have increased drastically, putting a lot of burden on people. The cost of tomatoes has surpassed the cost of petrol in some of the cities in India resulting in the consumption pattern of consumers dropping due to this sudden increase in the prices of tomatoes. On the other hand, a smartphone shop owner has decided to offer free-of-cost tomatoes with smartphones due to increased competition in the market. With this, all is not well for the common people as far as tomato price is concerned and are under the burden.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

claimed 12 lives in the state has reminded us of former election commissioner T N Seshan whose strong will is sorely missed now.

Imagine these are Panchayat elections and not high-prestige Lok Sabha elections. The violence has reminded us of two things, first the Left's rule in the state and second the saying 'Those who live by the sword, die by it'. Politicians should now be known as 'of the mighty, for the money and by the money. It is high time that the election commission takes strong note of it and ensures that the election process remains as free and transparent as possible everywhere in the country.

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

COMPOUNDING EFFECT OF INTEREST

It is possible to get monthly interest from FD but with a discounted rate



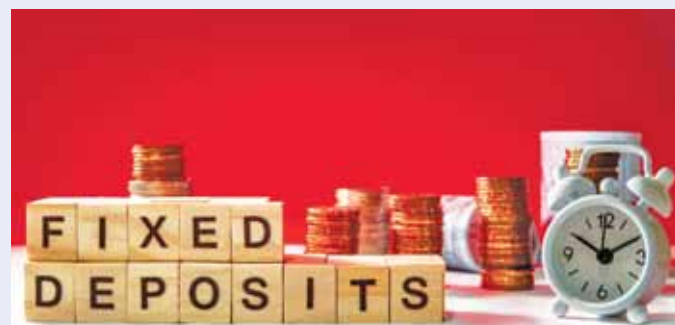
S KALYANASUNDARAM

Here is how a video advertisement from a leading private bank proceeds: You Pay phone bills, electricity bills and EMIs monthly. But earn interest on the Savings account only once in three months. But now there is a bank that credits interest in your Savings account every month instead of 3 months. And you earn interest on that interest with the power of monthly compounding. Then it claims that this private bank provides monthly interest on its savings bank accounts which is unique. The advertisement is carried out by a celebrity who is known for his deep, baritone voice and who is a narrator, a playback singer and a presenter for numerous programs and the private bank seems to have signed him as its brand ambassador.

There is no doubt that his voice is very persuasive. But what exactly is the benefit derived from the savings account holders? Is the monthly credit of interest in a Savings Account all as attractive as it is made out to be?

Investors must try to understand the difference between monthly payments and quarterly payments of interest on Savings Bank to know its impact on their return. Many years back, the Reserve Bank of India had left it to the discretion of banks to decide the rate of interest on deposits (term deposits as well as Savings Bank deposits). The interest can be credited at quarterly or shorter intervals. For savings accounts, the calculation is based on daily products.

Though the RBI has permitted to pay interest on deposits at quarterly or shorter intervals, most of the banks pay interest only at quarterly rests. Theoretically, interest can be paid even daily or weekly.



Though this private bank pays interest on Savings Bank accounts at monthly rests, for fixed deposits it pays interest at quarterly rests. It is possible to get interest in FD monthly but with a discounted rate.

How exactly is the monthly interest beneficial to the customer?

Let us assume that Rs.10000 is left in a Savings Bank account for a year, at 4 percent interest per annum. If the interest is calculated and credited every month, at the end of one year the balance will be Rs.10407.42. On the other hand, if the interest is calculated every quarter and credited, the balance will be Rs.10406.04. There is a small difference of just Rs.1.38 between the two. One may think that when the balance is more, the difference may be more. But why should one keep a huge balance in a Savings bank, which is only beneficial to the bank and not to the customer?

In June 2022, to protect consumer rights against wider advertising issues, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) notified the Guidelines on Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022 (the "Guidelines") with immediate enforcement.

Clause 4 of the guidelines lists the items which will qualify as valid and non-misleading advertisements. As per Clause 4. b. "Non-misleading consumers through exaggeration of the product or service's accuracy, scientific validity, practical usefulness, capability or performance" will qualify as a valid and non-misleading advertisement. When a savings bank customer's benefit by way of monthly payment of interest is hardly one or two rupees in a year, can this advertisement be treated as one offering some practical use? One expects that the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) to decide on this.

Couplet 423 of Thirukkural proclaims "Though things diverse from divers sages' lips we learn, 'Tis wisdom's part in each the true thing to discern. Bank customers must ponder over this wise saying by Thiruvalluvar and they should not be carried over by high-powered advertisements by celebrities.

(The writer is a retired banker)

Delhi power tariff will only go North

Delhi's electricity bill cannot be reduced unless reforms such as de-licensing of the distributors, breaking the monopoly of a few discoms is undertaken



UTTAM GUPTA



In its order dated June 22, 2023, the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) has allowed the power distribution companies (discoms) in the national Capital viz. BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL), BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) and New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) to charge 9.42 per cent, 6.39 per cent and 2 per cent respectively in PPAC (Power Purchase Agreement Cost) on top of the prevailing rates of 22.18 per cent, 20.69 per cent and 28 per cent.

Earlier on June 7, 2023, Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited or TPDDL (earlier NDPL) was allowed an additional PPAC of 1.49 per cent. But then, already it was allowed a high PPAC of 31 per cent. The higher rates are applicable for the next nine months i.e. from July 2023 to March 2024.

PPAC is a surcharge to compensate discoms for variations in the market-driven fuel costs. Since it is levied as a surcharge on the 'total energy cost and fixed charge component' of the electricity bill, the effective increase on the overall electricity bill will be 7.7 per cent in case BYPL, 5.3 per cent for BRPL and 1.2 per cent for TPDDL.

The hike will impact all consumers of electricity except households (HHs) which consume less than 200 units a month. Under the largesse granted by the Kejriwal dispensation, HHs consuming less than 200 units are fully subsidized by the state government. However, HHs consuming between 200 and 400 units a month will be impacted as the state subsidy in their case is capped at Rs 850.

There is an element of 'inevitability' in non-preferred consumers having to pay more for the power they consume. This is because as per directions of the Ministry of Power (MoP) issued on November 9, 2021, every state regulatory commission (DERC in the case of Delhi) has to put in place a mechanism for 'automatic' pass-through of fuel and power procurement cost in tariff for ensuring the viability of power sector.

More than 25 states and union territories have implemented a fuel surcharge adjustment formula commonly known as PPAC. It is a requirement under the

Electricity Act, DERC's tariff orders and Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (APTEL) orders. Delhi discoms are allowed to make adjustments in PPAC every quarter. This time, revision has come after a year.

The discoms are the sole sellers of electricity in a state. They purchase power from public sector undertakings (PSUs) such as the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), etc., and independent power producers (IPPs), under power purchase agreements (PPAs) which are mostly long-term contracts up to 25 years. A small portion of the demand, in the range of 5 - 10 percent is purchased from the electricity exchange. Almost all PPAs have in-built provisions for 'automatic' pass-through of fuel costs. The Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) allows central PSU generation companies or genscos like NTPC, NHPC Limited and even transmission companies such as Delhi Transco Limited to revise PPAC every month. Ditto for IPPs.

Even in cases where the IPP viz. Tata Power Ltd (TPL) and Adani Power Ltd (APL) had committed to sell to discoms at fixed tariff during the entire life of the PPA for their ultra mega power plants each with an installed capacity of 4,000 MW and 4,620 MW - following a due process under tariff-based competitive bidding (TBCB) - managed to get pass-through of the fuel cost. This was sanctioned by none other than the Supreme Court (SC).

Besides, the MoP issues orders from time to time which have the effect of increasing fuel costs. For instance, during April/May 2022, using powers vested in the government under Section 11 of the Electricity Act, 2003 it issued directions to all imported coal-based plants to operate and generate power to their full capacity and all

genscos based on domestic coal to import at least 10 per cent of their fuel requirements. Imported coal being far more expensive, this has led to an increase in the fuel cost and turn, PPAC. The cost of generation has also increased due to the zooming cost of natural gas particularly during 2022-23 in the wake of the Ukraine war.

Fuel cost being the dominant component of the power purchase cost and an official diktat (in some cases, even sanctioned by the top court) requiring fuel cost to be passed on to the consumer - even every month - has rendered PPAs infructuous. Even if a discom negotiates a good purchase price, it isn't sure when this gain would get nullified.

RISING FUEL COST IS NOT THE ONLY CULPRIT

The extant regulations give discoms leeway to balance their budget without being accountable regarding costs. Under the Electricity Act, of 2003, they are required to set tariff in a manner such that the revenue generated from sale at these tariffs fully cover the power purchase cost plus the cost of wheeling, and distribution. Generally, this requirement is not met even as the discoms leave substantial gaps uncovered.

The state electricity regulatory commissions (SERCs) recognize that the gap exists but don't do anything meaningful to plug it on a sustainable basis. Far from that, they allow the discoms to book this gap as receivable in their balance sheet - giving it a fancy name Regulatory Assets (RA). This has led to a proliferation of RAs over the years. In Delhi, the current RAs are around Rs 20,000 crore.

In a recent order, the SC has directed the DERC to let discoms recover their RAs. Even though DERC has decided to contest the

order, just in case the top court upholds it, Delhiites could face a steep hike in tariff of up to 100 per cent. Meanwhile, they are already paying for this grey area (read: RAs) by way of discoms collecting an ad-hoc and arbitrary 8 per cent surcharge.

Consumers other than the beneficiaries of state subsidies also suffer due to these subsidies being routed through discoms. The mechanism works as under: the discoms don't bill HHs consuming up to 200 units a month; as for HHs consuming in the 200 - 400 range, they give a deduction of Rs 850. In turn, the Delhi government is obliged to reimburse the discom for the shortfall in collection. The former may do it partially or won't reimburse at all. The resulting shortfall in revenue could eventually land in the RAs box.

The RAs could also arise due to the sheer act of financial irregularities committed by the discoms. A clear indication of this is available from the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in 2015 on the audit of Delhi discoms that was ordered by Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal immediately after taking charge in his first term. CAG found that discoms had charged consumers excess tariff of around Rs 8000 crores. It also revealed 'inflation' of Rs 7957 crores. There was no follow up those findings.

To conclude, all stakeholders in the supply chain viz. power generators, discoms, transco, MoP and Delhi Govt are acting in a manner as to let power tariff for all consumers (other than the beneficiaries of State largesse) remain on an ascending escalator for all time. Things won't change unless reforms such as de-licensing of the electricity distribution business, breaking the monopoly of a few discoms and direct benefit transfer of subsidy are implemented.



THE CONSUMERS OTHER THAN THE BENEFICIARIES OF STATE SUBSIDIES ALSO SUFFER DUE TO THESE SUBSIDIES BEING ROUTED THROUGH DISCOMS

(The writer is a Policy Analyst)

PM Modi has set the tone for the implementation of UCC

BR Ambedkar had said that a UCC is desirable but for the moment it should remain voluntary, and thus Directive Principles of the State Policy were added in the constitution

It was 187 years back when the Britishers produced a report which emphasized the dire need for uniformity in the codification of Indian laws relating to crimes, evidence and contracts besides making specific recommendations regarding the personal laws of Hindus and Muslims which must be kept outside such codification to ensure stability and harmony in the society.

Due to an increase in legislation dealing with personal laws, British Raj was forced to appoint B N Rau Committee to codify Hindu law in 1941. Based on these recommendations, a bill was then adopted in 1956 as the Hindu Succession Act to amend and codify the law relating to intestate or unwilled succession, among Hindus, Buddhists,



KS TOMAR

Jains and Sikhs. However, there were separate personal laws for Muslims, Christians and Parsis. A spate of Hindu family laws governing marriage, divorce, guardianship, succession and the ownership of property were enacted through the 1950s even as opposition from some quarters persisted.

As a devout and committed activist (Sawamsevak) of RSS and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, prime minister, Narendra Modi has fulfilled their dream of abrogation of article 370,35 A and laying the foundation stone of the Ayodhya Ram temple though the issue was settled by the supreme court, now Modi regime has set the rolling to execute the core issue of the Uniform Civil Code(UCC)

which will align with Savarkar vision and ideology of Hinduness thereby acting as a guarantor of 'secularism' like moon and space mission would mean embracing the advanced progress in science and technology in India.

The prime minister has recently set the agenda in motion to fulfil the third electoral promise of implementation of the promise of uniform civil code (UCC) made by the BJP/RSS combine which preceded the abrogation of article 370 and the construction of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya though the timing is undoubtedly linked to 2024 parliamentary polls.

As per top BJP leaders in Delhi, a bill about the implementation of UCC in the country may be introduced in

the parliament during the ensuing session which begins on July 20 and it may be sent to the Standing Committee of Parliament to ascertain more views from different sections of the society to make it acceptable and less controversial.

In a related development, the Justice Ranjana Desai committee appointed by Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Dhama one year ago may submit the UCC draft soon which will pave the way for its implementation in the hilly state. But Uttarakhand will become the second state in India to implement UCC which was adopted at the first instance by Goa in 1867 by the then Portuguese rulers and it was Re adopted with some modifications post-indepen-

dence.

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Shiv Sena, Shiv Sena(Udhav Thakre) and Bahujan Samaj Party have supported UCC whereas the majority of opposition parties and Muslim organizations are opposing it tooth and nail. Opposition parties are convinced that BJP is embarking upon UCC to take advantage of polarization in 2024 polls hence the prime minister made it a central point in his speech on June 27 during one day visit to Gujrat.

PM Modi's assertion of "Two Laws in a house" clearly indicates that UCC will eliminate this discrimination and protect the rights of Muslim women. PM has got clarity about UCC and dubbed the opponents as Anti-Muslim women. PM quoted the

supreme court which has favoured UCC which eliminates the chances of opposing it.

The parliamentary committee on personnel, public grievances and law and justice headed by BJP leader, Sushil Kumar Modi tried to inject possible space for keeping tribal communities and north-eastern states out of the ambit of UCC as the constitution permitted some exceptions for certain groups which will help in preserving their unique customs and traditional laws. Law commission members sought to make a case that UCC may be examined afresh though the commission in 2018 had described it(UCC) as neither necessary nor desirable ..gave their input about UCC and submitted their proposals

to the parliamentary committee. Politicians of northeast states are apprehensive about UCC as they feel that it may pose a threat to their identity.

It may be recalled that B R Ambedkar while formulating the Constitution had said that a UCC is desirable but for the moment it should remain voluntary, and thus Article 35 of the draft Constitution was added as a part of the Directive Principles of the State Policy in part IV of the Constitution of India as Article 44.

In this scenario, the Modi government is poised to implement UCC and party-ruled states will follow suit thereby dividing the opposition parties which may support or oppose the proposed bill in parliament based on their political expediency and political Will.

(Writer is a political analyst and senior journalist)

'Putin hosted Prigozhin after abortive mutiny'

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin hosted mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin at the Kremlin days after the commander led a short-lived rebellion, a senior government spokesman said on Monday, the latest twist in a baffling episode that has raised questions about the power and influence held by both men.

The three-hour meeting took place on June 29 and also involved commanders from Prigozhin's Wagner Group military contractor, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. Putin gave an assessment of Wagner's actions on the battlefield in Ukraine — where the mercenaries have fought alongside Russian troops — and of the revolt itself. The Wagner forces pledged loyalty to Putin, according to Peskov.

The confirmation that Putin met face-to-face with Prigozhin, who led troops on a march to Moscow last month in order to demand a change of defense minister, was extraordinary.

Though Putin branded Prigozhin a traitor as the revolt unfolded, the criminal case against the mercenary chief was later dropped and his ultimate fate remains unclear.

Adding to the unusual nature of the meeting was that until very recently, Putin had denied any link between the state and Prigozhin's forces. Though mercenaries are illegal in Russia, Wagner troops have fought for Russian interests around the globe and played a vital role in the capture of Bakhmut in the war's longest and bloodiest battle.

But throughout the war, Prigozhin has criticized decisions made by Russia's top military brass, leading to tensions with the Kremlin that culminated on June 24 in an armed mutiny in which he led his fighters into Russia.

The rebellion severely weakened Putin's authority, even though Prigozhin claimed that the uprising was not aimed at



the president but at removing Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and military chief Gen. Valery Gerasimov. Prigozhin ended his mutiny after a deal was brokered for him to go to Belarus.

Russia's Defence Ministry published a video featuring Gerasimov on Monday — the first time he has been seen since the rebellion.

The twin updates appeared to be another attempt by the Kremlin to show it's in control after a turbulent period. But many questions remain, including about the deal that ended Prigozhin's revolt.

Days after the revolt, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said Prigozhin was in Belarus. But last week the president said the mercenary chief was in Russia while his troops remained in their camps.

Peskov said that during the June 29 meeting, Putin offered an "assessment" of Wagner's actions on the battlefield in Ukraine and "of the events of June 24". The president also "listened to the explanations of the commanders and offered them options for further employment and further use in combat", the Kremlin spokesman said.

"The commanders themselves presented their version of what happened. They underscored that they are staunch supporters and soldiers of the head of state and the commander-in-chief, and also said that they are ready to continue to fight for their homeland," Peskov said. A total of 35 people took part in the meeting.

Peskov said.

Meanwhile, a Russian airstrike on a school in southern Ukraine killed four adults as people gathered to receive humanitarian aid, the governor of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region said Monday, branding the attack "a war crime".

Three women and a man, all in their 40s, died in the strike on Sunday in the town of Orikhiv, Gov. Yuriy Malashko said. A guided aerial bomb caused an explosion at the school, Malashko said, without providing evidence. Eleven other people were wounded in the attack, he said.

Overall, Russia fired on 10 settlements in the province over the course of a day, he said.

Moscow denies it targets civilian locations. Russia has been accused numerous times of doing so and committing other war crimes since its February 2022 invasion of neighbouring Ukraine. In March, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin for war crimes, accusing him of personal responsibility for the abductions of children from Ukraine.

Investigations are also underway in Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. The International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, located in The Hague, is helping with those probes.

Zaporizhzhia province is home to Europe's largest nuclear power plant, which Russian forces seized early in the war, and is one of four regions of Ukraine that Putin illegally annexed last year. Retaking the province is one of the targets of a Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Russian aerial assaults continued across Ukraine between Sunday and Monday, according to a summary from the Ukrainian presidential office. In the Donetsk region in the east, the Russians used aircraft, missile systems and heavy artillery to shell residential areas of 6 cities and villages, injuring one person, the office reported.

Turkey links Sweden's NATO membership to EU Support

AP ■ VILNIUS (LITHUANIA)

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday introduced a new condition for approving Sweden's membership in NATO, calling on European countries to "open the way" for Turkey to join the European Union.

The surprise announcement by Erdogan before departing to a NATO summit in Lithuania's capital added new uncertainty to Sweden's bid to become the alliance's 32nd member, which Turkey initially blocked saying Sweden was too soft on Kurdish militants and other groups that Ankara considers security threats.

It was the first time that Erdogan linked his country's ambition to join the EU with Sweden's efforts to become a NATO member.

"Turkey has been waiting at the door of the European Union for over 50 years now, and almost all of the NATO member countries are now members of the European Union," Erdogan told reporters in Istanbul.

"I am making this call to these countries that have kept Turkey waiting at the gates of



the European Union for more than 50 years."

"Come and open the way for Turkey's membership in the European Union. When you pave the way for Sweden as we did for Finland," he added.

Earlier, Erdogan's office said he told US President Joe Biden during a telephone call Sunday that Turkey wanted a "clear and strong" message of support for Turkey's EU ambitions from the NATO leaders meeting in Vilnius.

The White House readout of the Biden-Erdogan call did not mention the issue of Turkish membership in the EU. Erdogan and Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson

were expected to meet later Monday in Vilnius.

Asked about Erdogan's comments, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said he supports Turkey's ambition to join the EU but noted that it wasn't among the conditions listed in an agreement that Sweden, Finland and Turkey signed at last year's NATO summit in Madrid.

Stoltenberg reiterated that Sweden had met those conditions and said he thinks it is "still possible to have a positive decision" on the country's pending membership during this week's summit in Lithuania.

Turkiye is a candidate to join the EU, but democratic backsliding during Erdogan's presidency, disputes with EU-member Cyprus and other issues have held up the country's progress toward admission in the 27-nation bloc.

However, as a member of NATO, Erdogan's government has postponed ratifying Sweden's accession to the alliance, saying the administration in Stockholm needs to do more to crack down on Kurdish militants and other groups. A series of anti-Turkiye and anti-Islam protests in Sweden's capital raised doubts

that an agreement to satisfy Turkey's demands could be reached before the alliance's summit.

Turkiye's delays on Sweden's accession has irritated other NATO allies including the United States. Biden's national security adviser Jake Sullivan confirmed on Sunday that Biden and Erdogan had spoken earlier that day about Sweden's NATO membership among other issues and had agreed to meet in Vilnius for further talks. Sullivan didn't mention the EU membership issue.

He said the White House is confident Sweden will join the alliance. "If it happens after Vilnius — we're confident it will happen," he said. "We don't regard this as something that is fundamentally in doubt. This is a matter of timing. The sooner the better." Erdogan's latest comments stunned seasoned

Turkiye analysts. "Erdogan has introduced new demands and moved the target repeatedly throughout this process, but trying to put pressure on the EU over a NATO matter is rather spectacular," said Paul Levin, director of the Institute for Turkish Studies at Stockholm University.

Israeli troops kill alleged Palestinian gunman

Jerusalem (AP): Israeli troops shot and killed an alleged Palestinian gunman during new unrest in the West Bank Monday, as a wave of violence in the occupied territory showed no signs of slowing.

The Israeli military said troops stopped a motorist in Deir Nidham, a town west of Ramallah, to question him. It said the man got out of his car, threw a grenade and fired shots toward soldiers, who then opened fire.

The Palestinian Health Ministry confirmed that a 33-year-old man had been killed, but gave no further details.

The death comes during a major spike in violence between Israel and the Palestinians.

Last week, Israel concluded a fierce two-day offensive that used rare air power and hundreds of troops in what was designed as a crackdown against militants. But the operation in the Jenin refugee camp was followed by more bloodshed, including a shooting by a Palestinian assailant that killed an Israeli soldier.

'At least 300 travelling in boats from Senegal to Spain missing'

AP ■ DAKAR (SENEGAL)

At least 300 people travelling from Senegal to Spain in three boats are missing, a Spanish aid group said Monday, raising concern about their fate along one of the deadliest sea routes for migrants.

Two boats departed June 23 from Mbour, a coastal city in central Senegal, carrying about 100 people, and a third left the southern town of Kafountine four days later with approximately 200 people, according to Helena Maleno

Garzon, coordinator for the aid group Walking Borders, which is known as Caminando Fronteras in Spanish.

There has been no contact with the boats since their departures, she said.

"The most important thing is to find those people. There are many people missing in the sea. This isn't normal. We need more planes to look for them," Garzon told The Associated Press. Spain's Maritime Rescue Service said Monday that its plane spotted a vessel approximately 130 km (80 miles) from one of the Canary Islands

that appeared to have the same characteristics as one of the boats reported missing.

The vessel seen near the island of Gran Canaria appeared to be a multi-colored Senegalese pirogue, a kind of long canoe, carrying some 200 people. A rescue boat was launched but will take two hours to reach boat, the service said.

The Atlantic migration route is one of the deadliest in the world, with nearly 800 people dying or going missing in the first half of 2023, according to Walking Borders.

Bukele nominated for re-election

AP ■ SAN SALVADOR

President Nayib Bukele was officially nominated by his New Ideas party Sunday to run for reelection next year, brushing aside objections from legal experts and opposition figures who say El Salvador's constitution prohibits his candidacy.

New Ideas also announced that current Vice President Felix Ulloa would run for reelection in the ballot scheduled for February 4, 2024.

Bukele is highly popular among Salvadorans because of his harsh crackdown on street gangs, but he is considered controversial internationally. He announced in September that he planned to seek a second five-year term.

That came after the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court, handpicked by his supporters in Congress, ruled in 2021 that his candidacy for reelection was permitted and ordered the electoral court to allow it.

Constitutional lawyers maintain that Bukele's candidacy would violate at least four articles of the constitution, including Article 154, which states: "The presidential term will be five years and will begin and end on June 1, without the person who has held the presidency being able to continue in their functions even one more day."

But Ulloa, who is a well-known lawyer, said Bukele just has to ask Congress for a leave of absence by December 1 in order to be able to run again.

True to his populist form, Bukele depicted the announcement as a blow to financier and philanthropist George Soros.

"The Soros media say that Salvadorans can't decide for themselves," Bukele wrote on Twitter, his favorite medium.



"But the greatest party in history spoke today, and on February 4th, 2024, the Salvadoran people will have the last word."

While constitutional bans on reelection were once common in Latin America — where some countries have a history of "caudillo" strongmen perpetuating themselves in power — those term limits have been removed, overturned or ignored in a number of cases, including Honduras, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Bolivia.

Bukele, who maintains approval ratings above 80 per cent, has led a crackdown on the country's powerful street gangs that has landed more than 60,000 people in jail on suspicion of gang ties.

Despite suspending some fundamental rights for more than a year, the measures have been widely popular. Communities that lived under the constant extortion and violence of the gangs are returning to life. But there have been thousands of complaints of rights violations, and observers say many young men appear to have been rounded up simply because of their appearance, or where they live.

Pakistan court acquits PM's son in money laundering case

Lahore (PTI): A special court in Pakistan on Monday acquitted Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's son Suleman Shahbaz and all other accused named in the Rs 16 billion money laundering case filed by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).

The special court here issued its order on pleas filed by Suleman and others accused in the case seeking their acquittal. The prime minister's son was present alongside his counsel before the court at the time of the announcement, Geo News reported.

Suleman, who returned to Pakistan in December last year after a four-year self-exile in London, was not only accused in the case but was also named in an assets-beyond-means reference. He was declared a proclaimed offender in both cases.

Ahead of his arrival, the Islamabad High Court restrained both the FIA and NAB from arresting him.

The FIA, this January, cited a lack of proof and cleared him in the sugar mills case.

Meanwhile, the FIA has submitted the answers to the 27 questions related to the case in the court.

Judge Bakht Fakhur Behzad inquired regarding those involved in the inquiry of the money laundering case. FIA's lawyer told the court that the inquiry was conducted by a joint investigation team headed by a late FIA official.

"Tell me straight away, don't make up stories, I have read it all. I will send all the FIA people to jail now, remember this. I want an answer, what proof of crime was there with the challan?" the judge asked. Suleman's counsel, Advocate Amjad Parvez, said that the case is baseless and he had spoken against it. The court then asked, under whose pressure the case was filed.

The prosecutor said that there was no direct evidence and Suleman was declared accused in the light of the form used to open the account.

After the hearing, the court acquitted all the accused including Suleman in the money laundering case.

Dutch PM to leave politics post election

AP ■ THE HAGUE

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, the Netherlands' longest serving premier, said Monday he will leave politics after an early general election sparked by a dispute over migration that led to his government's resignation.

His decision means the end of nearly 13 years in power for the conservative leader sometimes called "Teflon Mark" because scandals that plagued his four different administrations did not stick to him.

Rutte, the 56-year-old leader of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, or VVD, announced his decision at a hastily arranged parliamentary debate to discuss the fall of his latest governing coalition. "Yesterday morning I made a decision that I will not be available again as a leader of the VVD. When a new Cabinet takes office after the elections, I will leave politics," he said.

Rutte called it a "personal decision, regardless of the devel-

opments in recent weeks." There was no immediate indication who might replace Rutte as leader of the VVD. The party's parliamentary faction is led by Sophie Hermans, Rutte's former political assistant.

No date has yet been set for the election, but it is not expected before October or November.

In the 27-nation European Union, only Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has been in charge of a country longer than Rutte, but their leadership styles could not be more different. Orban, in power for a full 13 years and counting, has turned Hungary into his vision of an "illiberal democracy" and increasingly smothered all dissent, while Rutte navigated a Western democratic system at its most eclectic and exuberant.

But the Dutch prime minister's four-party ruling coalition resigned Friday after failing to agree on a package of measures to rein in migration, an issue that often has divided the EU as a whole. Rutte said it was a unanimous decision prompted



by "irreconcilable differences" among the partner parties.

Supporters and opponents alike called it the end of an era.

With uncanny political savvy, Rutte at times managed to twist the arms of not just his coalition partners but also opposition lawmakers to pass new policies and remain in charge of governments that provided enough glue to hold together his politically frac-

tured nation of nearly 18 million. In the House of Representatives, the lower chamber of the Dutch parliament, no fewer than 20 parties are represented. To some extent, the diverse lineup reflects the European trend of the political center losing ground to voices on the far left and particularly the far right.

Rutte steered the Netherlands through crises ranging from flooding to the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine in 2014. Even his political opponents praised his handling of the aftermath of the plane's downing, which killed about 200 Dutch citizens.

Rutte also became known for seeking forgiveness for past Dutch government policies. When a parliamentary commission said that governments, several of which Rutte led, had put energy profits before the safety of people in northern Groningen province, where earthquakes from gas extraction destroyed homes and the lives

of families, he apologised. "We stand here cap in hand," he said earlier this year.

Two years ago, his third government also resigned to take responsibility for a scandal involving investigations into child welfare payments that wrongly labelled thousands of parents as fraudsters, again hurting hundreds of innocent families. He pledged his government would continue working to compensate affected parents as quickly as possible.

"We are of one mind that if the whole system has failed, we all must take responsibility," Rutte said.

Rutte's party nevertheless won the ensuing election, and he formed his fourth government with the same four parties that made up the coalition that collapsed last week. This time, though, the political rot set in early, and after 1½ years, he was not only unable to hold together his coalition, he was accused by some of setting up its fall with demands that at least one party could not accept.

UN relays Israeli request: Remove Hezbollah tent from disputed area

Beirut (AP): The commander of the UN peacekeeping force deployed on the tense Lebanon-Israel border relayed on Monday an Israeli request to remove a tent set up by the militant Hezbollah in a disputed area, Lebanon's foreign minister said on Monday.

The commander of the UN peacekeeping force known as UNIFIL, Maj. Gen. Aroldo Lázaro, met on Monday in Beirut with caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri. Lebanon Foreign Minister Abdallah Bouhabib said Lebanese leaders told the UN commander that Israel should withdraw its troops from the Lebanese part of the town of Ghajar that was captured by Israeli troops in 2006. Israel filed a complaint with the United Nations in June claiming that Hezbollah had set up tents several dozen metres (yards) inside of Israeli territory.

Incumbent Uzbek president wins new term in snap election with token opp

AP ■ TALINN

Uzbekistan's incumbent president, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, has overwhelmingly won a new seven-year term in a snap election in which he faced three weak opponents, preliminary results showed Monday. Mirziyoyev received more than 87% of the vote and each of the challengers about 4%, the country's national elections commission said. Sunday's vote followed a constitutional referendum that extended presidential terms from five to seven years.

In 2021, Mirziyoyev was elected to his second five-year term, the limit allowed by the constitution at the time. A set of constitutional amendments approved in April's plebiscite allowed him to begin the count of terms anew and run for two more, raising the possibility that he could stay in office until 2037. Since coming to power in 2016 after the death of longtime



In this handout photo released by Uzbekistan's Presidential Press Office, Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, fourth right, poses for a photo with his family members after voting at a polling station during a snap presidential election in Tashkent, Uzbekistan on Sunday.

dictator Islam Karimov, Mirziyoyev has introduced a slew of political and economic reforms that eased some of

the draconian policies of his predecessor, who made Uzbekistan into one of the region's most repressive coun-

tries. At the same time, Uzbekistan has remained strongly authoritarian with no significant opposition.

Biden, King Charles discuss climate change

AP ■ WINDSOR (UK)

President Joe Biden and King Charles III, aging leaders who've waited decades to reach the pinnacle of their careers, used their first meeting in their respective roles Monday to highlight the generational issue of climate change as they prod private companies to do more to bolster clean energy in developing countries.

The meticulously choreographed gathering at Windsor Castle injected substance into the type of encounter between president and monarch that historically has been more about the pomp and circumstance. After the arrival formalities, Biden and Charles participated in a climate-focused roundtable with officials from the financial and philanthropic sectors. John Kerry, the US envoy on climate, attended.

The 74-year-old Charles, who was crowned in May, has already made the environment a significant part of his policy legacy and has long fought to protect wildlife and battle climate change. Biden, for his part, identified climate change as one of the four crises he was determined to confront as president. He signed a sweeping legislative package last year that includes nearly \$375 billion in climate-related incentives.

Biden, 80, last had formal

talks with Charles, then prince, at the COP26 U.N. climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland, in November 2021. The US president also attended the state funeral of Charles's mother, Queen Elizabeth II, in September as well as a reception for heads of state at Buckingham Palace the night before the service. Biden did not attend Charles's coronation, sending first lady Jill Biden instead.

Jake Sullivan, the White House national security adviser, said the president has "huge respect" for the king's commitment on the climate issue in particular. He said Charles has been a "clarion voice" on climate and "someone who's mobilized action and effort."

"So the president comes at this with enormous goodwill," Sullivan told reporters Sunday as Biden flew to London.

Biden and Charles made sure to show off their still-developing friendship and warmth during the ceremonial arrival at Windsor Castle, outside London. After they shook hands, Biden put his hand on Charles's arm, then on the king's back as they approached a viewing platform to inspect an honor guard. They appeared relaxed and cordial — a contrast to more formal encounters between past US presidents and British royalty.



US President Joe Biden stands with Britain's King Charles III during a ceremony before their meeting at Windsor Castle in Windsor, England, on Monday. AP/PTI

The views of the late Queen Elizabeth II on politics and political issues were a closely guarded secret, and her meetings with world leaders were almost entirely ceremonial. Charles spent his decades as heir to the throne expressing opinions on issues from architecture to the environment, and has continued to take a keen interest in climate change now that he is king.

Biden's royal visit was paired with his sixth meeting with the British prime minister

since Rishi Sunak took office. The two discussed a range of global issues, including the war in Ukraine. Both nations are among the most stalwart defenders of Kyiv, and the United Kingdom has pushed the White House to take more aggressive steps in providing military aid to Ukraine.

Their talks were meant to highlight the so-called enduring "special relationship" between the US and the UK. When Biden declined to attend

Charles's coronation, he promised the king in a phone call that he would visit soon.

Before arriving at Windsor Castle, Biden sat down with Sunak at the prime minister's residence at 10 Downing St. in London to discuss Ukraine and other matters, including the US president's decision this week to provide Ukraine with cluster munitions, a weapon that more than two-thirds of the members of the NATO military alliance have barred for

their potential threat to civilian life. Biden has said that providing the bombs — which open mid-air and release smaller "bomblets" across a broad swath of land — was a "difficult decision" but he noted that the Ukrainians are running out of ammunition and that the weapons were necessary for them to continue to fight Russian forces.

"It took me a while to be convinced to do it," Biden said in a CNN interview broadcast as he flew to London. "But the main thing is, they either have the weapons to stop the Russians ... from stopping the Ukrainian offensive through these areas, or they don't. And I think they needed them."

Sunak, for his part, has distanced himself from the US decision. The prime minister's spokesman said the leaders spoke Monday about Britain's opposition to the use of cluster munitions.

"The first thing to say is this was a difficult choice for the US that has been forced on them by Russia's war of aggression," said Sunak's spokesman, Max Blain. "As the prime minister said over the weekend, the UK is a state party to the convention on cluster munitions. They discussed the commitments the UK has under that convention both not to produce or use cluster munitions and to discourage their use."

3 kids among 6 killed in knife assault at KG school in China

PTI ■ BEIJING

Six people, including three children and a teacher, were killed and another injured in a frightful knife assault at a kindergarten school in a revenge attack by a man in a southern Chinese city on Monday, the latest such incident in the country.

Photos and video footage in Chinese social media showed the man armed with a long dagger prowling in a privately-run school in Lianjiang City of South China's Guangdong province to attack the victims. According to witness accounts published by the official media outlets, the victims included one teacher, two parents and three children. One person was also injured in the attack.

The 25-year-old suspect, surnamed Wu, is a local resident who apparently carried out the attack to seek revenge against one of the victims for injuring his child in a car accident and declined to pay compensation, state-run Global Times reported. The assailant was seeking revenge, which could be the cause of the murder, the report said.

Targeted attacks on children have come under the spotlight in recent months as merely two weeks before Monday's tragic incident, an 8-year-old boy was brutally beaten to death by a martial arts coach on June 26, Global Times report said. The boy had enrolled in the martial arts training institution on June 10 and lost his life eight days later. As knife attacks have become a pattern, China's Ministry of Education advised

authorities to "effectively strengthen the safety of primary and secondary school and kindergarten campuses."

It asked all schools in the country to "deeply understand the extreme importance of maintaining school safety and student safety" and ensure police are at school entrances during "important times".

Social revenge attacks by disgruntled elements including knife attacks on kindergarten schools in China are a common occurrence. Such attacks were mostly attributed by police to disgruntled or mentally deranged people who have unaddressed grievances.

About 17 knife attacks have been reported in schools and other educational institutions since 2010, and ten of them took place between 2018 and 2023. The official media also, for some time, blacked out knife attack reports fearing copycat attacks.

In recent years, there have been several vicious incidents in primary and secondary schools in China.

In June, police in Beijing's Haidian district arrested a 26-year-old man who drove a car onto a high school campus after a rare hostage-taking incident in the capital, during which one student was wounded. In April 2021, two children were killed and 18 others wounded in a knife attack at a kindergarten in the southern region of Guangxi.

In June 2018, a 29-year-old man used a knife to kill two primary school students in Shanghai. The killer was executed in December 2020, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

Yoon pushes for strong resolve against N Korea's N-ambitions at NATO summit

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea's president says it's time to clearly demonstrate strong international resolve to deter North Korea's nuclear ambitions, and he plans to discuss how to cope with the North's expanding weapons arsenal with NATO leaders this week.

Yoon Suk Yeol will attend the annual NATO summit being held this year in Vilnius, Lithuania, on Tuesday and Wednesday as part of a two-nation trip that includes a stop in Poland.

"Now is the time to clearly demonstrate that the international community's determination to deter North Korea's nuclear weapons program is

stronger than North Korea's desire to develop nuclear weapons," he said.

It's the second consecutive year that Yoon will take part in the summit, underscoring his push to deepen ties with the world's biggest military alliance. South Korea faces a mix of security challenges, including North Korea's nuclear program and the US-China strategic rivalry. Last year, he became the first South Korean leader to attend a NATO summit when he took part in Spain.

In written responses to questions from The Associated Press ahead of his departure, Yoon said South Korea will stress at the NATO meeting the importance of international

cooperation against "North Korea's illegal acts." He also said a new NATO-South Korean document will take effect at the summit to institutionalise cooperation in 11 areas, including non-proliferation and cybersecurity.

North Korea's headlong pursuit of reliable nuclear weapons has taken on new urgency after it test flew more than 100 missiles and openly threatened to use nuclear weapons in potential conflicts with South Korea and the United States since the start of last year.

Whether North Korea possesses functioning nuclear missiles is still a source of debate. But according to a South Korean government estimate

in 2018, North Korea already had up to 60 nuclear warheads. Experts say North Korea is able to add six to 18 new warheads every year.

In response to North Korea's missile tests, Yoon, a conservative who took office in 2022, took steps to beef up his country's own missile capability and expand military drills with the United States. Yoon and President Joe Biden in April announced plans to reinforce their countries' deterrence capabilities, such as the periodic docking of a US nuclear-armed submarine in South Korea and the establishment of a new bilateral nuclear consultative group, whose inaugural meeting is slated for next week in Seoul.

Solomon Islands leader's Beijing visit highlights US-China rivalry

AP ■ BEIJING

Leaders of the Solomon Islands and China promised Monday to expand relations that have fuelled unease in Washington and Australia about Beijing's influence in the South Pacific.

Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare met Chinese leader Xi Jinping and the country's No. 2 leader, Premier Li Qiang. Sogavare and Li presided over the signing of agreements on police, economic and technical cooperation.

"We are here to further boost relations," Sogavare told Li following a ceremony at which a Chinese military band played the Solomon Islands national anthem.

The Solomon Islands, 2,000 km (1,200 miles) north-

east of Australia, has been China's biggest success in a campaign to expand its presence in the South Pacific. Sogavare's government switched official recognition in 2019 to Beijing from Taiwan, the self-governed island democracy claimed by the mainland's ruling Communist Party as part of its territory.

"Solomon Islands, sir, has a lot to learn from China's development experience," Sogavare told Li. He welcomed an opportunity for dialogue to enhance "bilateral interaction and cooperation."

The two governments "have decided to establish a comprehensive strategic partnership of mutual respect and common development," Li said. "The relationship between China and the Solomon Islands

has developed rapidly, and we can now say that it is very fruitful." The Solomon Islands signed a secretive security agreement with Beijing that might have allowed Chinese military forces in the South Pacific. However, Sogavare rejected suggestions his government might give Beijing a military foothold in the region.

The nearby island nation of Kiribati also switched official relations to Beijing in 2019.

Meeting later with Sogavare, Xi said Beijing wants to expand relations and trade through its Belt and Road Initiative to build ports and other infrastructure from the Pacific across Asia and Africa. "China supports more Chinese enterprises to invest and start businesses in the region," Xi said, according to state TV.

Iran sentences rapper to over 6 yrs in prison over protests

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran sentenced a popular rapper to six years and three months in prison over his participation in protests that rocked the country last year, his supporters said on Monday. A social media account run by supporters of Toomaj Salehi announced the sentence, as did Ye-One Rhee, a member of the German parliament who has campaigned on his behalf. There was no immediate word from Iranian authorities.

Salehi was among thousands of mostly young Iranians who took to the streets last fall after the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman who had been arrested by Iran's morality police for allegedly violating the country's strict Islamic dress code. The protests spread across the country and quickly escalated into calls for the overthrow of Iran's clerical rulers.

The 33-year-old rapper, who was arrested last October, had criticised Iran's government in songs and music videos that were widely circulated online. "Someone's crime was dancing with her hair in the wind," he raps in a video with over 450,000 views on YouTube — an apparent reference to Amini.

In another verse, he predicts the downfall of Iran's theocracy. "Your whole past is dark, the government that took the light out of the eyes... We go from the bottom of the pyramid and knock to the top... Forty-four years of your government, this is the year of failure." After his arrest, state media released a video showing him blindfolded and apologising for his words, a statement likely made under duress. Rights groups say Iran routinely tortures prisoners into making false confessions.

Disgraced sports doctor stabbed repeatedly in jail

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Disgraced sports doctor Larry Nassar, who was convicted of sexually abusing female gymnasts including Olympic medalists, was stabbed multiple times during an altercation with another inmate at a federal prison in Florida.

Two people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press the attack happened on Sunday at United States Penitentiary Coleman. The people said he was in stable condition on Monday.

One of the people said Nassar had been stabbed in the back and in the chest.

The people were not authorised to publicly discuss details of the attack or the ongoing investigation and spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity.

Nassar is serving decades in prison for convictions in state and federal courts. He admitted sexually assaulting athletes when he worked at Michigan State University and at Indianapolis-based USA Gymnastics, which trains Olympians. Separately, Nassar pleaded guilty to possessing child pornography.

During victim impact statements in 2018, several athletes testified that over the course of Nassar's more than two decades of sexual abuse they had told adults, including coaches and athletic trainers, what was happening but that it went unreported.

More than 100 women, including Olympic gold medalist Simone Biles, collectively sought more than USD 1 billion from the federal government for the FBI's failure to stop Nassar when agents became aware of allegations against him in 2015. He was arrested by Michigan State University police in 2016, more than a year later.

The Justice Department's inspector general said in July 2021 that the FBI made "fundamental" errors in investigating the sexual abuse allegations against Nassar and did not treat the case with the "utmost seriousness".

More athletes said they



were molested before the FBI swung into action.

The inspector general's investigation was spurred by allegations that the FBI failed to promptly address complaints made in 2015 against Nassar. USA Gymnastics had conducted its own internal investigation, and the organization's then-president, Stephen Penny, reported the allegations to the FBI's field office in Indianapolis. But it took months before the bureau opened a formal investigation. At least 40 girls and women said they were molested over a 14-month period while the FBI was aware of other sexual abuse allegations involving Nassar. Officials at USA Gymnastics also contacted FBI officials in Los Angeles in May 2016 after eight months of inactivity from agents in Indianapolis.

The FBI acknowledged conduct that was "inexcusable and a discredit" to America's premier law enforcement agency.

Michigan State, which was accused of missing chances over many years to stop Nassar, agreed to pay \$500 million to more than 300 women and girls who were assaulted by him. USA Gymnastics and the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee made a USD 380 million settlement. In June 2022, the Michigan Supreme Court rejected a final appeal from Nassar. Attorneys for Nassar said he was treated unfairly in 2018 and deserved a new hearing, based on vengeful remarks by a judge who called him a "monster" who would "wither" in prison like the wicked witch in "The Wizard of Oz."

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is for general information that I, OM PRAKASH VERMA S/O GOPI NATH R/O B-3/21, YAMUNA VIHAR, GARHI MENDU, BHAJAN PURA, NORTH EAST DELHI-110053 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as OM PRAKASH in my 10th, 12th, BSC educational documents. The actual name of mine is OM PRAKASH VERMA which may be amended accordingly. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection.

PUBLIC NOTICE
General Public is hereby informed that Smt. Sarika Jain is claiming to be the absolute legal owner & in possession of Built up Property No. 807/19-A/13-A (Old) and New No. W/353, Plot No. 99, Area 50sq.yds., out of Khazra No. 121, Gali No. 8, Dharanpura, Seelampur, Shahdara, Delhi-110031 vide a Sale Deed dated 05.02.2021 having Regs. No. 1141 of 2021 at SR-118, Delhi read with General Power of Attorney, Agreement to Sell and Will each dated 15.06.1989 executed in the name of previous owner Mr. Jhawan Dev, and is mortgaging the same to SMFG India credit company Ltd and therefore inviting any or all objections on it's title or on creation of mortgage or on any knowledge of dispute, litigation, notice etc. In respect of the above said Property with documentary evidence to Adv. Vikram Saw, Viksha Legal, 265, Anaraki Complex, Jhandowalia-110055 having landline number- 011-41555022 or e-mail- vikshalegal@gmail.com or within 14 days from publication this notice.

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar
Tender Notice Reference No. GNDU/Gen/09/2023
The Department of G.N.D.U. Amritsar invites online bids for the following:

Sr.No.	Item	Quantity
1	Printing of 40 Pages OMR Answer Books	10 Lac

Closing date & Time : 25-07-2023 at 5:00 pm
For details log onto : www.eproc.punjab.gov.in
Note: Any corrigendum(s) to the Tender Notice shall be published on the above website only.

Asst. Registrar (General)
Guru Nanak Dev University
Amritsar

NA/12/17486/2023/25704 Dated CHD - 7/10/2023

HDB Financial Services Limited Ground Floor, Zenith House, Keshavnagar Khadye Marg, Mahalaxmi, Mumbai - 400034
Tel No.: +91 22 49116300

FINAL AUCTION CUM SALE NOTICE FOR GOLD ORNAMENTS

The borrower(s) (whose details are provided in the table herein below), in particular, and the public, in general, are hereby informed that the below mentioned accounts are overdue, and the borrowers/account holders have not responded/complied with the communication, and notice sent by HDB Financial Services Limited (the "Company") requesting the borrower to clear his/her/their dues as per the documents in respect of the below mentioned loan signed/accepted by the borrower(s) (such documents, collectively "loan agreement") and therefore defaulted in terms thereof. The Company has in exercise of its rights as a pledgee, decided to enforce the pledge and therefore hold a public auction of the gold ornaments pledged to the company as security for the loan for the purpose of selling the same and realizing/recovering the dues owned by the borrower(s) to the company. The auction will be conducted on 17-07-2023 at the below mentioned local branch of HDB Financial Services Limited from 11.00 am onwards on the date and branches mentioned in the below table:-

Loan No	Customer Name	Date of Loan	Overdue Amount Rs.	Branch Name
29115444	Jay Singh	11/11/2022	72610	Delhi Ncr-Burari
15903964	Shamshad Abdulrehman	10/06/2021	21624	Delhi-Adarsh Nagar
21983575	Geeta Om Prakash	24/02/2022	7758	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
29838091	Mukesh Kumar	09/12/2022	19133	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
26087975	Mohd Zakir Idrishi	25/07/2022	50634	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
21414783	Ghan Shyam	25/01/2022	3864	Delhi-Kashmiri Gate
18087512	Munshi Lal	06/10/2021	12913	Delhi-Keshavnagar
19584627	Vikram Jeet Dutta	17/11/2021	5191	Delhi-Lajpat Nagar
25246981	Yogesh Kumar	24/06/2022	9437	Delhi-Lajpat Nagar
23605523	Rahul K	28/04/2022	22355	Delhi-Nai Sadak
25690935	Sandeep Kumar	11/07/2022	4390	Delhi-Nangloj
14432479	Sunil Kumar Gupta	01/03/2021	5210	Delhi-Shastri Nagar

The auction shall be conducted on an "AS IS WHERE" and "AS IS WHAT IT" basis and the Company is not making and shall not make any representation or warranties as regards the quality, purity, caratage, weight or valuation of the said gold ornaments. It shall be the sole and absolute responsibility of the potential purchaser to verify, examine and satisfy themselves about the quality, purity, caratage, weight or valuation of the said gold ornaments prior to placing their bid and for such purpose it shall be open to potential purchasers to examine, at their sole cost and expense, and at the address set out herein above, the gold ornaments whether with or without expert advice 45 minutes prior to the time stipulated for the conduct of the auction. All the bid shall be subjected to such minimum reserve price as the company may deem fit to fix in this regards. The auction process and sale (if any) pursuant to such auction shall be subjected to such further terms and condition as the company may at sole discretion deem fit to impose.

If the borrower(s) mentioned above pays the amount due to the Company in terms of the loan agreement in his individual loan account in full before the auction as mentioned above, the pledged ornaments securing the said loan may be withdrawn from the said auction without further notice. Please note that it is the absolute discretionary power of the undersigned authorized officer of the company, either to postpone or to cancel the auction proceeding without prior notice and without assigning any reason therefor and to reject any or all the bids or offer without assigning any reason for the same.

Place : DELHI
Date : 11-07-2023

Authorised Officer
(HDB Financial Services Ltd)

Syria revokes BBC's media accreditation, accuses it of spreading 'fake news'

AP ■ BEIRUT

Syria's Information Ministry has cancelled the BBC's media accreditation, accusing the British public broadcaster of biased and fake news in its coverage of the war-torn country. The announcement came days after BBC Arabic released an investigative documentary about the illicit drug trade in Syria, where they highlighted links between the estimated multibillion-dollar industry and the Syrian army as well as members of President Bashar Assad's family.

The Syrian Information Ministry in a statement late Saturday said the decision was made after "warning the channel more than once that it has broadcasted its misleading reports relying on statements and testimonies from terrorist entities and those hostile to Syria."

Damascus revoked the licenses of both the British broadcaster's radio and television correspondents in Syria, as well as their videographer.

"We speak to people across the political spectrum to establish the facts," the BBC said in a statement emailed to The Associated Press, adding that the broadcaster provides "impartial independent journalism." "We will continue to provide impartial news and information to our audiences across the Arabic-speaking world."

The illicit drug industry, most notably the addictive Captagon amphetamine pills, has blossomed in war-torn Syria in recent years. While experts say it has been a way to generate revenue for the country's crippled economy and sanctioned leadership, it has scoured neighbouring Jordan and Saudi Arabia, as well as

other Gulf countries. Captagon has been used both recreationally and by people with physically demanding jobs to keep them alert as well as fighters on the battlefield.

The United Kingdom, United States, and European Union have sanctioned a handful of drug kingpins and close associates of Assad for their involvement in the trade.

The Syrian government denies any involvement in the production of Captagon. A Syrian parliamentarian told the AP last month that Syria has been used as a transit state for Captagon and other drugs, and accused opposition groups of running the industry.

After Syria restored relations with many of its neighbouring countries and returned to the Arab fold, cracking down on drug smuggling has been a key issue in regional talks.

Nepal needs to further strengthen ties with India, China: FM Saud

Kathmandu (PTI): Nepal's Foreign Minister N P Saud on Monday underlined the need for further strengthening the Himalayan nation's ties with India and China as he asserted that the relations with one neighbour should not be compared with another.

"Both our neighbours are rising economic powers and their influence is increasing... Nepal enjoys a traditional friendship with both the neighbours," which needs to be further nurtured, Foreign Minister Saud said while speaking at the International Relations Committee of the House of Representatives.

He said the relationship with one neighbour should not be compared with another neighbour, according to his office.

"So far as Nepal's relations with the neighbouring coun-

tries are concerned, we should not feel psychological pressure and we need to put our concern in a transparent manner," he added.

Nepal's relations with India are historical and special, he said, noting that "owing to our open border, two-third trade links and transit facilities, our relations with the southern neighbour holds significance."

Saud said that Nepal is committed to the 'one-China' policy, and underscored the need that Nepal should not allow its territory to be used against its neighbours.

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' is planning an official visit to China in September, a bid by the senior Maoist leader to strike a balance in relations with both China and India.

India overtakes China as most attractive emerging market for investing

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has overtaken China as the most attractive emerging market for investing, according to 85 sovereign wealth funds and 57 central banks representing USD 21 trillion in assets.

India is increasingly viewed positively for its improved business and political stability, favourable demographics, regulatory initiatives, and a friendly environment for sovereign investors, according to a report by global investment management firm Invesco.

The report titled 'Invesco Global Sovereign Asset Management Study' included views from 142 chief investment officers, heads of asset classes along with senior portfolio strategists from 85 sovereign wealth funds and 57 central banks.

Amid persistent high inflation and real interest rates, investors are recalibrating portfolios.

Sovereign wealth funds, it said, favour fixed income and private debt, while Emerging Markets (EMs) with solid demographics, political stability, and proactive regulation, particularly India, have emerged as prime investment destinations.

"Among the Emerging Markets, India has piqued sovereign investors' interest, overtaking China," it said.

India, it said, exemplifies the attributes sought by sovereign investors. "India has now overtaken China as the most attractive Emerging Market for investing in Emerging Market debt."

A development sovereign fund based in the Middle East noted, "We don't have enough exposure to India or China. However, India is a better story now in terms of business and political stability. Demographics are growing fast, and they also have interesting companies, good regulation initiatives, and a very friendly environment for



sovereign investors."

India is among a number of countries, including Mexico and Brazil, that are benefitting from increased foreign corporate investment aimed at both domestic and international demand through 'friend-shoring' and 'near-shoring'.

This was seen as helping fund current account deficits as well as support currencies and domestic assets including debt.

On the scale of attractive

EM markets for increasing exposure, India and South Korea continue to be the most attractive destinations, it said.

One central bank based in the West explained that they were looking at increasing their exposure to EM debt and in particular focused on debt targeting real estate and infrastructure as well as other diversified industries.

According to the report, more than 85 per cent of the 85

sovereign wealth funds and 57 central banks noted that inflation will be higher in the coming decade.

In such a situation, gold and emerging market bonds are being seen as good bets. This shift may have been triggered due to the freezing of almost half of Russia's \$640 billion of gold and forex reserves by the West in response to the Ukraine invasion.

The survey showed a "substantial share" of central banks were concerned by the precedent that had been set. Almost 60 per cent of respondents said it had made gold more attractive, while 68 per cent were keeping reserves at home compared to 50 per cent in 2020.

India's PMI for manufacturing did not contract in the past year, but against expectations, FDI inflows fell 22 per cent to USD 46.03 billion in FY23 amid high inflation and recessionary trends in developed economies.

Sensex, Nifty edge higher on RIL boost, FII inflows

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex and Nifty advanced in a volatile trade on Monday, driven by heavy buying in index major Reliance Industries and unabated foreign fund inflows.

Bouncing back from Friday's decline, the 30-share BSE Sensex gained 63.72 points or 0.10 per cent to settle at 65,344.17. During the day, it climbed 353.04 points or 0.54 per cent to 65,633.49.

The NSE Nifty advanced 24.10 points or 0.12 per cent to end at 19,355.90. Correction in IT counters ahead of their quarterly earnings announcements restricted the gains.

From the Sensex pack, Reliance Industries jumped the most by 3.78 per cent, helping the index close in green. Tata Steel, Bharti Airtel, IndusInd Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, UltraTech Cement, ICICI Bank and Tata Motors were the other biggest gainers.

Titan, HCL Technologies, Power Grid, Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro, Hindustan Unilever, Axis Bank and Nestle were among the major laggards.

"Indian equities faced broad-based weakness, but the benchmark managed to stay marginally positive with the support of strong buying in heavyweight stocks. The weakness was led by IT stocks, as the sector is set to kick off the Q1 result season with expectations of soft earnings."

Additionally, cues from the US markets are unfavourable, as concerns about another rate hike persist despite expectations of a fast cooling of future US CPI inflation data, said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

"Markets oscillated in a narrow range and ended marginal-



Foxconn junks \$19.5 bn Vedanta chip plan, Vedanta says other investors lined up

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Taiwan's Foxconn has withdrawn from a USD 19.5 billion semiconductor joint venture with mining baron Anil Agarwal's Vedanta Ltd as the venture struggled to get a technology partner to make chips that are used in mobile phones to refrigerators and cars.

In a statement, Foxconn, the world's largest contract electronics maker, said it "has determined it will not move forward on the joint venture with Vedanta." Agarwal's metals-to-oil conglomerate responded saying it was "fully committed to its semiconductor fab project and we have lined up other partners to set up India's first foundry."

It however did not give details of the new partners. Foxconn, best known for assembling iPhones and other Apple products, and Vedanta last year signed a pact to set up semi-

conductor and display production plants in Gujarat. European chipmaker STMicroelectronics was being roped in as a technology partner for the venture but talks were deadlocked.

Most of the world's chips are manufactured in a handful of countries and India, which expects its semiconductor market to be worth USD 63 billion by 2026, is a late entrant.

Three applications — one from the Vedanta-Foxconn joint venture, another from a global consortium of ISMC and one from Singapore-based IGSS Ventures — were received in response to the government's incentive scheme for local manufacture of semiconductors. The other two applications too haven't made much progress.

Just last week, Vedanta announced that it will acquire the semiconductor and display glass units from group company Twin Star Technologies Ltd.

ESAF Small Finance Bank refiles IPO paper; lowers issue size to ₹629 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

ESAF Small Finance Bank has refiled preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise Rs 629 crore through an initial public offering (IPO).

The lender has cut down the issue size, which now comprises fresh issue equity shares aggregating to Rs 486.74 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of Rs 142.3 crore, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) available with Sebi on Monday.

Those selling shares in the OFS are promoter — ESAF Financial Holdings Private Ltd and other shareholders — PNB MetLife India Insurance Company Ltd, Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance Company Ltd.

At present, ESAF Financial Holdings owns a 62.46 per cent stake in the small finance bank, while PNB MetLife and Bajaj Allianz Life owns 4.75 per cent and 3.89 per cent stake in the lender, respectively.

Proceed of the fresh issue will be utilised to augment the bank's Tier 1 capital base.

The fresh filing came after ESAF Small Finance Bank's managing director and chief executive K. Paul Thomas in November 2022 stated that the lender is looking to refile its IPO with a lower issue size, which will hit the market in FY24.

The lender had in October 2021 filed for a Rs 998 crore IPO which was to include Rs 800 crore of primary issuance and also an OFS of Rs 198 crore from existing investors. However, the same lapsed as it was to be done within a year.

Adani row: SEBI disagrees with expert panel, says will take action if any violation found

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator SEBI on Monday told the Supreme Court that its 2019 rule changes do not make it tougher to identify beneficiaries of offshore funds, and action will be taken if any violation is found or established.

SEBI said it has continuously tightened rules concerning beneficial ownership and related-party transactions - key aspects in the allegations of Adani Group manipulating its stock price.

A Supreme Court-appointed expert committee had in an interim report in May stated that it saw "no evident pattern of manipulation" in billionaire Gautam Adani's companies and there

was no regulatory failure. It, however, cited several amendments the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) made between 2014-2019 that constrained regulators' ability to investigate, and its probe into alleged violation in money flows from offshore entities has "drawn a blank".

Without making any mention of the status report of its own investigation into allegations against Adani Group, SEBI in its latest affidavit to the Supreme Court said it did not agree with the expert committee observation of difficulties in identifying holders of economic interest behind an offshore fund. It also differed with the panel observation that stocks will re-price if



the markets feel actions taken in the past by the company were not desirable, saying even if the market may re-price the stocks of the company based on the past transactions, "there is no bar on SEBI to examine any securities laws violations because re-pricing of the stock

has happened." SEBI indicated it does not agree with the expert committee's views and action will be taken if any violation is found/established.

After a report of US short-seller Hindenburg Research alleging accounting fraud, stock market manipulation and improper use of offshore entities by Adani Group stirred a political row and triggered a rout in the conglomerate's stocks, dethroning Adani as the world's third richest man, the Supreme Court had on March 2 constituted the expert committee to investigate if there was any failure to disclose transactions with related parties and if stock prices were manipulated.

The committee was to work in parallel with the probe by Sebi into offshore entities investing in the Adani Group. The regulator was first asked to complete the probe in two months and then given another three months till August 14. In the affidavit, SEBI said its 2019 rule changes in fact "tightened the disclosure requirement" related to beneficial owners.

In its 43-page filing, SEBI opposed the expert committee's recommendation that a firm timeline for the regulator to complete its investigation must be "embedded into the law", saying prescribing such limits "may compromise the quality of investigation", create constraints and increase litigation.



'Apts sales at 15-yr high in top 7 cities in Jan-Jun'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sales of apartments, priced above Rs 1 crore, rose by 50 per cent during the January-June period to 50,132 units across seven major cities on better demand for luxury properties, according to real estate consultant JLL India.

Sales of flats, costing above Rs 1 crore, stood at 33,477 units in the corresponding period of the last calendar year.

JLL India data includes only apartments and excludes sales of rowhouses, villas, and plots.

Overall, sales of apartments increased 21 per cent in January-June across seven major cities to 1,26,500 units, which is the highest in 15 years in the first half of a year. Sales stood at 1,04,926 units in the year-ago period.

As per the JLL data, sales of apartments, priced less than Rs 50 lakh, fell 2 per cent to 24,482 units in January-June from 24,987 units a year ago. The share of affordable homes in total sales dropped to 19 per cent from 24 per cent.

Exempt small suppliers making inter-state supplies on e-commerce platforms from GST registration: GTRI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said small suppliers on e-commerce platforms should be permitted to undertake inter-state supplies without GST registration if their turnover does not exceed the threshold.

The GST Council has exempted small businesses making intra-state supplies through e-commerce platforms from

taking GST registration if their turnover is below Rs 40 lakh in case of goods and Rs 20 lakh in case of services. The rule will kick in from October 1.

Ahead of the 50th GST Council meeting on Tuesday, GTRI has recommended that similar registration rules should be applicable for inter-state supplies done by micro and small businesses through e-commerce platforms.

Giving example, GTRI Co-



founder Ajay Srivastava said that a small village artisan with less than Rs 10,000 annual turnover selling metal-ware craft through her website must enrol for GST pay tax and file regular

returns despite low turnover. However, if the artisan restricts business within a particular state, she/he does not need to pay GST.

"India is poised for big jump in e-Commerce exports in next few years. Enabling easier interstate sales will be the first step in that direction... The GST provision should be the same for within and across states' supplies," Srivastava said. GTRI has also suggested

doing away with the requirement of state-wise Goods and Services Tax (GST) registrations. Today, if a firm has a presence in 10 states, it must obtain 10 GSTINs and maintain a separate account for each.

"Since all supplies are captured online by GSTN, the GSTN can extract precise state-wise records from the PIN Code of the place of supply without seeking information from the firms," Srivastava said.

GST Council to decide on taxation on online gaming, definition of MUVs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The GST Council at its meeting on Tuesday is likely to deliberate on a host of issues including taxation of online gaming, definition of utility vehicles and tightening of norms for registration and claiming ITC.

The Council, chaired by Union finance minister and comprising state representatives, is also likely to clarify on GST rates applicable on food and beverages sold in multiplexes, exempt GST on import of cancer drug Dinutuximab, and Food for Special Medical Purposes (FSMP) used in the treatment of rare diseases.

It is also expected to finalise contours for setting up appellate tribunals and demand of the industry for reimbursement of full CGST and 50 per cent IGST

in 11 hill states under the 'scheme for budgetary support'.

The Council is likely to provide for mandatory physical verification of the business premises of "high risk" applicants before granting of GST registration, as well as reduced time for submitting Pan-linked bank account details to GST authorities.

Also, a new rule in GST law under which businesses would be required to explain the reasons for excess input tax credit (ITC) claimed or deposit the amount with the exchequer is likely to be discussed.

The Law Committee, comprising tax officers from Centre and states, have opined that where the ITC availed in GSTR-3B return exceeds the amount of ITC available in accordance with the auto-generated statement.

Export, import cost may increase from Jan 2027 as global shipping faces costly decarbonisation measures

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Decarbonisation measures for the global shipping industry to reduce carbon emissions in the coming years may increase the cost of doing exports and imports from January 2027, a report by think tank GTRI said on Monday.

The 175-member International Maritime Organization (IMO) notified its strategy on July 7 to decarbonise the global shipping sector and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, the Global Trade Research Institute (GTRI) said.

It added that IMO has also set interim targets for reducing emissions by 20-30 per cent by 2030 and 70-80 per cent by 2040, compared to 2008.

It added that IMO has also suggested the shipping industry to switch to cleaner fuel.



"By 2030 cleaner fuel must account for a minimum 5 per cent total fuel use. IMO will notify detailed measures next year. While IMO recommendations are not legally binding, countries are expected to achieve the targets set. This year, few countries pushed for a flat tax of USD 100 per tonne of carbon emission by ships, yet IMO ignored the recommendation and set broad targets due to opposition from China and many developing countries," GTRI co-founder Ajay Srivastava said.



Indian paints & coatings industry estimated to grow to ₹1 lakh crore in next 5 yrs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The size of the Indian paints & coatings industry is estimated to grow to Rs 1 lakh crore in the next five years from the present Rs 62,000 crore, said Akzo Nobel India.

Besides, the margin for the paints & coatings industry will improve as in FY23, it witnessed softening of raw material prices from their previous highs, said the latest annual report of Akzo Nobel India, a leading player in the segment.

"As raw materials account for approximately 55-60 per cent of the input costs, price corrections in crude oil and other essential components resulted in improved margins for the industry," it said.

The industry has emerged as an attractive sector, by the entry of several new players in recent times, which are actively investing in infrastructure, technology, and marketing to establish their presence and capture a share of the market, it said.

"This heightened competition has prompted existing play-

ers to further bolster their capabilities and differentiate themselves in order to maintain their market position, leading to a surge in investment activity within the industry," it added.

In the last few years, several companies such as Grasim Industries, Pidilite, and JSW have entered into the segment and are competing with established makers such as Asian Paints, Berger Paints, Kansai Nerolac and Akzo Nobel India, which collectively control nearly 3/4th of the market.

"The size of the industry is estimated to grow from Rs 62,000 crores to Rs 1 lakh crore in the next five years," it said.

The industry is divided into two categories - architectural segment and industrial segment.

The architectural segment dominates the industry as its accounts for around 69 per cent of the paint consumption on a volume basis. This segment primarily caters to residential, commercial, and institutional constructions, as well as repainting and renovation projects.

MEDVEDEV INTO FIRST WIMBLEDON QUARTER-FINAL

AP ■ LONDON

World number three Daniil Medvedev reached his first Wimbledon quarter-final on Monday when Czech opponent Jiri Lehecka retired with an injury.

Medvedev was 6-4, 6-2 ahead when his 37th-ranked opponent, who had needed a medical timeout for a right foot injury, retired from their Court One clash.

Former US Open winner Medvedev will face either Stefanos Tsitsipas, the Greek world number five, or unseeded Christopher Eubanks of the United States for a place in the semi-finals.

"I saw that his movement was restricted but I didn't see that it was causing any real trouble," said Medvedev.

"But when I saw that he was retiring, I saw that it was different. I had no choice but to keep battling until the last point. I feel sorry for Jiri. Hopefully he'll recover and play at many more Grand Slams."

RYBAKINA WINS

Defending champion Elena Rybakina made the Wimbledon quarter-finals on Monday after opponent Beatriz Haddad Maia quit in tears with injury after just five games.

Rybakina was 3-1 up when Brazilian world number 13 Haddad Maia took a medical timeout on Centre Court to treat a lower back injury.

She limped back onto the court but was reduced to walking pace and was in tears as she saw out the fifth game before retiring.

"It's never easy to finish a match like this. I hope it is not-

ing really serious, it is really unlucky for Beatriz," said Rybakina.

"Hopefully she is going to get better and I am just happy to play another round."

She added: "I was feeling the ball really well even though it was really windy today."

World number three Rybakina will face either two-time champion Petra Kvitova or 2022 runner-up Ons Jabeur for a place in the semi-finals.

DJOKER SHINES

"Big credit for Hubert for playing an amazing match, he put up a great performance," said 36-year-old Djokovic.

"Honestly I don't recall the last time I felt this miserable on returning games. He has one of the best serves in the world and it's difficult to read it on one of the quickest surfaces in the sport. It was not enjoyable for me."

Djokovic will face Andrey Rublev for a place in the semi-finals.

That match will take place on Centre Court, where Djokovic has not lost since 2013.

"I feel a great connection with this court. Every match that I win, every time I step on the court I feel more confident to play the match and hopefully the love affair continues for a long time," he said.

Djokovic had been two sets up overnight when the match was suspended due to a local curfew.

He had squandered five break points in those sets and Hurkacz eventually made him pay by breaking in the 12th game of the third set on Monday.

But Djokovic hit back to break for 4-3 in the fourth and



KEYS ENDS ANDREEVA'S DREAM RUN



AP ■ LONDON

Madison Keys fought back from a set and 4-1 down to end Mirra Andreeva's hopes of becoming the youngest Wimbledon quarter-finalist in 26 years on Monday.

The 18th-ranked American came through against the 16-year-old Russian 3-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 to make the last eight for the first time since 2015.

However, the tie ended in controversy when Andreeva was handed her second code violation of the match for slamming her racket into the ground at deuce in the eighth game of the final set.

She was hit with a penalty point which

in turn gave Keys match point, with the American going on to seal the tie.

Andreeva protested that she had slipped and had not banged her racket into the surface intentionally.

"I knew she's a phenomenal player. I knew I had to stay in the match and get an opportunity to break back. I got the momentum and kept going," said Keys, whose big game yielded 39 winners and 40 unforced errors.

"I'd be lying if I said I wasn't feeling the pressure (of facing a qualifier). I didn't want to be the first player to lose to her to get to her first quarter-final at a Slam."

For the second major in succession, Andreeva had come through qualifying to make the main draw and was hoping to become the youngest quarter-finalist at Wimbledon since compatriot Anna Kournikova in 1997.

She was comfortably on course in the early stages out on Court 2.

Andreeva, playing in only her second Grand Slam tournament compared to the 41 of Keys, broke the 28-year-old American three times in the opening set.

The teenager remained in control in the second set, breaking in the second game and stretching out to a 3-0 lead.

Keys dug deep to fight off break points in the fourth and sixth games and pounced on a rare, loose service game by the Russian to recover the break in the seventh game.

The American swept through the tiebreaker and a frustrated Andreeva was hit with her first code violation for petulantly throwing her racket at her chair.

Andreeva double-faulted as she slipped 2-0 down in the decider before the composed Keys ran away with a tie in which she saved eight of 12 break points.

from then on there was no way back for the 17th-seeded Pole despite his 33 aces and 64 winners.

Djokovic will take a 3-1 career lead over seventh-ranked

Rublev into their quarter-final on Tuesday.

Djokovic came out on top in straight sets at the same stage of this year's Australian Open.

Hurkacz for sure," said the Serb.

"Very powerful, very quick ground strokes, loves to dictate. I'm not going to talk to much about tactics — I will keep that to myself."



Wimbledon says no plans to issue statement after Azarenka booing

AP ■ LONDON

Wimbledon chiefs on Monday said that they have no plans to issue a statement after Belarusia's Victoria Azarenka was booed off court following her defeat by Ukraine's Elina Svitolina. Svitolina won a gripping three-set match on Court One late on Sunday to set up a quarter-final clash with world number one Iga Swiatek.

As has become common, Svitolina did not shake hands with Azarenka in protest over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Belarus is a key military ally of Moscow. Azarenka, who held her hand up in the direction of Svitolina, seemingly in a gesture of respect, left the court to a chorus of boos from some sections of the crowd.

The two-time Australian Open champion said her treatment "wasn't fair".

"I thought it was a great tennis match," she added. "If people are going to be focusing only on handshakes or the crowd, quite drunk crowd, booing in the end, that's a shame." Svitolina and her fellow Ukraine players all refused to shake hands with Russian and Belarusian rivals at the recent French Open.

She called on the sport's governing bodies to explain the

position of Ukraine players.

"I don't know if it's maybe not clear for people, some people not really knowing what is happening," she said. "So I think this is the right (thing) to do."

But All England Club chief executive Sally Bolton said on Monday that Wimbledon had no plans to issue such a statement. "Historically in tennis the decision on how a player reacts at the end of a match is entirely a personal decision for them and I think we don't really want to start mandating what happens," she said.

"I think we have an incredibly knowledgeable audience at Wimbledon and I think in most part they would understand what was happening."

She admitted it is impossible to control the crowd, calling for the sporting action to be centre stage. "Having witnessed one of the most incredible matches on Number One Court, to an absolutely rapt audience, we should be focusing on the tennis and the match that we saw, not all the other stuff that went on," she said.

There could be five players in the quarter-finals who are representing Russia or Belarus, a year after athletes from the two nations were banned by the All England Club.

Sen hails Canada open win as one of 'greatest comebacks'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Describing the Canada Open victory as one of the "greatest comebacks" in his nascent career, star Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen on Monday said the win against the reigning All England Champion gives him confidence and belief in the Olympic qualification year.

Sen saved four game points in the second game of the final to outwit China's Li Shi Feng of China 21-18, 22-20, snapping a 17-month wait for a BWF world tour title.

"Coming into the Olympic qualification year, it was tough as things didn't go my way," Sen, the reigning Commonwealth Games champion, said.

"So this will be one of the good tournaments for me and playing the finals like that is for me one of the greatest comebacks." Following the high of 2022, Sen endured a low this season. He made first-round exits from the last four events of 2022 and found the going tough in the early part of 2023.

His ranking also plunged to



world number 25 from six.

"I was training well but post-surgery, I was falling sick and immunity was not well, I had a lot of health issues. I couldn't play 100 per cent. I had prepared well for All England, but again couldn't do well," he said.

Sen also had to make some changes around him after Korean coach Yong Sung Yoo left following the 2022 World

Championships. He got Anup Sridhar on board and also hired Decline Leitao, a sport and exercise science specialist.

"Since my Korean coach left, there have been a lot of changes, I have tried different things in training and it is all helping me now," he said.

"The kind of support system that I have with Anup bhaiya, my physio and I changed my

trainer, now I am working with Decline Leitao.

"So gelling with all and having Vimal (Kumar) sir and my dad (DK Sen) around, it all helped. I hope to continue the form in the Olympic qualification year, it gives me a lot of confidence and belief."

While HS Prannoy is the highest-ranked Indian at world number 8, Sen and Kidambi Srikanth are ranked at the 19th and 20th spots respectively.

A win like this will surely ease the pressure in the Olympic qualification race which began on May 1 but Sen knows it is still a long road ahead with the Olympic period concluding on April 28, 2024.

"I won't say it is a relief, I still have to play a lot of tournaments but this win will give me big motivation that I am doing the right thing and belief in my process," he said.

"There are a lot of tournaments, I will just take the positives from this one. Now that my health issues are sorted, I just want to remain injury free and fit for the good season ahead."

Salunkhe becomes first Indian to win Youth World Championship in men's recurve category

PTI ■ LIMERICK

Parth Salunkhe became the first Indian male archer to win a gold in the recurve category of the Youth World Championships as the country's contingent finished with its highest-ever tally of 11 medals.

The 19-year-old from Satara in Maharashtra provided the perfect icing on the cake by defeating a Korean in the Under-21 men's recurve individual final here on Sunday.

Salunkhe, who topped the rankings round, bounced back from behind to down seventh



seed Song Injun 7-3 (26-26, 25-28, 28-26, 29-26, 28-26) in a hard-fought five-setter.

India also clinched a bronze medal in the Under-21 women's recurve individual section when Bhaja Kaur defeated Su Hsin-Yu of Chinese Taipei 7-1 (28-25, 27-29, 29-25, 30-26). India finished

with six gold, one silver and four bronze medals, which was the highest in the standings in terms of total number of medals. But in overall rankings, they finished second behind Korea who ended with six gold and four silver medals.

In women's recurve section, Deepika Kumari had become cadet and youth world champion in 2009 and 2011, a feat that was emulated by her Jharkhand state mate Komalika Bari in 2019 and 2021. Overall, Salunkhe is the sixth Indian archer to become world champion in the youth showpiece.

Indian women aim to seal series

PTI ■ MIRPUR

The supremely talented Shafali Verma would like to make an impact with the willow after a poor start in the lung opener as Indian women aim to clinch the three-match T20I series against Bangladesh with another dominant performance in the second game here on Tuesday.

India coasted to an easy seven-wicket victory in the opening match on Sunday with skipper Harmanpreet Kaur blazing her way to an unbeaten 35-ball 54 and Smriti Mandhana looking equally dangerous during her short but significant knock of 38.

The slow bowlers were also on target as the two debutants Anusha Baredy and Minnu Mani gave a good account of themselves under senior off-spinner Deepti Sharma.

However, what stuck out like a sore thumb was Shafali's three-ball duck and once again the distinct lack of footwork was evident against medium pacer Marufa Akter.

The young Haryana woman is one of the biggest batting talents in the country and has already played 57 T20I games even before completing her 20th birthday.

Bangladesh are such opponents which will give Shafali a good chance to regain some form and notch up a big score at the top of the order.



Harmanpreet's unit has shown the gulf in cricketing standards between the two teams and it will be a huge upset if Bangladesh win on Tuesday and restore parity in the series.

The difference in quality between the two teams was there to be seen when Bangladesh batted, as the only batter to at least score at run-a-ball strike-rate was Shorna Akter, who struck two sixes in her 28-ball-28 that took the home team past 100-run mark.

What has worked to India's advantage is the fact that all of Bangladesh's top seven batters are right-handers and that has

allowed the Indian skipper to stick to one particular line on a Sher-e-Bangla track where the ball at times stops before coming onto the bat.

It was a good toss to win for Harmanpreet during the opening game and if the spin of coin goes in her favour once again, she might see how well the batting unit performs while trying to set a target.

This will also give Shafali a chance to express herself freely in Mandhana and Harmanpreet's company and give the glimpse of a player that everyone wants to pay to watch.

Pakistan to host FIH Olympic qualifiers

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan is set to host an international hockey event after nearly 19 years with the International Hockey Federation (FIH) allocating the Olympic qualifying rounds to the country for early next year.

Pakistan, which last hosted an FIH event back in 2004, will host eight teams in Lahore from January 13 to 24 next year.

"Pakistani hockey fans have been deprived of seeing international hockey stars at home for 20 years now and the FIH Olympic qualifiers will no doubt boost the sport in Pakistan again," said Haider Hussain, the Secretary-General of the FIH.



Unfortunately, Pakistan has failed to

qualify for the last two Olympic Games in 2016 and 2021 but Hussain said he was hopeful that fans would turn out in big numbers to watch the matches in Lahore.

According to the given format, the top five Asian teams, seven from Europe, two from Pan America, and one each from Africa and Oceania can compete in the qualifying rounds.

The top three teams in each Olympic qualification tournament will qualify for Paris 2024.

Currently ranked 16 in the world, Pakistan will be eligible to compete in the qualifying round of the Paris Olympics even if they fail to win the Asian Games where they will face the likes of India, Korea, Malaysia, Japan and China.

Verstappen wins British GP

AP ■ SILVERSTONE

On a day when Brad Pitt joined the Formula One grid to shoot his new movie, defending champion Max Verstappen was reduced to a cameo role in his own win with F1 fans gripped by the fight for second place.

Apart from losing the lead to Lando Norris at the start — and then taking it back — Verstappen's cruise on Sunday to yet another win — his sixth in a row — lacked the Hollywood-style drama of Norris' battle with seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton for second.

India's inexperienced pace attack faces transition test

PTI ■ DOMINICA

The unparalleled success of India's Test team on away tours over the past decade was largely because of its all-weather pace attack but the same can't be said about the fast bowling resources available for the two-Test series against the West Indies.

Transition is inevitable in any team, but considering the uncertain future of injured star Jasprit Bumrah and the absence of Mohammed Shami and Umesh Yadav from the Tests in the Caribbean, it has been hastened in India's case.

Virat Kohli made a conscious effort to field five bowlers in his tenure as captain and the results that followed made his unit arguably the best Indian team of all time. India's pace attack became the envy of the world.

However, after back-to-back defeats in the World Test Championship final, it is a good time to plan for the future.

The skilful Shami might last another WTC cycle but the recent form of 35-year-old Umesh Yadav doesn't inspire a lot of confidence. The team would love to have the services of Bumrah but his body might not be able to take the rigours of multiple formats when he returns to action.

Veteran Ishant Sharma, who was part of the feared pace attack that brought glory to India, has already been phased out and the lack of India A tours over the past couple of years has left the team management with few options.

Mohammed Siraj, who has been India's most potent pacer of late, will lead the pace attack in the West



Indies after playing 19 Tests. Should the team look at 31-year-old Jaydev Unadkat, who made a comeback after 12 years in Bangladesh last year, as a long-term option?

The other fast bowling options include injury-prone pacer Navdeep Saini, who is making a comeback after featuring in the iconic series in Australia in early 2021, and uncapped Mukesh Kumar, who will be fighting out with the former for a place in the playing XI.

Another pacer who could have been tried in the Caribbean was Prasad Krishna but he is undergoing a long rehab like Bumrah following a surgery after a stress fracture.

The 24-year-old Shivam Mavi, who has done well in Duleep Trophy, is the only one who has age on his side but he is not part of the squad.

India, who have not lost a Test series to the West Indies since 2002, are expected to steamroll their opponents this time as well but a much tougher examination awaits them in South Africa later this year.

An A tour will precede that assignment and the team management will be hoping to find more options by then to carry out the transition.

India's squad for West Indies Tests: Rohit Sharma (Captain), Shubman Gill, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Virat Kohli, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Ajinkya Rahane (vice-captain), KS Bharat (wicket-keeper), Ishan Kishan (wicket-keeper), Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Shardul Thakur, Axar Patel, Mohd. Siraj, Mukesh Kumar, Jaydev Unadkat, Navdeep Saini.

Dube picked in West Zone squad for Deodhar Trophy

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India and Mumbai all-rounder Shivam Dube was on Monday included in the 15-member West Zone squad while fast bowler Tushar Deshpande was among the standby players for the Deodhar Trophy beginning July 24.

The Deodhar Trophy was last organised in the 2019-20 season and was not held in the subsequent seasons owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The upcoming edition of the inter-zonal 50-over Deodhar Trophy will be held this year entirely in Pudukcherry from July 24 to August 3.

The left-handed batter Dube had a terrific season with the bat for the Indian Premier League winners Chennai Super Kings, scoring 418 runs in 16 matches with a strike rate of 158.33.

The 15-member squad features right-handed India and Delhi Capitals' batter Prithvi Shaw, though he is also expected to fly out for his County stint with Northamptonshire after the conclusion of the Duleep Trophy.

Priyank Panchal was named the captain of the West Zone squad which also includes Sarfaraz Khan and Rahul Tripathi.

Right-arm pacer Deshpande was CSK's top wicket-taker with 21 scalps in 16 matches. He was recently called up into the West Zone squad ahead of their Duleep Trophy semi-final against the Central Zone after left-arm seamer Chetan Sakariya was ruled out due to an elbow injury.

Sakariya is also in the list of the five-member standby players for the West Zone in the Deodhar Trophy, which also features Saurashtra's Yuvraj Dodi-



hiya, Maharashtra's Abu Kazi and Gujarat's Kathan Patel. The 20-year-old Rajvardhan Hangargekar also made the cut. Features in the 15-member squad of the West Zone, who will begin their campaign on the opening day against the North East Zone.

SQUAD: Priyank Panchal (captain), Prithvi Shaw, Rahul Tripathi, Harvik Desai, Het Patel, Sarfaraz Khan, Ankit Bawne, Samarth Vyas, Shivam Dube, Atit Seth, Parth Bhut, Shams Mulani, Arzan Nagwaswalla, Chintan Gaja, Rajvardhan Hangargekar.

Standby players: Chetan Sakariya, Tushar Deshpande, Yuvraj Dodiya, Abu Kazi, Kathan Patel.

Rana to lead North Zone

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Left-handed batter Nitish Rana from Delhi will lead North Zone in the Deodhar Trophy to be held in Pudukcherry from July 24.

Rana, who had led Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL 2023, will be eager to make an impression here and return to the national reckoning.

The 29-year-old Rana has played one ODI and two T20s for India in 2021 during the tour to Sri Lanka. Rana had a good outing in the IPL for KKR as well, amassing 413 runs from 14 matches at a strike rate of 140.95 with 3 fifties.

In fact, he was the second highest run-getter for the Knight Riders behind Rinku Singh (474 runs) in this IPL.

Promising batter Abhishek Sharma, wicketkeeper batter

Prabhsimran Singh and Harshit Rana too have been added to the 15-member squad.

However, the trio is also part of the India squad for the Emerging Teams Asia Cup, scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka between July 13 and 23.

In the event of India reaching the final in that tournament, they will join the North Zone squad at a later date.

North Zone squad: Nitish Rana (Captain), Abhishek Sharma, Prabhsimran Singh, SG Rohilla, S Khajuria, Mandeeep Singh, Himanshu Rana, Vivrant Sharma, Nishant Singh, Rishi Dhawan, Yudhvir Singh, Sandeep Sharma, Harshit Rana, Vaibhav Arora, Mayank Markande.

Stand-by players: Mayank Dagar, Mayank Yadav, Arslan Khan, Shubham Arora, Yuvraj Singh, Manan Vohra, Aqib Nabi, Shivank Vashisht.

People are going overboard while criticising Rohit's captaincy: Harbhajan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rohit Sharma needs all the support from the Indian cricket establishment in the coming times as people are going 'overboard' with their criticism of his captaincy, feels spin great Harbhajan Singh.

In recent weeks, the Indian captain has received a lot of flak from fans and former cricketers, including the legendary Sunil Gavaskar, who felt that his leadership in the World Test Championship (WTC) final against Australia was not up to the mark.

However, Harbhajan, who has seen a lot of Rohit in the Indian as well as the Mumbai Indians dressing room, reminded everyone about the kind of respect he commands from his peers.

"I find that people are going a bit overboard... The way Rohit has been criticised. Cricket is a team sport and one individual cannot take you from one place to other," Harbhajan said ahead of India's next Test assignment against the West Indies.

"Team India didn't do well in WTC final, and yes, you talk about that performance and move on from there. But it is unfair to criticise Rohit alone, that he is not scoring runs, putting on weight, not captaining well. I think he is a brilliant leader," the veteran of 103 Tests said.

For Harbhajan, the need of the hour is to show faith in Rohit's leadership ability.

"I have played with him (Rohit) and watched him closely. He commands a lot of respect not only in MI dressing room but also in the Indian dressing room. So I think it's unfair to judge him on basis of recent results.



HAS ANYONE TRIED TELLING SARFARAZ WHY IS HE NOT BEING PICKED?

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Harbhajan understands that the current crop of players will get a long rope before a domestic performer like Sarfaraz Khan gets a chance, but Harbhajan wants that the young Mumbaiaiker is told about the areas that he has to work on, with an assurance that he is there in the mix. "Sarfaraz will get his opportunity as he

has scored heavily in domestic cricket. I want to know if anyone has made an effort to go and talk to him, may be from BCCI or state associations," he asked.

"He is scoring runs, so you need to go and talk to him. Try and make him the player you want him to be. You have to keep him around the group and keep him motivated that he will be selected," he elaborated.

"If you have the support from BCCI, you can work freely.

Not just MS Dhoni or Virat Kohli, if you go back a little further, a lot of captains have got support from BCCI presidents of that time. "Rohit must be getting support from BCCI. I don't know how much support he must be getting (though). Having that kind of support will help him take right kind of decision at the right time.

"He will get that liberty if he has that support. Support must be there for Rohit like BCCI has

another BCCI strongman, N Srinivasan, throughout his captaincy tenure.

When Virat Kohli enjoyed his best days on the hot seat, he had former CAG and Committee of Administrator (CoA) head, Vinod Rai, endorsing all his decisions. Harbhajan hoped that Rohit is getting the kind of backing from the BCCI like his predecessors got.

"If you have the support from BCCI, you can work freely.

given it to all its captains," the Turbanator said.

DESERVES RESPECT

Chesteshwar Pujara, a doyen at No. 3 in India's batting order, has been dropped and Harbhajan feels that Indian cricket hasn't exactly learned to value his contribution.

"I have a lot of respect for Chesteshwar Pujara for what he has achieved. He has been an unsung hero of Indian team for many of those years now. He has been one of those pillars of strength for India, doing the dirty work of hanging in there, making sure other batters got their comfort," Harbhajan was blunt as ever in his assessment.

Harbhajan has expressed his massive displeasure with the "lack of respect" for the Saurashtra man and the fact that the yardstick to judge performances hasn't been same for every senior player.

"I believe he needs to be given a bit more respect than what he has been given and the way he was chucked out of the team was a surprise for me. Because he isn't the only one not scoring runs. There are others as well who play in that same team who are scoring runs at same average," Harbhajan said.

Harbhajan was all praise for Ajinkya Rahane for the manner in which he made a comeback to the Test arena, with knocks of 89 and 46 against Australia in the WTC final at the Oval.

"The way he made a comeback, he really looked good in that WTC finale. Now he is the vice-captain again.

"You need to show faith in these players so that they can do well again. A good player is a good player. Doesn't matter if you are going forward or backwards (with his selection)."

Ashraf to push for Pakistan's World Cup matches at neutral venues in ICC meeting

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) acting chairman Zaka Ashraf will push for the country's ODI World Cup matches at neutral venues at the ICC meetings in Durban this week, the Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination (Sports), Ahsan Mazari, has said.

"Zaka Ashraf will bring up the issue of why can't Pakistan's matches in the World Cup be played at neutral venues when the Indian team can't travel to Pakistan for the Asia Cup," he said.

India has refused to play its Asia Cup matches in Pakistan owing to geopolitical tensions, and after months of speculation around the continental tournament, the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) announced that the event will be staged in a hybrid model with four games in Pakistan and nine in Sri Lanka from August 31 to September 17.

However, the PCB recently conveyed to the ICC and the BCCI that the

national team's participation in the World Cup is subject to government clearance due to the tense relations between the two countries.

Ashraf and the PCB chief operating officer, Salman Taseer are in Durban to attend the ICC meetings where they are expected to discuss India's refusal to send its team to Pakistan citing security reasons.

Mazari also claimed that, like him, some other members of the special committee, formed by Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to recommend whether the national team should travel to India for the World Cup, also felt in their personal capacities that it was time Pakistan took a strong stance on India refusing to tour the country.

Sharif had formed a high-level committee, headed by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto, to decide on the national cricket team's participation in the World Cup in India.

"I want our World Cup matches at



neutral venues if India doesn't want to send its team to Pakistan for Asia Cup. If they have security problems in Pakistan according to the Indian board, then we can also question the security situation in India," said Mazari.

Before Ashraf was named chairman of a new cricket management committee by the government to run the PCB affairs, his predecessor Najam Sethi had

negotiated the deal with the ACC members, including BCCI, that Pakistan should be allowed to host 4-5 Asia Cup matches at home while rest could be held in Sri Lanka under the hybrid model.

A PCB source also said that Sethi had prepared a strong case for the ICC to increase Pakistan's revenue share in the new financial model for member countries.

"Sethi had argued that if India was to get the lion's share of the ICC revenues Pakistan also wanted an increase in its share as without its participation, the ICC would not be able to sign lucrative broadcast and other sponsorship deals for its new cycle of ICC events from 2023-2027," said the source.

It remains to be seen how Ashraf would plead for an increase in revenue at the ICC meetings.

"The situation is clear (that) if there is no Pakistan-India matches in ICC events, the other boards stand to lose out on revenue," the source added.

We will continue the way we play: Stokes

PTI ■ LEEDS

England will "play cricket that gets a result, our way," said their inspirational captain Ben Stokes, strengthening the team's commitment to stick to the hotly-debated 'Bazball' approach.

England beat Australia by three wickets to win the third Test at Headingley on Sunday and cut the deficit to 1-2 in the five-match Ashes series, having lost the first two games.

"We've kept the series alive and we just have to park everything from this week, but continue the way we play," Stokes said.

"I said last week we find ourselves in the perfect position with the way we play cricket.

"It doesn't change. After the Lord's game and before this game, before the game in Manchester, we just have to do exactly the same thing: play cricket that gets a result, our way."

Stokes was happy with



England's approach here, but insisted his teams needs to improve.

"I still think we can be better. The thing about cricket is no-one has the perfect answer to everything. Everything will be assessed on the outcome. That will always be the case. No-one ever has the perfect answer for how it should be played.

"We can be better in certain areas, and that's all we can do, keep trying to be better and better and as clear as we possibly

can as a team. People always seem to have an answer after the fact. I don't think anyone will ever crack it; that's why it's such a great game."

The famous rivalry will resume with the fourth Test at Old Trafford on July 19.

After suffering heartbreaks at Edgbaston and Lord's, Stokes said his team was "over the moon" following the win in another "down-to-the-wire game."

"If you look at the first two games in terms of how tight they were, getting over the line in another tight game can mentally help... Knowing that it's another close game but we've got over the line in this one.

"The first two didn't go our way. If you flip it round and we didn't win this one and it's tight again, you would think it's just not meant to be.

"We're obviously over the moon that we won this one but it's just the start of what we know we need to do."